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Students' perceptions of the impact of guidance and counselling programs on academic needs satisfaction in secondary schools within the Rift Valley Region, Kenya

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Guidance and counselling is increasingly becoming an important service in secondary schools in Kenya and the world at large. The needs of learners in secondary schools are constantly changing as the society is changing paving way for counselling services to be up scaled to address both academic and other issues. The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of students on the impact of guidance and counselling on academic needs. The research study was guided by Gestalt theory of perception and the Ex Post Facto research design was adopted for the study. The target population was all secondary students within Rift Valley Region and ten schools were selected from five counties through stratified and simple random sampling. Four hundred and fifty students were selected. Data collection was done using questionnaire which was validated by experts in counselling; it has a reliability index of 0.89 which was appropriate. Data analysis was done descriptively and inferentially. The study concludes that there is a connection between the provision of guidance and counselling services and the satisfaction of academic desires. Additionally, the workload for teacher counselors should be reduced for them to find time to address students' academic and other personal needs. The study recommends multiple approaches to implementation of counselling programs in school set up involving many actors such as counselors, principals, subject teachers among others.

Key words: Perception, guidance, counselling, satisfaction, academic needs.

INTRODUCTION

Counselling program in secondary schools in Kenya is a critical service that is intended to contribute to the holistic growth of learners while in schools and even beyond. The students' needs may include but not limited to academic, spiritual, social, careers, cognitive, behavioral and personal. A satisfactory counselling program aims at dealing with these needs which keep varying based on the changing patterns of the society, not only in Kenya but the world over. For schools which have embraced and facilitated effective counseling programs they can

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attest the results of this worthy area of educational service.

Dondo (2004) and (Gross, Capuzzi 2001) allude that the areas in which counseling is needed in schools include handling traumatic experiences, relationships, orientations issues, academics, vocation, sickness, bereavement among others. In an effort to deal with students' needs Dondo (2004) outlines the qualities of a guidance and counselling teacher as keen listener, approachable, having fair judgment, trust worthy, keen observer, emphatic, understanding, organized and having good relations with learners. Guidance and counselling has also been found to be good for learners' academic improvement (Siahi and Maiyo, 2015).

According to Cheruiyot and Simatwa (2016) increased provision of counselling services leads to enhanced students' academic performance while Tina and Ugochukwu (2014) postulate that Guidance and counselling has not been effective in academic achievement because of heavy workload on the part of teacher counselors implementing the services. Eremie and Jackson (2019) found that guidance and counselling services indeed enhances students' academic achievement and needs. In a study conducted by Shehu et al. (2021) eighty percent of the respondents reported that there was a positive change in their academic performance after they received counselling support and that the performance was good.

Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) emphasized specific services within the broad area of guidance and counselling designed to aid in satisfying academic needs of learners such as good study skills, choice of subjects, motivation on academics, time and stress management, academic improvement initiatives. In addition Ebizie et al (2016) included post-secondary planning, use of library, techniques of passing examinations, handling discipline, overcoming learning difficulties, class counselling among others.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of students concerning the impact of guidance and counselling programs on academic needs of students in secondary schools in Rift Valley Region.

METHODOLOGY

Ex post facto research design was considered suitable for this study. Coolins (1994) asserts that this design involves looking back after the fact to relate the measure of dependent variables to the independent variable. Ex post facto design was relevant due to the fact that the researcher looked at the variables as they were without manipulation. Ten secondary schools were selected from 500 schools across five counties in the Rift Valley Region using stratified sampling method. The secondary schools were categorized into private and public as well as boarding or day, single or mixed. Each county had two secondary schools that were selected.

The students who took part in the study were 169 females and 231 males where 119 (30%) students came from form three,109 (27%) from form two,91(23%) from form four form ones were 81 (20%).Participants were further classified based on their school

category, where 158 were from mixed schools, while 113 from boarding,58 from day schools and 71 came from single schools (boys or girls only).

Learners in the randomly selected schools responded to questionnaires regarding their views on the satisfaction of the Counselling programs towards their academic needs. Class register was used to identify respondents that formed the sample in every class. The choice of Form two, three and four was necessary to look at whether perceptions varied based on class levels of the students. It was also necessary to look at counselling experiences in each form regarding academic satisfaction as perceived by students. Pilot study was conducted to check the reliability of the students' questionnaire which was assessed using internal consistency method and the reliability coefficient of 0.893 was established that was considered high enough. Expert judgment from lecturers in the Department of Educational psychology, Moi University was sought to assess content validity of the questionnaires. Scoring of the instruments was done to establish perceptions of students where satisfaction of the guidance and counselling program was indicated by a mean value of 2.5 and above; while uncertainty or neutral perceptions ranged from between mean values of 1.8 to 2.4 and finally dissatisfaction or negative perception was indicated by a mean of below 1.7.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected were analyzed using t test to test the hypotheses that stated that there was no significant impact of school type and gender of the respondents on guidance and counselling on academic needs; while Anova was performed to test the hypotheses that stated there were no significant impacts of class levels, school category and age of learners on guidance and counselling on academic needs. The first part was an overview of perceptions of students on the impact of guidance and counselling on academic needs (Table 1).

Table 1 indicates that thirteen items registered positive perception while seven gave neutral perception on the impact of counselling on academics. A cursory view on these results is that the student's perception tends towards positive perception, meaning the impact is satisfactory in enhancing academic needs. It was expected that the program will score highly especially that academics is the core of any school program. Positive perception was noted on orientation of new students, school rules and regulations, motivation of weak learners, enhancing disciple for academic improvement, drugs and substance abuse prevention, techniques of passing examination, setting educational goals, academic improvement initiatives, choice of subjects, good study skills and motivational talks to students, motivating weak learners, overcoming learning difficulties. Uncertain responses were registered in counselling for each class, post-secondary school planning, talents recognition, use of library, stress management skills. The items score on the impact on academics' ranges between means of 2.41 to 2.78, which gives an impression of guidance program affecting academic behaviors of students. These items are the core areas in a guidance program targeting academic

Table 1. Overview of perceptions regarding academics needs (N=400).

Guidance and counselling on:	Mean	Nature of perception
Good study skills	2.66	Positive
Orientation on the various subjects	2.59	Positive
Motivation talks on academic	2.78	Positive
Study skills/time management	2.63	Positive
Stress management skills	2.23	Uncertainty
Academic improvement initiatives	2.53	Positive
Setting personal educational goals	2.67	Positive
Use of library	2.29	Uncertainty
Techniques of passing exams	2.59	Positive
Talents recognition	2.39	Uncertainty
Choice of subjects	2.50	Positive
Orientation of new students	2.40	Uncertainty
Needs of physically challenged learners	2.23	Uncertainty
Post- secondary planning	2.19	Uncertainty
Drug abuse prevention	2.60	Positive
Disciple for academic achievement	2.75	Positive
Overcoming learning difficulties	2.50	Positive
Motivating weak learners	2.50	Positive
Counselling for each class	2.3	Uncertainty
School rules and regulations	2.78	Positive
Overall mean	2.5	Positive

Table 2. Gender and perceptions of guidance and counselling on academic needs.

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Male	233	2.50	.38
Female	167	2.51	.34
Independent sample test	t	df	sig, (2 tailed)
Equal variances assumed	-151	398	.880
Equal variances not assumed	-154	.377	.878

needs, meaning the program is very visible in these schools though it needs re-engineering and refocusing to meet ever increasing needs of learners in secondary schools. The overall mean statistic of 2.50 showed that the students were generally satisfied with the impact that guidance and counselling has had on their academic needs.

From the findings male and female students had somewhat similar perception on the impact of counselling on academic needs based on their mean scores; however it is noteworthy that there was no significant difference in students' views of counselling on academic needs by gender as shown in Table 2. The study findings therefore indicate that gender did not significantly influence their perception on the satisfaction of academic needs. Their perception was similar irrespective of gender.

These results show that there is no statistically significant difference in perception between students in public and private schools on the impact of counselling program on academic needs. The null hypothesis was therefore supported and concluded that the type of school did not significantly influence the perception of the students. Their perception was more or less the same whichever school they came from (Table 3).

Table 4 indicates that there is a significant statistical difference on the impact of guidance and counselling on students' academic needs by boarding school category, that is mixed, single, boarding school $F_{(3,396)}=4.328, P=.005$. From these findings the null hypothesis that the category of school has no significant impact on students perception on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling on their academic needs satisfaction is rejected, implying that the category of school where the students learn significantly affects their perception on needs satisfaction. Boarding school's category had more positive perception than the other school categories. Boarding school students were more satisfied than other students on the role of guidance and counselling.

Table 3. Type of school and the perception on academic needs.

Type of school	N	Mean
Public	240	2.52
Private	160	2.48
Independent sample test	**t**	**df**	**sig, (2 tailed)**
Equal variances assumed	1.095	398	.274
Equal variances not assumed	1.098	.377	.273

Table 4. School category and the perception of academic needs satisfaction.

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	1.632	3	.54	4.328	.005
Within groups	49.779	396	.126		
Total	51.411	399			

(I)Category	(J)Category	Mean difference	sig.
	Boarding	0.15*	0.001
Mixed	Day	-0.01	0.940
	Single	0.02	0.685
	mixed	-0.15*	0.001
Boarding	Day only	-0.15*	0.010
	Single	-0.12*	0.021
	mixed	0.05	. 0.940
Day only	Boarding	0.15*	0.010
	Single	0.02	0.695
	mixed	-0.02	0.685
Single	Boarding	0.12*	0.21
	Day only	-0.02	0.695

The findings show that the age of students influenced their perception of counselling on academic needs. Post hoc tests were conducted to test the significance between the means. There is a significant statistical difference F (2,397) =3.259, P=0.039 on the students' academic needs by the age of students from 14 to 15 years and 19 to 20 years. From the findings the null hypothesis that the age of the students has no significant impact on their perceptions is rejected; it is concluded that age of students had significant influence; the ages 14 to 15 years as well as 19 to 20 years had more positive perception, hence they were more satisfied than students of other ages. This necessitates organizing guidance and counselling based on age specific content for them to benefit more (Table 5).

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the class level of the students'

class level influenced their perception (p=0.038) (Table 6). From these results the null hypothesis that stated the class level has no significant influence on students' perception is rejected. It shows that the class of the students significantly influenced their perceptions. Additionally, it can be deduced that form three were more satisfied and had more positive perception than the other groups. More sensitization on the use of guidance and counselling services need to be enhanced across the class levels for them to benefit optimally.

The findings from the study indicate that the respondents' perception of counselling program on the satisfaction of academic needs was satisfactory (positive); the overall satisfaction mean was 2.50. The overall impression is that students were satisfied with the implementation of guidance and counselling regarding academics needs on majority of the items that were investigated. The findings confirm what Ribadu (2021) found that 63 % of the respondents strongly approved of the guidance and counselling role in students' academic

Table 5. Age and the perception of guidance and counselling on academic needs.

Anova	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	.830	2	.415	3.259	.039
Within groups	50.581	397	.127		
Total	51.411	99			

Post Hoc tests
Multiple comparisons

(I)Age (years)	(J) Age (years)	Mean difference	sig.
14-15	16-18	0.09*	0.025
	19-20	0.15*	0.04
16-18	14-15	-0.09*	0.025
	19-20	0.06	0.404
19-20	14-15	-0.15*	0.04

Table 6. Class levels and perception on academic needs.

Anova	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	sig.
Between groups	1.078	3	.359	2.827	.038
Within groups	50.33	396	.127		
Total	51.41				

Multiple comparisons

(I)class	(J)Class	Mean difference	sig
Form one	Form two	0.11*	0.041
	Form three	0.15*	0.040
	Form four	0.11	0.054
Form two	Form one	0.11*	0.041
	Form three	0.04	0.397
	Form four	-0.00	0.974
Form three	Form one	-0.15*	0.040
	Form two	-0.04	0.397
	Form four	-0.14	0.974
Form four	Form one	-0.11	0.054
	Form two	0.00	0.974
	Form three	0.04	0.401

improvement. These results are consistent with Kyauta (2017) who found in a study that counselling services enhances good study habits which ultimately improves academic performance. Atsuwe and Achugbulu (2018) and Cheruiyot and Simatwa (2016) found a positive correlation between counselling program and academic achievements of students in Benue State, Nigeria. The gender of the students and type of school were insignificant influence on their perception of counselling towards academic needs. However, it is noteworthy that the school category was found significant in its impact on the perception of the students. The students from mixed boarding school were more satisfied than the other students. This could be due to the types of guidance and counselling contents offered in the school setting (Eremie and Jackson, 2019).

The ages of the students were found significant in influencing their perception regarding academic needs satisfaction. Specifically, 14 to 15 years and 16 to 20 years were more satisfied than students of other ages. The findings are consistent with Stokes (1998) who cited developmental issues as a fact that affects perception.

Atodo (2008) also confirmed the same while investigating on the utilization of counselling services in schools. Cakir and Avci (2021) reported that subjective well-being and target orientation as well as sense of belonging in school are significant predictors of academic achievement and resilience in high school students; all these factors can be improved with counselling services in schools.

Class levels of the students also had significant influence on their perception of academic needs. Students from form one, form two and three were more satisfied than others with the impact of guidance and counselling on academic needs satisfaction. This could be due to the heavy emphasis on academics and passing of examination in every school at the expense of other students' needs These findings agree with Eremie and Jackson (2019) who established that certain methods of presenting counselling information and services is affected by the class levels of the respondents. It also confirms what Stone and Bradley (1994) found that the functions of guidance and counselling varied depending on the class levels of learners.

Conclusion

The study concludes that since majority of the respondents had positive perceptions of counselling programs regarding academics needs it is imperative to enhance its implementation across all secondary schools in Kenya. The study findings also conclude that the execution of counselling programs need to take into consideration the class levels, ages of learners and school categories so as to satisfy the needs of students. It is also necessary to have holistic implementation of counselling services targeting all needs of learners and not only academics.

Recommendations

School counselors need to be retrained on the usability of guidance and counselling programs in fulfilling students' expectations and needs. In this regard, students should be guided on good study skills, strategies of passing examination, positive attitudes towards each subject; stress and time management techniques, educational planning among others should contribute to the content development in school counselling.

The study findings recommend enhanced awareness among students on the importance of guidance and counselling in addressing their academic needs. School counselling should be offered to all students not necessarily those with psychological problems which will help them gain access to rigorous academic preparation and excellence.

Teacher counselor's workload should be reduced to allow them time to manage unique needs of learners

which may include the gifted, those with learning and behavior difficulties among others. The more the time given for counselling functions the more the likelihood of better academic performance and holistic development of learners. It is recommended that adequate time for counselling should be outlined in the school timetable for students to note and adhere to it.

There should be team approach in the implementation of counselling programs in schools so as to involve class teachers, principals, chaplains, parents, special needs teachers and others.

It is recommended that stakeholders consider the varied perception of students on the influence of counselling on their needs as this affects their utilization of this noble service. Neutral or uncertain perception responses could indicate the counselling program is not being felt in school and its impact is not noticeable.

The ministry of Education should develop a proper policy on guidance and counselling in secondary schools so that there is uniform administration of the programs. This is because each school is implementing differently based on the perceived benefits. A standardized implementation matrix should be set in place by the ministry to avoid ensuing confusion

The needs of physically challenged learners should not be left with special needs education teachers alone but a systematic framework should be established where the school counselors can also attempt to address their specific needs. This may require additional competencies by teacher counselors.

Teachers and school administrators should take advantage of the positive perception of students towards guidance and counselling to escalate implementation of programs to a large scale to support academic activities in their schools.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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