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The Need, Practice and Challenges of Guidance and Counseling Services in Selected Sidama Zone Secondary Schools of SNNPRS Ethiopia

Adane Wako Jarso

Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Hawassa University, Ethiopia

Abstract:

The general objective of this study was to assess the need, process of practice and challenges of guidance and counseling services in selected secondary schools at Sidama Zone of SNNPRS, Ethiopia. The study used survey design and 258 student, 3 school counselors and 5 school directors were participated in the study. Descriptive statistics like percentages, mean, range, and Standard deviation were used as data analysis techniques for close ended items. Open ended items were narrated qualitatively. The result indicated that there is high counselor student ratio in the study areas. Although Students have favorable perception about school counseling programs and characteristics of their school counselors, majority of students are not utilizing counseling services. As a result students face different psychosocial problems that need the help of school counselors. The major problems faced by students are low self concept, lack of proper study skills, time management problem, lack of assertiveness among female students in their teaching learning process, and different psychosocial problems students with special Needs face. The major reasons for not utilization of the available guidance and counseling service in their respective schools are lack of awareness about the service in their school, and weak link between school counselors and school community among others. Besides, counseling services in schools are not being implemented due to different problem which are related with pre-service training of professionals, administrative problems, lack of proper guideline and manual, lack of job description proper evaluation mechanism of professionals and counselors' personal problems. Based on the findings, it is recommended that there should be clear manual and job description for professionals and necessary pre-service training on school counseling should be offered for new graduate to improve school guidance and counseling services in the nation.

Keywords: Guidance and counseling, Need, Counselor, School administrative, Preparatory and Secondary schools

1. Introduction

It is believed that education is an investment in the future for nation, the future of each individual student, and society at large. In this investment process, as Adebowale (2012) said there is imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning, especially at a school or similar institution. Since learning is a broad and lifelong process, nearly all human beings can anticipate common experiences. These experiences are developmental/growth, educational, and vocational in nature. These experiences are significantly shaped by one common setting among others- the school. It is in the school that a person's development is stimulated and shaped for the great experiences of his life: learning, living with others and working.

However, it is assumed that with the increasing complexities in the society, industrial and technological development all going hand-in-hand, the succeeding generation will find it difficult to adjust themselves both to the society, work, family and schools. As Gysbers(2001) noted, social structures and social and personal values continue to change and become more diverse. Emerging social groups are challenging since people are on the move from place to place in search of economic, social and psychological security.

This implies students need appropriate personal and social skills to achieve optimum benefits from the educational program. With this regard, no one can undermine the role of guidance and counseling within the education system. Because, the service is part and parcel of education and aimed at assisting individuals to discover themselves, their worth, aptitudes, capabilities, weakness and know the way to move forward in life to be useful to oneself and his community.

Hence, as Rashid et.al(2011) stated the role and responsibility of the counselor in educational institutions is much complex as compared to other organizations since there are legal, professional and organizational issues involved in counseling process.

To achieve the above mentioned optimal benefits, it is not deniable that schools need well trained school counselors. As different writers and researchers (Baker & Gerler, 2004; Erford et al., 2003; Myrick, 2003; Schmidt, 2003; Sink, 2005; Sink & MacDonald, 1998) cited in Denise and Lisa (undated) described the role, functioning, and training of school counselors have been directly influenced by societal changes and fluctuating social concerns. These additional expectations will require school counselors to periodically reevaluate guidance program priorities and their own productivity and effectiveness. With this point in mind, this research want to assess the need, implementation process and challenges in the provision of guidance and counseling services in selected preparatory and secondary schools.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The aims of guidance and counseling service are similar to the purposes of education in general—to assist students in fulfilling their basic physiological needs, understanding oneself and acceptance of others, developing associations with peers, balancing between permissiveness and controls in the educational setting, realizing successful achievement, and providing opportunities to gain independence (Heyden,2011).

Counseling services prepare students to assume increasing responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices (Gibson, 2008; Kauchak, 2011). The ability to make such intelligent choices is not innate but, must be developed. This educational integral part of service is not being implemented similarly in the world. It is effectively being used and implemented in the educational system of developed nations. When guidance and counseling services are missing in schools, students' adaptation becomes difficult thus leading to low performance, misbehavior and dropout.

When we look at the experience of Ethiopia, eventhough the concept is new(Yusuf,1998), it is getting better attention for the last ten years than before. However, its need and mode of implementation is not well researched.

The emerging issues of personality maladjustment, poor study habit, career choice and knowledge of one's aptitudes add skills etc, make it obligatory for our educational planners and administrators to build appropriate guidance and counseling programme into our education system at different level for the development of the individual student into an adult personality, intellectual and functional proficiency, discipline and confidence. As, Yusuf (1998) described one of the challenge of Ethiopian school counselors is excess number of students which does not comply with the number of counselors.

However, such comprehensive study were not carried out in South Nation and Nationalities People Regional State(SNNPRS) of Southern Ethiopia and that is why this research is initiated to fill this gap.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the need, mode of practice and challenges scholars faced while implementing guidance and counseling services in their placement areas.

1.3. Specific Objectives

More specifically, the study is intended to achieve the following specific objectives. So, the study will:

- Identify the gap between the need and sufficiency of guidance and counseling officers at each schools of the study area
- Assess implementation process of the service being rendered in schools
- Identify the challenges schools face in offering the service
- Find out the challenges professionals face in rendering the service in the schools
- Propose possible intervention mechanisms.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Guidance and counseling is the bedrock for achieving self-actualization. An analysis of provision of adequate guidance and counseling service for secondary school students is of paramount importance; hence the result from the study will help in throwing more light on how guidance and counseling services is being implemented in secondary schools. In addition, it will come up with recommendations to education planners and school administrators on their responsibility in designing and revising adequate facilities for guidance and counseling services in order for students to receive quality service.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Subjects of the Study

The required data were collected from students, school counselors and school administrators of preparatory and secondary high schools from Hawassa University technology centers. In this study, four schools namely Tabour, Addis Ketema, Wondogenet and Yirgalem preparatory and secondary schools were considered. Hence, representative samples of students from grade nine and eleven were selected using stratified sampling techniques. Counselors and principals(vice principals) were selected using availability sampling. Finally, analysis of 258 students, 3 counselors and 5 principals/vice principals were done.

2.2. Data Gathering Instruments

In order to gather the required information self report questionnaire that depicts the existing gap in the area of guidance and counseling services in schools will were developed. The items for all participants contained both close ended and open ended items which are developed after rigorous review of literature in the area.

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

To analyze the quantitative close ended data, Statistical Programs for Social Science for Window version twenty (SPSS 20.0 Statistics Software) was used. After the data has been entered into the computer, different statistical analyses were made for different purposes. Accordingly, descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean, and standard deviations were used to express the proportion, average, and variability of certain characteristics of the variables. In addition, open ended data were described and interpreted in words qualitatively.

3. Analysis of the Data

Analysis and interpretation of the data was conducted for information gathered through questionnaires from students, counselors and school administrators (principals). As far as figure of respondents interms of their school is concerned, 26.7% of students were from Tabour Preparatory and secondary school, 21.8% were from Addis Ketema Preparatory and secondary school and the rest 27.1% and 24.8% are from Wondogenet and Yirgalem Preparatory and secondary schools respectively. Tabor and Addis Ketema preparatory and secondary schools are found in Hawassa city where as the rest two are from outside Hawassa city. Concerning gender of the study participant, 55.4% are male and the rest 44.6% are female participants. Interms of educational status, the majority 51.2% are from grade 11 where as 48.8% are from grade 9. The average age of participant students is 17.3 years old. Additionally, data were gathered from 2 female counselors and 1 male counselor and from 4 male directors/vice directors) and 1 female director.

3.1. Need of Counseling Services in Schools

As far as need of the service is concerned, assessing counselor student ratio in schools was one technique. With this regard, the data collected from school administration indicated that on the average counselor - student ratio in the study area is 1: 3363. Further detail about each schools is indicated on the following table.

Name of Preparatory and Secondary School	Availability of counselor	Number of counselor	Total No. of students in the school	Counselor student ratio	Year of experience of counselors
Tabour	yes	2	6801	1:3400	1 over 10 years and 1 is <2 year service
Addis Ketema	Yes	1	3138	1:3138	< 2 years
Wondogenet	yes	1*	4701	1:4701	< 2 years
Yirgalem	Yes	2**	5543	1:2771	< 2 years

Table 1: Availability of counselors in respective schools

* The counselor was almost quitted his job for the last two month during data collection

** one counselor was on maternal leave during data collection

3.2. Priority Areas That Need Psychologist Intervention in Schools

There are so many problems that need professional support to prevent, intervene or rehabilitate ones they happened in schools. With this regard, students and school administrators were asked to identify their priority area that need school counselor's professional support. Accordingly, students were presented with and asked to list their top five priority area from 20 identified problems that can be managed by school counselors. Accordingly they identified the following priority areas among twenty listed problems.

S/N	Items	Frequency	percentage
1	Helping students to use scientific study skills	65	25.1%
2	Helping students to use scientific study skills	65	25.1%
3	Development of students self concept in the teaching learning process	55	21.2%
4	Helping Students with special Needs	32	12.4%
5	Helping Female students to be effective in their learning	28	10.8%
3	Empowering students in time management skills	24	9.3%

Table 2: Priority areas of students' need of psychological support

On similar manner, school administrators indicated that, disciplinary cases, low motivation of students to engage themselves in teaching learning process, lack of study technique, cheating, disruptive behavior in class, disrespect for teachers, low academic performance, harassment of female students, not doing assignments and homework on time, late coming to school, fighting among students and bullying are some major problems commonly mentioned among others on the given open ended items.

3.3. Practice of the Service

As far as implementation process of counseling service is concerned, students and counselors were asked different questions to draw conclusion.

Students were asked in close ended question as "Do you think that in your school, guidance and counseling service is being offered in effective manner?"

As can be seen from the following table, only 90(34.9%) responded that it is being offered in effective manner in their school. The majority 106(41.1%) responded that it is not being offered in effective manner. The rest 62(24.0%) responded as it is difficult for them to decide whether the service is being offered in effective way or not.

Response	Yes	No	Difficult to Decide	Total
Frequency	90	106	62	258
percent	34.9	41.1	24.0	100

Table 3: Response of students on Effectiveness of counseling service in schools

As far as the utilization of the service is concerned, the researcher asked the participants whether they visited the counseling office or not.

As can be depicted on the following table, the majority 165 (64%) didn't visit the center to get the service. Only 93(36%) visited school counseling center to get psychological service in their respective school.

Response	Yes	No	Total
Frequency	93	165	258
Percent	36%	64%	100%

Table 4: Utilization of counseling service by students

Among the none users of the service, top four reasons were identified as a challenge not to use the service in their schools. The majority 50(30.3%) of students replied that they do not have awareness about counseling service, followed by fear 46(27.9%) believe that there is no adequate counselor in their school and the rest 27(16.3%) replied that they fear of break of confidentiality as a reason not to visit school counselor for their psychosocial problems.

S/N	Reasons for not using the counseling Service	Number of respondent	Percent
1	Lack of awareness about the service	50	30.3%
2	Fear	46	27.9%
3	Thinking that there is no experienced counselor	42	25.5%
4	Fear break of confidentiality	27	16.3%
Total		165	100%

Table 5: Challenges not to use Counseling service by students

On the other hand, those who visited the school counselor for the service mainly focused on about study skills, personal issues and social problems.

S/N	Reasons for visiting School Counselor	Number of respondent
1	About Study skill	40
2	Personal Problem	29
3	Social problem	15

Table 6: Reasons of students to visit school Counselor

On the other hand, school counselors were asked about their sources of referral of students for counseling services using rating items. All three respondents rated the role of student self referral, unit leaders, subject teacher and parents as a great deal source for their referral of counseling service. But friends, home room teacher and principals were rated as a little source for referral of students for counseling purposes.

Concerning the time and number of sessions they spend with the client, all participant counselors responded that they spend 45' to 1 hour on average per session and it takes 2 to 4 session to solve clients problem. However, the number of session depends on nature of problem as replied by the counselors.

3.4. Challenges in Delivery of Counseling Service

As far as problems related with provision of school counseling is concerned, data were collected from school administrators and counselors.

From school administrators (directors and Vice Principals) side, all respondents state that there is lack of commitment and creativity by professionals to promote the profession in the school. Eventhough there are so many problems in schools, counselors are reluctant and disinterested to carry out their duties properly.

For counseling services, except one participant, the rest school directors stated that they provided office and necessary materials like computers, chair, table and other facilities. The one that didn't provide office stated the counselor share office with other teachers. On the other hand all school directors have responded that they do not have any reference and job description to evaluate the effectiveness of their counselor unlike other teachers.

When they are asked to express their impression about guidance and counseling service, they replied that it so essential and support the teaching learning process. But all reported that the service in their school is not this much effective.

Additionally, lack of cooperation among counselors, low commitment, health problem, lack of planning skills, and absence of appropriate rooms for the service in schools are some challenges mentioned by school administrators.

From Counselors side, only one school counselor responded that s/he has got on job training on guidance and counseling. But the rest replied that they didn't get any training that prepares them for the position. In addition to provision of guidance and counseling, they engage in other activities like School Improvement Program (SIP), research, club coordination activities, and other administrative issues.

In relation to pre-service training, except one, the rest responded that the contribution of pre-service training is not a great input to prepare them for school counselor position.

As far as their practice is concerned, two of the school counselors responded that they focus on preventive activities where as only one counselor responded focuses on remedial aspect of counseling.

As far as their job description and evaluation system is concerned, all of the respondents stated that there is no job description that guides them. Instead they will be evaluated by their engagement in other non professional activities than counseling service they provided.

The other challenge that all counselors described is that number of students in their respective schools and the available counselor does not match. The numbers of students are too much and beyond their capacity to address their needs. Besides, lack of conducive office, lack of budget allocation, lack of coordination among stakeholders, lack of awareness among school community about the service, defensiveness of clients during the session, and lack of proper guideline are among the challenges they mentioned.

4. Discussion

Result of the study has identified top five student priority areas that need psychology professionals' intervention. Accordingly, Promotion of students self concept in the teaching learning process (55) = 21.2%, helping students to use scientific study skills (65) = 25.1%, empowering students in time management skills (24) = 9.3%, helping Female students to be effective in their learning (28) = 10.8%, helping Students with special Needs to cope with the challenge they face (32) = 12.4%. In similar manner school directors and v/principals stated they need the help of counselor for various psychological problems exist in their respective schools. All these mentioned (identified) problems are psychological in nature and have their own adverse impact in student learning. These findings align with the finding of Charles Onencan (2008) and Terje and Cherinet (2004) which is conducted on comparison of Guidance and Counseling services in Ethiopian and Norwegian Secondary schools.

As far as availability of school counselors are concerned, in all schools there were counselors. With the exception of one counselor, the rest are BA degree holder of Psychology and have less than two years of experience in counseling at school level. Majority of counselors stated that they didn't get proper training about the ways to manage school counseling programs. Only one counselor MA degree holder and served over 25 year and have got different on-service refreshing training. As far as gender of professionals in the study area is concerned, only one sex category of professionals is assigned in one school. So that gender disparity is not considered while professionals are recruited and assigned for the respective schools by the concerned officials. This align with what Euvrard (1996) established that those periods allocated for guidance in South Africa schools were not utilized optimally because of inadequately trained counselors. Similarly it align with the finding of Rutondoki (2000) which states that many educational planners and heads of institutions are not trained in guidance and counseling methods. In America, school counselors lack effective organizational and counseling skills Chireshe(2006).

Concerning counselor student ratio in schools it is found that counselor student ratio is 1: 3363. This is similar with previous finding of Yusuf (1998) and Yirgalem(2013) which stated that the number is too far from standards. The result is too far away from the standard which is recommended by American School of Counselors Association (2007) that suggests an ideal 1:100 counselor student proportion. Besides, it is too far from what Shertzer et.al(1980) recommended that one full- time counselor for 300 pupils in secondary schools.

As far as utilization of the service by the students are concerned, only 93(36%) of the respondents visited the school counseling office in order to benefit from the service. The majority 165 (64%) are not using the service. Among the users, they visited the school counselors to cope with different psychological problems. This is similar with the finding of Yirgalem(2013) which stated study skills and fostering healthy heterosexual relationship to be the most important functions of school guidance and counseling programs. Similarly, this finding align with what Terje and Cherinet (2004) listed as a major reasons why Ethiopian students visit the counselor. In this study, it is found that students have favorable perception as far as the service is concerned and this is similar with the finding of Beker Hadji(2002), and Yirgalem(2013). As stated above, the majority didn't visit the school counselor to get the service. This is similar with what Yirgalem (2013) stated that less than a quarter of students utilized the services in their schools in its study area. The reasons for under utilization of the service in this study area are Lack of awareness about the service, thinking that there is no experienced counselor, and fear of break of confidentiality.

Concerning the challenges faced in the provision of the service different points can be raised. In this study, school administrators stated that lack of commitment and creativity by professionals to promote the profession in the school is mentioned as the major challenge. This mainly match with what Yusuf(1998) has said that in schools some professionals lack professional preparations and motivation to render the service.

From school counselors side, lack of proper facility like office, stationery and budget has been mentioned as an obstacle to offer guidance and counseling service effectively in their respective schools. This align with different previous finding of Abdela Muzeyin(1984), Yusuf(1998), Terje and Cherinet (2004) and Yirgalem (2013). But it contradicts with the finding of Lehr and Sumarah (2002) who stated that effective School Guidance and Counseling services in American schools have adequate resources, equipment and space. Besides, the facilities to be fulfilled for the service in Ethiopian schools doesn't fulfill the infrastructures required and necessary equipments stated by the manual in Federal Ministry of Health(2007) for HIV Testing and Counseling.

Additionally, school counselors stated that absence of proper manual and any job description about the service in schools and vague procedure to evaluate professionals at the end of the semester and year are among the major challenges to continue in schools to offer the service effectively. Moreover, counselor participants of this study stated that initial training is not well prepared them to be effective school counselor. This align with the finding of Yusuf(1998), and Terje and Cherinet(2004). But it contradict with what Chireshe(2006) stated that some African countries (Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, Botswana and Nigeria) have School Guidance and Counseling services policies.

5. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the information's gained at present, summary, conclusion and recommendations are given.

5.1. Summary

The general objective of this study was to assess the need, process of practice and challenges of guidance and counseling services in selected secondary schools at Sidama Zone of SNNPRS, Ethiopia.

In order to achieve this purpose, questionnaire was developed that assess need of counseling service in secondary schools, mode of its implementation process, factors that hinder the service and possible intervention strategies.

The subjects of the study were 143 male and 115 female students; 1 male and 2 female counselors; 3 male and 1 female school directors.

Both close ended and open ended questionnaires were used to collect the data. Documents were also used to obtain the necessary information for the study. The data gathered were analyzed using various quantitative statistical tools such as percentages, coefficient of variation and Chi-square; and triangulation method of qualitative approach.

The analyst's made has brought the following major findings.

- i. There is high counselor student ratio in the study areas,
- ii. The results of this study revealed that students have favorable perception about school counseling programs,
- iii. Gender diversity of professionals in the study is not well addressed
- iv. Students encounter different psychosocial problems that need psychological intervention,
- v. Majority of students are not utilizing counseling services
- vi. Counselors engage in different activities in addition to provision of counseling services
- vii. Counselors face different problems
- viii. There is no guideline that describe job description and their assessment
- ix. Counselors are not motivated to promote the service in schools
- x. The role of pre-service training was rated as poor to equip and prepare professionals to be school counselors
- xi. School counselors lack cooperation to work with school and non school community

5.2. Conclusion

From the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

- i. There is high need for the service as stated by all participants
- ii. There is favorable perception about the service with low awareness of the service by students
- iii. Majority of Students are not using the service effectively due to lack of awareness followed by fear about the service.
- iv. Absence of any guideline is a challenge for professionals and school administrators

5.3. Recommendation

Up on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded to different concerned bodies.

- i. Counselors should work hard to create awareness about counseling service for school community
- ii. Counselors should be creative and a role model in their profession for others
- iii. Appropriate facilities should be fulfilled for effective counseling by the school administrators
- iv. The service should be gender sensitive
- v. Budget should be Allocated
- vi. Additional counselors should be employed by government using the existing opportunity
- vii. Proper guideline and job description should be developed for school counselors
- viii. Pre-service training should be reconsidered in the manner to suit to school counseling

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