



## **Teachers' Perception of the Effectiveness of Counselors in Government Secondary Schools in Mbale Municipality Uganda**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research study was designed to survey the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of counselors in government schools Mbale municipality. The research focused on the following objectives: to determine teachers' perception of vocational services of counselor in secondary schools Mbale municipality, to determine teachers' perception of the effectiveness of educational services of counselors in secondary schools Mbale municipality, to determine teachers' perception of the effectiveness of personal/social services of counselors in secondary schools, Mbale municipality. The study adopted a cross sectional survey design. The researcher used a sample of 165 respondents which include only teachers from all the 3 public schools in Mbale municipality, Uganda. Census inquiry was used to select schools, while simple random sampling techniques were used to select teachers from all three schools. Data was collected through questionnaires which were based on five Likert scale of 1 for Strongly agree, 2 for Agree 3 for Undecided, 4 for Disagree, and 5 for Strongly disagree. The data collected was analyzed using relative frequencies and percentages, mean and standard deviation. The study found a positive perception of teachers on the effectiveness of counselors in Mbale municipality. Where in objective one the mean is 2.5052, and standard deviation is .81877, objective two 2.4152, and SD is.83985, and objective three is 2.3658, and SD .70669. In conclusion, the perception of teachers of the effectiveness of counselors in Mbale municipality government school is high/positive. Recommendations: professional counselors should be in charge of counseling activities in schools.

**Keywords:-** Teachers' Perception, Effectiveness of Counselors, Government Secondary Schools and Mbale Municipality

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a result of the continued request for increased accountability in education, there is heightened awareness and interest by all members of the school community to ensure that proper and effective programming is defined and implemented. Teachers, administrators, counselors, students, parents, as well as other personnel in the system holds considerable stake in the evaluation of our school services. School counselors, due to their unique situation in working with students and school staff, often find varied perspectives of how others see their roles and responsibilities defined. Through the examination of these perspectives, the ultimate goal is to bring clarity to the counselor role and thus support for the entire guidance and counseling program (Katherine, 2006). A school counselor is a professional and experience someone who works in elementary, middle, and /or high schools to provide academic, career, college

readiness, and personal/social competencies to all students through a school counseling program.(Akinade, 1994). In order to understand how counselors work with students and staff in school guidance programs today, it is important to recognize the evolution of the profession first. The school counseling profession traces back to the early 1900's where it had the sole purpose of vocational guidance. It was developed in response to the economic and social problems of those times. Teachers were assigned the counseling position, in addition to their regular teaching duties (Gysbers, 2001). As times progressed, new complexities arose and additional challenges to students and staff surfaced. It became evident that guidance programs needed to change with the times by providing trained and professional personnel to cater for the issues of counseling. In Uganda like in most African countries, Guidance and Counseling (G&C) is relatively new movement. The need for formal Guidance and Counseling in schools was realized in the 1960s, when the Ministry of Education then established the office of Career Guidance at its headquarters in Kampala. When Uganda got independence (1962), it became necessary to gear the education of the children towards national development. The Minister of Education in the 1960s, the late J.S Luyimbazi Zake did a lot to promote the Career Guidance and Counseling movement in this country. He also emphasized the need for school leavers to choose appropriate careers for their future.The Government White Paper of (1992) on Education recognized the importance of Guidance and Counseling movement in this country. It also emphasized the need for school leavers to choose appropriate careers for their future and recognized the importance of guidance and counseling services at all levels of education. It recommended, among other recommendations, that, each school ranging from primary to tertiary should have at least one teacher responsible for Guidance and Counseling. The Guidance and Counseling Department of the Ministry of Education and Sports was established in 2008, after the re-structuring of the ministry, and charged with the duty of helping teachers in schools to ensure provision of guidance and counseling to the young ones; and help them think about their future occupations and guide them to select or opt for occupations, in which they would fit best; appropriate subjects or courses to pursue in order to realize these occupations, hence crucial Vocational education and personal guidance are all equally important (MOES, 2008). The overall objectives of the Department are to: Promote, support and ensure the provision of quality guidance, counseling including psychosocial services in the entire Education Sector; Sensitize all stakeholders and advocate for policies and strategies to effectively address issues of Guidance and Counseling, HIV/AIDS and other psychosocial concerns in the entire Sector, Develop and maintain an up to date National Data Bank and Information System on the issues/status of Career Guidance, Counseling, placement of school leavers, HIV/AIDS and other psychosocial trends, and services in schools so as to guide decision making and advice to stakeholders; and Initiate and coordinate the provision of Guidance and Counseling in schools/institutions.

Key functions of the department include to: Develop policies, strategies, plans and guidelines for the implementation and provision of Guidance and Counseling services; Carry out advocacy, sensitization and information dissemination programmes; Ensure training and retraining/refresher programmes for teacher counselors and other stakeholders to ensure that G&C is effectively provided in schools; Advise on and ensure provision of appropriate materials in respect to G&C service provision. Initiate and conduct workshops, seminars for in-service teachers/tutors and other practicing personnel.

Other functions are to: Guide and support any initiative for promoting G&C services. Provide linkages with organizations and other bodies in the region and internationally. Establish an information/data bank on psychosocial and career information. Conduct research and studies on career guidance, and counseling services and to coordinate placement of students at various levels of education (MOES,2008). All school teachers should be able to play the role of counselor to their pupils. However effective Guidance and Counseling requires that teachers are trained and grounded in the principles and practice of child counseling. The counseling program should be able to do the following: Developmental Guidance; develop, coordinate, and implement various programmes that foster development of children in all areas of life as well as preventive interventions for HIV/AIDS, STIs; pregnancy, delinquency control. Individual Pupil's Academic Planning and Performance: Working hand in hand with teachers of all subjects through participation, collaboration, and consultations to provide relevant support for pupils' individual planning and development. Responsive Services: Support services should be provided to pupils

in need through individual and small group Guidance and Counseling interventions, crisis intervention, parent out-reach, consultation, referral, to mention but a few. Systems Support: Put mechanisms in place for various activities that can support the aims of school's Guidance and Counseling services. Examples include conducting workshops for parents and staff, documentation through research or data collection, community outreach/sensitisation, and program continuity. Counselors are also in a key mediation position with an advocacy role for pupils and the staff, families, and outside child (referral) agencies. According to the State University Encyclopedia (2012), School counselors help to make learning a positive experience for every student. They are sensitive to individual differences. They know that a classroom environment that is good for one child is not necessarily good for another. Counselors facilitate communication among teachers, parents, administrators, and students to adapt to the school's environment in the best interests of each individual student. (State University Encyclopedia, 2012). Although the roles of school counselors vary among settings, common tasks include individual counseling, small-group counseling, large-group or classroom presentations, involvement in school wide behavior plans for promoting positive and extinguishing negative behaviors, and consulting with teachers, parents, and the community. Therefore, counselors in secondary schools must cultivate positive attitude in teachers and students about counseling services. They must exhibit and possess the required talents in order to be in position to lead students to self –actualization. Literature is awash with reports on strikes, student unrest, examination malpractices, absenteeism, drug abuse and bullying (Directorate of Educational Standard DES, 2008, 2009; Ocoromach, 1999; Seburimage, 1998; Uganda National Examinations Board [UNEB], 2005, 2006). According to DES. (2008) AND MOES (2008), one of the reasons for this trend of events is that learners' needs are not attended to in time. It is pertinent to ask: To what extent are guidance and counseling services used to align student behavior to the code of conduct. The MOES has put in place measures to strengthen guidance and counseling services in education institutions in Uganda. It has, for example, created a fully fledged Department of Guidance and Counseling in the ministry, developed reference materials for teachers, conducted workshops, strengthened monitoring and supervision, and developed policies and guidelines to address psychosocial difficulties experienced by school children (MOES, 2010; Ssenkuma, 2010). Despite these efforts, there has been an escalation of indiscipline among secondary school students in Uganda, Mbale Municipality inclusive. According to a research survey, a lot of students are involved in different acts of indiscipline in public schools of Mbale municipality, for instance in Mbale S.S on 12/11/2014 there was a case of vandalizing electrical gadget in the hall by students of S.S 3, in Mbale High School also a case of drug abuse was recorded on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2014, where students of Senior five were involved in kuba drug abuse, and also in Nkoma S.S a student fought with his teacher on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2013 as a result of clearance card.

### **Research questions**

- i. What are the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of counselors' vocational services in secondary schools in Mbale Municipality?
- ii. What are the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of counselors' educational services in Mbale Municipality secondary schools?
- iii. What are the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of counselors' personal/social services in secondary schools in Mbale Municipality?

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Research Design**

Research design is the plan or structure of an investigation, or a study, employed in order to obtain answers to research questions. In this study, the researcher adopted descriptive survey study design. Avoke (2005) citing Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996), indicated that descriptive survey research in education involves collection of information from members of a group of pupils, teachers or other persons associated with educational issues and it permits the researcher to gather information from a large sample of people relatively quickly (Ary, Jacobs and Rezavieh, 2002).

### **Population of the study**

Population refers to any collection or specified groups of human or non-human entities, educational institutions, geographical locations, time units etc. from which data is collected. This study involved all

the teachers of government schools in Mbale municipality, as the population of the study. There are 3 government schools whose total population is 310 teachers see table 3.1 below. This population served as the aggregate items from which the sample of the study was drawn, thus constituting the entire collection of data to which the study results were generated.

**Table 1. Sample size and sample technique**

	Population	Sample size	Sampling techniques
Schools	3	3	Census inquiry
Teachers	310	165	Simple random sampling
Total	313	165	

**Sample size of the study**

A sample refers to the part of a population that is carefully chosen for an intensive study and whose result is taken to represent the population of the study. In the case of this study, the sample involved all the three (3) government schools of Mbale which includes 165 teachers, who were targeted with the guide of a sample selection procedure from Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table as cited by Amin (2005). It is used to determining sample sizes for research activities from a given population.

**Sampling technique**

Simple random sampling was used to select teachers who constituted the sample that was used in the study, since all the teachers are involved in the teaching-learning process. And the essence is to get general knowledge of how they perceive effectiveness of counselors in their school.

**Procedure of data collection**

The researcher acquired a written introductory letter from the Dean of faculty of education of Islamic university in Uganda introducing the researcher to the respondents. He sought permission from the head teachers, the objectives and the purpose of the study were explained to the respondents. And the assurance of confidentiality to respondents, and their right to withdraw at their wish at any moment were guaranteed.

**Data Analysis**

At the end of data collection, all the completed questionnaires were thoroughly edited, organized, and processed by the researcher. All research questions required descriptive statistical tools (frequency and percentage) as well as mean and standard deviation were used and computed the level of perceptions of the respondents either positive or negative. The researcher coded the responses on likert-scale from 1-5, strongly agree 1, Agree 2, Undecided 3, Disagree 4, Strongly disagree 5. The researcher used the statistical package for social Science (SPSS) to help in analyzing the data. The questionnaire items were turned into frequencies and analyzed using descriptive statistics frequency, percentage, Mean and standard deviation.

**Table 2: Counselor supports students in acquiring and applying strategies for study habits**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	28	23.3	23.3	23.3
A	44	36.7	36.7	60.0
U	15	12.5	12.5	72.5
D	9	7.5	7.5	80.0
SD	24	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that 28(23.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that counselor supports students in acquiring and applying strategies for study habit, 44(36.7%) agreed upon that, and 15(12.5%) were not sure, while 9(7.5%) disagreed with the statement and 24(20.0%) strongly disagreed with that statement. This means that 72(60.0%) agreed with the statement, and 15(12.5) were not sure of it, while 33(27.5%) disagree with the statement. Compared to number of those who agreed, it implies that counselors support students in acquiring and applying strategies for study habits in Mbale municipality government schools. The result is positive since the mean appeared as 2.64, and SD 1.437. And the findings are similar to that of Nyan, who conducted her research on students and teachers' perceptions. The study revealed a moderate positive relationship between teacher-students' perception, resource availability, talent availability and counseling services in secondary schools. From the study findings it was concluded that teacher-students' perception, were positively related with counseling services in secondary schools.

**Table 3: School counselor provides guidance to students on how to resolve conflicts**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	18	15.0	15.0	15.0
	A	72	60.0	60.0	75.0
	U	9	7.5	7.5	82.5
	D	12	10.0	10.0	92.5
	SD	9	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 above shows that 18(15.0%) strongly agreed that school counselor provides guidance to students on how to resolve conflicts, 72(60.0%) agreed upon that, but 9(7.5%) were undecided, while 12(10.0%) disagreed with that, and 9(7.5%) of them strongly disagreed. This indicates that 90(75.0%) of the respondents agreed upon the statement, while 9(7.5%) were undecided on it, but 21(17.5%) of them disagree with that statement. Basing on the majority who agreed, implies that counselors provide guidance to students on how to resolve conflicts. The mean is 2.35, and SD 1.090, which implied that on this item also teachers had positive perception on the statement. The study was supported by a research conducted by Odongo and Njiru(2010) in Nyalenda secondary school in Kisumu, Kenya.

**Table 4: School counselor provides individual counseling to students experiencing romantic relationship problems**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	SA	18	15.0	15.0	15.0
	A	40	33.3	33.3	48.3
	U	31	25.8	25.8	74.2
	D	11	9.2	9.2	83.3
	SD	20	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Based on table 4 above, it shows that 18(15.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the item, 40(33.3%) agreed, while 31 (25.8%) of them were unsure, 11(9.2%) disagreed, and 20(16.7%) strongly disagreed with the statement. This shows that 58(48.3%) of the respondents agreed that counselor provides individual counseling to students experiencing romantic relationship problems, 31(25.8%) were

undecided, while 31(25.9%) disagree with that statement, compared to those who agreed implied that counselor provides individual counseling to students experiencing heterosexual relation problems in government senior schools Mbale municipality. The mean is 2.79, and SD 1.289 which implied that many teachers' perception on the statement is positive. These findings were supported to a research conducted by Zaluquet (2005) who studied 500 principals' perception on counselors role in the State of Florida US.

**Table 5: Provides individual counseling to students on HIV/AIDS issues**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	33	27.5	27.5	27.5
A	58	48.3	48.3	75.8
U	9	7.5	7.5	83.3
D	1	.8	.8	84.2
SD	19	15.8	15.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 above was indicating that 33(27.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that counselor provide counseling to students on HIV/AIDS issues, 58(48.3%) agreed on that, but 9(7.5%) were undecided, but 1(.8%) disagreed, and 19 (15.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement. The table 4.34 presented that 91(75.8%) of the respondents agreed with the item, while 9(7.5%) of them were not decided on the item, but 20 (16.6%) of the respondents disagree with the statement, which indicated that due to higher number of those who agreed. Counselors provide individual counseling to students on HIV/AIDS issues in government secondary schools, Mbale municipality. Mean 2.29, SD 1.318, which explained that teacher's perception on this statement is positive

**Table 6: Facilitates students in understanding themselves**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	28	23.3	23.3	23.3
A	66	55.0	55.0	78.3
U	3	2.5	2.5	80.8
D	8	6.7	6.7	87.5
SD	15	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 above shows that 28(23.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that counselor facilitates students in understanding themselves, and 66(55.0%) agreed on that, but 3(2.5%) were undecided, while 8(6.7%) disagreed, and 15(12.5%) strongly disagreed with the statement. Which indicates that 94(78.3%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 3(2.5%) out of them were undecided and 23(19.2%) of them disagreed with the statement, which implied that counselors facilitate students in understanding themselves in those schools. The mean is 2.30, SD 1.254 and none of the respondents was missed, via the mean of the finding indicated that general perception of teachers is positive. And the findings was supported to a research conducted by Zaluquet(2005) who studied 500 principals' perception on counselors role in the State of Florida US.

**Table 7 : School counselor engages students in problem solving**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	26	21.7	21.7	21.7
A	74	61.7	61.7	83.3
Valid U	4	3.3	3.3	86.7
D	6	5.0	5.0	91.7
SD	10	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows that out of the respondents, 26(21.7%) strongly agreed that school counselor engages students in problem solving, 74(61.7%) agreed upon that, while 4(3.3%) were not sure, but 6(5.0%) disagreed, and 10(8.3%) strongly disagreed with that statement. This indicated that 100(83.4%) agreed with the statement, , and 4(3.3%) of them were undecided, but 16(13.3%) of the respondents disagree which implied that counselors engage students in problem solving in Mbale municipality government schools Uganda. And the mean is 2.17, SD 1.087, which shows that teachers had positive perception on the statement. And the research was in line with that of Beesley who studied 300 K-12 teachers in United States of America. Where he found that counselors' strength were most clearly seen and best utilized when there were more opportunities to perform classroom guidance lessons, facilitate individual counseling or group sessions, provide consultative/collaborative activities, and work with special education services to meet the needs of all students.

**Table 8 : Summary of mean and standard deviation of objective three of the study. Teachers' perception of the effectiveness of personal/social services of a counselor in schools**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
School counselor provides guidance to students on how to relate with one another	120	2.03	.835
School counselor engage students in problem solving	120	2.17	1.087
Provides guidance to students on sexuality education	120	2.23	1.193
Provides group counseling on how students should conduct themselves before elders	120	2.27	1.193
Provides individual counseling to students on HIV/AIDS issues	120	2.29	1.318
Facilitates students in understanding themselves	120	2.30	1.254
School counselor provides guidance to students on how to resolve conflicts	120	2.35	1.090
The school counselor assists students to deal with psychological problem	120	2.60	1.279
School counselor provides guidance to students on how to relate with strangers/visitors	120	2.63	1.341
School counselor provides individual counseling to students experiencing heterosexual relationship problems	120	2.79	1.289
Valid N (listwise)	120		

**Table 9: Cumulative mean and standard deviation of teachers' perception of effectiveness of personal/social services of counselor**

N	Valid	120
	Missing	0
Mean		2.3658
Std. Deviation		.70669

Table 9 shows the cumulative Mean and standard deviation of objective three of the study, which answered the research question three that says: What are the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of personal/social services of counselors in government secondary schools Mbale municipality?

From the presentation above it revealed that all the 120 respondents are valid non is missing, and the cumulative mean of the findings are (2.3658) which implied that the general perceptions of teachers on objective three of the study is positive perceptions, and the standard deviation of the findings (.70669) which is low implying that respondents had similar views and opinions about the findings. And the finding shows that counselors' role in personal/social services are effective in government secondary school Mbale municipality. And study was backed with that of Mikaye(2012) who studied influence of guidance and counseling on students' discipline in Kenyan public secondary schools, kabondo division Kenya. The study findings revealed that guidance and counselling services were offered in the schools and 82.4% of the principals considered it important. From the literature review it is found that character formation is achieved through intense formal and informal programmes for guidance and counselling. It is through guidance and counselling that students remain disciplined and focused in life. Collins (2002) as cited by Mikaye (2012 ) also indicates that through guidance and counseling students are assisted to be disciplined and become able to deal with challenges and realities they face in their academic, social and physical environment.

## CONCLUSIONS

### Objective one

Conclusively based on the findings of objective one of the study it is clear that teachers perceptions of effectiveness of counselors in objective one are positively, since the mean of the findings is (2.5052) and it is above average, this indicated that vocational/career choice counseling are effective in such schools and majority of the teachers agreed on that.

### Objective two

On the issue of objective two of the study which aimed to explore teachers' perception of educational services in their schools, the result of the findings revealed (2.4152) as the mean of the study, which implied that teachers perceptions on educational services of counselors in their schools were positive, meaning that counselors educational services conducted in those schools were effective.

### Objective three

The last objective of the study also that sought teachers to rate the counselors' effectiveness in personal/social services in their schools, the Mean of the study shows (2.3658), meaning that teachers had positive perceptions on counselors services' in personal/social issues, and it is a clear indication that counselors' personal/social services were effective in those schools.

The finding is similar to that of Beesley (2004) who studied 300 k-12 classroom teachers in United States, about their perceptions of effectiveness of counselors in their schools; who's overall findings revealed that teachers were satisfied with their school counseling services and reported strength in several areas. These areas included classroom guidance, individual and group counseling sessions, consultation and coordination of special education services.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Objective 1: Teachers' perception of the effectiveness of counselors' vocational services.

- i. Though the findings showed positive perception of the effectiveness of counselors among the teachers of Mbale government schools, still there is need to assign professional counselors to oversee counseling services in all Ugandan schools, because in some schools the counselors were untrained.
- ii. There is need to strengthen the issue of orienting students on the importance of guidance and counseling in all schools, because of his great impact to them.

### Objective 2: Teachers' perception of the effectiveness of counselors' educational services.

- i. There is need to give chance to professional counselor to be in charge of counseling unit.
- ii. School counselor should remain only on counseling students, that is should not be assigned a class to teach.
- iii. Individual counseling needs to be given consideration with the aim of helping students facing educational problem.
- iv. School counselors should consider classroom guidance for the purpose of reminding students of their obligations.

### Objective 3: Teachers perception of the effectiveness of counselors' personal/social services.

- i. School manager or head teacher should help and give chance to school counselors in helping those students facing psychological problems in their schools.  
This study covered factors such as teachers' perception of the effectiveness of vocational services of counselors, teachers' perception of the effectiveness of educational services of counselors, teachers' perception of the effectiveness of personal/social services of counselors in Mbale municipality.

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