

Contribution of Counseling Assistance Services in the Support of the Students' Acquisition of Life Skills among Public Secondary Schools in Moshi Municipality

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Abstract

The researcher aimed to investigate the contribution of counseling assistance services in supporting students' selected life skills among public secondary schools in Moshi municipality. Anchored in Rational Choice Theory, the study utilized a convergent design under the mixed methods approach focusing on a target population of 1516 individuals, including 1232 students, 17 teacher counselors, 249 teachers, 17 heads of schools, and 1 District Secondary Education Officer. The sample size was 131 respondents, comprising 1 District Secondary Education 5 heads of schools, 5 teacher counselors, and 120 students. Data collection methods included questionnaires, interview guides, and documentary analysis, with two schools used for pilot testing. The research instruments were validated, and the questionnaires had a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.781. The quantitative data was descriptively analyzed using SPSS version 22 and presented in tabular form, while the qualitative data was analyzed thematically, with the findings presented using words and verbatim quotes. The study indicates that a complete counseling strategy helps students develop critical time management skills, resilience, and self-regulation. The study concludes that counseling services significantly enhance students' initiative and life management skills, which enhances their sense of control and self-direction. The study recommended that students should take full advantage of individual and group counseling sessions offered by their schools. Teacher counselors should continue to offer and expand workshops on a range of topics, including career exploration, college preparation, and life skills, to equip students with the knowledge and tools they need for future success.

Keywords: Students' life skills, guidance and counseling services, counseling assistance services, students' selected life skills

Introduction

Life skills are the abilities that help students deal with the challenges and opportunities of life that can be learned through education, experience, or observation (Nasheeda et al., 2019 Prajapati et al., 2017). According to Shek et al. (2021), life skills are personal and social skills needed for all people to act with confidence and competence within themselves and the community and society. As per the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund -UNICEF, (2014) and the World Health Organization -WHO (2016) life skills as positive behavior change or behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas which are knowledge, attitude, and skills that enable the individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Dey et al. (2022) argued that life skills education plays a key role in promoting psychological well-being and quality of a satisfying life for students such that they can lead an effective life. Life skills education gives students the tools they need to behave in pro-social ways supports mental health and behavioral readiness and prepares them to deal with the challenges (Rawat et al., 2018), it is health-giving. According to Okey-Orji et al. (2019), life skills that students need to acquire are leadership skills, problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, effective communication skills, decision-making skills, interpersonal relationship skills, self-awareness skills, public speaking skills, teamwork skills, and time management skills. Ubale et al. (2023) also add that life skills that need to be incorporated into the students include self-awareness, critical

thinking, empathy, decision-making, creative thinking, problem-solving approach or attitude, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, coping with stress and emotions.

Besides that, Christopher et al. (2022) argues that the need for the acquisition of life skills in schools is in line with the provision of guidance and counseling services which are very important tools in students' development especially during the adolescent stage that is characterized by rapid growth and change: physically, socially, spiritually, morally and intellectually. According to Supriyanto et al. (2020), guidance and counseling services are the services that help students develop their life skills that entail academic, personal, social, and career and cope with their challenges and difficulties in school and outside the school.

The studies by Suleiman et al. (2019), and Jacob and David (2021) emphasize that the common guidance and counseling services among the students are student assessment, information service, placement, and follow-up and counseling assistance. Supriyanto et al. (2020) noted that student assessment as the guidance and counseling service helps students to understand their strengths, weaknesses, interests, values, and personality traits. Guidance and counseling services through student assessment can also help students to identify their learning styles, aptitudes, and potential. Additionally, counseling assistance services are services that help students to deal with their emotional, social, or behavioral problems that may interfere with their learning or well-being (Ahmed & Firdous, 2020). Counseling assistance services can also help students develop their life skills, such as communication, decision-making, problem-solving, self-awareness, empathy, assertiveness, resilience, and coping. Conversely, Paolini (2019) argued that students with poor decision-making, problem-solving, or self-management skills may struggle to achieve their academic and career goals. Students who have poor communication, empathy, or conflict-resolution skills may have trouble forming or maintaining healthy relationships with others (Saravanakumar, 2020; Alajmi, 2019).

Moreover, life skills are linked to the educational system since they represent a crucial idea that aids in achieving and gauging the educational system's effects on students. In China, the Ministry of Education issued the Life Skills Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 edition). The learning objectives include organization and storage, household cleaning, and cooking. They have been formulated according to different school stages and curriculum standards (Global Times, 2022). The fundamentals of reading, writing, and mathematics are taught to secondary school pupils in America, along with life skills that help students succeed in the real world. Students receive instruction in problem-solving, critical thinking, and creative thinking. Many students in Tanzania have the same experience as that of China, the students study to receive better scores than others instead of studying to learn and apply knowledge in their daily lives during and after school (Exley, 2020).

Shek et al. (2021) maintains that the lack of life skills among students in secondary schools is a serious problem that can affect the future well-being and success of students in a particular stage of schooling. For instance, the study by Nasheeda et al. (2019) shows that a lack of life skills among students in secondary schools has resulted in poor civic engagement, poor interpersonal relationships, poor academic and career performance, and poor mental and physical health.

In Tanzania, poor understanding of life skills has resulted in inadequate resourcing of life skills teaching at secondary schools, teacher training institutions are unable to prepare both in-service and pre-service teachers to undertake (Hannahan et al., 2021 and Budoya et al., 2019). In many secondary schools, life skills education is not taught at all. Some of the challenges mentioned by principals who admitted not having supervised the implementation of Life Skill Education include a lack of materials and teachers trained in LSE (Mathenge, 2018). Nkya and Huang (2019), revealed that interference from politicians is one problem, there has been interference from some politicians who are not education experts and they are still thinking that the mode of education is the same as the old one, they measure performance based on examination results, so the schools which have poor results on national examination their head of school are demoted and other teachers to be transferred to outreach school.

Similar to schooling, guidance and counseling services are procedures aimed to help children realize their inherent potential or noble traits for their development, which also affects their social development. Following the government circular number 11 of 2002, the government established guidance and counseling services that mandatorily instructed all schools and teachers' colleges to establish these services to guide students' behavior and bridge the gap between Western education and traditional life (Lubawa et al., 2021). However, the study by Maree and Magere (2023) revealed that the intervention of guidance and counseling services could not enhance most of the students' career decision-making capacity, boost participants' psychological selves, improve their career adaptability, and boost their ability to make informed career

decisions. Omollo et al. (2022) indicate that guidance and counseling in secondary schools in Tanzania are not adequately implemented due to the scarce number of counselors in public secondary schools. Such a situation left most of the students in secondary schools with less acquisition of life skills during their learning process and outside the school circles.

Therefore, it was important for the research to be conducted in Moshi Municipal due to various factors that include; helping in understanding the specific needs and challenges faced by the population in terms of mental health, career guidance, and social issues. This information is crucial for tailoring counseling services to effectively meet the needs and requirements of the aforementioned factors. By studying the effectiveness of current counseling services and interventions, research can highlight areas for improvement (WHO, 2021; Wong et al., 2023). This could include evaluating counseling techniques, assessing counselor-client relationships, or examining the accessibility of services. Therefore, this study investigated the extensiveness of counseling assistance services in supporting students' selected life skills among secondary schools in Moshi Municipality.

Statement of the Problem

Ineffective counseling by teachers causes students to fail at acquiring the life skills that are necessary for independent living, work, handling finances, and maintaining healthy relationships (Alajmi, 2019). The literature reviews the role of guidance and counseling interventions in enhancing teaching, learning, academic performance, student career aspirations, and managing educational programs effectively (Lubis et al., 2021; Chilewa and Osaki, 2022; Lubawa, 2021; Oteng, 2020 and Nyayal, 2019). Employers, parents, and school communities are criticizing graduate students for lacking the necessary skills (Urio & Nziku, 2024; Mbilinyi, 2024). According to Supriyanto et al. (2020), insufficient supervision and counseling provided by educators impede students' ability to acquire life skills as they progress in their learning hierarchy. The link between guidance and counseling services and the development of students' life skills in public secondary schools has not received much attention in the literature. To enhance students' acquisition of life skills, the current study examined how comprehensive counseling help services were among Moshi Municipal public secondary schools.

Research Question

The research was led by a question: What are the contributions of counseling assistance services in the support of the student's acquisition of life skills among public secondary schools in Moshi Municipal?

Significance of the Study

The study findings informed teacher counselors about the effectiveness of current counseling programs and areas for improvement to better meet the needs of students. The study findings provide knowledge to heads of schools about the evidence-based justification for allocating resources and prioritizing the provision of comprehensive counseling services in public secondary schools. The study findings informed education officers about the challenges and successes of implementing counseling services in public secondary schools, which can guide the allocation of resources and the provision of support to schools. This study contributes to the growing body of research on the role of counseling services in facilitating the development of life skills among students. It would provide empirical evidence to complement the existing literature, which has traditionally focused more on academic and mental health outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Rational Choice Theory (RCT) which was first presented by American economist and scientist Gary Becker in 1976 and served as the study's guide. RCT is a social and economic theory that states that individuals make rational decisions by calculating benefits and costs. According to the notion, individual interests have a significant initial influence on all choices and decision-making (Pan, 2020). According to Dibb et al. (2021), the steps involved in reaching rational decisions and choices are made in a disorganized manner; hence, the individual has to be guided to reach decisions that are regarded as rational. According to Rational Choice Theory, individuals are free to weigh their options and select the one that will benefit them the most or cost them the least (Frank, 2019). Teachers can better comprehend students and their group behaviors by using RCT which also helps teachers select guidance and counseling services that may help students develop new life skills (Hallsworth & Kirkman, 2020; Herfeld, 2022). As a result,

guidance and counseling should facilitate students' acquisition of life skills as they progress down the learning ladder. The theory does not consider the role of emotions, motivations, beliefs, values, norms, or institutions in shaping human behavior but gives students the freedom to acquire life skills as a result of the supervision and counseling that their professors supply.

Literature Reviews

Counseling Assistance Services play a crucial role in empowering students to become self-directed individuals by providing tailored support and guidance. Through personalized counseling sessions, students are equipped with essential skills to take control of their academic and personal lives. These services foster independence and resilience, helping students navigate challenges and make informed decisions confidently. In Pakistan, Mehmood and Bhatti (2020) conducted research to examine the role of teachers in the provision of guidance and counseling at the secondary school level. The study was planned to investigate the role of educators in providing guidance and counseling to students of secondary level. A descriptive survey design was used for this purpose. The participants were included through a stratified sampling technique including principals, teachers, and students of secondary schools in the Islamabad Capital Territory. The study used questionnaires to collect data from the participants. The findings revealed that the teachers lacked the skills and knowledge required to provide guidance and counseling to the students. The current teacher education programs don't equip teachers with the skills to provide guidance and counseling services to students. In addition, the teachers are not ready to play the role of guidance counselors. On top of that the study revealed that there did not exist any arrangement for providing guidance and counseling to the students.

The impact of guidance and counseling services on students' academic adjustment was noticed by Okirigwe (2020) in public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study found that Guidance and Counseling Services have an influence on students' compliance with rules and regulations, school social environment, motivation to learn, and adaptation to the physical school environment. Based on the findings, the study recommended that the Ministry of Education develop a training program for secondary school guidance and counseling teachers through in-service training to improve academic adjustments and performance in Rivers State secondary schools. In Tanzania, many secondary students continue to disobey school rules and regulations despite numerous consequences imposed by the schools, community, and parents. This means that guidance and counseling are still required for students in public secondary schools to help students acquire life skills. The researcher examined the contributions of counseling assistance services in assisting students towards self-directed control in public secondary schools in Moshi Municipal.

Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020) investigated the procedures and difficulties associated with providing guidance and counseling services to secondary schools in Southwest Ethiopia using quantitative and qualitative research methods and a descriptive survey design that involves quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study used questionnaires and oral interviews to collect data from 392 students and 108 teachers as the participants who were selected from the secondary schools of Southwest Ethiopia by systematic random sampling. Moreover, 8 counselors, 8 principals, and 8 educational bureau officers were selected through availability sampling. The study found that a number of factors affected guidance and counseling services, including a lack of facilities and counselors with the required training. The study also revealed that teachers play a critical role in ensuring that students understand the value of guidance and counseling services in their studies. Since there are plentiful benefits, and contributions, the current study investigated the contributions of counseling assistance services in assisting students towards self-directed control in public secondary schools in Moshi Municipal.

Using a convergent design under a mixed-method research approach. Andegiorgis (2019) assessed guidance and counseling services on the management of student discipline in secondary schools in Keren Sub-Zone, Anseba Region, Eritrea. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data from a sample of 306 students, 20 teachers, 5 headmasters, and 5 teacher counselors were used for this study. Systematic sampling, simple random, and purposive sampling were used to select schools and the participants. Data were gathered through questionnaires and interview guides that were analyzed descriptively and thematically. The findings of the study showed that guidance and counseling services were minimally used to manage student discipline in secondary schools in the Keren subzone. The majority of students (57.6%) and 75% of teachers reported that their schools did not have guidance and counseling services. Due to social and economic problems, students' attitudes differ in Eritrea and Tanzania.

Lubawa (2021) conducted a study on the Influence of GCS on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance in Tanzania. The study aimed to investigate the influence of Guidance and Counseling Services (GCS) on secondary school students' academic performance in Tanzania: A case of Tanga City. The study employed a mixed-method approach that utilized a correlation design and a case study design. The study's sample size was 423 respondents, including 330 students, 26 heads of schools, 33 guidance and counselor teachers, 33 academic teachers, and one City Educational Officer. The study used questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions and semi-structured interview guides for data collection. The study findings found out that the Tanzania government circular number 11 of 2002 had been successfully implemented in Tanga city secondary schools and is helpful to the students; however, it is faced with challenges related to the inadequacy of facilities. The findings also showed that educational GCS strongly influenced the students' academic performance. With such findings, the study could not assess the specific guidance and counseling services that would contribute to students' acquisition of life skills. Therefore, the current study examined the contribution of counseling assistance services in assisting students towards self-directed control in public secondary schools in Moshi Municipal.

Overall, the research under evaluation paints a conflicting image of the situation concerning counseling services in schools. Okirigwe (2020) found counseling services positively impact student outcomes, but Mehmood and Bhatti (2020) found teachers often lack the necessary skills for effective guidance and counseling. However, Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020) identified several challenges that can hinder the effectiveness of counseling assistance services, such as a shortage of professionally trained counselors and inadequate facilities, and Andegiorgis (2019) found that counseling services were minimally utilized for student discipline management. Importantly, none of the reviewed studies have explicitly examined the contributions of counseling assistance services in supporting students' acquisition of specific life skills, which represents an important gap that the current study aims to address by investigating the role of counseling assistance services in supporting the development of selected life skills among public secondary school students in Moshi municipality.

Methodology

The study utilized a mixed methods approach, specifically employing the convergent design. The study focused on a target population of 1267 individuals, which consisted of 1232 Form Four students, 17 teacher counselors, 17 heads of schools from 17 public secondary schools, and a District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO). The sample size for this study consisted of 1 District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO), 5 heads of schools, 5 teachers' counselors, and 120 students, resulting in a total of 131 respondents. Questionnaires and interview guides were used as tools for data collection in this study. The analysis did not include the two public secondary schools that were part of the pilot program. The assurance of the validity of research tools led to the exact collection of data and the production of dependable results. Cronbach-Alpha was used to ensure the 120 questionnaires were reliable on the Likert scale, with a reliability coefficient of 0.781.

The collected quantitative data through a questionnaire was analyzed descriptively with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), computer software version 22. The researcher generated frequencies, percentages, and means for descriptive statistics. For the case of qualitative data, thematic analysis was used, whereby the researcher transcribed the collected data, coded them, and then generated themes according to the four research questions. The presentation of qualitative data was in words, and verbatim quotations were used to support the arguments. The researcher adhered to research ethics by maintaining confidentiality, and anonymity and protecting the participants from any form of harm. The American Psychological Association (APA) format version seven was used to list all the cited works on the reference pages.

Results

The study intended to determine the extent of counseling assistance services in supporting students' life skills. Table 1 consists of responses from students on the extent to which information on guidance and counseling services supports students' life skills.

Table 1: Students Responses about the Extent to Which Counseling Assistance Services Contribute to their Self-Directed and Control (n=120)

Statements	VSE	SE	ME	HE	VHE	Mean
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		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
i	Counseling assistance services empower students to take charge of their futures.	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	7.5	25	20.8	86	71.7	4.6
ii	Counseling assistance services support students' self-awareness.	0	0.0	11	9.4	19	16.2	18	15.4	69	59.0	4.2
iii	Counseling assistance services develop students' decision-making capacities.	0	0.0	0	0.0	27	23.1	47	40.2	43	36.8	4.1
iv	Counseling assistance services build students' problem-solving skills.	0	0.0	3	2.6	19	16.2	31	26.5	64	54.7	4.3
v	Counseling assistance services foster students' ability to make autonomous decisions and choices.	0	0.0	20	17.1	24	20.5	26	22.2	47	40.2	3.8
vi	Counseling assistance services nurture students' self-regulation and responsibility.	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	8.5	36	30.8	71	60.7	4.5
vii	Counseling assistance services provide students with tools for personal responsibility	0	0.0	0	0.0	17	14.5	42	35.9	58	49.6	4.3
viii	Counseling assistance contributes to students' independent success.	0	0.0	0	0.0	19	16.2	53	45.3	45	38.5	4.2
ix	Counseling assistance services contribute to students' independent success.	0	0.0	16	13.7	28	23.9	37	31.6	36	30.8	3.7
x	Counseling assistance services promote students' overall self-management.	0	0.0	9	7.7	25	21.4	28	23.9	55	47.0	4.1
	Grand mean											4.2

Source: Field Data, 2024

Key: 1 VSE= To a Very Small Extent, 2 SE= To a Small Extent, 3 ME= Moderate Extent, 4 HE= To a High Extent, 5 VHE= To a Very High Extent.

Table 1 shows that the overwhelming majority 92.5% of students indicated that counseling assistance services empower students to take charge of their futures while an extreme minority 7.5% of students indicated to a moderate extent to the item. The data suggests that the guidance, support, and resources provided through the counseling services are highly effective in cultivating a strong sense of personal agency, self-direction, and control among the student population. Through empowering students to actively shape their educational and life trajectories, the counseling services are helping to instill a mindset of proactivity, resilience, and a belief in one's capabilities to determine their path forward. The results are in line with the arguments of the Teacher counselor who shared:

We focus on personalized counseling sessions that address each student's unique needs and aspirations. By helping them set clear, achievable goals and creating action plans, we enable students to see a clear path forward. Additionally, we offer workshops on topics like career exploration, college preparation, and life skills, which provide them with the knowledge and tools they need to succeed (TC₄, personal communication interview, April 19, 2024).

When asked of the same in an interview, one of the most experienced heads of the school shared: *"We also emphasize the development of soft skills such as problem-solving, time management, and resilience. These skills are crucial for students to navigate the challenges they may face in the future and to take proactive steps towards their goals"* (HS₂, personal communication, April 15, 2024). The information from the teacher counselors and heads of schools implies that the counseling assistance services are comprehensive and well-rounded, addressing both the practical and personal development needs of students. These services not only address practical aspects such as academic advising, time management, and study strategies but also focus on the personal development of students. This includes support for emotional well-being, stress management, and interpersonal relationships, which are crucial for fostering resilience and emotional intelligence.

A very high majority 70.9% of students indicated that counseling assistance services promote students' overall self-management while an extreme minority 7.7% indicated a small extent to the item and 21.4% of students indicated a moderate extent to the item. The data infers that the multifaceted approach of the counseling services is successful in helping students develop essential self-regulation skills, time management strategies, and the ability to maintain a balanced and proactive approach to their academic, personal, and social well-being. The counseling services are helping students become more self-directed and

in charge of their personal development by helping them build these self-management skills. The findings are in with the study by (Ion, Lupu, and Nicolae 2022) in Roma, which found that students who participated in counseling programs showed improved attitudes toward school and better academic performance. Counselors assist students in developing effective study habits, time management skills, and goal-setting strategies, which are crucial for academic success. This support fosters a sense of competence and confidence in students, enabling them to take control of their learning processes.

Table 1 shows that to a high majority, 74.4% of students indicated that to a high extent and very high extent counseling assistance services support students' self-awareness while extremely minority 9.4% of students indicated a small extent to the item and 16.2% of students indicated moderate extent to the item. Furthermore, the data also show that the majority 62.4% of students indicated that to a high extent and very high extent counseling assistance services foster students' ability to make autonomous decisions and choices while extremely minority 17.1% of students indicated small extent to the item and 20.5% of students indicated moderate extent to the item. The data generally implies that counseling assistance services are perceived to a high extent in supporting both self-awareness and autonomous decision-making among students.

During an interview, a teacher counselor was asked about their opinions regarding counseling services that help students become more self-aware and capable of making their own decisions. The teacher counselor had this to say:

Our counseling services use a variety of strategies to enhance self-awareness and autonomy. We offer individual counseling sessions where students can reflect on their personal experiences and feelings. We also conduct group workshops on topics like emotional regulation, stress management, and effective communication. These activities help students understand themselves better and develop the skills needed to make informed decisions (TC₁, personal communication, April 12, 2024).

One of the heads of schools also shared

From an administrative perspective, we support these initiatives by ensuring counselors have the resources they need and by integrating self-awareness and decision-making activities into the broader school curriculum. This approach ensures that all students have opportunities to develop these important skills" (HS₃, personal communication, April 17, 2024).

The data generally implies that the counseling assistance services at the school are designed to comprehensively support students' self-awareness and their ability to make autonomous decisions. The teacher-counselor emphasizes that a range of techniques, such as one-on-one counseling and group workshops on stress management, emotional control, and effective communication, are utilized to assist students in better understand who they are and how to make decisions. The findings are supported by the study of Lubawa (2021) in Tanzania which revealed that most of the head of schools complements counseling assistance services by emphasizing the administrative support for these initiatives; ensuring counselors have the necessary resources and integrating self-awareness and decision-making activities into the broader school curriculum. This combined approach ensures that all students have ample opportunities to develop these crucial skills.

The data show that an extreme majority of 91.5% of students indicate a high extent and a very high extent that a very high majority 85.5% of students indicated too high extent and a very high extent that counseling assistance services provide students tools for personal responsibility. On the same note, 14.5% of students specified a moderate extent and a very high majority 83.8% of students indicated a high extent and very high extent that counseling assistance contributes to students' independent success to the item while extremely minority 16.2% of students indicated a moderate extent to the item. The data generally imply that the vast majority of students perceive counseling assistance services as highly effective in fostering personal responsibility and contributing to their independent success. The findings are consistent with the view shared by the teacher counselor who said: -

Personal responsibility involves students recognizing their role in their own success, understanding the impact of their actions, and being accountable for their decisions. Independent success refers to the ability of students to achieve their goals and manage challenges on their own, using the skills and strategies they've developed through counseling and other support systems (TC₁, personal communication, April 12, 2024).

The head of the school also said:

Personal responsibility and independent success are fundamental to preparing students for life beyond school. These qualities help students navigate their academic journeys and personal lives more effectively. By instilling these traits, we aim to equip students with the skills they need to thrive independently in various aspects of their lives (HS₁, personal communication, April 12, 2024).

The District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO) shared:

Counseling services use a multifaceted approach to enhance these skills. Individual counseling sessions allow students to reflect on their personal experiences and behaviors, helping them to understand and take responsibility for their actions. Group workshops focus on building skills like emotional regulation, stress management, and effective communication. These sessions provide students with practical tools and strategies that enable them to manage their responsibilities and achieve their goals independently (DSEO, personal communication, April 08, 2024).

The information from the interviews generally implies that both the teacher counselor and the head of the school strongly believe in the importance of counseling assistance services in fostering personal responsibility and independent success among students. The teacher counselor highlights how these services help students understand their role in their success and become accountable for their actions, thereby developing the skills needed to manage their goals and challenges. The head of school emphasizes that these traits are essential for students to navigate their academic and personal lives effectively, preparing them for life beyond school. Together, their views suggest a comprehensive approach to student development that integrates counseling services as a key component in equipping students with the necessary tools to thrive independently.

Therefore, the study generally found that counseling assistance services contribute to students' self-directedness and control to a high extent with a total mean score of 4.2. Most students indicated that these services empower them to take charge of their futures, highlighting the effectiveness of counseling in fostering a strong sense of personal agency, self-direction, and control. The findings suggest that the multifaceted approach of counselling through individual sessions, group workshops, and integrated curriculum activities helps students develop essential self-regulation skills, time management strategies, and resilience. Teacher counselors noted that personalized counseling sessions and workshops on topics such as career exploration, college preparation, and life skills provide students with the tools they need to succeed. Heads of schools emphasized the importance of soft skills like problem-solving and resilience, which are crucial for students' future success. The data also indicated that most students felt that counseling services support self-awareness and autonomous decision-making. Both teacher counselors and heads of schools highlighted the comprehensive nature of these services, which address both practical and personal development needs.

Conclusion

The study concluded that counseling services significantly improve students' ability to take initiative and manage their lives, which in turn boosts their sense of control and self-direction. Students felt that counseling services support self-awareness and autonomous decision-making. Most of the students felt that counseling services support self-awareness and independent decision-making. The all-encompassing nature of these programs effectively meets students' requirements for both practical and personal development another point of emphasis for school administrators and teacher counselors.

Recommendation

The individual and group counseling sessions provided by schools should be fully utilized by students since involvement in these programs aids in the development of critical life skills, self-awareness, and a deeper understanding of one's own experiences. Teacher counselors should continue to offer and expand the number of workshops they offer on a variety of subjects, such as job exploration, college preparation, and life skills for enhancing students' personal responsibility and independent success, to give students the knowledge and resources they need for future success.

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