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Emerging School Guidance Counselor Roles in the New Normal Secondary Education Landscape

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the emerging roles of secondary school guidance counselors in selected private secondary schools in Dagupan City, Pangasinan, within the new normal educational landscape, using the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS) domains and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model as organizing frameworks. A descriptive quantitative design was employed, with ten (10) school guidance counselors and guidance designates purposively selected as respondents. Data were gathered through a modified, validated self-assessment questionnaire (content validity index = 3.72; Cronbach's alpha = 0.87) and analyzed using weighted means. Results showed an overall weighted mean of 3.97 across the four SCARS domains, interpreted as Often, with Collaboration and Consultation rated highest (4.22, Always) and Career Development rated lowest (3.56, Often); Curriculum and Individual Planning (4.17) and Responsive Services (4.05) were both interpreted as Often. Among the factors influencing role performance, administrative workload (3.67) and large caseloads (3.60) were rated Influential, while the overall factor mean of 2.95 was interpreted as Moderately Influential. Findings indicate that guidance counselors regularly perform their expanding roles but continue to face structural constraints in staffing, resources, and professional development. A three-year development plan addressing capacity building, structural integration, and sustainability is proposed to strengthen the delivery of guidance services in the new normal secondary education context.

Keywords: *school guidance counselor, emerging roles, SCARS, new normal education, descriptive research*

INTRODUCTION

Across education systems worldwide, school guidance counselors are recognized as key stakeholders in fostering academic performance, career readiness, and psychosocial development. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019) identified that school counselors operate within three primary domains, namely academic development, social or emotional development, and career development. Despite the formal recognition of these roles, role ambiguity remains a persistent concern in school counseling practice. DeKruyf et al. (2013) observed that counselors often experience unclear role expectations, which limit the effective application of their professional training. In addition, Chandler et al. (2018) reported that increasing administrative responsibilities further constrain counselors' ability to focus on developmental and preventive services.

Recent changes in secondary education have expanded the scope of school counseling practice. Savitz-Romer et al. (2021) emphasized that counselors have assumed greater responsibility for crisis response and student well-being as schools respond to evolving learner needs. In line with this shift, the

American School Counselor Association introduced guidelines for virtual counseling to support digital service delivery and student access to counseling programs (ASCA, 2020).

In high-performing education systems, counselor roles are embedded within clearly defined institutional structures. The Ministry of Education in Singapore institutionalized career counseling and socio-emotional support as part of the national curriculum to ensure continuity of guidance services across grade levels (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2018). In Finland, counselors function as members of student welfare teams that focus on early identification and intervention (OECD, 2021). Lee and Park (2019) documented how South Korea strengthened school-based mental health services by deploying counselors with specialized preparation for academically demanding environments.

In Southeast Asia, the implementation of school guidance services remains uneven. SEAMEO INNOTECH (2017) reported that although guidance services are widely acknowledged as important, many education systems have not fully institutionalized counselor roles within national education policies. Tan (2020) further noted that in some schools, counselors continue to perform clerical or disciplinary tasks, which weakens the developmental orientation of guidance programs.

In the Philippine setting, school counseling is anchored on the Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004, which defines licensed guidance counselors as facilitators of learning, mental health advocates, and career development professionals (Republic Act No. 9258). Due to the shortage of licensed practitioners, the Department of Education authorized schools to appoint guidance designates through DepEd Order No. 77, s. 2009. Benigno (2017) observed that these designates are frequently assigned multiple academic and administrative duties, reducing their capacity to perform core counseling functions. Similarly, Hilts et al. (2019) emphasized that excessive workload limits the effectiveness of school-based guidance services.

In Dagupan City, data from the Schools Division Office (2024) indicated that many secondary schools rely on teaching personnel assigned as guidance designates due to the absence of licensed counselors. These personnel commonly manage student referrals, behavioral concerns, and welfare-related issues despite limited formal preparation in counseling practice, and the absence of standardized evaluation mechanisms further contributes to fragmented and reactive guidance services. Llego (2021) reported that in several regions, one licensed counselor may serve multiple schools, or counseling duties are assigned to untrained personnel, leading to inconsistencies in service delivery.

Given these conditions, the present study assesses the emerging roles of secondary school guidance counselors in Dagupan City. Guided by the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale framework, the study examines how counselor roles are performed across academic, career, and social or emotional domains (Scarborough, 2005). The findings aim to provide evidence-based inputs for role clarification, policy improvement, and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen school guidance services in Philippine secondary education.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the core principles of school guidance and counseling as articulated in educational psychology and comprehensive school counseling literature, which emphasize a structured, developmental, and responsive support system designed to promote the holistic growth of learners (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). According to Sink (2005), the structured principle refers to the systematic organization of guidance programs with defined objectives, roles, and procedures; the developmental principle underscores that counseling support must be continuous and age-appropriate; and the responsive principle emphasizes the capacity of guidance services to address immediate student concerns as they arise.

The ASCA National Model (2019) builds on these principles by defining school counselors' roles across three interrelated domains: academic development, career readiness, and social or emotional support, and by promoting proactive, preventive, and developmental interventions supported by ethical practice, data-informed decision-making, and stakeholder collaboration.

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

In the Philippines, the professional practice of school guidance and counseling is anchored on Republic Act No. 9258, the Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004, which defines licensed guidance counselors as qualified professionals responsible for facilitating student development, advocating learner welfare, and collaborating in school-wide interventions. Complementary DepEd issuances, including DepEd Order No. 77, s. 2009, DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2012, DepEd Memorandum No. 207, s. 2003, and the Basic Education Development Plan 2030, further define and support guidance service delivery at the school level.

Grounded in these theoretical and policy foundations, the study adopts the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS) as an evaluative framework for examining the actual roles performed by secondary school guidance counselors in Dagupan City, and uses the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model as its research paradigm: inputs such as counselor profile, policy standards, and institutional conditions are processed through counseling activities and practices to produce outputs related to role performance and program outcomes, with a feedback mechanism informing future improvements in policy implementation, role clarification, and capacity-building.

Literature Review

Emerging Roles of School Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors in the 21st century operate in a role that transcends traditional academic advising, with holistic student development now a central focus integrating emotional, social, academic, and career domains (Sink et al., 2015). The ASCA (2019) model positions school counselors as leaders in equity and institutional transformation, emphasizing student advocacy and systemic change.

Contemporary literature organizes this expanded mandate around four themes that structure the present study. In career development, recent literature emphasizes continuous career development support across grade levels rather than limiting it to senior-level interventions, particularly in preparing students for uncertain labor markets (ASCA, 2019). In collaboration and consultation, counselors are increasingly expected to engage in data-driven planning and policy-making alongside school leadership teams (Zyromski et al., 2019; Levy & Lemberger-Truelove, 2021), while inclusive, culturally responsive practice is called for to affirm student identity and foster a safe school climate (Pope & Reynolds, 2016). In curriculum and individual planning, digitalization has reshaped counselor responsibilities: virtual platforms and data-informed interventions enhance student engagement and extend accessibility, requiring digital fluency (Hatch & Powers, 2016). In responsive services, Perryman (2025) emphasized the counselor's role as trauma responder, especially in marginalized communities, with trauma-informed practice now embedded in conceptual frameworks for counselor behavior and institutional readiness.

Across these domains, professional identity and role clarity remain recurring concerns, with counselors frequently experiencing tension between historical expectations and emergent responsibilities; continuous professional development and institutional policy alignment are recommended to address this tension (Zyromski et al., 2019; Selna, 2023). Regional literature further identifies interdisciplinary competencies, spanning social work, educational psychology, and digital communication, as increasingly necessary across East and Southeast Asian school settings.

The New Normal Education Context

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a pivotal shift in the educational landscape, requiring guidance counselors to transform how services are planned, delivered, and sustained. Unlike traditional face-to-face models, the new normal necessitates virtual and asynchronous modalities, with the counselor's role expanding to include digital facilitation, home-school coordination, and online crisis response.

In the Philippine setting, several schools have institutionalized virtual check-in systems, locally known as "e-Kumustahan," typically conducted through Zoom, Google Meet, or Messenger, to maintain continuity of emotional support (Manaois et al., 2023; Mababa & Fabella, 2023). Social media platforms

ISSN: 3116-3475
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of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

have likewise been used for disseminating motivational messages, career announcements, and emergency response content (Hernandez, 2024; Obrero & Pascua, 2025), while asynchronous tools such as Google Forms support psychological first-aid screening and weekly check-ins at scale (Gidaya, 2023). Counselors are also increasingly engaged in pandemic response units, child protection committees, and virtual student support teams, reflecting an organizational-level evolution of the counselor's role (Guzman Dunn, 2025), with hybrid service delivery allowing continuity across varying accessibility needs (Hernandez, 2024; Dela Cruz, 2021).

This digitization introduces heightened ethical responsibility, requiring compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and careful navigation of consent protocols for minors (Obrero & Pascua, 2025; Lopez & Santos, 2021). Counselors also face increased psychosocial demands, with many reporting burnout and emotional fatigue; institutional support mechanisms such as peer mentoring and wellness sessions are considered critical for counselor sustainability (Abad, 2022).

Empirical Findings on Role Performance

In career development, Sink et al. (2015) found comprehensive school counseling programs most effective when addressing academic, personal-social, and career domains simultaneously, and Whiston et al. (2017) demonstrated through meta-analysis that school counseling significantly improved academic and behavioral outcomes; Lapan et al. (2017) linked fully implemented programs to higher graduation rates. In the Philippine context, Crespo et al. (2018) and Mendoza and Santos (2020) identified effective practices despite systemic barriers such as high caseloads and administrative overload.

In collaboration and consultation, Borders and Drury (2016) and Crespo and Clark (2019) emphasized structured program implementation, consistent evaluation, and inclusive strategies for diverse student populations. Philippine-based research found that counselors frequently collaborate with teachers, parents, and administrators, though these roles are often informally assigned and under-recognized in institutional policy (Gonzalez & Rivera, 2020; Ferree, 2022).

In curriculum and individual planning, Lee and Whitson (2017) confirmed that counselor-led group sessions significantly improved students' socio-emotional skills, with program effectiveness linked to structured, developmentally aligned counseling models (Villalba & Baez, 2020). Dionaldo (2024) found that Philippine counselors engage in academic advising and individualized planning despite high student-to-counselor ratios and limited digital resources.

In responsive services, Villalba and Baez (2020) reported that many U.S.-based counselors lacked adequate preparation for mental health needs, and Peterson (2019) documented a shift toward trauma-informed care. Philippine studies found that counselors routinely implement behavior modification plans, wellness initiatives, and peer mediation, often without explicit recognition in institutional workload assessments (Gonzalez & Rivera, 2020; Dionaldo, 2024).

Studies specific to the new normal context reported difficulties with abrupt transitions to virtual platforms and counselor mental health concerns (Smith et al., 2020), resource scarcity and rising service demand (Jones & Williams, 2021), and adaptive online-delivery strategies (Lee & Kim, 2020). In the Philippines, Gonzalez and Rivera (2020) identified a dual burden of limited institutional support and rising student mental health needs, while Lopez and Santos (2021) and Mababa and Fabella (2023) reported high levels of emotional fatigue alongside emotional resilience and role expansion. Gonzales and Corral (2023) documented role overload and institutional fragmentation, and Manaois et al. (2023) described a redefinition of professional identity marked by adaptability alongside ethical concerns and limited institutional support.

Taken together, the reviewed literature indicates that school guidance counselors perform emerging roles across career development, collaboration and consultation, curriculum and individual planning, and responsive services, roles that have expanded significantly under new normal conditions, even as institutional support, workload, digital readiness, and counselor well-being continue to shape how

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International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

consistently these roles are performed. These findings support the need to examine the emerging roles of school guidance counselors and the factors influencing their performance within the Philippine secondary education setting.

Statement of the Problem

This study endeavored to analyze the emerging roles of school guidance counselors at the secondary level in the new normal educational landscape, with the aim of promoting quality and relevant guidance services for students. Specifically, it sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the extent of performance of the emerging roles of the Secondary School Guidance Counselors based on the following SCARS domains: (a) career development; (b) collaboration and consultation; (c) curriculum and individual planning; and (d) responsive services?
2. What factors influence the performance of the emerging roles of secondary school guidance counselors based on the aforementioned SCARS domains?
3. What development plan can be proposed to improve the performance of the emerging roles of secondary school guidance counselors in the new normal educational landscape?

Assumptions of the Study

This study was guided by the following assumptions:

1. The roles of secondary school guidance counselors are clearly defined across the SCARS domains and are expected to align with both institutional mandates and national policy standards.
2. School guidance counselors are expected to perform expanded roles in the new normal, adapting their services to meet students' evolving needs.
3. The actual performance of school guidance counselors is influenced by multiple internal and external factors.
4. Gaps may exist between expected and actual roles of guidance counselors as assessed using the SCARS.
5. The proposed development plan can be crafted to strengthen the implementation of school counseling programs, clarify role expectations, and enhance the overall effectiveness of guidance services.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive survey method to examine the roles, practices, and challenges experienced by school guidance counselors in the current educational setting. The approach enabled the researcher to collect quantifiable information without manipulating variables. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive research describes the characteristics of a population or phenomenon, focusing on the what, where, when, and how rather than the why. In this study, the survey method enabled the researcher to document and analyze the perceptions and experiences of school guidance counselors, aiming to generate a comprehensive account of the current and emerging roles of guidance counselors in responding to students' academic, social, and emotional needs within the evolving educational environment.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in private secondary schools in Dagupan City, Pangasinan, a highly urbanized educational center in Region I that hosts a significant number of long-established and mid-sized private secondary schools serving diverse student populations. Compared with public schools, private secondary schools in Dagupan City commonly assign guidance responsibilities to designated personnel and

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

implement guidance services at the school level, allowing examination of counselor functions in relation to professional standards and institutional practices.

Ten (10) private secondary schools were purposively selected based on enrollment size, continuity of guidance services, and willingness to participate, ensuring that the findings are applicable to urban private secondary school settings with similar institutional conditions in the Philippines.

Table 1. *Profile of Respondent Private Secondary Schools in Dagupan City (SY 2024-2025)*

School Name	Reported Enrollment
University of Pangasinan	756
St. Albert the Great School	486
St. John's Cathedral School	819
University of Luzon	360
Genesis School of Happy Kids Advanced Studies	350
Northfield Academy	389
Escuela de Nuestra Señora de La Salette	356
St. Michael School	789
Prime Brilliant Minds Academy	370
Ednas School	337

N = 10 schools, one guidance counselor or designate per school.

Respondents of the Study

The study involved ten (10) school guidance counselors and guidance designates from the selected private secondary schools, purposively identified based on the presence of assigned guidance personnel and the implementation of school-based guidance services. Enrollment size for School Year 2024-2025 was considered only as a contextual indicator of school size and not as a measure of the number of respondents. From each participating school, one (1) officially designated guidance counselor or guidance designate served as the respondent, ensuring that the data reflected the actual professional experiences and role performance of individuals directly responsible for guidance services within their respective institutions.

Research Instrument

The main instrument was a modified self-assessment questionnaire based on the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005) and the ASCA National Model (2019), adapted to the purpose and local setting of the present study. SCARS categorizes school counseling activities into five domains — counseling, consultation, curriculum, coordination, and non-guidance activities — and the instrument used here revised several item statements, adjusted role descriptions, and excluded non-guidance activities to focus only on functions directly related to school guidance counseling, guided by the DepEd Service Manual, relevant DepEd Orders, and RA 9258. The ASCA National Model informed the conceptual alignment and classification of counselor roles across the academic, career, and social-emotional domains rather than being adopted directly.

The instrument consisted of two parts. Part I comprised ten (10) items measuring the extent of role performance across four domains — Career Development, Collaboration and Consultation, Curriculum and Individual Planning, and Responsive Services. Part II consisted of ten (10) items determining the factors influencing role performance, addressing institutional and work-related conditions such as caseload size, administrative workload, resource availability, leadership support, student engagement, and emotional demands.

A two-phase validation process was conducted. First, content validation was carried out by two (2) licensed school guidance counselors from private secondary schools outside Dagupan City, yielding a Content Validity Index of 3.72, indicating high content relevance (Polit & Beck, 2006). The instrument was

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

then pilot tested with three (3) school guidance counselors outside the study locale; Cronbach's alpha analysis produced a coefficient of 0.87, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured approval from the Dean of the Graduate School to ensure the research protocol and instruments complied with institutional research requirements and ethical standards. Formal email communication was then sent to the designated guidance counselors of the selected schools. Upon approval, the researcher administered the modified survey through Google Forms to the selected respondents. After completion, responses were retrieved, consolidated, and subjected to data analysis in accordance with the study's objectives.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data from the completed questionnaires were treated using the mean, consistent with the study's descriptive quantitative method. For sub-problem 1, the mean determined the frequency with which counselors performed their expected roles; for sub-problem 2, the same tool assessed the extent of challenges encountered. Each Likert-scale response was assigned a value from 5 (Always) to 1 (Never), following the recommended scaling method for perception-based instruments (Calmorin & Calmorin, 2007). The following scales were used to interpret the computed means throughout the Results section.

Table 2. *Scale for Interpreting Role-Performance Means*

Rating Range	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	**Always** — Consistently performed; sustained, systematic, and embedded in daily practice.
3.41 – 4.20	**Often** — Regularly performed; frequent and expected part of the role.
2.61 – 3.40	**Sometimes** — Performed intermittently, depending on need, time, or workload.
1.81 – 2.60	**Rarely** — Seldom performed; inconsistent or limited implementation.
1.00 – 1.80	**Never** — Not performed; absent from practice.

Table 3. *Scale for Interpreting Factor-Influence Means*

Rating Range	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	**Strongly Influential** — Consistently affects role performance.
3.40 – 4.19	**Influential** — Regularly affects role performance.
2.60 – 3.39	**Moderately Influential** — Sometimes affects performance.
1.80 – 2.59	**Slightly Influential** — Rarely affects performance.
1.00 – 1.79	**Not Influential** — No meaningful effect.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in compliance with ethical standards and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). The research protocol and the modified instrument were reviewed and approved by the Graduate Studies Office prior to data collection. Permission to conduct the study was formally requested through email communication explaining the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, and the data gathering process. Upon confirmation, respondents were provided an informed consent form explaining the study's objectives, assurance of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time.

Data were gathered through a self-administered online survey using Google Forms, sent directly to respondents through official school communication channels; respondents answered individually at their own convenience, with no enumerators or research assistants involved. Follow-up reminders were sent to ensure completion. All responses were treated with confidentiality; no personally identifiable information was collected, and data were stored securely and used solely for academic and research purposes.

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

RESULTS

Extent of Performance of Emerging Roles

Career Development

Table 4. *Extent of Performance of Emerging Roles as to Career Development (N=10)*

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
I guide students in exploring careers or post-secondary education options.	4.20	Always
I assist students in identifying their interests, skills, and values to support career planning.	3.87	Often
I provide students with resources and information on labor market trends and in-demand careers.	2.81	Sometimes
I conduct individual or group sessions focused on career goal-setting and decision-making.	3.79	Often
I guide students in exploring scholarship opportunities and financial aid options.	3.12	Sometimes
Overall Mean	**3.56**	**Often**

Table 4 shows an overall mean of 3.56 (Often) for Career Development. The highest-rated indicator was guiding students in exploring careers or post-secondary education options (M = 4.20, Always). Assisting students with career-related self-awareness (M = 3.87) and conducting career goal-setting sessions (M = 3.79) followed, both interpreted as Often. The lowest-rated indicators were guiding students on scholarship and financial aid options (M = 3.12) and providing labor market information (M = 2.81), both interpreted as Sometimes.

Collaboration and Consultation

Table 5. *Extent of Performance of Emerging Roles as to Collaboration and Consultation (N=10)*

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
I coordinate with school administrators and academic units to integrate guidance services for college and career preparation.	4.56	Always
I collaborate with teachers, parents, and school staff to support students with academic, behavioral, or emotional concerns.	4.67	Always
I collaborate with external partners (industry, colleges/universities) to offer career exposure opportunities.	3.42	Often
Overall Mean	**4.22**	**Always**

Table 5 shows an overall mean of 4.22 (Always) for Collaboration and Consultation. Collaborating with teachers, parents, and school staff recorded the highest mean (4.67, Always), followed by coordinating with administrators and academic units (4.56, Always). Collaboration with external partners such as industry and higher-education institutions was lower (3.42, Often).

Curriculum and Individual Planning

Table 6. *Extent of Performance of Emerging Roles as to Curriculum and Individual Planning (N=10)*

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
I assist students with academic goal-setting and planning.	4.33	Always
I conduct needs assessments or use data to identify student concerns.	4.13	Often

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
I organize student development programs such as webinars or workshops.	4.13	Often
I monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of counseling activities.	4.13	Often
I use student data to inform and improve my counseling practices.	4.13	Often
Overall Mean	**4.17**	**Often**

Table 6 shows an overall mean of 4.17 (Often) for Curriculum and Individual Planning. Assisting students with academic goal-setting and planning recorded the highest mean (4.33, Always); the remaining four indicators — needs assessment/data use, organizing student development programs, and monitoring and evaluating counseling activities — each recorded a mean of 4.13 (Often).

Responsive Services

Table 7. *Extent of Performance of Emerging Roles as to Responsive Services (N=10)*

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
I provide individual counseling for personal, emotional, or behavioral concerns.	4.07	Often
I facilitate group guidance or psychoeducational sessions.	4.00	Often
I coordinate referrals or interventions with external agencies.	4.07	Often
Overall Mean	**4.05**	**Often**

Table 7 shows an overall mean of 4.05 (Often) for Responsive Services. Providing individual counseling and coordinating referrals with external agencies were both rated 4.07, and facilitating group guidance or psychoeducational sessions was rated 4.00, all interpreted as Often.

Summary Across SCARS Domains

Table 8. *Summary of Extent of Performance Across SCARS Domains (N=10)*

SCARS Domain	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Career Development	3.56	Often
Collaboration and Consultation	4.22	Always
Curriculum and Individual Planning	4.17	Often
Responsive Services	4.05	Often
Overall Weighted Mean	**3.97**	**Often**

Table 8 consolidates the four domains. Collaboration and Consultation recorded the highest weighted mean (4.22, Always); Career Development recorded the lowest (3.56, Often); Curriculum and Individual Planning (4.17) and Responsive Services (4.05) were both interpreted as Often. The overall weighted mean across all domains was 3.97, interpreted as Often.

Factors Influencing Role Performance

Table 9. *Factors Influencing the Performance of Emerging Roles (N=10)*

Factor	Mean	Interpretation
My caseload is too large to provide personalized support.	3.60	Influential
I lack updated counseling resources and materials.	2.93	Moderately Influential
Students are hesitant or unwilling to seek help.	3.00	Moderately Influential

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

Factor	Mean	Interpretation
Administrative duties interfere with counseling work.	3.67	Influential
There is insufficient school leadership support.	2.60	Moderately Influential
Online/hybrid learning limited my reach and impact.	2.80	Moderately Influential
I receive limited opportunities for professional development.	3.07	Moderately Influential
The counseling program is not given priority in school planning.	2.73	Moderately Influential
There is a lack of mental health awareness among students and staff.	2.60	Moderately Influential
I experience emotional exhaustion or burnout from my counseling duties.	2.53	Moderately Influential
Overall Mean	**2.95**	**Moderately Influential**

Table 9 shows an overall mean of 2.95 (Moderately Influential) across the ten factors examined. Two factors were rated Influential: administrative duties interfering with counseling work (M = 3.67) and excessive caseload (M = 3.60). The remaining eight factors — limited resources, student reluctance to seek help, insufficient leadership support, online/hybrid learning limitations, limited professional development, low program prioritization, limited mental health awareness, and emotional exhaustion — were rated Moderately Influential, ranging from 2.53 to 3.07.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Role Performance by Domain

Career Development

The moderate overall performance in Career Development (M = 3.56, Often) aligns with existing literature indicating the need for stronger institutional support and external collaboration to enhance comprehensive career guidance (Mendoza & Santos, 2020; Bryan et al., 2020). Counselors demonstrate consistent engagement with fundamental aspects of career development, particularly advising students on educational and occupational options and supporting career-related self-awareness. However, the lower ratings for labor market information and scholarship guidance reveal limitations in access, institutional linkage, and resource capacity, echoing Mendoza and Santos (2020), who noted that Filipino school counselors recognize the importance of career guidance but face systemic and resource-related restrictions on delivering comprehensive programs. Bryan et al. (2020) similarly emphasized strengthened collaboration between counselors and external stakeholders as necessary for relevant career exposure, and Whiston et al. (2017) highlighted that effective career counseling depends not only on counselor expertise but also on institutional structures supporting proactive labor-market engagement. Taken together, these findings suggest a partial institutionalization of career development roles that would benefit from targeted capacity-building workshops, inter-agency linkage programs, and inclusion of career guidance planning in school development frameworks.

Collaboration and Consultation

The high overall rating for Collaboration and Consultation (M = 4.22, Always) aligns with literature positioning guidance counselors as systemic collaborators. Bryan et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of counselor engagement in multi-tiered systems of support, and Whiston et al. (2017) noted that student support systems are strengthened when counselors act as facilitators of partnerships. In the Philippine context, Gonzalez and Rivera (2020) pointed to the growing need for structured partnerships with higher-education institutions and industry players to address gaps in post-secondary transition planning — consistent with the comparatively lower rating observed here for collaboration with external partners (M = 3.42) relative to collaboration with internal stakeholders. This pattern suggests counselors are fulfilling

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

collaborative functions consistently within the school system, while linkages with community and industry sectors remain an area for strengthening, particularly for maximizing student career readiness in the new normal.

Curriculum and Individual Planning

The overall mean of 4.17 (Often) for Curriculum and Individual Planning affirms the need for data-driven, developmentally aligned guidance programming, consistent with Whiston et al. (2017), who noted that using student data to guide interventions contributes to improved academic outcomes and program accountability, and Bryan et al. (2020), who advocate integrating goal-setting and evaluation mechanisms into guidance practice. Locally, Mendoza and Santos (2020) highlighted the critical role of structured academic planning and student development programs in enhancing learner engagement in adaptive learning environments. The near-uniform 4.13 rating across four of the five indicators suggests a plateau in implementation intensity, possibly reflecting limited access to analytics tools or training in program monitoring — pointing to a need for professional development in data literacy, program design, and evaluation.

Responsive Services

The overall mean of 4.05 (Often) for Responsive Services is consistent with literature positioning school counselors as frontline providers of mental health and crisis support, especially in under-resourced contexts. Goodman-Scott et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of strengthening school-based mental health infrastructure, and Gonzalez and Rivera (2020) noted that while Filipino guidance counselors are responsive to students' psychosocial needs, such services are often delivered reactively and in isolation rather than as part of a structured mental health framework. The absence of an Always rating across indicators here may reflect gaps in institutional support, professional specialization, and policy-driven service protocols, pointing to the value of more structured referral systems, continuous capacity-building in trauma-informed practice, and formalized linkages with community-based health providers.

Cross-Domain Pattern

Across the four domains, collaboration and consultation emerged as the strongest area of performance, while career development was the least consistently implemented — a pattern consistent with Whiston et al. (2017), who noted that full implementation of multi-domain guidance programs depends on institutional infrastructure and access to external networks, and with Mendoza and Santos (2020), who observed that in the Philippine setting, role performance across guidance functions is shaped by disparities in staffing, training, and program prioritization. Bryan et al. (2020) further suggested that collaborative roles are more readily realized in settings with strong school-community partnerships, while instructional and individualized domains often require deliberate policy alignment and resource investment. This suggests a need for domain-specific capacity development so that career development and responsive services receive operational support and professional investment comparable to the more strongly performed domains.

Interpretation of Influencing Factors

The overall factor mean of 2.95 (Moderately Influential) suggests that institutional, professional, and contextual conditions occasionally hinder counselors' performance depending on situational factors, rather than constituting a uniformly severe barrier. The two factors rated Influential — administrative duties interfering with counseling work (M = 3.67) and excessive caseload (M = 3.60) — align with Mason et al. (2023), who found that as the complexity and expectations of school counseling programs intensify, counselors' time and energy are increasingly diverted to non-counseling administrative tasks, reducing capacity to support students. High counselor-to-student ratios have similarly been linked to burnout and

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 9 (September 2026)

diminished capacity for personalized guidance, with counselors frequently managing caseloads exceeding recommended levels (Um & Bardhoshi, 2024; Bardhoshi & Um, 2021).

Among the moderately influential factors, insufficient leadership support and outdated resources echo Goodman-Scott et al. (2022), who emphasized the need for enhanced training and resources to empower counselors in high-stress contexts. Student reluctance to seek help reflects broader societal stigma around mental health, a trend exacerbated by COVID-19 and remote learning (Hilts & Liu, 2023; Fitriyah, 2023). Emotional exhaustion and limited professional development, while rated moderately influential here, are flagged in recent scholarship as significant concerns: sustained emotional demands, multiple role expectations, and increasing administrative responsibility affect counselor well-being and service quality (Um & Bardhoshi, 2024), and when left unaddressed may erode counselors' capacity to sustain professional judgment and consistent support over time. This positions structured, continuous professional development as a necessary institutional support — strengthening coping strategies, updating competencies, and building resilience — rather than a supplementary activity.

Summary of Findings

Secondary school guidance counselors in the sampled private schools regularly perform their emerging roles under the SCARS framework, with an overall weighted mean of 3.97 (Often) across domains. Collaboration and Consultation is the most consistently performed domain (4.22, Always), followed by Curriculum and Individual Planning (4.17, Often) and Responsive Services (4.05, Often), while Career Development is the least consistently implemented (3.56, Often), particularly regarding labor-market information and scholarship guidance.

Factors influencing role performance were, on balance, moderately influential (overall M = 2.95), with administrative workload and caseload size standing out as the most consistently disruptive conditions. Other factors, including limited resources, student help-seeking reluctance, leadership support, professional development access, and emotional exhaustion, exert a situational rather than uniform influence on performance.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Secondary school guidance counselors consistently perform the emerging role areas within the SCARS domains, particularly in collaboration, academic guidance, and coordinated student support.
2. The emerging roles examined in the study were pre-identified from established frameworks and recent literature; the research focused on determining their level of execution rather than generating new roles through interviews.
3. Institutional enablers such as clear role definitions, administrative support, and manageable workload significantly influence the effective performance of these emerging roles.
4. Structural and professional constraints, including limited staffing, restricted professional development, and weak policy integration, continue to hinder the full realization of emerging counseling functions.
5. Emotional fatigue and psychological strain remain critical concerns, indicating the need for counselor well-being mechanisms to sustain effective guidance practice.

Recommendations

1. Institutionalize structured support systems that include clearly defined counselor roles, manageable caseloads, and the reduction of non-counseling tasks.
2. Conduct regular training aligned with SCARS and ASCA to strengthen core competencies and address emerging professional challenges.

3. Allocate sufficient budget for updated counseling tools, assessment instruments, and service resources to support effective program delivery.
4. Integrate counseling programs into the School Improvement Plan and Annual Implementation Plan to ensure alignment with institutional priorities.
5. Implement wellness and psychosocial support programs for counselors to prevent burnout and sustain professional effectiveness.
6. Adopt and periodically review a structured three-year development plan to support progressive and sustainable implementation of guidance programs.
7. Replicate this study in public secondary schools and in other geographic locations to determine the applicability of the findings across varied educational settings.

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