

Factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling services at university of Eswatini

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Abstract

The growth from childhood to adulthood is always fraught with difficulties which create a void for effective guidance and counselling. The purpose of the study was to identify factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling at the University of Eswatini (UNESWA), Luyengo Campus. The study utilised a descriptive correlational research design. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire. The instrument was pilot tested with 30 students from the Luyengo Campus who were not included in the study. The instrument was found to be 79% reliable. Three experts in counselling from UNESWA and Ministry of Education and Training validated the instrument for both content and face validity. A sample of 297 was randomly drawn from a population of 1,277 students. Data were analysed using descriptive, correlational and multiple regression statistics. Findings revealed that counsellor training contributes most to effective guidance and counselling services (30.4%). Conclusion drawn is that counsellor training is responsible for effective guidance and counselling. Thus, the study recommends that counsellors must receive training in order to provide effective guidance and counselling services to their clients.

Keywords: Counsellor training, descriptive correlational research design, Eswatini, guidance and counselling services, multiple regression.

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1. Introduction

The growth from childhood to adulthood is fraught with difficulties. Today's changing and complex world places increasingly greater demands on the students in schools. Students worldwide experience a number of socio-economic, personal, psychological and academic problems disturbing their learning process (Buraga & Caballero, 2018; Madhuku, 2005; Tuju, 1996). The problems are experienced either at school or at home (Chireshe, 2006). Students experience problems like living in distressed families (for example: where parents are divorced or separated and where family conflicts occur), substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, unemployment and sexual harassment (Nziramasanga, 1999). Consequently, many student dropouts are a result of poor academic grades and failure to adjust to learning situations (Otwel & Millins, 1997).

Gora, Sawatzky and Hague (1992) concluded that the increase in diverse students' problems and the current economic situation necessitate for effective counselling services even more critical than in the past. Thus, guidance and counselling assistance for students has increased in frequency and complexity (Buraga & Caballero, 2018; Gora et al., 1992). Effective guidance and counselling implies that the role and function of counsellors should be shaped in large part by nowadays students' problems (Suryadi, Hamidah, Hanifa & Sawitri, 2018). Borders and Drury (1992) argued that students who receive guidance and counselling services showed a significant increase in academic persistence and achievement, school attendance, classroom behaviour, better self-concepts and improved attitudes towards school work and peers.

Guidance and counselling services enhance students' performance, reduce students' dropout rate and prepare students for the world of work and life (Wangoi, 1994). Thus, counsellors should be competent and well-trained and have a sense of efficacy (Awinsong, Dawson & Gidiglo, 2015). A need exists to determine what it is that counsellors do, how they do it and how to improve what they do. If these determinants can be made, then training, hiring and support of counsellors can be done more effectively, and consequently, the needs of students can be better addressed (Gora et al., 1992).

The essence of an effective counselling programme consists of knowledge; thus, training is a central theme to effective counselling (Ogunlade & Akeredolu, 2012). Okech and Kimemia (2012) when studying the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in Secondary School in Kenya found that most of the counsellors were untrained. Wambui (2015) asserted that there is a need for systematic short in-service courses which should be conducted on a continuous basis. Also, Brown (1989) concluded that pre-service and in-service programmes, workshops and seminars help to prepare all those involved in the process of guidance and counselling by acquainting them with the new curriculum.

Effective guidance and counselling also rests on the attitude of both the counsellor and counsee (Agi, 2014). They are both required to develop positive attitudes towards the subject (Brown, 1989). Bernes (2005) stated that beyond attitude; effective counsellors should show the following generic personal characteristics: warmth, genuineness, empathy, humanness, ability to build relationships, interpersonal skills, communication skills, articulation, work ethic, motivation, always seeking to expand their comfort zone by striving for higher goals and standards and attentive to self-care and appearance. Bernes (2005) further presented five critical components of effective guidance and counselling, namely: i) history of the client; ii) personal characteristics; iii) cognitive ability; iv) rigorous, quality academic programme and v) major field exposure.

Euvrard (1996) stated that clientele needs assessment is crucial for effective guidance and counselling. Need assessment refers to a formal process that determines the gaps between what is and what should be (Stead, 1987). Stead (1987) considered needs assessment as an approach for involving students, families and the community in setting goals and priorities for school guidance and counselling services. Needs assessment is an integral component of any guidance and counselling services (Euvrard, 1996). Needs assessment determine school guidance and counselling services goals and objectives (UNESCO, 2007). Needs assessments also allow evaluation for guidance and counselling services. The results of needs assessments determine priorities for guidance and counselling. Kavale (2012) recommended that the contents of future syllabuses for school guidance and counselling services should be based on the needs of

the students. Needs assessment should focus on the personal, social, educational and vocational needs of students, parents and teachers to provide balanced and comprehensive school guidance and counselling services. School counsellors who offer effective services begin by obtaining the necessary information on which to make appropriate and accurate decisions (Stead, 1987).

The success of the implementation of guidance and counselling programmes also depends on a number of other factors. These include the level of education and training of the implementer, knowledge and skills in counselling, the qualities of the counsellors, availability of resources, attendance at workshops and seminars, among other things (Zvobgo, 2009).

Kochhar (2003) argued that a counsellor who has adequate and relevant teaching materials and facilities will be more confident, effective and productive. Teachers may have the competence and positive attitudes, but inadequacy resources can compromise the outcome of their efforts (Muema & Kiilu, 2013). Hui (1998) reported that timely acquisition of the required materials was of paramount importance for the provision of quality counselling by teachers. The provision of facilities and the appropriate use of teaching resources can provide a conducive environment in which in the long run would facilitate the direct and indirect change of behaviour of the students. It is, therefore, imperative to supply counsellors with adequate and relevant materials for the success of the guidance and counselling programme.

Effective guidance and counselling encompasses evaluation. Borders and Drury (1992) stated that school guidance and counselling services evaluation historically consisted of reports on kinds of services offered, percentages of school counsellors, time spent on each activity and the number of students served. Schmidt (2003) suggested that the evaluation of guidance and counselling services should constantly improve in order to remain dynamically responsive to the changing needs of students, school and the community. Davis (2003) also viewed evaluation in school guidance and counselling as both an on-going process of collecting data from students, parents and teachers to assessing services and activities and an annual process of gathering feedback regarding the guidance and counselling services as a whole. Evaluation examines how well particular services meet intended goals. UNESCO (2008) also stated that evaluating activities for the effectiveness of school guidance and counselling services focus on determining whether school counsellors achieve their objectives and whether the guidance and counselling services are effective in assisting students to achieve the set goals and objectives.

In Eswatini, Guidance and Counselling in schools falls under the Ministry of Education and Training. It is a programme and service that cut across the education system. It is offered from primary to tertiary institutions. The need for effective counselling increased due to the emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the country. Thus, professional counselling is relatively a new phenomenon in Eswatini. Educational institutions such as the University of Eswatini provide counselling services to both students and staff. Effective counselling in institutions of higher learning has now become an essential service. According to Sukati (2000) in Eswatini, students at tertiary level are susceptible to a myriad of problems and their severity cannot be over-emphasised. Sukati further reported that this is shown by the number of withdrawals per academic year, yet every institution wishes to retain the same number of students it started within that academic year. Therefore, a dire need to establish factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling services was evident. Hence, the researcher was prompted to conduct the study on the factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling services in UNESWA, Faculty of Agriculture.

The study was framed using Durkheim's Theory of 1952. The theory highlights that a child's good behaviour is a product of concerted effort right from the family, the learning institutions and the community. Thus, it also stresses the importance of moral guidance of the children. With regard to the school environment, the theory postulates that persistence deviance is an indicator of problems being experienced within the school. Some of the conditions that lead to deviance include rapid social change and the sudden economic crisis that disrupts the normal running of the society without any means of regulating it. Therefore, a need exist for the school to avail guidance and counselling services so that the students with various problems can get assistance. The theory rhymes well with this study

as it seeks to identify factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling services at the Luyengo Campus of the University of Eswatini

The purpose of the study was to identify factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling services at the Luyengo Campus of the University of Eswatini. The study specifically sought to:

1. Describe respondent demographic characteristics in relation to effective guidance and counselling.
2. Describe the perceptions of students regarding effective guidance and counselling services.
3. Compare respondent by demographic characteristics; sex and programme of study.
4. Identify explanatory and predictor variables for an effective guidance and counselling programme.

The research hypothesis was that counsellor training is the main determinant factor contributing toward effective counselling perceived by UNESWA Luyengo Campus students. Knowledge of factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling will enhance the counselling practices.

2. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive correlational design. The target population was UNESWA Luyengo Campus undergraduate students—Year 1 to Year 4 ($N = 1277$). The students were selected as they were the intended beneficiaries of guidance and counselling services at the university. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table was used to determine the sample size and a sample of 297 students was drawn randomly from the target population.

A self-administered questionnaire was used for collecting data. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A was of perceptions of students regarding effective guidance and counselling. Section B was on the factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling services. Then, Section C consisted of demographic characteristics. Each respondent was asked to indicate level of agreement by circling the number that best corresponded to his/her response using a Likert-type scale in Section A and Section B. Basically, the rating scale was as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = slightly disagree, 3 = disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = strongly agree.

The questionnaire was compiled into a booklet format and a picture on the front page was inserted to enhance face validity. Content validity was established by one University counsellor, one University guidance and counselling lecturer and one counsellor from the Ministry of Education and Training in Eswatini. Reliability of the instrument was established by piloting the instrument to 30 UNESWA Luyengo campus students who were not part of the study. Reliability coefficient was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability coefficient of the domains ranged from 0.73 to 0.84 and the overall reliability coefficient was 0.79. Thus, the reliability of the instrument was good (79% reliable) as it was greater than 0.70 (Kathuri & Pals, 1993).

The questionnaires were hand delivered to the respondents by the research team. The questionnaires were collected after a day or two after delivery. The researchers made a follow up by verbally reminding students to fill the questionnaire. The data collection lasted for about a month (mid-February 2015 to mid-March 2015). The Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 20 was employed for data analysis. Specifically, descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and multiple regressions were used to analyse the data. Consent forms were used to solicit permission from the participants. Only the researchers had access to individual data or names in order to ensure confidentiality. Participants were also allowed to decline participating in ensuring autonomy. Also, no harm was associated with this study.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1. Demographical characteristics and background information of the respondents

Table 1 indicates that a majority of the respondent were males ($n = 155$, 52.2%). Most of the respondents were aged between 18–23 years ($n = 215$, 72.4%) and most of them were single ($n = 275$, 92.6%). Also, the highest number of the respondents were enrolled for a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy ($n = 43$, 14.5%). Most students were staying on campus ($n = 196$, 66.0%) and had never visited a counsellor before ($n = 160$, 53.6%).

Table 1. Background information and demographic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	f	%
Sex		
Male	155	52.2
Female	142	47.8
Age		
18-23	215	72.4
24-29	82	27.6
Marital status		
Single	275	92.6
Married	22	7.4
Programme		
Agricultural Education and Extension (AEE)	35	11.8
Consumer Science Education (CSE)	25	8.4
Agronomy (Agron.)	43	14.5
Agricultural and Bio-systems Engineering (ABE)	40	13.5
Horticulture (Hort.)	28	9.4
Agricultural Economics and Management (AEM)	41	13.8
Textiles, Apparel Design and Management (TADM)	18	6.1
Food Science and Nutrition Technology (FSNT)	23	7.7
Consumer Science (CS)	14	4.7
Animal science (AS)	30	10.1
Residence of respondent		
On-campus	196	66.0
Off-campus	101	34.0
Counsellor visit by respondent		
Yes	137	46.1
No	160	53.9

3.2. Perceptions of students regarding guidance and counselling services at Luyengo campus

Table 2 revealed that the overall mean indicated that guidance and counselling was regarded effective by the students at the Campus ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.16$). Students at the campus rated the following items high, thus, were perceived effective factors for guidance and counselling:

(i) counsellor non-judgmental ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.10$), (ii) counsellor respecting students' rights to confidentiality ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.14$), (iii) counsellor puts students interests at heart ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.24$), counsellor good approach to student ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.93$) among others. These findings are encompassed in the findings by Bernes (2005). Bernes revealed that effective guidance and counselling, involves understanding the client in terms of i) history; ii) personal characteristics; iii) cognitive ability; iv) rigorous, quality academic programme and v) major field exposure.

Table 2. Perceptions of students regarding effective guidance and counselling (n = 297)

Item	M	SD
Counsellor non-judgmental	5.18	1.10
Counsellor respecting students right to confidentiality	5.08	1.14
Counsellor puts students interests at heart	5.00	1.24
Counsellor good approach to student	4.88	0.93
Enough time for counselling session	4.85	1.14
Students trusting the counsellor	4.81	1.15
Counsellor openness	4.80	1.32
Counselling session conducted in a private place	4.74	1.21
Students being honest to counsellor	4.71	1.30
Counsellor making referrals where and when necessary	4.70	1.06
Strong positive student-counsellor relationship	4.59	1.17
Counsellor good questioning of students	4.53	1.18
Overall	4.82	1.16

Rating scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Slightly disagree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Strongly agree. M = Mean, SD = standard deviation

3.3. Comparison of factors for effective guidance and counselling by selected background information and demographic characteristics

An independent t-test was used to find out the difference of the UNESWA Luyengo campus students on the factors contributing toward effective guidance and counselling in terms of sex. Table 3 indicates that there was a significant difference between male and female students on the factors contributing toward effective guidance and counselling ($t = -2.02, p = 0.04$).

Table 3. Comparison of students views on factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling by sex

Sex	N	M	SD	t	p	d
Females	155	4.74	0.74	-2.02	0.04	0.23
Males	142	4.90	0.64			

Effect size was calculated using Cohen's formula in order to determine the practical difference (magnitude) between the female and male students.

The formula for calculating effect size is as follows:

$$d = \text{Mean}_1 - \text{Mean}_2 / \text{SD}_{\text{pooled}}$$

Where:

d = effect size

Mean_1 = mean of female students

Mean_2 = mean of male students

SD_1^2 = standard deviation for mean of female students

SD_2^2 = standard deviation for mean of male students

$\text{SD}_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{[(\text{SD}_1^2 + \text{SD}_2^2)/2]}$ = square root of the standard deviations divided by two.

$\text{SD}_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{0.74^2 + 0.64^2}/2 = 0.69$

$d = [4.74 - 4.90]/0.69 = 0.23$

The higher the effect size: the greater the practical value on the magnitude between the female and male students on factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling at the University of Eswatini. According to Cohen (1988), a large effect size is one that has a value of $d = 0.80$ and above; medium effect size (d) between 0.50 and 0.79; while small effect size has d value of 0.49 and below. The findings of the study revealed a small effect size ($d = 0.23$). This implies that the difference between male and female students on the factors contributing toward effective guidance and counselling was small.

Furthermore, One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to determine if there are differences of UNESWA Luyengo campus students among the programmes regarding factors contributing toward effective guidance and counselling. Table 4 indicates that there was no significant difference existed among the programmes.

Table 4. Comparison of students views on factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling by programme of study

Programme	N	M	SD	F	p
ABE	40	4.8	0.45		
Agronomy	43	4.7	0.73		
Horticulture	28	4.8	0.72		
AEM	41	4.8	0.87		
TADM	18	4.7	0.88	0.292	0.977
AEE	35	4.9	0.82		
FSNT	23	4.8	0.54		
CSE	25	4.8	0.67		
CS	14	4.7	0.54		
AS	30	4.8	0.57		

3.4. Explanatory and predictor variables for effective guidance and counselling

Multiple regression was employed to identify the explanatory and predictor variables for effective guidance and counselling at the University of Eswatini—Luyengo Campus. Table 5 indicates the significant factors explaining and predicting effective guidance and counselling services were counsellor training ($t = 11.3, p = 0.00$); roles of peer ($t = 3.94, p = 0.00$); effective evaluation ($t = 3.04, p = 0.00$) and sex ($t = 2.58, p = 0.01$). In other words, the counsellor’s training was the main factor as it contributed 30% in variance of effective guidance and counselling. The remaining factors contributed 4%, 2% and 1%, respectively. The overall model explained 37% (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.37$) of the total variance in factors contributing to effective guidance and counselling. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted that counsellor training is the main determinant factor contributing towards effective counselling as perceived by UNESWA Luyengo Campus students. Similar findings to this study were also reported in several studies. Awinsong, Dawson and Gidiglo (2015) reported that counsellors should be competent and well-trained and having a sense of efficacy. Suryadi, Hamidah, Hanifa and Sawitri, (2018) also revealed that effective guidance and counselling implies that the role and function of counsellors should be shaped in large part by nowadays students’ problems. Similarly, Borders and Drury (1992); Schmidt (2003) and UNESCO (2008) found that evaluation factored in the effectiveness guidance and counselling services evaluation historically consisted of reports on kinds of services offered, percentages. The findings imply that counsellors must be trained and the role played by peers should not be undermined as it contributes the effective guidance counselling. It is imperative for counsellors to reflect or evaluate each counselling session so that improvement can be made from each session.

Table 5. Explanatory and predictor variables for effective guidance and counselling

Variables	R	R ²	R ² change	B	β	t	p
Counsellor training	0.55	0.30	0.30	0.55	0.55	11.3	0.00
Roles of peer	0.58	0.34	0.04	0.19	0.21	3.94	0.00
Counsellor evaluation	0.60	0.36	0.02	0.14	0.16	3.04	0.00
Sex	0.61	0.37	0.01	0.16	0.12	2.58	0.01
Constant = 1.25							

$P \leq 0.05$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.37$, Standard Error = 0.06

3.5. Prediction model for effective guidance and counselling services

Effective guidance and counselling can be predicted using this model

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_{5K} b_i + X_i + e$$

Where Y = the estimated value of effective guidance and counselling

a = intercept (constant);

b_i = slope; partial regression coefficient

X_1 = trained counsellor

X_2 = roles of peer counsellors

X_3 = effective evaluation

X_4 = sex of respondent

e = error

The model specific for this study was therefore:

Effective guidance and counselling = 1.25 + 0.55 (trained counsellor) + 0.21 (roles of peer counsellors) + 0.16 (effective evaluation) + 0.12 (sex of respondent)

The effective guidance and counselling can also be summarised using a diagrammatic model as presented in Figure 1.

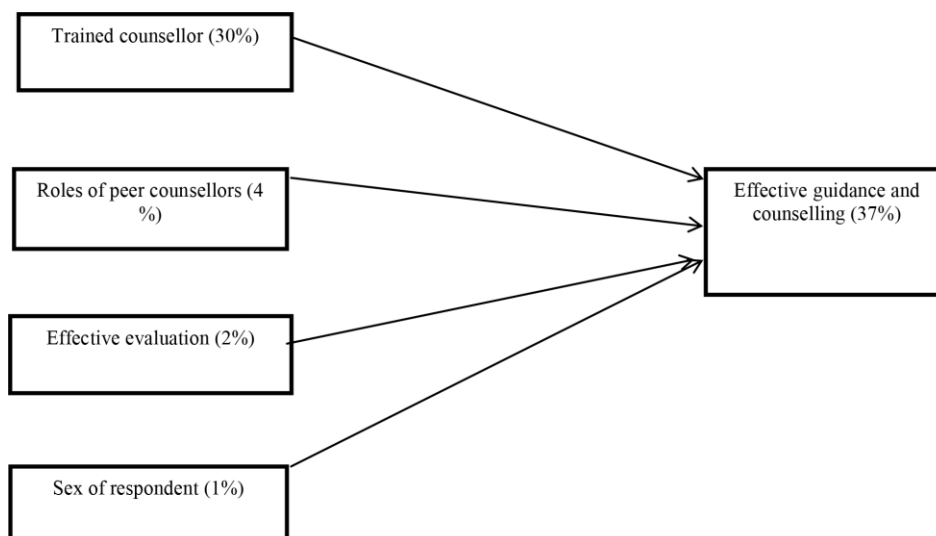


Figure 1. Explanatory variables of effective guidance and counselling

4. Conclusion

Effective guidance and counselling mainly rests on the counsellor's training. Roles played by peers, evaluation of counselling services and sex are also influential for effective guidance and counselling.

5. Recommendations for the study

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. University of Eswatini should provide training to counsellors in order to enhance their skills for effective guidance and counselling.
2. Guidance and counselling services should be evaluated frequently to ensure effectiveness.
3. Counsellors should be open to students for easy communication so that guidance and counselling flourish.
4. Since this study was conducted with students as recipients of guidance and counselling services, the same study can be conducted involving counsellors, educators for guidance and counselling and parents.

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