INFLUENCE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING ORIENTATION SERVICES ON LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AMONG SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MUDUUMA SUB-COUNTY, MPIGI DISTRICT. A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.

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Abstract
Background
Guidance and counseling services are a set of comprehensive programs and interventions designed to support individuals in their personal, social, educational, and career development. The study aims to assess the Influence of guidance and counseling orientation services on life skills development in secondary schools in Muduuma Sub-county, Mpigi District.

Methodology
A cross-sectional study utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative component involved obtaining graphs, and charts. Simple Random Sampling and Purposive Sampling were used.

Results
(56.1%) of the respondents were male while (43.9%) were female. The mean score for participants' belief in the importance of the guidance and counseling Orientation services for personal development was M = 3.98 (SD = 0.981). Participants' satisfaction with the information provided during the guidance and counseling Orientation services yielded a mean score of M = 3.44 (SD = 1.218). Participants indicated a mean score of M = 3.34 (SD = 1.146) for the effectiveness of the guidance and counseling Orientation services in addressing their specific needs and concerns. The guidance and counseling Orientation services were perceived as effective in preparing participants for academic challenges, with a mean score of M = 3.66 (SD = 1.249). The perceived effectiveness of the guidance and counseling Orientation services in enhancing well-being and overall development had a mean score of M = 3.49 (SD = 1.136).

Conclusions
Individuals who held a more favorable view of the Orientation services were also more likely to report higher levels of life skills.

Recommendations
The study recommended that the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Ministries of Education should, through District Education Officers (DEOs) and inspectors, encourage head teachers to enhance Orientation services quality and consistency.

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Background
Guidance and counseling services are a set of comprehensive programs and interventions designed to support individuals in their personal, social, educational, and career development. Counseling and guidance services aim to help individuals address various challenges, make informed decisions, and develop the necessary skills and competencies for their overall well-being and success (Dr. Paula Paixão et al., 2018). Guidance and counseling services assist individuals in addressing challenges they may encounter throughout their lives. These services offer a supportive and non-judgmental environment where individuals can explore their concerns, receive guidance, and develop problem-solving skills. By helping individuals make informed decisions, these services empower them to navigate obstacles and make choices that align with their goals and aspirations.

Historically, counseling in schools has primarily focused on academic guidance and career development. However, starting in the mid-20th century, there was a growing recognition of the importance of addressing the social and emotional needs of students. This led to the integration of counseling services that emphasized personal and interpersonal growth, along with academic success. The American School Counselor Association has played a significant role in advocating for comprehensive school counseling programs to support students' overall well-being (Dr. Paula Paixão et al., 2018). However, it's important to note that the situation

in Uganda may differ from that of the United States. Each country has its unique educational context, cultural norms, and policy frameworks. While the United States has made significant progress in advancing counseling services in schools, the availability and implementation of such services in Uganda may face different challenges and may be at various stages of development. It would be necessary to consider the specific context of Uganda's schools and their efforts to provide guidance and counseling services.

In Latin America, the perception of guidance and counseling services in primary schools has also changed. Different countries in the region have recognized the importance of providing comprehensive support for students' personal and social development. Counseling programs in Latin American primary schools aim to enhance students' life skills, such as decision-making, problem-solving, communication, and emotional intelligence. Some countries have also integrated counseling and guidance services into their broader educational policies to ensure a holistic approach to student development (HIA Americas Workshop, 2010). In my view, the specific historical development and perception of guidance and counseling services in primary schools can vary within each region and between individual countries. To obtain more detailed and up-to-date information, it was recommended to consult scholarly research articles, educational policy documents, and reputable sources focusing on the specific countries of interest. The study aims to assess the Influence of guidance and counseling orientation services on life skills development in secondary schools in Muduuma Sub-county, Mpigi District.

Methodology
Research Design
A cross-sectional study. Initially, quantitative data sources were collected and organized into tables or charts, providing a foundation for the subsequent qualitative data collection and analysis. The qualitative data was gathered, allowing for a deeper exploration and understanding of the research topic. Finally, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data sets were combined and integrated to inform the final interpretation of the research outcomes.

Research Approaches
The researcher utilized a mixed research approach for this study, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative research component involved obtaining comprehensive descriptions of the phenomena by directly capturing respondents' narratives, opinions, and suggestions. This entailed reviewing and analyzing relevant documents. On the other hand, quantitative data was collected in numerical form and presented through tables, graphs, and charts. This numerical data was interpreted alongside the qualitative narratives provided by the respondents, allowing for a comprehensive and integrated analysis of the research findings.

Study population
The study population entailed students in Muduma sub-county; Mpigi district with a total population of 30403 and a target population of 161 (UBOS, 2020).

Sampling Techniques
The sampling techniques below were used while taking samples;

Simple Random Sampling
Respondents were selected without considering their background knowledge about the subject under investigation. Each of the respondents was sampled randomly to provide a wider opportunity for respondents to contribute opinions and suggestions about the progress of guidance and counseling life skills in their organization and community.

Respondents such as teachers and learners are to be sampled randomly without following their background knowledge of the guidance and counseling or life skills.

Purposive Sampling
Here respondents were sampled with a bias. Their background knowledge of the subject matter was first confirmed before involving them. These include parents, opinion leaders, and community elders. References leading to these respondents were obtained from students, teachers, or parents.

Study Samples

Table 1: A summary of this sample size

Key Participants	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Headteachers	3	3	Purposive
Teachers	28	15	Simple Radom
Learners	130	97	Simple Radom
Total	161	115	

The respondents were accessed from communities of Mpigi, especially in Muduuma Sub-county.

Determining Sample Size

The sample size was developed using Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967) for inferential statistical data. Thus by substituting the above data into the formula below;

N = Population size: n = Sample size: e = Degree of precision
= 115

Primary Data

Primary data was gathered using interviews and questionnaires set in the English language. Primary data was used to derive quantities, suggestions, and opinions of respondents. Data was organized and correlated to conclude.

Secondary Data

Secondary data was gathered from texts that are useful to this study and was followed by a document checklist. This unearthed fact cannot be obtained using interviews and questionnaires but from other scholars. Thus, journal articles, reports, and online documents were analyzed.

Data collection methods

Data collection methods play a crucial role in gathering information for research studies. In this context, three commonly used data collection methods are questionnaire surveys, interviews, and documentary reviews.

Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire survey involves administering a set of structured questions to a targeted group of individuals. Questionnaires can be delivered in various formats, such as online, paper-based, or face-to-face interviews. This method was used because it allows for the collection of data from a large number of respondents. Closed-ended questions with predetermined response options are typically used, making data analysis and comparison relatively straightforward. Questionnaire surveys are useful for obtaining information on attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and demographic characteristics.

Interviews

Interviews involve direct interaction between the researcher and the participant, allowing for in-depth exploration and understanding of the research topic. Interviews can be conducted in person, over the phone, or via video conferencing. They provided an opportunity for participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and insights in their own words. Interviews can be structured (with predetermined questions), semi-structured (with a flexible question guide), or unstructured (allowing for free-flowing conversation). Interviews are particularly effective for gathering rich qualitative data and exploring complex phenomena.

Documentary Review

Documentary review involves the systematic analysis of existing documents or records relevant to the research topic. These documents can include reports, articles, books, policy documents, organizational records, or historical archives. Researchers review and analyze these sources to extract relevant information, identify patterns or themes, and gain insights into the research area. Documentary reviews were valuable for gaining historical context, verifying information, and supplementing primary data collection methods. It was especially useful in social science and humanities research.

Data Collection Instruments

The research employed questionnaires, interviews, and document reviews were instruments for collecting data. These have been briefly explained below;

Questionnaires

The researcher organized both structured and unstructured questionnaires to capture responses. These had both open-ended and closed-ended questions to enable the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires were used to collect data from participants who can read and write. Ample space was provided for respondents to reply to these questionnaires without being influenced. Questionnaires were used because they leave a traceable record of responses and respondents can reply to them at their convenience.

Interviews

Interviews were used because they enabled the researcher to have one-on-one interactions with the respondents, asking questions and meditating about the scenario surrounding a response. An interview guide was drawn to enable orderly questioning but within the scope of the objectives of the study. Respondents responded to the interview on free will. Therefore, they were requested to respond and those willing participated. Respondents who were not able to read and write also participated in the interview process. The questions presented during interviews were translated in the local language, Luganda for respondents who are strained by the English language. An interview guide was used to guide the process of data collection.

Documentary Review checklist

Documents were gathered using a document checklist and reviewed according to the objectives of the study. These included sources such as the internet, articles, and journals. The data collected in these documents were quoted citing the reference within this research. A document checklist was employed in collecting this data.

Data Quality Control
Validity of the Instruments

The research instruments were tested for content validity. The instruments were given to three experts in the field

of research and mostly in the education sector to rate the relevance of the items. These experts included the research supervisor and some research methodology lecturers at Nkumba University. The results of their judgments were analyzed to find the CVI. This was done by using the Content Validity Index (CVI) obtained by the formula;

$$CVI = \frac{\text{No. of items judged relevant by all the judges X } 100}{\text{Total number of items}}$$

The tools would be valid if the CVI of 0.5 or above is attained as illustrated in Table 3.2

Table 2: Degree of Accuracy (Construct Validity Test)

Interpretation	Mean Range
Not Acceptable	Below 0.50
Acceptable	0.50 to 0.699
Good	0.70 to 0.799
Great	0.80 to 0.899
Superb	Above 0.90

Source: Polit (2006)
50/54 = 0.870

The Content Validity Index was found to be 0.870 for all the items on the questionnaire and interview guide combined. Thus the questionnaire was considered valid given that a CVI of at least 0.8 was considered great in measuring validity.

Reliability of the Research Instruments
The researcher ensured the reliability of qualitative data by recording accurate facts, responses, observations, and events. The reliability of quantitative data was obtained by the pre-test method. Here the instruments were administered to a small number of respondents 1 month before the actual study. The researcher then computed the reliability of the variables using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 computer software to find Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The results of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient on each were above 0.70 for the instruments to be reliable. Pretesting also helped to show the clarity of the instrument. Unclear instructions, wrong numberings, and similar questions were corrected and modified before the instruments were administered to the actual sample.

Table 3 Reliability

Variable	Cronbach Alpha Value
Counselling orientation services	.801
Counselling information services	.722
Counselling services	.834
Life Skills Development	.811

Source: Primary data, 2023

According to Cronbach (1950), a coefficient alpha of 0.7 and above was considered adequate. From the results all the Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from .722 to .834, therefore meeting the acceptable standards.

Research Procedure
The researcher ethically followed procedures to get to the aforementioned respondents. An introduction letter was obtained from the School of Education (SEDU) and presented to community members and school management to be allowed to access respondents. The researcher had a university identity card to prove that she belonged to Nkumba University.

Ethical Consideration
The researcher kept maximum confidentiality of responses from the field and therefore did not have a pane in the interviews or questionnaires requiring respondents to indicate their names. The researcher did not delegate the work of collecting data to any enumerator or agents but conducted interviews about guidance counseling and life skills herself. This self-assignment proceeded to stages of data analysis, conclusion, and recommendation. The researcher continued following the data collection tools at each instance of data collection, referencing or citing quotations. The quotations were cited in Quotes and presented in Italics.

Privacy
Privacy in research involves safeguarding the confidentiality and personal information of participants. It encompasses protecting the privacy rights and sensitive data provided by participants during the

research process. The study established protocols to handle and store data securely, ensuring that unauthorized individuals do not have access to participants' personal information. Respecting privacy involves using appropriate data protection measures, such as encryption, password protection, and restricted access to data.

Anonymity

Anonymity refers to the protection of participants' identities. When research is conducted with anonymity, the researcher ensures that the participants' identities cannot be linked to their responses or data. This was typically achieved by removing any identifying information or assigning unique identifiers to participants instead of using their names. Anonymity provides participants with a sense of safety and confidentiality, as their responses cannot be traced back to them.

Data Analysis Procedure

The baseline data obtained from interviews and questionnaires were analyzed sequentially.

Content analysis

Data analysis was collected on tools, entered in Word and excel documents, edited, and coded accordingly. It was then analyzed to obtain the most filtered and meaningful information relating to the objective under study. This analysis followed the themes derived right from the set objectives of the study.

Qualitative Data analysis

Qualitative data was analyzed by normal data processing by identifying the responses that were relevant to the research problem and within each theme. Responses were quoted directly from tools and presented within the data.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data was collected from questionnaires, entered in the spreadsheet, and correlated to obtain frequencies and mode ranges. Quantitative data analysis involves the process of transforming numerical data into meaningful insights and conclusions. These were later presented in the form of tables, graphs, and charts. The study used the techniques used in quantitative data analysis below:

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to measure the central tendency to provide a summary of the main characteristics and features of the data. Measures such as mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and frequency distributions were used to describe and summarize the data while,

Inferential Statistics: Inferential statistics were used to help draw conclusions or make inferences about a larger population based on a sample. Techniques such as hypothesis testing, confidence intervals, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine whether there are significant differences, relationships, or patterns in the data.

Area of the Study

This study was concentrated in primary schools located in the Muduuma Sub-county of Mpigi District of Uganda.

Results

Response Rate

The study used a questionnaire and an interview guide to collect data from respondents. The study considered 115 respondents as the sample. A total of 97 questionnaires were distributed among respondents and 18 interviews were arranged. However, questionnaires distributed and interviews arranged were not all attended to by some respondents as indicated in table 4.

Table 4: Study Response Rate

Tools			Frequency	Percentage
1.	Questionnaires	Distributed questionnaires	97	100%
		Returned questionnaires	82	84.5%
2.	Interviews	Arranged interviews	18	100%
		Carried out interviews	14	80%

Source: Primary Date (2023)

Table 4 indicates that out of the 115 respondents, a total of 96 respondents participated in the study. This makes a response rate of 843%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2010), a response rate of 50% is adequate, 60% is good and above 70% is very good. Therefore, the study response rate of 84.3% is considered sufficient for the study. In addition, the researcher is confident that the results from the high response rate are representative of the target population. Some respondents' failure to participate in the study can be attributed to the busy schedule of their tasks.

Table 5: Gender

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	46	56.1
	Female	36	43.9
	Total	82	100.0

Primary data (2023)

Table 5 shows that the majority of participants were male (56.1%), while the remaining participants were female (43.9%). The gender distribution is somewhat skewed toward males in this sample.

Table 6: School Section

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Boarding Section	44	53.7
	Day section	38	46.3
	Total	82	100.0

Primary data (2023)

Data findings in Table 6 reveal that in terms of the school section, a slight majority of participants were from the boarding section (53.7%), with the remaining participants being from the day section (46.3%).

To analyze the influence of guidance and counseling orientation services on life skills development in secondary schools.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Guidance and Counselling Orientation Services on Life Skills Development

	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am familiar with the guidance and counseling Orientation services offered in this school.	3.49	1.045
I believe that the guidance and counseling Orientation services are important for students' personal development.	3.98	.981
I am satisfied with the information provided during the guidance and counseling Orientation services.	3.44	1.218
The guidance and counseling Orientation services effectively address students' specific needs and concerns.	3.34	1.146
The guidance and counseling Orientation services prepare students well for the challenges they may face in their academic journey.	3.66	1.249
I find the guidance and counseling Orientation services informative and helpful in making decisions about my academic and personal life.	3.66	1.229
I actively engage and participate in the guidance and counseling Orientation services sessions.	2.83	1.404
The guidance and counseling Orientation services are effective in enhancing students' well-being and overall development.	3.49	1.136
I feel comfortable discussing my academic and personal concerns with the guidance and counseling facilitators during the Orientation services	2.73	1.572
Valid N (listwise)		

Primary data (2023)

Participants reported a mean familiarity score of M = 3.49 (SD = 1.045) with the guidance and counseling Orientation services. This suggests a moderate level of familiarity with the services, with a relatively low degree of variability in participants' responses. One of the major themes from the thematic analysis in the interviews was that of awareness as some respondents reported that:

In this school, an orientation session is an activity that helps the new student get familiar with the new environment. This activity helps to inform students about their right to access all guidance and counseling services as required, to advise students to seek guidance and counseling in case the need be, and to inform the students about the availability of those services and the places of operation (KII, 2023).

These findings imply that guidance and counseling orientation inform students of the available services and

that it is the student's right to access those services in the school.

The mean score for participants' belief in the importance of the guidance and counseling Orientation services for personal development was M = 3.98 (SD = 0.981). This indicates a generally high level of perceived importance, with responses clustering closely around the mean. Participants' satisfaction with the information provided during the guidance and counseling Orientation services yielded a mean score of M = 3.44 (SD = 1.218). The relatively high standard deviation suggests notable variability in participants' satisfaction levels, despite the moderate average satisfaction reported.

Participants indicated a mean score of M = 3.34 (SD = 1.146) for the effectiveness of the guidance and counseling Orientation services in addressing their specific needs and concerns. This indicates a moderate perception of effectiveness, accompanied by some variability in responses.

The guidance and counseling Orientation services were perceived as effective in preparing participants for academic challenges, with a mean score of M = 3.66 (SD = 1.249). Variability in responses is reflected in the standard deviation, suggesting that while the average perception is moderate, individual opinions vary. This finding is supported by some findings from the interviews such as one informant who reported under the theme of **addressing challenges**:

The orientation sessions create room for students to be aware and overcome the challenges they are meeting in their lives, that is, the students will be knowledgeable on how to handle their difficulties as far as studies are concerned (KII, 2023).

Another respondent commented that:

Being that students have different challenges where solutions to each problem are different, orientation sessions may be effective depending on one's need and the particular challenges at a particular time. So, the orientation services ensure students to seek counseling services at any point when it is needed (KII, 2023).

These findings imply that the orientation services inform and equip learners with what possibly they will meet during their study time and prepare them with what they will need to about that.

Participants reported finding the guidance and counseling Orientation services informative and helpful in decision-making, with a mean score of M = 3.66 (SD = 1.229). The standard deviation indicates variability in participants' perceptions, despite the moderate average agreement.

Participants' level of active engagement and participation in the guidance and counseling Orientation services sessions yielded a mean score of M = 2.83 (SD = 1.404). The standard deviation highlights substantial variability in participants' levels of engagement, even though the average engagement is moderate. One of the interviewees in answering a question reported under the theme of **Motivation**:

The guidance and counseling orientation services motivate and encourage the students to understand what they need to achieve their targeted goals in their academics. The students will study effectively no matter the difficult situations (KII, 2023).

The perceived effectiveness of the guidance and counseling Orientation services in enhancing well-being and overall development had a mean score of M = 3.49 (SD = 1.136). This suggests a moderate perception of effectiveness, accompanied by variability in participants' responses. Participants' comfort level in discussing academic and personal concerns with the guidance and counseling facilitators during the Orientation services was reported as M = 2.73 (SD = 1.572). The wide standard deviation indicates substantial variability in participants' comfort levels, despite the moderate average comfort reported.

Correlation analysis between the orientation services and life skills development among students

The correlation analysis examined the relationship between participants' perceptions of the guidance and counseling Orientation services and their reported life skills. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the strength and significance of these relationships.

Table 8: Correlation between Guidance and Counselling Orientation Services and Life Skills Development

		Orientation Services	Life Skills
Orientation Services	Pearson Correlation	1	.232*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.036
	N	82	82
Life Skills	Pearson Correlation	.232*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	
	N	82	82

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Primary data (2023)

Participants' perceptions of the Orientation services were positively correlated with their reported life skills (r = .232, p = .036). The correlation coefficient suggests a modest positive relationship between the two variables.

This finding indicates that individuals who perceived the Orientation services more positively were also more likely to report higher levels of life skills. The correlation between participants' perceptions of the Orientation services and their reported life skills was statistically significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The finding suggests that a favorable view of Orientation services is associated with higher levels of life skills among students. This finding underscores the potential synergies between effective guidance and counseling programs and the development of essential life skills. Educational institutions can leverage this insight to not only enhance students' perceptions of their support services but also to foster the acquisition of practical life skills that are crucial for personal growth and future success.

DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate a notable relationship between participants' perceptions of guidance and counseling Orientation services and their reported life skills. The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant, modestly positive relationship ($r = .232$, $p = .036$) between these two variables. This suggests that individuals who held a more favorable view of the Orientation services were also more likely to report higher levels of life skills. These results emphasize the potential synergy between effective guidance and counseling programs and the development of essential life skills among students.

Educational institutions should not only aim to enhance students' perceptions of these services but also recognize them as a valuable platform for the acquisition of practical life skills. By integrating life skills education within the guidance and counseling framework, schools in Nigeria can better prepare students to face the challenges they encounter in their personal and academic lives, ultimately contributing to their holistic development (John, 2015).

Furthermore, the research findings indicate that while participants generally perceived the guidance and counseling Orientation services positively, there was notable variability in their responses regarding satisfaction, engagement, and comfort levels during these sessions. This variability underscores the importance of tailoring orientation services to the diverse needs and preferences of students. By adopting a more personalized approach and addressing individual concerns, educational institutions can potentially enhance the effectiveness of these services in fostering life skills development. Moreover, it highlights the need for continuous evaluation and improvement of the orientation process to ensure that it remains relevant and beneficial to students. Collecting regular feedback from participants and adapting the services accordingly can contribute to a more comprehensive and impactful support system, aligning with the broader goal of preparing students for personal and academic success.

Conclusions

Individuals who held a more favorable view of the Orientation services were also more likely to report higher levels of life skills emphasizing the potential synergy between effective guidance and counseling programs and the development of essential life skills among students

Recommendations

The study recommended that the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Ministries of Education should, through District Education Officers and inspectors, encourage head teachers to enhance Orientation services quality and consistency.

List of Abbreviations

ASCA   American School Counselor Association
HIA   Health Impact Assessment

Conflict of interest

The author did not declare any conflict of interest.

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