

Students Perspectives on the Guidance and Counselling Units in the School System

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the student's perspectives towards the School Guidance and Counselling Unit. School Guidance and Counselling Units were established in all government schools with the assistance of the Ministry of Education through the applications recommended by circulars no 16/2011 and 6/2013. Due to the students' emerging psychological and behavioral problems, there was a growing interest in enhancing the School Guidance and Counselling Service. The research objectives were to investigate the student's awareness about the School Guidance and Counselling Unit, student's attitudes towards the School Guidance and Counselling Unit, perception of the students towards the School Guidance and Counselling Unit, and identify the steps to increase the function of the unit. A questionnaire survey was administered under the mixed-method research design, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten purposively selected students. Data analysis was done by using quantitative and qualitative methods. Findings indicate that most of the students are unaware of the services provided by the School Guidance and Counselling Unit. Students positively perceive that seeking help from the unit is beneficial. However, most students believe that seeking guidance and counselling services consumes much time, and the unit does not encourage one to seek counselling services. It was evident that whether schools have implemented the recommendations addressed via circulars, the function of the school guidance and counselling service is not up to the desired level. Therefore, it is essential to circulate a proper monitoring system towards the school guidance and the counselling center. Needed utilities and resources should provide for the proper function of the Student Guidance and Counselling Unit within the school level with the assistance of the ministry of education.

Keywords: School Guidance and Counselling, School Guidance and Counselling Unit, Students Perspective

I. INTRODUCTION

Implementation of the school guidance and counselling units in the school context aimed to reduce the school sector's emerging psychological and behavioral problems. The initial step was taken in 1983 by starting the "Yowun mithuro" project. Later, with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, the Sri Lankan government took significant steps in establishing the school counselling service within the school sector. By addressing circular no 2001/16. Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka stated that each school with more than 350 students should have school guidance and counselling service within the school context. This application aims to develop academic performance, discipline, strengthening psychosocial development, and help identify and develop the potentials of the students. From time to time, the Ministry of Education applied many implementations regarding guidance and counselling to develop the child's academic and personal development and focused on creating a skilled person who could face the challenges in the 21st century.

Circular no 6/2013, released in January 2013, which function to present, addressed the importance of starting a "School guidance and Counselling Unit" in every school. This focused the giving priority to career guidance within the school years and introducing the career field to the school level. It aimed at introducing the world of work to the school children. In 2015 Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka, with the assistance of the ADB project, EKSP published a teacher's guide for career guidance at the school level. By distributing it among the teacher counsellors and conducting training workshops ministry of Education took initial steps to implement these at the school level. Concerning the given circulars, every school focused on developing the school guidance and counselling service by establishing a unit within the school premises.

Ministry of Education applied many implementations regarding guidance and counselling to develop the child's academic and personal development and focused on creating skill full person who could face the challenges in the 21st century. The services rendered by the school guidance and counselling unit were prioritised to address the student's psychological, educational, and family problems and career guidance and empower the student's abilities. However, it has been noted that the school guidance and counselling units are not functioning as expected. Although a guidance and counselling teacher was appointed to do the assigned duties, a lengthy discussion on the implementation of the assigned duties commenced as expected.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the student's awareness about the school guidance and counselling unit
2. To examine the student's attitudes towards the school guidance and counselling unit
3. To explore the perception of the students towards the school guidance and counselling unit
4. To identify the steps to increase the proper function of the unit

III. RESEARCH DESIGN MATERIALS AND METHODS

The objective of this study was to find the awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of students towards school guidance and counselling center. The mixed method approach was considered the appropriate method to use in the present study. A questionnaire was used as the main tool of primary data collection. The given questionnaire inquired the attitudes, perceptions, and awareness of students about the school guidance and counselling unit. The questionnaire was prepared to utilise the available literature on the relevant area of

research. (Mutinda,2005; Mwangi & Otanga 2015; Arfasa. 2018). The validation of the self-administered questionnaire was done by having expertise review and feedback obtained by the discussion.

The questionnaire consisted of 24 close-ended questions. The initial part of the questionnaire contained questions regarding the awareness of the students. Questions measured awareness consist of two optional answers indicating "Yes" "No". The second part of the questionnaire contained the questions relevant to identify the attitudes and perceptions of the students. These were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Strongly agree and agree collectively were considered to agree to the statement, while disagreeing and strongly disagree statements were considered disagreeing—further qualitative information was gathered by conducting a focus group interview with the students.

A simple random sampling method was used when selecting the sample for the study. The sample consisted of 150 secondary-grade students. After distributing the questionnaires, completed questionnaires were collected after about a week. The qualitative data was gathered by conducting a focused group interview. Purposive sampling method was used to select the qualitative sample consists with 10 students. The data collected from questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistical measurements such as percentages, mean, mode and standard deviation. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis method.

IV. FINDINGS

Data were collected analysed among a sample of 150 respondents who consisted with grade 10 and grade 11 students belonged to 3 government schools. Among them 40.6% of them were male students and 59.4% were female. The findings were presented in Table 1

Table 1 Gender and grade of the students

Gender	Grade 10	Grade 11	Total	%
Male	40	21	61	40.6
Female	51	38	89	59.4
Total	91	59	150	100

Findings of the table 1 revealed that majority of the respondents were females. The first goal of this study to identify the student’s awareness about the school guidance and counselling unit. Descriptive statistics were obtained to achieve this goal. As illustrated in table 2 the findings revealed that the most students are unaware of the function of the school guidance and counselling unit. 73.3% of the students are unaware of the location of the school guidance and counselling unit .79.3% of the students are unaware of who is the student counsellor in their school. Most students do not have proper awareness about the services provided by the school guidance and counselling unit.

Table 2. Awareness of the Guidance and Counselling among students

No	Statement	Gender	Yes	%	No	%
01	Are you aware that your school provides a student guidance and a counselling service?	M	18	29.5	43	70.5
		F	23	25.8	66	74.2
		Total	41	27.3	109	72.6
02	Do you know where the school guidance and counselling unit situated in your school	M	17	27.8	44	74.2
		F	23	25.8	66	74.2
		Total	40	26.7	110	73.3
03	Do you know who is the student counsellor in your school	M	10	16.3	51	83.6
		F	21	23.6	68	76.4
		Total	31	20.6	119	79.3
04	Are you aware that academic services provided by your school guidance and counselling unit?	M	11	18	50	82
		F	18	20.2	71	79.8
		Total	29	19.3	121	80.7
05	Are you aware that career guidance is provided by the school guidance and counselling unit?	M	12	19.7	49	80.3
		F	15	16.9	74	83.1
		Total	27	18	123	82

This was evident by having 79.3%% responds regarding students don't have an awareness of academic services are provided by their school guidance and counselling unit Most students do not seek help for their educational problems and problems related to career guidance because they are unaware of the services offered by the school guidance and counselling unit. The results revealed that most of male students when comparing to the female students have less awareness regarding the student guidance and counselling unit.

The second question of this study was to examine the student's attitudes towards the school guidance and counselling unit. Students were required to answer 8 questions designed to elicit their attitudes, on a Likert scale 1-5. Table 3 contains the findings related to

student's attitudes towards school guidance and counselling unit. Most students have a negative attitude toward seeking help and approaching the student guidance and counselling unit 58% of the students have an attitude that one can overcome mental conflicts by themselves. 64%of students think that seeking guidance and counselling services consumes a lot of time and effort. 53% of the respondents do not have much faith in student counsellors. Most students believe that seeking help from a friend is better than seeking help from the school guidance and counselling unit. Most students have a positive attitude that seeking career guidance from the school guidance and counselling unit is a better option.

Table 3 - Student's attitudes towards the school guidance and counselling unit

No	Statement	SA F(%)	A F(%)	NS F(%)	D F(%)	SD F(%)
1	One can overcome mental conflicts by himself without external help	87(58)	32(21)	-	25(16)	6(5)
2	I would feel uneasy going to guidance and counselling unit because of what other students may think	104(69)	43(28)	-	3(3)	-
3-	I would prefer counselling from a friend than a counsellor	106(70)	28(19)	3(1.3)	4(2.6)	9(6)
4	If my friends asked my advice about a problem, I recommend them to get assistance from the guidance and counselling unit	99(66)	24(16)	-	15(10)	12(8)
5-	Seeking guidance and counselling services consumes a lot of time and effort	96(64)	33(22)	5(3)	16(10)	-
6	Although there is a student counsellor who offer counselling help, I would not have much faith in him	82(54.7)	37(24.7)	-	30(20)	1(0.6)
7	I think seeking carrier guidance from school guidance and counselling center is a better option	18(12)	24(16)	12(8)	36(24)	60(40)
8-	It is difficult to talk about personal affairs with a counsellor	96(64)	18(12)	5(3)	25(16)	6(5)

The third objective of the study was also met by distributing statements on a five point Likert scale. 61% of students perceive that guidance and counselling are essential to enhance the knowledge of the future career world. 51% of the students perceived that guidance and counselling units' help is not needed to enhance their learning. 75% perceived that the guidance and counselling unit could not address their problems and 59% indicate that the teacher counsellor is too busy to listen to their problems.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the mentioned findings, drawn conclusions reveal that; although the schools have implemented the recommendations addressed via circulars, the function of the student guidance and counselling service is not up to the desired level. Most students are unaware of the functions of the school guidance and counselling unit. Access to the unit is limited, and it lies as a sole unit on the school premise. Student awareness regarding the services offered by the school guidance and counselling unit is very low. The attitudes towards seeking help from the student's guidance and counselling were negative. They have the attitude that one can overcome mental conflicts

by themselves without any external help. Although they wanted to get help from the student counsellor, they feel uneasy about approaching the unit. Seeking help from the student guidance and counselling unit is perceived to be beneficial and students think that guidance and counselling is essential to enhance the knowledge about future career world. However, the student guidance and counselling unit discourage them from seeking help counselling services from the unit and they perceive that the unit could not address their problem. It is essential to circulate a proper monitoring system towards the school guidance and the counselling center from the zonal level. Needed utilities and the resources should be provided for the proper function of the unit within the school level with the assistance of the ministry of education. Awareness programs for counselling teachers and the principals of the school should be carried out to make awareness of the duties of a school counselor. School guidance and counselling programs should focus to address student's empowerment as well as educational, career, and other specific matters. Suitable persons who have a first degree in psychology or other bachelor's degree holders who have obtained a diploma in counseling should be given priority when appointing school guidance and counselling teachers. Conducting awareness programs for students, teachers, and parents, conducting vocational guidance programs, arranging skill development programs for students are essential to increase student awareness about the unit and get student attraction to the school guidance and counselling unit. Guidance and counselling teachers must attend to every classroom and must engage with students to increase student awareness. The teachers and the students should be assisted to seek guidance and counselling from the school guidance and counselling unit.

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