

The Role of Guidance Counselling Services in Selected Junior Secondary Schools in the Freetown Municipality

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Abstract

It has been noted that students face a lot of problems during adolescence. Since secondary school students are in the adolescent stage, the need for guidance and counselling services become compelling. Moreover, the incident of the Ebola virus disease in Sierra Leone has disrupted the school system for several months. Schools have recently reopened and most students who might have suffered from Ebola virus disease need teacher counsellors whom they can contact for psychological support. Thus, there is a need for school counsellors and school administrators to ensure and to enhance the effectiveness of these services in schools. In addition, students experience a number of problems especially in the outbreak of Ebola in Sierra Leone and the present modern society which has promoted the researchers to investigate the role of guidance and counselling services in schools.

KEY WORDS

Guidance, Counselling, Vocational Guidance, Adolescent

INTRODUCTION

According to Gsybers (2002), teachers were assigned to the counselling position, in addition to their regular teaching duties. In order to understand how counselling with students and staff in school guidance program today, it is important to recognise the evolution of the profession first. The school counselling profession traces back to the early 1900s where it has the sole purpose of vocational guidance. It was developed in response to the economic and social problems of those times. Guidance according to Perrone and Ryan (1976), is a process developmental in nature by which an individual is assisted to understand, accept and utilize his abilities, aptitudes, interest and attitudinal patterns in relation to his aspiration, so that he may become increasingly capable of making wise choice and decisions both of a dynamic and expanding society. Hughes (1970) defines guidance as a process of helping individuals achieve the self understanding and self direction necessary to make the maximum adjustment to school, home and community. Gibson and Mischelle in introduction to counselling describe counselling as one-one helping relationship that focuses on a person's growth and adjustment, problem solving and decision make skills.

Milton and others (1955), define counselling as a process which take place in a one-one relationship between an individual faced by problems which he cannot cope with alone, and a professional worker whose training and experience qualify him to help others to arrive at solutions to various types of personal difficulties. Blocher (1966) defines counselling as helping an individual become aware of himself and the ways in which he is reacting to the behavioural influences of his environment. It further helps him to established some personal meaning for this behaviour and to develop. This was, the student becomes independently able to handle future difficulties.

Tylers (1969) says that the purpose of counselling is to facilitate wise choices and certain decisions which a person's later development depends. The assumption of guidance counselling is that individual who understand themselves and their world will become more effective, more fully functioning person in the sense described by Carl Rogers. Thus through guidance, individuals achieve greater awareness not only of who they are but of who they can become. Bakare (1984) defines guidance and counselling as a number of processes used in assisting an individual having problems in any facet of life so that he can be more effective, satisfied and useful to the society in which he lives.

Guidance in learning goes on continuously during the school day. It consists of providing the students with the suitable task in encouraging him or her to progress giving him just enough

help so that he or she can solve a problem himself. The timing of help is important. The counsellor gives too soon, before the student has exhausted his own resources, he may deprive him of an experience of success and accomplishment, if the teachers delay too long, the students may feel frustrated and incompetent.

Today's counsellors are faced with a wide range of the therapeutic methods and system to effect changes in clients. To help individual to plan, obtain and derived maximum benefits from educational, social, vocational and other kinds of experience which will enable those individuals to discover and develop their potentials for their future endeavours.

Over the last few years, there has been a huge growth of interest in the field of counselling. This has manifested itself in a number of areas in healthcare, in the family, in the work place and of course in the schools. The school is a more recent context for the provision of psychological treatment of young people.

Every day, life can be challenging and stressful for even the most resilient children. Competitiveness, bullying, social exclusion, racism, family curses, sibling rivalry, scholastic underachievement, abuse, homophobia, peer pressure and substance misused and but a few of the problems brought by children to the average school counsellors' office. The parent expects the children to provide solution to their children's discipline in secondary schools. African adults have become more concern with earning money and are less occupied with many traditional practices that formally contributed the upbringing of young people. Rapid sociological changes emanating from modernization and urbanization stress students. There is also an increase in the divorce rate and in the number of single parent families all over the world which is also a stress factors for students. The increase in diverse student problems and the current economic situation have made the need for counselling services even more critical than in the past.

Student experience immense psychological pressures in today's world. There are a number of socio-economic, psychological problems which disturb the learning process of student. In other words, the growth numbers of social, economic and family problems have resulted in an increased need for school guidance and counselling service. Research has demonstrated the high prevalence of risk taking behaviour among adolescents who attend schools. Student in the adolescents age bracket experience, rapid growth and change, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. The rapid development changes occur at a time when environmental stresses for example; parental and teacher pressure on young people to excel in school, peer pressure to experiment with drugs, conflict in families or peer

relationships, loneliness and pressure to make carried choice are at their peak. Adolescent bring the following problems in to the classroom; on certain thing about sex roles, a feeling of dependency and simultaneously a desire to be autonomous and difficulty in making and sustaining significant relationship. Thus adolescent in an intense time of change where many battles of self are old and lost. Student experiences the above mentioned problems need information understanding and guidance to help them to adjust to all the changes.

During adolescence, challenges that have to do with intellectual and physical development, choice of companions, social activities and the formation of appropriate social attitudes are confronted. Adolescence has always being a challenging time in a persons' life but believes that in today's fragmented chaotic with its dangerous sexualized and media saturated society which adolescent face incredible pressure, such student need help in their growth towards emotional maturity. Adolescent should be taught to understand and accept themselves and become more understanding in accepting others. Schools are ideally positioned to initiate and maintain activities and services to enhance the psychological development and wellbeing of youths. The above can be accomplished if the school provide guidance and services.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design according to Trochim (2006) can be described as the “glue” that holds all elements in a research together. According to Oska Blackstad (2000, research design is the structure of any scientific work that gives direction and systemizes the research. The purpose of this research is to examine the role of guidance and counselling services in selected schools in Freetown. A quantitative descriptive study was adopted, which describes the counselling services in selected secondary schools in Freetown.

SAMPLE SIZE OF THE STUDY

The sample size for this study is 60 school pupils from the selected schools, 12 adults; 6 principals and 6 Guidance Counsellors from the selected schools and they were interviewed as part of the sample for obtaining research data.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The Guidance Counsellors are principals were selected based on their availability and conveniences. The 60 pupils were within the premise of the school compound during the period the research was conducted, 30 of them consented to be the sample for the research.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The data for this study was obtained using a combination of instruments. The instruments were developed to focus on the different object sample. The major consideration as to which

type of instrument was developed was the appropriateness and its ability to elicit the quality of the information required by the researcher. Three types of instruments were developed and used in this study and are as follows;

- Questionnaire for principals
- Questionnaire for guidance counsellors
- Questionnaire for pupils

DATA ANALYSIS

The data is presented as follows:

- The relevant data was extracted, organized into categories and coded.
- The data was entered into a master sheet and the frequencies of response determined.
- The data was then listed in tables to facilitate interpretation and explanation.
- Frequency counts were made and raw scores converted into percentages of totals.
- The tables were described from the information gathered. Information collected is analyzed using statistical techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ROLE OF TEACHER COUNSELLORS IN SCHOOLS

The question sought to establish the role of teacher counsellors in schools. Participants were therefore required to identify the roles performed by the school counsellors in the respective schools involved in the study. The following table presents the response of participants on the above question.

Table No. 1

Views of school administrators (participants) on the role of Guidance Counsellors in schools.

No.	Views	No. Of Respondents	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Vocational/Career Counselling	6	6	100%	0	0%
2	Health Care Service	6	4	67%	2	33%
3	Keeping Counselling Records	6	6	100%	0	0%
4	Psycho-Social Counselling	6	6	100%	0	0%

According to table.1. (100%) of responses of principals agreed that one role played by school counsellors is vocational/career counselling, 4 (67%) of responses of principals noted that school counsellors performed a health care service role in their schools while 2 (33%) disagreed with such a role being played by counsellors in their schools.

6 (100%) argues that school counsellors played the role of record keeper of all counselling details. Similarly, 6 (100%) of responses of principals said school counsellors played a psycho-social counselling role in schools.

Table No. 2

Views of Teachers Counsellors on the role of Guidance Counsellors in schools.

No.	Views	No. Of Respondents	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Educational counselling	6	6	100%	0	0%
2	Follow up visits to clients	6	6	100%	0	0%
3	Counselling of teachers and parents	6	6	100%	0	0%
4	Individual and group counselling	6	6	100%	0	0%

According to the statistics on table number 2, all school counsellors (100%) responses of counsellors agree that school counsellors performed the following roles as counsellors of their schools. 6(100%) said they did educational counselling. There was 0% disagreement on the above role. 6(100%) said they did follow up visits to some clients. There was 0% disagreement on the above. 6(100%) said, their role also involved counselling teachers and parents. 6(100%) said; they performed individual and group counselling roles in their schools

Table No. 3 Views of pupils on the role of school Counsellors in Schools.

No.	Views	No. Of Participants	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	Participants	Frequency	Participants
1	Guide on subject selection	60	52	87%	8	335

	(career counselling)					
2	Referral	60	30	50%	30	50%
3	Stress and trauma counselling	60	60	100%	0	0%
4	Spotting out problems in pupils	60	48	80%	12	20%
5	First aid treatment	60	15	25%	45	75%
6	Continuous assessment record of teachers	60	45	75%	15	25%

Table number 3 has shown that 52 participants (87%) of pupils said teacher counsellors guided them on the selection of subjects. 8 pupils representing (33%) of pupils responses disagreed that they were agreed and disagreed that their school counsellors performed referral role in their schools. 60 (100%) of pupils responses said their teacher counsellors did stress and trauma counselling. There was 0% disagreement on this. 48 pupils representing 80% of pupils total responses said counsellors in their school spotted out problem pupils while 12 (20%) said their school counsellors did not spot out problem pupils. 15 (25%) of responses of pupils agree that (4) of their school counsellors offered first aid treatment in their schools. 45 (75%) disagreed that school counsellors did not perform that role.

The table also showed that 45 (75%) of pupils responses agree that teacher counsellors performed the role of Continuous Assessment record teacher in their schools. 15 (25%) disagreed with the above role being played by Counsellors in their schools.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research uncovered several roles of school guidance counsellors in schools. According to school administrators, school counsellors performed psycho-social counselling services in schools. They argued that this was to ensure that pupils and teachers were in the right frame of mind to go through the teaching and learning processes.

School administrators also revealed that school counsellor's carried out vocational and career counselling to pupils. They emphasized although the 6-4-4-3 system of education geared towards child centered education, yet still, the school had an obligation to guide pupils in selecting appropriate carrier paths based on their academic abilities. Some school administrators resolved that school counsellors also offered health care services in their schools. They noted that when there were healths related issues in the schools, school counsellors offered first aid attention before pupils were either returned to class or given referral slips to seek medical attention elsewhere.

School guidance counsellors' interrogation revealed that their roles comprised performing educational counselling, follow up visit to clients, counselling of teachers and parents, conducting individual and group counselling and keeping appropriate counselling records. On educational counselling, counsellors explained that they normally made reference to the previous performance of pupils and advice them accordingly during choices of subjects for external examinations or placement in to streams. Also, school counsellors stressed that they kept records of all counselling sessions for reference purposes.

From the angle of pupil with regard the role of school counsellors, it was found that school counsellors played a role in guiding pupils in the selection of subjects (Career counselling). Pupils further revealed that, school counsellors performed counselling services to pupils, teachers and parent with stress or trauma. They added that, these services helped to stabilize pupils, teachers and parents who because of adverse experiences in life, would have deviated from doing the right things to promote educational attainment.

School counsellors according to pupils were keen observes of pupils, and through this, they always spotted out pupils with problems for counselling purposes.

Status of School Guidance Counsellors.

Questionnaires and interview guides were designed and used to collect data from school administrators, school counsellors and pupils to ascertain the status of school counsellors in schools. Data obtained from the investigations were presented and analyzed in the following tables.

Table No. 4

Views of School administrators on the status of Guidance Counsellors in Schools.

No.	Views	No. Of Participants	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	Participants	Frequency	Participants
1	Trained qualified but inexperienced	6	5	83%	1	17%
2	Not passionate about their job	6	4	67%	2	33%
3	Trained but unqualified	6	3	50%	3	50%
4	Dormant and ineffective	6	5	83%	1	17%

From table number 4 above, it was shown that 5 (83%) of total responses of school administrators agreed that counsellors in their schools were trained, qualified but inexperienced in the performance of their roles as school counsellors. 1 (17%) of total responses of school administrators disagreed that their school counsellors were inexperienced.

4 (67%) of responses of school administrators agreed that school counsellors did not have portion for their job as school counsellors. 2 (33%) disagreed with their view that their school counsellors did not have portion for guidance counselling. 3 (50%) respectively agreed and disagreed that their school counsellors were trained but not qualified. 5 (83%) said that status of guidance counselling in schools was very dormant and ineffective.

Table No. 5

Views of School Counsellors on the status of Guidance and Counselling Services in Schools.

No.	View	Agree		Disagree	
		Frequency	Participants	Frequency	Participants
1	Lack of office space	5	67%	2	33%
2	lack of logistics	4	83%	1	17%
3	No remuneration or reward	3	100%	0	0%
4	Poor motivation	5	100%	0	0%

The statistics on table number 5 revealed that the status of school counsellors was deplorable with regards the performance of their roles as school counsellors in schools. 4 (67%) of

counsellors investigated said they were not even provided office space to perform their role as school counsellors. However, 2 (33%) of responses disagreed that they did not have office space to so their job.

5 (83%) of responses of school counsellors lacked logistics to perform their duties. 1 (17%) said they were provided logistics to perform their roles as school counsellors. Similarly, all six (100%) of school counsellors said they were not motivated to perform their duties as school counsellors.

Table No. 6 Views of Pupils on the Status of School Counsellors in Schools.

No.	Views	No. Of Participants	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Operational	60	45	75%	15	25%
2	ineffective	60	52	87%	8	13%
3	Poorly equipped	60	58	97%	2	3%
4	Unprofessional	60	55	92%	5	8%

As could be seen from table 5, 45 pupils representing 75% of total responses of pupils revealed that guidance counselling was not operational in their schools. Only 15 (25%) of pupils said there were guidance and counselling services in their schools. 52 (87%) of pupils said guidance and counselling was very ineffective in their schools, 2 (3%) disagreed.

58 pupils projecting 97% of pupil's total responses described the status of guidance counselling as been poorly equipped. 2 (3%) of pupils responses disagreed.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings on investigations to establish the status of school guidance counsellors revealed that the status of school counsellors was very precarious and unhelpful to ensure that they were empowered enough to effectively perform their roles as school guidance counsellors.

According to school administrators investigated, most school counsellors were trained, qualified but inexperienced. Thus, their guidance and counselling services made little impact on the school as more and more cases of disruptive behaviours were recorded on a daily basis. The research also revealed that some school counsellors have no portion for their job as school counsellors. They maintained that instead of observing and identifying problem children and offering appropriate counselling services, the counsellors were more inclined to look for money. Instead of helping pupils to cope with their psycho-social and economic

problems, the counsellor's infact help to ass to their stress and trauma they were going through.

It was also discovered from school administrators that some school, counsellors were ineffective and dormant in the performance of their duties as school counsellors. School counsellors involved in the investigations agreed with the choice of school administrators that the status of school counsellors in schools was nothing to write home about. Most of the schools under review had no office space for guidance and counselling unit. School counsellors explained that their principals always complained of lack of space to allocate special room for counselling services. Thus, the principals instead encouraged the school counsellors to do their work in the staff room and keep records in a special cupboard allocated to them.

Added to the above, the counsellors complained that, they lacked the necessary logistics to carry out clinical counselling of pupils with psycho-social problems.

Very crucial was the absence of any form of remuneration or reward for counsellors for counselling services offered to pupils. All school counsellors involved in the study maintained that besides the salaries they received as teachers, they received no special reward as school counsellors.

School counsellors concluded that to make the situation worse, they were not motivated by their principals to encourage them to perform their roles as counsellors despite the odds. Pupils involved in the study ah contrasting views about the role of school guidance counsellors. Although majority of pupils investigated agreed that school counsellors were indeed functioning in their schools, a small percentage held that school counsellors were not operational in their schools.

Similarly, most pupils investigated held that counselling services were ineffective in their schools. However, few pupils contested that claim arguing that their school counsellors were very effective. There was a great consensus on the lack of equipment in available counselling units.

A very appalling revelation was that most school counsellors conducted themselves in a very unprofessional manner as this made the status of Guidance Counselling to be very low in the eyes of the pupils investigated. Notwithstanding, some pupils hailed their school counsellors and believed they were performing professional services.

BENEFITS OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN SCHOOLS.

Participants were required to bring out the benefits of guidance and counselling services based on their personal experiences. School administrator, school counsellors and pupils were targeted questionnaires as well interviews were used to solicit data on the above questions. The results have been presented and analyzed in the following table.

Table No. 7 Views of School Administrators on the benefits of Guidance Counselling on School.

No.	Views	No. Of Participants	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	School discipline	6	6	100%	0	0%
2	Academic Excellence	6	6	100%	0	0%
3	Effective Teaching And Learning	6	6	100%	0	0%
4	Effective Streaming	6	6	100%	0	0%

All school administrators investigated agreed that guidance and counselling services were of immense benefits to the school in terms of effective school administration and management 6 (100%) said guidance and counselling services promoted school disciplines. 6 (100%) revealed that guidance and counselling services brought about academic excellence in the school. 6 (100%) said guidance and counselling services ensured that teaching and learning were effective in the schools.

Then, school administrators said, effective streaming (100%) was a benefit of guidance and counselling services in schools.

Table No. 8 Views of School Counsellors on the benefits of Guidance and Counselling Services in Schools

No.	Views	No. Of Participants	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Therapy For Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	6	5	83%	1	17%
2	Stabilizing Pupils, Teachers and Parents With Problems	6	4	67%	2	33%

3	Enhancing Career Success With pupils	6	6	100%	0	0%
4	Catering For Ideal Learning Environment	6	6	100%	0	0%

From the statistics on table 8, it was very evident that guidance and counselling services were very beneficial to schools. 5 (83%) of school counsellors agreed that school guidance and counselling services were a therapy for post traumatic stress disorders, 1(17%) disagreed.

4 (67%) of responses of school counsellors said guidance counselling services were beneficial in schools because they helped to stabilized pupils, teachers and parents with problems. All 6 school counsellors projecting (100%) of total reposes indicated that guidance and counselling services were beneficial in enhancing the career success of pupils and catering for an ideal learning environment.

Table No. 9 Views of Pupils on the Guidance and Counselling Services in Schools

No.	Views	No. Of Participants	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	boost academic performance of pupils	60	51	85%	9	15%
2	proper choices of subject areas	60	57	95%	3	5%
3	ideal learning environment	60	60	100%	0	0%
4	good school image	60	38	63%	22	37%
5	school discipline	60	60	100%	0	0%

From table 9, it could be seen from the views of pupils that, guidance counselling was beneficial in schools.51 (85%) of pupils responses agreed that guidance counselling gave a boost to the academic performance of pupils, 9 (15%) disagreed, 57 (95%) of pupils total responses agreed that guidance counselling was beneficial in schools in that it ensures proper choice of subject areas. 3 (5%) of pupils responses disagreed.

All 60 pupils investigated (100%) responses said guidance counselling was beneficial because it ensured an ideal learning environment in schools. 38 (63%) of responses of pupils agreed that guidance counselling projected a good image of their school. However, 22 (37%)

of pupils responses disagreed. 60 (100%) of pupils responses said discipline was one crucial benefits of guidance counselling in schools.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

The research established that guidance counselling was very beneficial in schools. School administrators argue that as a result of effective guidance counselling, there was good school discipline in their schools. Teachers conducted themselves in professional ways, while pupils behaved well and lived up to their expectations.

Moreover, school administrators emphasized that teaching and learning were observed to be effective due to appropriate guidance and counselling services.

Then, school administrators hailed the effective streaming which ensures participatory and exciting lessons as a benefit of guidance counselling. School administrators furthered that through the expert advice of school guidance counsellors, streaming in school was seen as been effective leading to effective teaching and learning.

School counsellors on their part noted that guidance counselling was an effective therapy for post traumatic stress disorder. They held that certain experiences in life leave disorders in their behaviours which guidance and counselling need to address.

School counsellors further explained that they stabilized pupils, teachers and parents with problems that go through their counselling services.

Another problem of guidance counselling revealed by school counsellors was the enhancement of pupil's career services, catering for an ideal learning environment in schools. They argued that through their counselling services, pupils and teachers did what was expected of them that creating an ideal learning environment in schools.

Challenges of School guidance counsellors in performing their roles in schools

The research sought to establish the problems and constraints of school guidance counsellors in the performing of their roles as counsellors.

The views of school administrators, school counsellors and pupils were captured on the above through questionnaires and interviews. Data obtained from the investigations had been presented and analyzed in the following table:

Table No. 10 View of school Administrators on the Challenges of School Guidance Counsellors

No.	Views	No. Of Participants	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Capacity handicap	6	5	83%	1	17%
2	Lack of staff development initiatives	6	5	83%	1	17%
3	Logistical constraints	6	4	67%	2	33%
4	Lack of monitoring and supervision	6	6	100%	0	0%

As could be seen from table 10, 5, (83%) of responses of school administrators agreed that one constraint of school counsellors was capacity handicap. Also, 5 (83%) agreed that lack of staff development initiatives was a constraint of school guidance counsellors. 1 (17%) of the views of school administrators disagreed that capacity and staff development were problems of school counsellors. 4 (67%) support the idea that school counsellors faced logistics constraints while 2 (33%) disagreed.

6 (100%) said lack of monitoring and supervision was a factor which constrained school counsellors with regards the performance of their roles as counsellors.

Table No. 11 View of school Guidance Counsellor on the constraints they face in the performance of their roles as school counsellors.

No.	Views	No. Of Participants	Agree		Disagree	
			Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	Lack of office space	6	6	100%	0	0%
2	Lack of equipment	6	6	100%	0	0%
3	Lack of recognition	6	6	100%	0	0%
4	Absence of reward	6	6	100%	0	0%

The statistics on 11 table showed that all the counsellors of the schools under review were unanimous vis a vis their constraints in the performance of their role as school counsellors.

6 (100%) said lack of office space was a constraint, and the same 100% response was obtained for lack of equipment, lack for recognition and absence of reward. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data on the above. The result of the investigations have been presented and analyzed in two tables. From the tables, it was established qualified but inexperience but not trained or qualified at all.

Another constraint emphasized was that most school counsellors lacked the initiative to proceed on staff development programs and this constrained them ion terms of capacity in contemporary guidance and counselling approaches.

Added to the above, school administrators said lack of logistics, monitoring and supervision constrained school counsellors in their schools.

School counsellors lamented lack of office space to carry out their functions and lack of equipments as well. The most outstanding constrains emphasized by school counsellors was lack of recognition by most school administrators and the absence of any form of record for school counsellors looking at the patience and professionalism that was required in the performance of their roles as school counsellors.

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