

Challenges Encountered in Guidance Services among Private Educational Institutions in Marinduque: Basis for a Comprehensive Guidance Program

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ABSTRACT

This research identified the challenges in implementing guidance services in private schools in Marinduque and proposed a Comprehensive Guidance Program. Following RA 9258 and RA 12080, the implementation of guidance services was inconsistent with the limitations in human, financial, and infrastructural resources. This research adopted a descriptive-correlational quantitative design. There were 324 respondents, composed of 300 Junior High School students and 24 guidance designates in 12 private schools. About 5 percent of each school's population of students were surveyed, from grades 7 to 10. The research utilized a researcher-made questionnaire, which was pilot tested and validated, and data were analyzed using percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Spearman's Rho. The research concludes that

institutional and structural factors were more correlated than students' profiles with guidance services in private schools. Most of the respondents were female, aged 14-17, and were in Grade 10. Guidance designates are mostly females with their tertiary or college education and years of experience, but without formal training in guidance, without institutional support, and with insufficient resource materials. The student-respondents confirmed that guidance services are available, but they were not sure if these services were good, responsive, and useful. To address these, students suggest the provision of adequate training for guidance designates, provision of the needed resources and facilities, pro-activeness of programs, and effective collaboration with stakeholders to guarantee a relevant service for all students. The study developed and proposed the Comprehensive Guidance Program that emphasizes training, provision of the required resources, collaboration, proactiveness, and relevance in order to make guidance services effective, utilized, and sustained.

Keywords: *challenges, comprehensive guidance program, counseling, guidance services*

INTRODUCTION

Guidance and counseling services have existed as an integral part of the educational system, contributing to students' total development and welfare. As used in the Rules and Regulations of Republic Act 9258 (Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004), guidance and counseling is a profession involving an integrated approach to the development of well-functioning individual mainly through enabling students to maximize their potential and plan his or her present and future life based on their ability, interests, and needs (Manila Standard, 2007 as cited in Villar, 2007). In this sense, guidance services are more than just personal advising or academic counseling—these are comprehensive interventions that facilitate the total learner's development.

Guidance services by Villar (2007) are a systematic and organized set of activities and interventions to enable students to know themselves, adjust to the environment, and make sound decisions for their lives. Dr. Villar

emphasized that a guidance and counseling program will be effective if it is developmental, preventive, and remedial in nature, geared to address the current needs of students while ensuring their long-term personal and social growth. However, Dr. Villar also revealed that the implementation of such programs in most Philippine schools is usually hindered by inadequate facilities, limited funding, and the shortage of professionally trained counselors—challenges that seriously weaken the responsiveness of schools to evolving emotional and psychological needs of students. In addition, counseling in the Philippines can be traced back to the 1920s, when faculty members served as counselors to students, indicating the early recognition of guidance as part of educational practice (Ros, 1965, as cited in Salazar-Clemeña, 1993, as cited in Bernardo, 2016) and according to Villar (n.d.) in her other study titled “Western Approaches to Counseling in the Philippines”, these approaches such as Behavioral, Gestalt, and Transactional Analysis were introduced in the 1970s and strengthened through training in major universities, broadening the practice of counseling in the Philippines.

As such, the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 12080, or the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act, requires the institutionalization of integrated mental health programs in all basic education schools. These are the School Mental Health Program, Child Protection Policy, and Guidance and Counseling Services, which collectively enhance students' psychological well-being, social resilience, and positive learning environment. Even with these national initiatives, however, the implementation of these programs remains inconsistent, especially in private educational institutions, where human and financial resources are usually limited. Together, these research and legislative bases show the necessity for integrated, developmental, and preventive guidance services. On the other hand, they do show continuing areas for improvement and implementation, especially in low-resource situations. It was from this research and legislation that the current study identified areas of interest: the adequacy of facilities, staffing of the services, and the level of services being delivered in private schools.

The problem is framed within the incomplete implementation of guidance and counseling services in the Philippines, especially in private schools, which, in practice, falls far from the comprehensive, developmental, and preventive approach espoused in the literature. While the strong legal mandates support the guidance and mental health programs, many schools still experience problems such as scarcity of facilities, inadequate financing, and a lack of professionally trained counselors. Thus, the guidance services are primarily reactive in nature and cannot properly address the students' academic, emotional, and psychosocial concerns. If the challenges of these students are not adequately addressed, then they will not receive sufficient psychosocial support, which will have implications for their academic performance, emotions, and personal development. Although there are national policies that will guide school services delivery, empirical research regarding the delivery and management of guidance and mental health services in the private school setting, especially at the provincial level, like in Marinduque, has scarce data. The challenges above have been said to be most evident in Marinduque, where the teachers who are non-specialists mostly assume the guidance roles, and such post-pandemic issues as absenteeism, anxiety, and burnout bring forth the pressing call for better systems for support. Based on these issues, this research centers on identifying the current status, challenges, and effectiveness of guidance services based on the implementation, resource, and student-centered nature of the guidance programs.

This study investigated how private schools in Marinduque provide and manage guidance and mental health services, identify challenges, and offer recommendations based on data. It is meant to help provide insights that bridge the gap between the national standards and actual practices on the ground for the further improvement of effectiveness, accessibility, and sustainability of guidance programs. In particular, this research is seeking to develop evidence-based understanding that would be used to shape policy and to help improve programs that are implemented in school-based guidance services.

The same challenges can be seen in the province of Marinduque. Few private schools have licensed full-time guidance counselors and instead entrust counseling responsibilities to teachers who have no formal training in guidance work. As a result, the guidance services are reactive rather than proactive, addressing discipline cases in favor of preventive and developmental measures. Recent studies by school administrators and educators indicate that in the post-pandemic era, there are high levels of student absenteeism, academic burnout, anxiety,

and social adjustment difficulties. These indicate the necessity for properly designed, well-funded, and equitable guidance services that not only tackle students' intellectual issues but also their emotional and mental health. It is clear from all these conditions that there is a gap between what policy makers anticipate and what is being practiced, and private schools (less-privileged ones) are at greater risk. It warrants an in-depth contextual study.

With these conditions, the researcher is motivated to conduct this study to establish the current status, challenges, and effectiveness of guidance services in private educational institutions in Marinduque. This research also sought to establish the comparison of current practices and national guidelines under R.A. 9258 and R.A. 12080, and to ascertain measures to improve the comprehensiveness, accessibility, and sustainability of guidance programs.

By addressing the identified gaps, the research aims to offer empirical data and policy suggestions that can guide administrators, guidance designates, and policymakers toward improving their mental health and counseling services. In the end, this research aspires to make Marinduque's private school guidance services responsive, comprehensive, and transformative, empowering students to become not just academically successful but emotionally resilient, self-assured, and responsible citizens.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to examine the status, challenges, and effectiveness of guidance services among private educational institutions in Marinduque.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Describe the demographic profile of the guidance designates and students.
2. Identify the challenges encountered by guidance designates in delivering guidance services.
3. Assess students' perceptions of the accessibility and effectiveness of these services.
4. Determine the relationship between the demographic profile of guidance designates and students and the perceived challenges, accessibility, and effectiveness of guidance services.
5. Propose essential and measurable components for developing a comprehensive guidance program that addresses the identified challenges.

Significance of the Research

The result of the study holds important implications for several key groups, including guidance designates, school administrators, students, and future researchers.

To Guidance Designates. The study provides them with a rich understanding of particular barriers and personal challenges they meet in the context of their role. The information would also be invaluable because it focuses on the areas where they are least likely to be trained or supported. Additionally, it gives them more powerful tools to promote the important changes in institutional and capital structures that can improve the quality and scope of their program. They can also improve their approach to meeting the various needs of students by being aware of the aforementioned challenges. Additionally, it helps administrators and counselors to create focused plans that tackle systemic and personal barriers, increasing the efficacy of the program as a whole. Additionally, it promotes ongoing professional development and reflective practice, which builds a more flexible and resilient guidance service.

To School Administrators. Institutional leaders and administrators can use the study's insightful observational data to inform their decision-making processes. This data will support the creation of evidence-based policies that will improve the guidance and education systems within the institution. Additionally, it supports the rationale for allocating a sufficient budget and capital with the express goal of enhancing that program. Ultimately, administrators are better positioned to foster a supportive environment that prioritizes the welfare of students and the professional growth of the guidance personnel. In order to improve organizational effectiveness and student services, the study also assists leaders in identifying systemic gaps and putting strategic interventions into place. In the end, administrators are in a better position to create a nurturing atmosphere that puts students' well-being and the guidance staff's professional development first.

To Students. Students will be directly impacted by the findings of the research, which emphasize the importance of enhancing students' access to effective and full-scale guidance programs. The same psychological and educational issues that face students need to be addressed in such programs. Students with more supervision are contented and better able to cope with personal as well as academic issues. In a supportive environment, students can excel academically, socially, and emotionally. Additionally, well-designed guidance programs can support students in gaining resilience, self-assurance, and critical life skills. Additionally, they increase motivation and a sense of belonging, which motivates students to actively participate in school and community events.

To Future Researchers. For academics and practitioners, the direction of the study is a useful cornerstone and makes an important point. It offers baseline statistics and findings that can inform and direct subsequent investigation activity, especially that concerned with an analogous regional scenario or a brightening backdrop. Scholars can draw on findings to extend into new areas, confirm outcomes, or construct interventions to further strengthen guidance programs. This cycle of analysis helps to establish a sound body of knowledge that strengthens the profession. The study also offers a framework for assessing the efficacy of current procedures and pinpointing areas in need of development. Additionally, it promotes cooperative research projects that unite theory and practice, leading to creative solutions in the guidance and counseling industry. This cycle of analysis contributes to the development of a solid body of knowledge that supports the field.

METHODS

This section describes the methods used to examine the challenges in the delivery of guidance services in private schools in Marinduque. This part includes research design, respondents, sampling procedure, research instruments, data collection, and treatment of data. This is the primary source of evidence, from which the researcher is allowed to analyze the different variables and construct a reasonable basis for a comprehensive and relevant guidance program.

Research Design/Research Instrument/Data Gathering Procedures

The present study utilized a descriptive-correlational quantitative research design to identify and analyze the challenges encountered in the delivery of guidance services among private educational institutions in Marinduque. The descriptive aspect of the study provided a clear profile of the guidance designates and students using percentages. In contrast, the challenges encountered in the implementation and utilization of guidance services were described using weighted mean and standard deviation. The correlational aspect determined the possible relationships between their demographic variables and the challenges they encountered through Spearman's rho correlation. In addition, mean, rank, and the Mann-Whitney U test were used to determine the significant differences in the respondents' perceptions when grouped according to gender. This research design was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to describe current conditions and examine associations among variables without manipulation or intervention.

The study involved three hundred twenty-four (324) respondents, composed of three hundred (300) students and twenty-four (24) guidance designates, from twelve (12) private educational institutions in Marinduque. The student respondents represented approximately five percent (5%) of the total Junior High School population in each participating school, with a total number of 300 students. Each participating school contributed a proportionate number of student respondents from Grades 7 to 10, along with their assigned guidance designates. Purposive sampling was used to ensure the inclusion of participants who were directly involved in or affected by the delivery of guidance services within their schools.

The primary data collection tool used in the study was a structured survey questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data. The instrument consists of three major parts:

Demographic profile of the respondents: This section captured key variables such as age, sex, grade level for students, educational attainment, years of experience, and professional status for guidance designates. These

variables were measured using both categorical and continuous formats to allow for correlation analysis with the study variables.

Challenges faced by guidance designates: Workload, role ambiguity, administrative support, available resources, and training adequacy were some of the variables this measured. A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," was used to evaluate the degree of difficulty for each indicator.

Perceptions of the guidance service's availability and usefulness by students: This section's items operationalize the following: perceived service availability, guidance staff responsiveness, intervention utility, and program satisfaction.

These too were measured on a 5-point Likert scale to enable quantitative analysis and correlation with demographic variables.

The research instrument underwent content validation first, whereby a panel of experts in the areas of guidance and counseling, psychology, and educational research reviewed the clarity, appropriateness, and relevance of the items. It was subjected to a pilot test to evaluate internal consistency and reliability, for example, by Cronbach's alpha, with the goal of refining the items for actual data collection, ensuring that it yields valid and reliable measurements of the key study variables.

Before data collection, formal approval was obtained from the President and Vice President of the Private School Association of Marinduque (PRISAM), and the administrators of the participating schools as well. Upon approval, the researcher administered the survey questionnaires personally to the respondents at an agreed-upon schedule. Respondents were then given an information sheet explaining what was expected during the study and informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and would involve signing an informed consent form that elaborated on the study aims, procedure, potential benefits, and (if any) drawbacks of participating, as well as stating that any responses given were completely anonymous and confidential. For the respondents who were underage to legally sign an informed consent form, children were also given an assent form explaining the study in an age-appropriate manner and confirming the child was willing to participate, and their parent/guardian completed the informed consent form. The completed questionnaires were retrieved, encoded, and arranged for statistical analysis.

Along with the survey, guidance designates, school heads, or a few chosen parents participated in semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. The purpose of these interviews was to offer deeper, more contextual insights into the challenges encountered when providing guidance services, the efficiency and usability of programs, and the institutional support offered.

Quantitative data collected were analyzed employing proper statistical methods, such as descriptive statistics, specifically percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation, to report the demographic profile of the respondents and describe the challenges encountered in the delivery of guidance services. Furthermore, mean rank and the Mann-Whitney U test were employed to determine the significant differences in the respondents' perceptions when grouped according to gender. At the same time, Spearman's rho correlation was utilized to identify the significant relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and the challenges faced in the implementation of guidance services.

Respondents/Units of Analysis/Subjects of the Study

The study involved two (2) categories of respondents: guidance designates and students. The guidance services consisted of coordinators or teachers designated to oversee the guidance services, who were directly accountable for organizing, enforcing, and measuring guidance initiatives and could provide significant perceptions of the challenges they face in their competent responsibilities. Meanwhile, students who remained selected for a number of classes are the main beneficiaries of the abovementioned support and may present their competence, performance, and relevance. There were three hundred twenty-four (324) respondents, composed of three hundred (300) students and twenty-four (24) guidance designates, from twelve (12) private educational institutions in Marinduque. The student respondents represented approximately five percent (5%) of the total

Junior High School population in each participating school, with a total number of 300 students. Each participating school contributed a proportionate number of student respondents from Grades 7 to 10, along with their assigned guidance designates.

The respondent's composition of the analysis ensured that the study takes into account both the competent challenges faced by the guidance designates and the life experiences of the student, giving a comprehensive understanding of the current state of guidance services in the province.

Sampling Design and Procedures

In the selection of respondents, purposive sampling was employed for both guidance designates and students, based on their direct involvement and experience in guidance services. Guidance designates must be officially assigned to handle counseling-related functions in their schools. At the same time, student respondents must be enrolled in Grades 7 to 10 and have prior interaction or familiarity with school guidance services. By excluding students who have not availed guidance services and employees who were not officially assigned to guidance roles, exclusion criteria protect data privacy and uphold ethical standards while inclusion criteria guarantee that participants have relevant availability, experience, and knowledge of guidance services.

Because it enabled the purposeful selection of participants who can offer the most pertinent and significant information regarding the difficulties and efficacy of guidance services, purposeful sampling was thought to be the most suitable sampling technique for this study. This method improved the accuracy of correlation analyses between demographic variables and perceived difficulties or service efficacy by statistically guaranteeing that the sample is representative of the population most directly affected by guidance programs. The reliability and validity of the results were weakened by using random sampling, which included participants with no relevant exposure.

This procedure was considered to be primarily suitable, as long as it enables the researcher to deliberately select guidance designates and students who were directly affected by the institution's guidance services. Focusing on this specific group ensured that the data gathered was directly related to the goals of the study and that the findings fairly represent the needs, perceptions, and experiences of those who were most involved in the delivery and use of guidance services.

Research Locale/Study Site

The research was conducted in twelve (12) private educational institutions located within Marinduque. These institutions, located in a different municipality, provided a variety of circumstances that enabled a thorough understanding of the challenges encountered in the guidance services to private institutions in the province.

Marinduque, as the locale of the study is called the "Heart of the Philippines" because of its outline and central location, is an island in the MIMAROPA Region composed of six Municipalities: Boac, Mogpog, Gasan, Buenavista, Torrijos, and Santa Cruz interlinked by a circumferential road grid. The province is home to a number of private educational institutions, ranging from basic to higher education, which complement citizens' educational institutions in terms of quality instruction and student services. The aforementioned private institutions are strategically located throughout the municipalities and play a key role in the development of students' personal growth. Beyond academic development, they also organize training and guidance counseling programs designed to support students' integrated welfare, creating those crucial stakeholders in the exploration of guidance services within Marinduque.

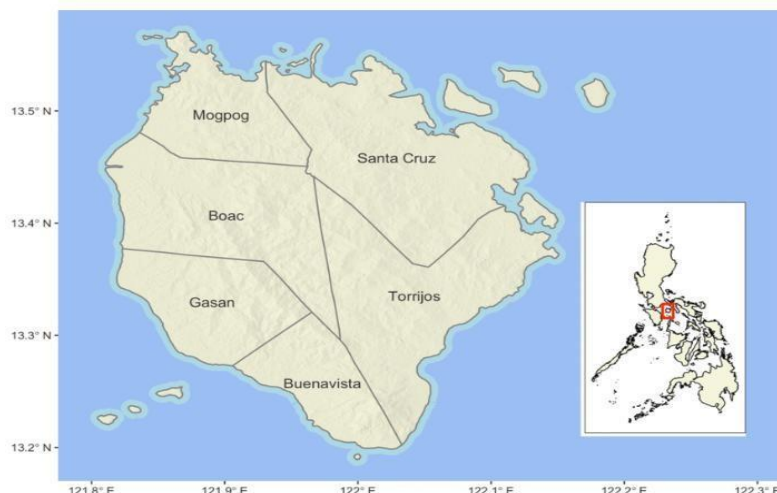


Figure 1. *Map of Marinduque, Philippines*

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Location-map-of-MarinduquePhilippines_fig1_328201241

Assumptions or Hypotheses

H₀: The demographic profile of guidance designates and students has no significant relationship with the perceived challenges, accessibility, and effectiveness of guidance services.

H₁: The demographic profile of guidance designates and students has a significant relationship with the perceived challenges, accessibility, and effectiveness of guidance services.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of guidance designates and students regarding the challenges encountered in the delivery of guidance services, as well as the accessibility and effectiveness of these services, when grouped according to their demographic profile.

H₁: There is a significant difference in the perceptions of guidance designates and students regarding the challenges encountered in the delivery of guidance services, as well as the accessibility and effectiveness of these services, when grouped according to their demographic profile.

Data Analysis Plan

The data gathered were assessed via both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation, were used to provide an overall description of the demographic profile of the guidance designates and students, as well as their feedback on the challenges in the provision of guidance services. Mean rank and the Mann–Whitney U test were utilized to determine if there were significant differences in the respondents' perceptions when grouped according to gender. Furthermore, Spearman Rho Correlation was employed to determine if there was a significant relationship between the respondents' demographic variables and the challenges encountered in the delivery of guidance services. All statistical calculations were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Trustworthiness of the Data

Trustworthiness in research means the reliability of data, interpretation, and procedures for guaranteeing the quality and dependability of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). In this quantitative research, trustworthiness was ensured through the guidelines of validity, reliability, and objectivity.

Validity

The research instrument was validated by an expert panel of guidance and counseling, psychology, and research to confirm that it is measuring what it is supposed to measure. Their responses were utilized to improve the questionnaire in terms of clarity, relevance, and accuracy. Pilot testing was also done to determine content validity and to ensure that the questions could be comprehended by the respondents.

Reliability

Reliability means the stability of the results of the instrument over time. The pilot test scores were tested for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to measure the internal consistency of the items. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above was acceptable in this research.

Objectivity

To preserve objectivity, all the data were processed using standardized statistical methods via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Personal bias in gathering data, analysis, and interpretation was avoided by the researcher to guarantee findings are a true representation of participants' responses.

Research Paradigm/Conceptual Framework

By clearly defining the important variables and the proposed relationships between them, this study uses a restructured conceptual framework rather than simply outlining procedural steps. The revised framework illustrates how the students' demographic characteristics, challenges encountered in guidance services, and students' perceptions of these services interact and influence the development of a responsive and context-based comprehensive guidance program. The independent variables in this framework consist of: Respondents' demographic profile (age, sex, grade level, etc.); challenges in Guidance Services (accessibility, availability, program adequacy, counselor responsiveness, etc.); and perceptions of students regarding the effectiveness, relevance, satisfaction, and ability of services provided.

The dependent variable, which is the particular needs and priorities necessary for an all-encompassing, holistic, and context-based guidance program, is thought to be greatly influenced and explained by these variables. The model's expected relationships demonstrate how students' perceptions of challenges and backgrounds affect how they assess the guidance services that are currently available. Together, these connections serve as a roadmap for identifying gaps and creating a better guidance program. As a result, this conceptual framework acts as a research road map, guiding the gathering, examination, and interpretation of data in order to comprehend how these factors interact to influence program development.

Figure 2. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of the respondents' data and its interpretation of demographics profile, encountered challenges by guidance designates, students' perceptions about guidance service, and shows the relationships and differences between each variable. The result and analysis served as the basis for the development of a comprehensive guidance program.

Part 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 details the students and guidance designate by age. In the case of the student respondents, the majority frequency group is the age range 14-17 years old (169 total individuals, or 52%). The next most frequent group is that of 10-13-year-old respondents (129 total individuals, or 40% of the students); only two students are within the age range of 18-21 (1%, or 2 total individuals). With respect to guidance designates, the majority frequencies of the age range 30-39-year-olds and the age range of 50 years and older both have seven total individuals each (2% of the students), and the frequency of the age range 40-49 years old has 6 respondents (2%). The minority group of guidance designates falls within the age range of 23-29 years old, with 4 total individuals (1%). Students are reported with a total number of 324 respondents, and guidance designates with a total of 30 respondents; all percentages for each group are taken from these numbers to provide a clearer understanding of the distribution of respondents from each designated group. All percents are calculated using the 324 number of respondents, and not from the numbers within each specific group of respondents (e.g., the total student count is 324, while the guidance designation count is 30); these percents are calculated based on the entire number of respondents that answered, and not on only that of students and guidance designates individually.

In summary, it appears that student respondents are largely in their early and middle adolescence. At the same time, the guidance designates are mostly older in age, reflecting the range of an inexperienced individual versus a moderately experienced teacher.

The results are fairly consistent with Villar et al. (2011) and Bustos (2016), but should not be considered a confirmation. The fact that the 14-17 group represents most of the students indicates that this stage of development has been the most studied on the topic of guidance, corroborating the affirmation of Villar et al. (2011), who argue that the age of the students influences how guidance services are perceived and used.

Likewise, the prevalence of 30-39 and 50 and above groups in the selection of guidance designates may be attributed to a higher degree of professional experience and maturity among the students, confirming the opinion of Bustos (2016) that age and professional experience influence the quality and reception of guidance services.

Table 2. Respondents' Distribution According to Gender

Type of Respondents	Categories	Frequency	Percent (%)
Students	Female	189	58
	Male	111	34
Guidance Designate	Female	21	6
	Male	3	1
	Total	324	100

The distribution of students by grade level is given in Table 3 and was arranged in descending order according to frequency to ease readability. The number of students distributed among the various grade levels of the 300 respondents was highest in Grade 10, with 87 students or 29%. Second highest was in Grade 8 with 80 students or 27%. The third highest was in Grade 7 with 70 students or 23%, and the fourth lowest was in Grade 9 with 63 students or 21%. The data appears to have a relatively uniform distribution among the grade levels. None

of the grade levels are in extreme contrast with each other, but grade level 10 is slightly higher in count than the rest of the levels. This would mean that the participants were not biased with regard to grade level.

Overall, these results support the claims of Villar et al. (2011) and Pastor (2020), but only as correlation and not as causation. Minor differences in distribution across year levels could have been caused by varying levels of access, availability, or use of services between students across the different year levels.

According to Villar et al. (2011), grade level can impact how guidance services are perceived and used by students, potentially explaining why participation across different grade levels varies. Likewise, Pastor (2020) pointed out that academic level could shape how students approach support systems within their school, which could account for why upper-year students, like Grade 10, appear slightly more likely to have had an encounter or involvement with surveys or similar school-related events. However, as with the previous points, these are merely interpretations and explanations and not direct causal relationships.

Table 3. Students' Distribution According to Grade Level

Categories	Frequency	Percent (%)
Grade 10	87	23
Grade 8	80	27
Grade 7	70	21
Grade 9	63	29
Total	300	100

Table 4 shows the distribution of guidance designates respondents in terms of educational attainment. The data show that all 24 respondents (100%) are bachelor's degree holders.

This consistency of result implies that the instruction texts that form part of this research fulfill the academic prerequisite necessary to be classified as such; nevertheless, it makes the comparison of responses across the various levels of education impossible. The results must thus be considered as reflecting the perceptions of only bachelor's degree holders.

The data is aligned with the Bustos (2016) and Yulianti et al. (2021) study. The data revealed that 24 out of 24 guidance designates (100%) have a bachelor's degree. The data is consistent with the previous studies; the level of education attained by counselors has a significant impact on counselor competence in providing guidance services.

Table 4: Guidance Designates' Distribution According to Educational Attainment

Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Bachelor's Degree	24	100
Total	24	100

The distribution of the type of guidance designate by number of years of teaching experience is given in Table 5, with frequencies presented in descending order from most to least. There are 15 respondents (63%) who have taught for between seven and ten years, the greatest proportion of the sample. After this, 5 respondents (21%) have taught for seven to ten years, 3 (13%) for one to three years, and only one respondent (4%) has taught for between four and six years. The general trend among the guidance designees is to have at least seven years of teaching experience, indicating that the sample has more experienced guidance personnel on average.

This would mean that the responses given will reflect personal experience more heavily, potentially leading to more insight, though it may be less representative of less experienced personnel.

Table 5. *Guidance Designates' Distribution According to Years of Teaching Experience*

Years	Frequency	Percent (%)
More than 10 years	15	63
7-10 years	5	21
1-3 years	3	13
4-6 years	1	4
Total	24	100

Part 2. Challenges Encountered by Guidance Designates in Providing Guidance Services

Table 6 represents the challenges perceived by guidance designates when providing guidance services. In this, weighted mean scores range from 3.17 to 4.33, which is interpreted as “Neutral to Strongly Agree”. It means that respondent generally agree on the existence of these challenges in their work practice. In this, there is variability in respondents' answers, the standard deviation values are from 0.702 to 1.527, which means that this varies depending on the workload of the guidance designates, their level of training, and the nature of the institution, etc.

There is a highest weighted mean among all indicators, which is 'lack of professional training' (WM = 4.33, Strongly Agree). This means that the respondent greatly perceives that the lack of professional training has been a significant barrier in terms of delivering and coping with a variety of concerns of the students. Therefore, it shows the importance of having training and education for the counselors to provide effective guidance services, where skills have been perceived to a great extent as determining whether the counselors can meet students' academic, personal, and socio-emotional needs. This is also supported by Bustos (2016) and Kilag et al. (2024), who provided bases and support for this research, and their study emphasized that the level of training, experience, and competencies has a strong influence on their function and services provided.

The majority of the indicators get an "Agree" weighted mean. It means that guidance designates generally acknowledges most institutional, environmental, and workload-based factors as true challenges: facilities, resources, students' caseload, parental involvement, problems in coordination, etc. It shows that not just capability, the function of guidance service highly depends on institutional and environmental structure, which includes the provision of proper resources, balancing workload, effective teamwork, etc.

However, there were two indicators that got Neutral, which are 'difficulty in coping with emotional problems' (WM= 3.38) and 'inconsistency in maintenance of confidentiality' (WM= 3.17). This means that they did not significantly perceive the two indicators as barriers in working practice, which suggests variations of experience and level of confidence in the group of guidance designates. In addition, this means that there is still a need for ongoing training on skills for counseling and ethics on professional practice so that they can effectively deliver their services to every student.

As such, the overall weighted mean score is 3.64, which is interpreted as “Agree”. The guidance designates agree that they have faced some challenges in guidance services. It should not interpret as 'positive perception', however, it provides evidence that there are some challenges that are commonly faced by the guidance designates and their response is mostly moderate that the challenges are consistently faced in work practice across a wide range of aspect of counseling tasks which emphasize the improvement of training, institution and resource provided as claimed by Bustos (2016) and Kilag et al. (2024).

Table 6. *Guidance Designates' Perception on Challenges Encountered in Providing Guidance Services*

Statements	Weighted Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. It is difficult to meet the varied needs of students due to a lack of professional training.	4.33	0.702	Strongly Agree
2. Insufficient facilities and equipment affect the delivery of guidance services.	3.92	0.974	Agree
3. I find it challenging to support students in their social transition within the classroom.	3.79	1.250	Agree
4. Inadequate resources and materials make it difficult to implement career guidance services.	3.79	1.250	Agree
5. It is challenging to address students' concerns when there is a lack of parental involvement.	3.71	1.301	Agree
6. The number of students assigned affects the quality of guidance services provided.	3.67	1.274	Agree
7. My teaching responsibilities limit the time I can devote to guidance services.	3.63	1.135	Agree
8. External factors such as peer pressure and social issues affect the effectiveness of guidance services.	3.54	1.382	Agree
9. My workload makes it difficult to allocate sufficient time for guidance services.	3.50	1.351	Agree
10. Limited institutional support affects the sustainability of guidance programs.	3.50	1.445	Agree
11. Coordinating guidance initiatives with administrators and teachers is challenging.	3.42	1.381	Agree
12. I find it difficult to address the emotional and personal concerns of my students.	3.38	1.527	Neutral
13. Maintaining confidentiality is challenging when handling multiple cases simultaneously.	3.17	1.435	Neutral
General Weighted Average	3.64	0.708	Agree

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Strongly Agree
 3.41-4.20 = Agree
 2.61-3.40 = Neutral
 1.81-2.60 = Disagree
 1.00-1.80 = Strongly Disagree

Part 3. Students' Perceptions of the Accessibility and Effectiveness of the Guidance Services

Table 7 shows that students have a moderate view of the accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services. The weighted means range from 2.80 (Neutral) to 4.36 (Strongly Agree). The standard deviations are within a moderate range, ranging from 0.575 to 1.128, indicating variability in the responses and student experiences on guidance services.

The most highly weighted item obtained by the students is "Improving the facilities, resources, and program will help the services be more effective" (WM=4.36, Strongly Agree). Students believed that for the service to be more effective, an institutional effort is necessary. This means that students believed that the effective delivery of guidance services is mainly an institutional response to their needs rather than a skill of the guidance

personnel. This is supported by the findings of Bustos (2016) and Kilag et al. (2024) that effective guidance services need enough support from the institution, competence of counselors, and sufficient resources in their program.

One of the highly weighted items the students strongly perceived is “Guidance designates are approachable and willing to help” (WM = 3.55, Agree). Students saw the value in being accessible and willing to help from the guidance designates in helping them cope and find answers. Bustos (2016) and Kilag et al. (2024) found that the availability and professionalism of counselors were seen by students in using the service.

However, some indicators are only "Neutral", like the confidentiality and students' satisfaction with the services they received (WM=3.20 and WM=3.13, respectively). The same perception on academic success through guidance services (WM=3.08) and accessibility of guidance services (WM=2.80-2.97) was found. Students had mixed views on the overall effectiveness and accessibility of guidance services.

This suggests that despite the existence of guidance services within schools, they are not being effectively accessible to students, on time, and positively impacting students to feel more in touch. This implies a need for clearer indications for students to access guidance offices, better dissemination of programs/ services, and increased visibility. This is consistent with the findings of Bustos (2016) and Kilag et al. (2024) regarding the importance of counselor access, institutional support, and adequate guidance programs on student utilization of services.

The General Weighted Average of 3.07 or “Neutral” shows that students neither “Agree nor Disagree” on the level of accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services. This means students neither strongly agree nor disagree on its existence or lack of it, nor do they have positive or negative responses to it. Hence, for the effectiveness of guidance services within the school environment, there is a need for much communication on delivery and awareness of the service for students to know that they are available.

Table 7. Students' Perception of Accessibility and Effectiveness of Guidance Services

Statements	Weighted Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Improving facilities, resources, and programs will make guidance services more effective.	4.36	0.575	Strongly Agree
2. Guidance designates are approachable and willing to help.	3.55	1.051	Agree
3. My personal information is kept confidential when I share it with the guidance office.	3.20	1.115	Neutral
4. I am satisfied with the career guidance services provided by my school.	3.13	1.125	Neutral
5. Guidance services effectively address my academic concerns.	3.08	1.090	Neutral
6. The guidance office conducts activities promoting mental health and student welfare regularly.	3.01	1.115	Neutral
7. I feel comfortable approaching the guidance office for concerns.	2.97	1.121	Neutral
8. I can easily access guidance services whenever I need help.	2.92	1.108	Neutral
9. I receive timely assistance from the guidance office.	2.87	1.076	Neutral
10. Guidance services help improve my social relationships and behavior.	2.86	1.112	Neutral
11. I have no major difficulties accessing guidance services.	2.86	1.093	Neutral
12. I am aware of the available guidance services in my school.	2.84	1.063	Neutral
13. Guidance programs contribute to my overall well-being and development.	2.83	1.111	Neutral

14. Guidance personnel provide support for my emotional and personal needs.	2.81	1.108	Neutral
15. I am satisfied with the overall quality of guidance services.	2.80	1.128	Neutral
General Weighted Average	3.07	0.777	Neutral

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Strongly Agree
 3.41-4.20 = Agree
 2.61-3.40 = Neutral
 1.81-2.60 = Disagree
 1.00-1.80 = Strongly Disagree

Part 4. Correlation Between Guidance Designates' Perception on Challenges Encountered in Providing Guidance Services and Demographic Profile

Spearman's Rho Correlation is a non-parametric counterpart of Pearson's R Correlation in parametric testing. It tests whether two variables have a significant linear relationship based on their ranks. Since the data do not satisfy the normality of the distribution, non-parametric testing gives a more optimal result than the parametric tests. For the decision rule using the p-value method, significant relationships exist if the p-value does not exceed the level of significance; otherwise, no significant relationship is concluded.

Based on the correlation coefficient regarding guidance designates' perception on challenges encountered in providing guidance services and age, which is equal to -0.055, it can be seen that they have a weak negative correlation. Moreover, the p-value of 0.797 is greater than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the relationship is not statistically significant. Therefore, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the perceived challenges encountered in providing guidance services have a significant linear relationship to age.

Similarly, the correlation coefficient between the respondents' perception of challenges encountered in providing guidance services and years of experience ($r = 0.091$) shows a weak positive correlation.

Based on these results, no significant relationship was found between the demographic profile of guidance designates and their perceived challenges in providing guidance services.

This implies that age or the years one has spent working as a guidance designer does not have an effect on the perception of the difficulties faced in offering services as the designation itself. It can be concluded that the delivery of guidance services is determined more by some other things like the provision of institutional support, burden of work, level of training, clear roles, etc., than just the design and that it has been found by the researchers too, in that Bustos (2016) and Yulianti et al. (2021) found that while the training, professionalism, education and experience could influence counselors, demographics are not necessary determinants of the difficulties faced. Moreover, Neyland-Brown et al. (2019) found that the structural and institutional factors, including administrative demands and lack of resources, can more strongly account for differences in the delivery of guidance services than age or years of teaching experience.

Table 8 shows the significant relationship between the guidance designates' perception of challenges encountered in providing guidance services and demographic profile using Spearman's Rho Correlation.

Table 8. *Spearman's Rho Correlation between Guidance Designates' Perception on Challenges Encountered in Providing Guidance Services and Demographic Profile*

Areas	Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Age	-.055	Weak Negative Relationship	.797	Not Significantly Correlated
Years of Experience	.091	Weak Positive Relationship	.673	Not Significantly Correlated

Areas	Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Age	-.055	Weak Negative Relationship	.797	Not Significantly Correlated
Years of Experience	.091	Weak Positive Relationship	.673	Not Significantly Correlated

Significant at $\alpha = 5\%$

Table 9 shows the significant relationship between the students' perception of accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services and demographic profile using Spearman's rho correlation.

Spearman's Rho Correlation is a non-parametric counterpart of Pearson's R Correlation in parametric testing. It tests whether two variables have a significant linear relationship based on their ranks. Since the data do not satisfy the normality of the distribution, non-parametric testing will give a more optimal result than the parametric tests. For the decision rule using the p-value method, significant relationships exist if the p-value does not exceed the level of significance; otherwise, no significant relationship is concluded.

Based on the correlation coefficient regarding students' perception of accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services and age, which is equal to 0.244, it can be seen that they have a weak positive correlation. Moreover, since the p-value is 0.000, which is greater than the level of significance of 0.05, it can be concluded that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to say that the perceived assessment of accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services has a significant linear relationship to age.

Likewise, the correlation coefficient of the respondents' perception of accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services and grade level ($r=0.214$) shows a weak positive correlation. Furthermore, since the p-value is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Thus, there is enough evidence to say that the perceived assessment of accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services and grade level has a significant linear relationship.

This implies that students in older age and higher grades could be more informed about guidance services and willing to utilize them, as well as have knowledge of the support they may have within the school. It can also illustrate that guidance activities should be tailored to specific stages in students' lives and the communication of the services to students at each developmental level.

The findings concur with those of Villar et al. (2011), in which age and grade level were noted as being factors in student attitudes toward and usage of guidance services, and Pastor (2020), who stated that age influences a student's relationship to the counseling services. Both studies show the impacts of demographical characteristics like age and grade level on student experiences with counseling.

Table 9. *Spearman's Rho Correlation Between Students' Perception of Accessibility and Effectiveness of Guidance Services and Demographic Profile*

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Interpretation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Age	.244	Weak Positive Relationship	.000	Significantly Correlated
Grade Level	.214	Weak Positive Relationship	.000	Significantly Correlated

* Significant at $\alpha = 5\%$

Table 10 presents the Mann-Whitney U Test to examine whether there are statistically significant differences between male and female groups in the perceived assessment of challenges encountered in providing guidance services.

The Mann-Whitney U test was employed as the data did not necessarily meet the assumptions required for parametric testing. The analysis compared the mean and median values for each gender group across the dependent variables, and statistical significance was evaluated using two-tailed p-values. This test will tell whether the two groups are significantly different (Alternative Hypothesis) or whether there are no significant differences at all (Null Hypothesis). In order to reject the null hypothesis, the p-value must be less than or equal to 0.05; otherwise, if the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The findings indicate that gender is not a significant factor in the dependent variable. The perceived assessment on challenges encountered in providing guidance services when respondents were grouped according to gender has a p-value which is greater than 0.05, so it is not sufficient in rejecting the null hypothesis. Therefore, at 5% level of significance, it can be concluded that males and females do not have a statistically significant difference in their perception of challenges encountered in providing guidance services.

This implies that any intervention designed to respond to the difficulties encountered in guidance service delivery does not necessarily need to be gender specific. Efforts should be directed to factors that affect all guidance designates regardless of their gender, workload, training, institutional support, and a clear definition of role that more strongly influences service delivery quality and uniformity.

The findings aligned with Bustos (2016), who found that demographic factors such as gender have no significant effect on the counseling counselors perceive to be the problem, and Yulianti et al. (2021), who found that counselors' level of professional experience and training was a stronger factor determining counselors' efficiency and job satisfaction than counselors' gender.

Table 10. *Mann-Whitney U Test for the Significant Difference on the Guidance Designates' Perception on Challenges Encountered in Providing Guidance Services According to Gender*

Gender	U statistic	P	Decision	Conclusion
Male	30.000	.896	Fail to Reject Ho	Not Significantly Different
Female				

* Significant at $\alpha = 5\%$

Table 11 presents the Mann-Whitney U Test to examine whether there are statistically significant differences between male and female groups in the perceived assessment of accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services.

The Mann-Whitney U test was employed as the data did not necessarily meet the assumptions required for parametric testing. The analysis compared the mean and median values for each gender group across the dependent variables, and statistical significance was evaluated using two-tailed p-values. This test will tell whether the two groups are significantly different (Alternative Hypothesis) or whether there are no significant differences at all (Null Hypothesis). In order to reject the null hypothesis, the p-value must be less than or equal to 0.05; otherwise, if the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

The findings indicate that gender is not a significant factor in the dependent variable. The perceived assessment on accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services when respondents were grouped according to gender has a p-value which is greater than 0.05, so it is not sufficient in rejecting the null hypothesis. Therefore, at 5% level of significance, it can be concluded that males and females do not have a statistically significant difference in their perception of accessibility and effectiveness of guidance services.

This finding shows that guidance service enhancement strategies may need to aim at universal means, benefit all students regardless of sex; they can focus on upgrading facilities, diversifying program choices, maintaining counselor accessibility, and building institutional backing, rather than on targeting sexes individually.

This finding is supported by Villar et al. (2011), who found that gender does not produce any significant difference regarding students' perceptions toward the guidance service, and Pastor (2020), who found that although age and grade level, two demographic variables, affect students' use of the guidance service, sex alone does not pose any significant difference in perceptions.

Table 11. *Mann-Whitney U Test for the Significant Difference in the Students' Perception of Accessibility and Effectiveness of Guidance Services According to Gender*

Gender	U statistic	<i>P</i>	Decision	Conclusion
Male	10035.000	.531	Fail to Reject Ho	Not Significantly Different
Female				

* Significant at $\alpha = 5\%$

CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to assess the implementation of guidance services in private schools through investigating demographic characteristics, challenges encountered by guidance designates, student perceptions, and the relationship between them. It was observed that while both students and guidance designees were primarily females, and that the student and guidance designate groups were respectively young (aged 14-17 years old) and educationally or professionally mature (achieving high academic and professional levels respectively), there was no correlation between these variables and the quality of guidance services delivered. The study revealed that guidance designates encountered significant challenges: these were insufficient professional training, overwork/large caseloads, inadequate facilities and resources, and insufficient institutional support. These structural and institutional challenges, rather than the characteristics of guidance designates, were found to be a significant cause of poor guidance services.

Student perceptions of guidance services were positive as guidance designates were seen as accessible and approachable, but not as consistent and efficient. Correlational analysis revealed that neither the professional nor demographic characteristics of guidance designates were positively related to the challenges they encountered. Still, the age and grade level of students were found to positively correlate with their recognition and use of guidance services. None of the variables were related to guidance designates' gender. Overall, it appears that institutional and structural problems, rather than demographics, have a greater influence on guidance services implementation. This implies that the development of comprehensive guidance programs should focus on capacity building and the provision of resources, a manageable workload, and adequate institutional support.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, many strategies could be put in place to ensure that guidance services are accessible, effective, and sustainable:

Professional Training for Guidance Designates: Guidance designates need ongoing training and workshop sessions in order to enhance their ability to assist students with a variety of problems encountered by students-academic, personal, and social-emotional problems. There should be specific programs for high caseload management, confidentiality, and career guidance so that the quality of services rendered can be increased.

Resources and Institutional Support for Guidance Designates: The guidance services need sufficient facilities, teaching aids, and equipment to perform efficiently. The time for counselors to execute guidance-related duties needs to be adequately planned and provided in the timetable.

Program Development and Delivery: Guidance services should be systematically programmed for different ages and grade levels to reach the most students. Proactive activities that target mental health, social skills, and career preparation should be put in place.

Collaboration and Communication: Communication and cooperation with teachers, administrators, and parents need to be fostered to support students better. Information needs to be disseminated properly and systematically so students are well-informed on the services, programs, and confidentiality policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Services should be monitored closely and periodically evaluated on their effectiveness and accessibility, especially student perceptions and performance data. Results from monitoring and evaluation can be used for continuous improvement in the services provided.

Gender Fairness: Strategies to enhance access and benefits of services to both genders, with special attention to service quality and responsiveness, are needed to address gender differences, where possible. Guidance programs should accommodate the differences of each age group and grade level and be accessible to all students.

By using these recommendations, guidance services can improve their quality, utilization, and sustainability to assist students in their development at all levels.

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