

The practice of guidance and counselling service in Amhara regional state public universities, Ethiopia

Alebachew Mohammed Legas*, Faculty of social science and humanities, Department of psychology, Debre Tabor university, Debre Tabor +251, Ethiopia

Antehun Atanaw Mengistu, Faculty of social science and humanities, Department of English language and literature, Debre Tabor university, Debre Tabor +251, Ethiopia

Suggested Citation:

Alebachew, M. L. & Antehun, A. M. (2018). The practice of guidance and counseling service in amhara regional state public universities, Ethiopia. *Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools: Current Perspectives*, 8(3), 119-127.

Received from March 20, 2018; revised from August 15, 2018; accepted from November 18, 2018.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Kobus Maree, University of Pretoria South Africa.

©2018 Sciencepark Research, Organization & Counseling. All rights reserved.

Abstract

This study aimed to assess the practice of guidance and counselling service in Amhara region public universities. The study was conducted on Bahir Dar University, Wollo University and Debre Tabor University. Through using sample size determination formula, 576 regular students were selected by stratified random sampling from all batch and faculty and five counsellors using comprehensive sampling techniques were selected. The data were gathered through document analysis and questionnaire and analysed using qualitatively and quantitatively. The finding indicates the average ratio of one counsellor is 5,000–15,000 students and only one female counsellor exists in the three universities. Only around 2% of students are using the service, of which half of them are reported as not helpful. All universities use Regular government working time. Finally, counsellors and teachers are found among the next possible choice next to friends, mothers and religious father to consult student problems in the university.

Keywords: Child, story book, gender responsive, diversity, semiotics.

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Alebachew Mohammed Legas**, Faculty of social science and humanities, Department of psychology, Debre Tabor university, Debre Tabor +251, Ethiopia. *E-mail address:* alebemohaa@gmail.com / *Tel.:* +2-51-091-359-1899

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Guidance and counselling have been conceptualised as a programme of activities which has provided us with the gateway out of the existing numerous problems of our present age of complex scientific and technological development (Okobiah & Okorodudu 2004, Esuong, Eyo & Joshua 2007)

Guidance and counselling as the third force in education along with instruction is an integral part of educational system (Esuong, Eyo & Joshua 2007). According to Day (2004), the guidance and counselling practices is an efficient and effective way of supporting and helping students to deal with problems and issues in educational, career and personal/social areas in the university academic atmosphere, Thus, the guidance and counselling is vital in minimising this problem with the mission of Counselling Services in structural comprehensive programme that is preventive and proactive in nature and focuses on each student's potential for growth.

To undertake guidance and counseling, creating awareness and favourable atmosphere are essential because the effectiveness of any counselling service has been attributed largely to the prevailing climate of opinion of such services (Agi, 2014). According to Larson, Vogel and Wester (2007), less than one-third of individuals that experience psychological distress seeks help from a mental health professional (Andrews, Issakidis & Carter, 2001). In fact, people tend to see counselling as a last option (Hinson & Swanson, 1993) to be considered only after their attempts to handle things on their own or in when individuals close to them have failed (Wills, 1992). These perceptions of counselling persist despite studies showing that seeking counselling services is often helpful (Bergin & Garfield, 1994) and that the consequences for not seeking help are often severe (Dubow, Lovko, & Kausch, 1990 cited by Larson, Vogel & Wester 2007)

Kushner and Sher (1989) cited by Larson, Vogel and Wester (2007) first conceptualised the act of seeking professional help as being an approach/avoidance conflict wherein approach factors, the desire to reduce distress increase the likelihood that one will seek out counselling services; on the other hand, avoidance factors, such as the risks of being perceived as crazy, reduce the need of services. (Larson, et al., 2007)

Thus, there is important to clearly recognise the factors that lead individuals to avoid or seeking professional helps. As Esuong, Eyo and Joshua (2007) and Kirangari (2014) summarised, common themes can be seen throughout many of their findings as factors involved in the decision to use or avoid mental health services are: stigma, gender, culture, experience and knowledge, fear and accessibility.

For Guidance and Counselling to be comprehensive, according to Eddy (2001), it should be relevant for the client and not merely maintain a status quo. It must be purposeful and designed to meet the priority needs of the clients. There are three major components of Guidance and Counselling in schools. These components are educational guidance, vocational guidance and personal and psychological counselling (Kirangari, 2014). So that it is very important to look the service of guidance and counselling in higher institution and challenge faced for improvement and acknowledgment of its contribution.

2. Statement of the problem

The world in the 21st century continues to undergo considerable changes in social, cultural and economic which impact the living and adaptation of people. These changes are creating substantial challenges for young people. A rapidly changing work world and labour forces; violence in homes, schools and communities; divorce; teenage suicide; substance abuse; sexual experimentation, eating disorders, sexual identity crises and addiction are just a few examples of these challenges (Gysbers, 1999 cited by Esuong, Eyo & Joshua 2007).

These are serious struggles that should not be taken lightly or ignored, and the research shows that seeking help for such issues from counsellors either on or off campus dramatically reduces symptoms and saves lives. These challenges are real and they are having extensive impact on the personal/social, career and academic development of young people (Gysbers, 1999).

Since supporting students through their academic and social development are central functions in meeting the stated mission of any university, due attention should be provided for the programme. However, Daniel (2004) in his study ascertained that

Despite the dreadfulness of the challenges and needs for services, higher education educators in Ethiopia reported that guidance and counselling services in the universities are extremely overlooked (Daniel, 2004).

Furthermore, there is an agreement among experts that there are three major components of guidance and counselling. These are educational guidance, vocational guidance and personal social guidance (UNESCO, 2000). Under these three major areas, there are several guidance and counselling services such as appraisal, information, placement, orientation, evaluation, referral and follow-up (Denga, 2001). Each of these major components of guidance and counselling alone with their services addresses student's needs, challenges and problems.

The absence of non-utilisation of these services in the present-day school system has led to the unprecedented rise in the violence among students, fueled cultism, wrong career choice, dropouts, HIV, STI and other personal and social problem. However, the university's except establishing the office they do not control and monitor whether this service is delivered accordingly and contributing to healthy student social and educational development (Esuong, Eyo & Joshua, 2007). Thus, this research investigates the practice of guidance and counselling service in Amhara regional state public universities.

3. Research methods

3.1. Research design

This study investigates the practice of guidance and counselling, thus it is a descriptive survey type.

3.2. Study site

The study site is public universities which are found in Amhara Regional State.

3.3. Study population

The overall population of the study are three public universities that are found in Amhara regional state. The population of the study are regular students at public universities in Amhara Regional State in the academic year of 2016/17.

3.4. Sample and sampling techniques

There are seven public universities in Amhara regional state which are classified by three generations. Thus, this study was conducted on randomly selected Bahir Dar University, Wollo university and purposively selected Debre Tabor university from 1st to 3rd generation accordingly. Through using sample size determination formula, 576 regular students (304 male and 272 female); 148 from Debre Tabor University, 237 from Bahir Dar University and 191 from Wollo University are taken into the sample from all batches of 1st to 5th year and from five faculty/colleges. The study also sampled five counsellors using comprehensive sampling techniques from five campuses.

3.5. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria: Regular students and guidance and counsellors in selected university and campus.

Exclusion Criteria: Extension students and counsellor who works in unselected campus are not included in the study

3.6. Data collection instruments

3.6.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaire was prepared to investigate student awareness, use and source of consultation. The first part deals about the personal background of the student. Second part investigates guidance and counselling awareness and usage and the final part deals to investigate student rank of their source of advice when they are in trouble in the university.

3.6.2. Document review

Document of the guidance and counselling session recording was taken to see how many students have utilised the service and time and mode of guidance and counselling

3.7. Methods of data analysis

After the data were collected, it is analysed through quantitatively using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage. Qualitatively the data is analysed by narration and value determination based on the standard.

3.8. Ethical considerations

The collected information from the university are used only for academic purpose. Confidentiality of their responses was protected by pseudonyms identity. Permission was obtained to disseminate the questionnaire and investigate the document by concerned authority and all the participants are given their consent to participate in the study.

4. Data analysis and discussions

4.1. Counsellor ratio and gender composition

Except Debre Tabor university, the two universities have only male counsellor, Wollo university Kombolcha campus has no counsellor at all. In the three universities, more than 40,000 students are attending their education in the regular programme. However, to the maximum, each of the university has two counsellors per campus on an average the ratio of one counsellor is 5,000 to 15,000 students (depending on the campus).

When we compare this finding with the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA, 2005), which recommends a ratio of 1 counsellor to 250 students; the California Department of Education (2003) recommends a ratio of 1 to 834 for elementary school, 1 to 461 for middle and junior high and 1 to 364 for high school. Furthermore, Carrell and Carrell (2006) indicate the ratio has an impact on the reduction of student problem of recommended ratio of 250 students per counsellor would predict a 7.4 percent decrease in the probability of a disciplinary recurrence. In all, 100 person increases in the student to counsellor ratio would result in a 0.34 percentage point increase in the fraction of students involved in a disciplinary incident.

The other finding indicates counsellors in the three universities are a bachelor of art (BA) in psychology graduate which indicate all the universities had no specialised counsellor to treat a chronic psychological problem that needs further specialisation. Furthermore, except Debre Tabor University, all universities have no female counsellor to treat a female specific problem that needs more privacy to talk.

4.2. Schedule and mode of guidance and counselling

The schedule and mode of the counselling determine the convenience for the students to use the service. In line with this, all university counselling office provide the counselling service in regular working time (2:30–6:30 AM and 7:30–11:30 PM) Monday to Friday. In all universities, there is no Weekend, Night, Free Telephone and Internet counselling. Due to this limitation of service option, student is forced to come in working hour which supposed to attend the class. However, some counsellor report they provide weekend free service for students.

4.3. Student awareness of the guidance and counselling service

Table 1 Guidance and counselling service student’s awareness

Questions	Bahir Dar university		Debre Tabor university		Wollo university	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 I know the guidance and counsellor office	68	28.69	33	22.29	60	31.41
2 Methods they know about the service						
A Orientation by guidance and counsellor office	18	26.47	12	36.36	14	23.33
B Orientation by deans/department heads	4	5.88	4	12.12	5	8.33
C Pamphlet/leaflet	13	19.11	6	18.18	9	15
D Information from Teacher	4	5.88	2	6	7	11.66
E Information from senior student	12	17.64	7	21.21	4	6.66
F Information from Administrative staff	2	2.94	0	0	9	15
G Just look the office while I pass/do other activity	15	22	3	9	12	20

To use the guidance and counselling service first to knowing the availability of service and its office location; however, Table 1 indicated 22.9% to 31% of the sampled population know the address of the office but large number 69%–77.1% of student don’t know the office location. Regarding the way student knows the service and office location, only 23.33%–36.36% of student were from the orientation of the counsellor, 15%–19.11% from phanphilte, 6.66%–21.21% from senior students. On the contrary, the table indicates Orientation by deans/department heads and

Information from Teacher about the guidance and counselling service is minimal which is 5.88%–12.12% and 5.88%–11.66%, respectively.

Yorgason, Linville and Zitzman (2008) cited by Chan and Yin-Fah (2015) reported that between 30% and 60% of the American college students were unaware or unsure regarding the availability of campus mental health services. Further, there are only 14% of the respondents who know exactly where their university’s counselling center is.

4.4. Student utilisation of guidance and counselling service

Table 2. Student who used counselling service reported by counsellor

University	Campus	No. student Get counselling service in 2016/17 EC			Percentage from the total population
		M	F	T	
1 Bahir Dar university	Main campus	1100	550	1650*	**
	Poly campus	31	8	39	1%
2 Debre Tabor university	Main campus	144	56	200	3%
3 Wollo university	Main campus	228	121	409	4%
	Kombolcha Campus	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total					

- Including group counselling ** Not determined % individual counselling

Regarding the number of students who got the guidance and counselling service indicated in Table 1 above, approximately 1% of Bahir Dar University (Poly campus), 3% of Debre Tabor University and 4% of Wollo University (main campus). Barr, Rando and Krylowicz, et al. (2011) reported that depending on school size, between about 15% (schools with under 2,500 students) and 4.87% (schools sizes ranging from 30,000 to 35,000 students) of the entire student body was served by counselling centers. Likewise, Gallagher, (2011) reported the percentage of students who sought counselling ranged from 17.8% (schools with under 2,500 students) to 6.3% (schools with over 15,000 students), depending on school size. Thus, in both scholar’s recommendation, the ratio of student get service are below the sated standard.

Regarding the gender difference, Table 2 indicates larger percent of male students are using guidance and counselling service than female students. On the contrary of this finding, studies have found women were more receptive and have higher positive attitudes compared to men (Lopez et.al, 1998; Vogel et.al, 2007; Greenidge, 2007 cited by Chan and Yin-Fah (2015).

4.5. Student evaluation of the counselling service

Table 3. Utilisation of guidance and counselling

Questions	Bahir Dar university		Debre Tabor university		Wollo university	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Number of students use guidance and counselling service in the university?	20	8.43	15	10.13	20	10.47
2 Is guidance and counselling service helpful?						
A Not helpful	12	60	7	46.66	9	45
B Somewhat its helpful	4	20	3	20	6	30
C Yes, it is helpful	2	10	4	26.66	3	15
D Yes, it is very helpful	2	10	1	6.66	2	10
3 Reasons not using guidance and counselling						
A I don’t know about the service	69	29.11	62	41.89	72	37.69

B	I don't believe that the counsellor can solve my problem	34	14.34	18	12.16	25	13
C	I don't have problem to go for	82	34.59	26	17.56	62	32.46
D	I don't know the office	52	21.94	42	28.37	32	16.75
		237		148		191	

Among the sample student indicated in the above table, 8.43%–10.47% of student are reported using the guidance and counselling service in the three university's, a total of 55 (9.54%) of the student are used the service. Among this, 28 (50.9%) of student evaluated as not helpful, largely reported by Bahir Dar university students as 12 (60%). Regarding the service helpfulness; A young adolescent who had experienced the counselling service previously have more favourable intention in seeking counselling help in future or later time (Koydemir-Ozden & Erel, 2010).

Finally, the table depicts reason not to use guidance counselling; 26 (17.56%) to 82 (34.59%) of student believe they don't have problem to go for. But the rest 65.41% to 82.44% of the student are mentioning different reasons for not using the service as 29.11% to 41.89% not knowing the service, 16.75% to 28.37% don't know the office, respectively. Thus, majority of student are not using the service by lack of awareness and positive attitude towards the service. As Eisenberg et al. (2007) cited by Hinderaker and Daniel (2013) found that 45% responded that they did not have any need; 37% said that the problem would get better by itself and 32% responded that they don't have time.

4.6. Students' source of consultation

Table 4. Student source of consultation at university

	Source of Student consultation when they face problem at university	Bahir Dar University		Wollo University		Debre Tabor University	
		NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
1	Father	12	7.22	29	16	4	3.36
2	Mother	41	24.69	32	17.67	25	21
3	Brother	10	6	13	7.18	5	4.2
4	Sister	9	5.42	6	3.31	5	4.2
5	Relatives	3	1.8	4	2.2	1	0.84
6	Friend	37	22.28	47	25.96	43	36.13
7	Teacher	2	1.2	8	4.41	6	5
8	Religious father	34	20.48	22	12.15	18	15.12
9	Counsellor	18	10.84	20	11	12	10
	Total	166	100	181	1000	119	100

N = 446

As indicated in above table, student immediate consultation when they face problem in the university is largely 43 (36.13%) of Debre Tabor, 47 (25.96%) of Wollo and 37 (22.28%) of Bahir Dar to their friends, thus relatively Debre Tabor university students largely consult their friends than the other universities. The second largest student source of consultation 32 (17.67%)–41 (24.69%) are to their mother and 22 (12.15%)–34 (20.48%) to their religious father. On the contrary, teachers are among the list possible body to consult students ranged 2 (1.2%)–6(5%) of student's options and 10% of students favour counsellor in the three universities.

Similar finding is found by Robinson, (2003) on Asian students, more willing to seek help from informal sources, such as family and friends because of their culture. Later, Salim (2010) cited by Chan and Yin-Fah (2015) reaffirmed that Asian culture, having negative correlation towards help-seeking with any counselling services even they are facing any problems.

5. Conclusion

The finding indicates except Debre Tabor university, all universities have no female counsellor. The existed ratio of one counsellor is below the standard of APA which state 1 to 364 for high school and above. Regarding the number of students that get the guidance and counselling service are very small compared with the report of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health reports of different university's student exposed at risk of dropout, addiction, STI, etc. As one reason for this small no of student involvement is student lack of awareness of evaluation of the service as not helpful. This might relate to their expectation about the guidance and counselling service output which implicate their low awareness of the service. Because of this, they report friends, mother and religious father, respectively as their source of consultation for their problem in the university. On the contrary, counsellor and teachers are next prioritised possible body to consult students in the three universities. In overall, the practice of guidance and counselling are not functioning as it supposed to function. Thus, awareness for important stockholders (directors, deans, department heads and instructors) to work with the guidance and counselling office should be the centre of focus. More importantly, the professional competence (MA in counselling and or clinical psychology) and gender of the counsellor is apriority of each university to improve.

Acknowledgements

First, we would like to thank Debre Tabor University for financing this research to be conducted. Secondly, we would like to express deepest gratitude and appreciation for the instructors of psychology department for their constrictive comment and suggestions in accomplishing this this study.

References

- Agi, C. W. (2014). Evaluation of students' perception of school counselling and their attitudes toward its programs. *Department of Educational Foundations, Rivers State University Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2, 5.
- American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (2005). *Position statement: comprehensive school counseling programs*. Retrieved September 19 2005 from: www.schoolcounselor.org
- Andrews, G., Issakidis, C. & Carter, G. (2001). Shortfall in mental health service utilization. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 179, 417-425.
- Barr, V., Rando, R. & Krylowicz, B. et al. (2011). *The association of university counseling center directors annual survey*. Retrieved from: <http://www.aucccd.org/support/aucccd>
- Chan, B. & Yin-Fah, B. C. (2015). Counselling services utilizations in a Malaysia private university. *International Education Studies*, 9, 3
- Bergin, A. E. & Garfield, S. L. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change* (4th ed.). NY, USA: Wiley
- California Department of Education (2003). Study of pupil personnel ratios, services, and programs. *Assembly Bill 722. Counseling and Student Support Office, California Department of Education*
- Carrell, S. & Carrell, S. (2006). Do lower student-to-counselor ratios reduce school disciplinary problems? *Contributions to Economic Analysis & Policy*, 5(1)
- Daniel, D. (2004). Observations and reflection of the higher education teachers on quality of teaching and learning in higher education in Ethiopia. *The Ethiopian Journal of Higher Education*
- Denga, D. I. (2001). *Guidance and counselling in school and non school settings* (2nd ed). Port Harcourt Double Diamond publications
- Day, S. X. (2004). *Theory and design in counseling and psychotherapy*. Boston, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Eddy, J. M. (2001). *Aggressive and defiant behavior: The latest assessment and treatment strategies for the conduct disorder*. Kansas City, MO: Compact Clinicals.

Alebachew, M. L. & Antehun, A. M. (2018). The practice of guidance and counseling service in amhara regional state public universities, Ethiopia. *Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools: Current Perspectives*, 8(3), 119-127.

Esuong, A. E., Eyo, M. & Joshua, A. (2007). *Attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services*. Calabar, Nigeria: Education Cross River University of Technology.

Gallagher, R. P. (2011). *National survey of counseling center directors* (Monograph Series No. 8). Alexandria, VA: The International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. Retrieved from: <http://www.iacsinc.org/2011%20NSCCD.pdf>

Gysbers, N.C. (1999). *Strengthening Guidance Leadership for the 21st Century*. Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri-Columbia.

Gysbers, N. C. (2001). School guidance and counseling in the 21st century: Remember the past into the future. *Professional School Counseling*, 5, 96–105.

Hinderaker & Daniel J., (2013). 'College Student Mental Health and Use of Counseling Center Services'. *Master of Social Work Clinical*

Larson, M, L., Vogel, D. L. & Wester, S. R. (2007). Avoidance of Counseling: Psychological Factors That Inhibit Seeking Help. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 85

Kirangari, E, T. (2014). *A research project submitted to the school of education in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of master of education* [administration]. Nairobi City, Kenya: Kenyatta university

Koydemir-Ozden, S. & Erel, O. (2010). Psychological help-seeking: Role of socio-demographic variables, previous help-seeking experience and presence of a problem. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 5, 688–693.

Okobiah, O. C. & Okorodudu, R. I. (2004). *Issues, Concepts, Theories and Techniques of Guidance and Counselling*, Benin City, Nigeria: Ethiope Publishing. Okorodudu R. I. Oskamp (Eds.), *Helping and being helped* (pp. 17–48). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Robinson, M. (2003). Students' help-seeking behaviors by gender, racial background, and student status. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 37(2), 151–166.

UNESCO. (2000). *Guidance: Module 1*. Botswana, Southern Africa: UNESCO.

Wills, T. A. (1992). *The helping process in the context of personal relationships*.