

Challenges Faced By Teachers in the Implementation of Guidance and Counselling in Eswatini High Schools

ABSTRACT

Aims: This study was purposed to identify the challenges faced by teachers in the implementation of guidance and counselling in --Eswatini, Manzini region. The objectives of the study were to identify the challenges encountered by guidance and counselling teachers in the implementation of guidance and counselling in Eswatini high schools; analyze the impact of these challenges on the delivery and effectiveness of guidance and counseling services; explore the attitudes of the teachers, principal and students towards the implementation of guidance and counseling.

Methods: The study employed the phenomenological design that targeted guidance and counselling teachers in the Manzini region. A sample of eighteen participants (n=18) from nine high schools in the Manzini region were purposively sampled for this study using simple random sampling. This study employed an in-depth interview guide as a data collection instrument, which consisted of open-ended questions. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and was presented in narration format.

Findings: The study concluded that time constraints, lack of support from administration, lack of funding and lack of parental involvement are major challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers in the implementation of the program and assigning more time to the subject. Organizing regular workshops and campaigns to equip teacher and parents on guidance and counselling would help combat the challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers. The study finally recommended that guidance and counselling needs more support from school administrators, teachers and parents

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through provision more time to the subject and funding guidance and counselling activities. -----

Keywords: *Guidance, Counselling, effectiveness, mental health issues*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Ebralidze (2019), the implementations of learner support services are only successful to the extent that people who are involved in the implementation are trained. Education in the twenty first century aims at developing learners holistically thus, the need for introduction of a learner support programme, such as the guidance and counselling programme in schools to assist learners in different aspects such as personal, social, educational and vocational (Baker & Green, 2019). Additionally, learners' abilities, interests and aptitudes are better taped at the initial stages of life hence the need for guidance and counselling to be introduced at schools (Okonkwo et al, 2017). Thus, guidance and counselling is a process of helping learners within and outside the school, to achieve up to their full potential in personal, social, academic and vocational aspects (Rahman & Yunus, 2020). The Eswatini education sector policy of 2020 states that guidance and counselling is implemented in schools to ensure the holistic development, survival and safe transition to adulthood for learners at all levels of the formal and non-formal education system. The implementation of high school guidance and counselling in Eswatini is aimed at holistic (personal, social, academic and vocational) development of learners to help ensure that they survive to adulthood and develop into responsible adults with the capacity to contribute positively to the socio- economic growth of Eswatini (Mafumbate, 2019). The policy further posits that guidance and counselling can no longer be seen as external to teaching but as a central pillars of classroom activity and support.

The teachers experience problems in the implementation of guidance and counselling because they lacked the knowledge and skills in implementation of the programme. According to Ates and Kadioglu (2018), the appointment of the guidance teachers is based on personal characteristics such as being loving, patient and approachable as opposed to training. These teachers have dual roles as they have the normal teaching

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load and provision of guidance and counselling which limits the time they use for guidance and counselling (Kilminster, Cottrell, Grant & Jolly, 2010).

1.1 Problem Statement

Providing guidance and counselling in schools is one of the most important services a school has to have and it is the reason why the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) introduced guidance and counselling in both primary and high schools of Eswatini. However, there are obstacles that affect the effective implementation of guidance and counselling in schools. The existing learners are not well equipped of what is expected of them in the subject, they do not take it seriously in a way that the attendance to the career guidance classes is low. The career guidance teacher doesn't seem to be motivated; they do not give it all to it as they do to the other subjects. Despite the importance of addressing these challenges, there is limited research available on the specific obstacles faced by teachers in this context. The existing literature is silent on the challenges faced by high school teachers in the implementation of guidance and counselling in Eswatini.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the challenges encountered by guidance and counselling teachers in the implementation of guidance and counselling in Eswatini high schools.
2. To analyse the impact of these challenges on the delivery and effectiveness of guidance and counseling services.
3. To explore the attitudes and perception of the teachers, principal and students towards the implementation of guidance and counseling.

One early theory, Trait-factor theory (Nixon, Harrington & Parker, 2012), posits that individuals possess inherent traits influencing their success. Guidance, therefore, should focus on identifying and developing these traits. The Developmental theory (Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2018) emphasizes that individuals progress through distinct developmental stages, requiring counseling tailored to their specific needs at each phase. The Cognitive-behavioral theory focuses on modifying negative thought patterns and behaviors that hinder student success. Furthermore, the Multicultural counseling theory

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SUB DIVIDE THE WHOLE OF YOUR WORK AS;
1. INTRODUCTION (LIT REVIEW AND GAPS PROBLEM STATEMENT, STUDY OBJECTIVE,)
2. METHODOLOGY (RESEARCH DESIGN, STUDY POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES, RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS/DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES)

3. Results and Discussion

4. CONCLUSION (GIVE CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION)

REFERENCES

(Sue, Gallardo & Neville, 2013) emphasizes the importance of considering students' cultural backgrounds when providing guidance and counseling services.

Guidance and counseling play a crucial role in high schools by supporting students in navigating the challenges they face during this critical period. They assist students in academic success, career readiness, personal development, and cultivating multicultural awareness (Rogers, 2020). Additionally, they provide essential mental health support for students struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns (Furey, 2015). Several frameworks guide the implementation of effective guidance and counseling programs. The ASCA National Model (Geesa, Elam, Mayes, McConnell & McDonald, 2019) provides a comprehensive framework for school counseling programs, emphasizing data-driven decision-making and aligning counseling programs with school goals.

Resistance to guidance and counseling programs can arise from various sources. Students may resist due to stigma associated with seeking help, fear of judgment, or lack of trust in confidentiality. Parents may resist due to cultural or religious beliefs, concerns about confidentiality, or a lack of understanding of the benefits of counseling (Lendrum, Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2013). School administration may resist due to budget constraints, competing priorities, or a lack of understanding of the role of school counselors.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach known as phenomenological research design. This type of approach is used in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and education, among others. Merriam and Grenier (2019) stated that qualitative research seeks to provide insight into the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals and groups assign to their behaviors and interactions, rather than focusing solely on numerical data. A phenomenological research design allows for a rich in- depth

exploration of a phenomena (Wirihana, Welch, Williamson, Christensen, Bakon & Craft, 2018). A phenomenological study explores what counsellors experienced and focuses on their experience of a phenomenon.

A sample of eighteen (18) participants from nine high schools in the Manzini region were purposively sampled for this study using simple random sampling. They were comprised of eighteen guidance and counselling teachers. Participants were from urban (n= 6), semi-urban (n=6) and rural (n=6) schools in the region. The study used two instruments, which is the one-on-one interview and focus group. The purpose of the interview was to gather detailed information about the teachers' experiences, opinions, and attitudes on this topic (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This method was useful in this exercise confirming what Rowley (2012) noted that it gives researchers more control over the interview process, including the order and wording of questions, ensuring that the research objectives are achieved.

The trustworthiness was ensured through employing a construct by Moser and Korstjens (2018) who proposed four criteria's that they believe should be considered by qualitative researchers in order to ensure a trustworthy study. To establish credibility of the qualitative questions and data, the research questions were given to teachers at high schools in the Manzini region. Credibility of the data was also established through member checks (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018). Secondly, the teachers' direct quotes have been used to demonstrate that researcher bias does not skew the interpretation of what the research participants said to fit a certain narrative (Kyngäs, Kääriäinen & Elo, 2020). Thirdly, for stability of the research findings over time the researcher employed overlapping methods such as strategically describing the research design and its implementation and also addressing the operational detail of data gathering in the field. Lastly, transferability was measured through provision of enough background data in order to establish the context of the research project and detailed description of phenomenon in question was provided.

Participants were informed on the aim and procedures of the study. They were also informed that their participation was voluntarily and of the option to withdraw if they wished to do so without any negative consequences on them. Participants accepted to participate

in the study by completing consent forms. Data collection instruments were administered and conducted by the researcher during normal school hours. The interviews were facilitated by the researcher and they lasted about 30- 45 minutes. The data of the study was analyzed using thematic analysis by identifying and analyzing patterns, themes, and meanings within qualitative data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The study used a six-phase framework to conduct the analysis. These include; familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and producing a report.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Guidance and Counselling

3.1.1 Time constraints

The findings of the study reveal that, among other challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers in the Manzini region, **time constraints** are a significant issue. Teachers identified that limited teaching hours compared to the **demands** of the curriculum across subjects contribute to this challenge. The guidance and counselling class is only given one period per week and the teachers are expected to cover all the topics within the limited timeframe, which is impossible. It was also vented that the curriculum for guidance and counselling is as overloaded, with broad topics, as all other subjects thus deserves the same treatment in as far as teaching hours are concerned. *“Time allocated for guidance and counselling is very limited, because of the limited number of teaching hours available, it is one period per week, yet the teachers are expected to cover all the topics which are broad within the limited timeframe, which can be challenging and overwhelming, and learners have many questions in some of the topics”* Teacher 1 said.

It was observed that due to the limited time for guidance and counselling, the teachers have difficulty to run counselling activities that normally needs a lot of time per student depending on the issue at hand. To make matters worse, the schools have limited number of qualified teachers for guidance and counselling and thus schools normally combine two or three grades at a time thus leading to overcrowding. Overcrowding classes significantly affect the time given for guidance and counseling in schools by stretching the

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teachers thin and making it more difficult to provide individualized attention and support to students who need it *“Time allocated time is very limited it is difficult to make the counselling activities. Number of teachers available to provide guidance and counselling services is limited, there is shortage of qualified teachers which leads to overcrowded classrooms and limited time for the subject”*, Teacher 7 noted.

The findings are in line with those of Baker and Green (2019) who observed that guidance and counselling teachers were not sufficiently relieved from their teaching duties to have adequate time to devote to guidance and counselling. Kilminster et al (2010) stated that teachers are over-loaded with the responsibility bestowed upon them and therefore need support from head teachers in relieving them in order to enable them to have more contact hours with student-clients. Adding to that, not having a period in the school timetable is common in the implementation of guidance and counselling was also reported by Okonkwo et al (2017) who found that guidance and counselling was offered during breaks, lunch breaks and after school in Kenya. Similarly, Amanyama, Ngeno and Sitienei (2017) also found out that lack of adequate time to handle and counsel the students, was a challenge in Kenyan high schools. The findings are also consistent with Mafumbate (2019) who posited that the lack of time is another factor which hinders the proper implementation of guidance and counselling in schools and therefore, there is a great need to increase the time allocated for guidance and counselling in schools.

3.1.2 Lack of support from administration

The findings of the study also revealed that guidance and counselling teachers lack support from the administration. The shortage of resources, workshops or teacher training, text books and teaching aids were among the kinds of support guidance and counseling teachers are not getting from the administration. This makes it hard for teacher to implement the program successfully as they struggle to provide students with the support they need, *“Administration does not provide the necessary training and professional development to help teachers overcome the challenge of implementing guidance and counseling.”* Narrated Teacher 4.

This study found that the administration has neglected the guidance and counseling subject, primarily due to inadequate staffing, as reported by teachers. The administration tends to leave all the challenges related to this subject to the individual teachers, rather than addressing them at the administrative level. *“The administration is not supportive in that it leaves all the challenges of guidance and counseling to the teachers instead of motivating the whole staff. You find that the teacher teaches both streams A&B making the exercise ineffective.”* Lamented Teacher 1.

The shortage of resources, workshops or teacher training, text books and teaching aids were among the kinds of support guidance and counseling teachers are not getting from the administration. This makes it hard for teacher to implement the program successfully. This is consistent with Mapfumo and Nkoma (2013) who indicated that school heads in Mutare Urban high schools reported minimal supervision of the programme with little support from the school inspectors. Contrarily, Mbongo, Mowes and Chata (2016) found out that Regional School Counsellors were quick to respond and render help when asked for help and that teacher counsellors felt motivated to do their work as they did not feel isolated and did not lack support.

3.1.3 Lack of funding

The findings of the study suggest that guidance and counseling lessons often suffer from inadequate funding. This leads to a shortage of essential instructional materials such as textbooks, workbooks, assessment tools, and technology. The lack of funding for guidance and counseling lessons has a significant negative impact on the quality of education provided. When schools fail to allocate sufficient resources to these programs, teachers struggle to access the materials necessary for effective instruction. This hinders the effectiveness of the lessons and limit the support available to students who may benefit from guidance and counseling services. *“There are monetary constraints which restrict access to essential resources such as updated counselling materials, assessment tools, and technology. Without these resources, teachers struggle to deliver effective guidance and counselling services that meet the diverse needs of the students.”* – Teacher 6 said.

The lack of textbooks and workbooks which makes teaching difficult, was pointed out in relation to lack of funding, as they are crucial for structuring lessons, providing guidance, and facilitating student learning. The absence of textbooks and workbooks impact the

counseling aspect of education. Counseling services in schools rely on a variety of resources to support students' social, emotional, and academic needs. Without adequate materials, teachers struggle to provide comprehensive guidance and support to students. *"There is a lack of funding for necessary materials and resources. Textbooks, workbooks, and other instructional materials are often insufficient in quantity, making it difficult for teachers to provide a comprehensive curriculum. It results in a shortage of teaching aids"* teacher 1 noted.

These findings were similar to Okonkwo et al (2017) assertion who opined that in some schools, the school counsellor shared the office with other teaching staff due to lack of funds for infrastructure and consequently confidentiality of students' records can be easily compromised yet counsellors agreed that counselling should take place where there are no disruptions so that learners can be assured that no one can hear their conversations. The findings are also supported by Mafumbate (2019) who opined that no meaningful services are cheap, for effective counselling, funds are needed. Funds are needed for the purchase of counselling materials like inventories, charts and also to equip the counsellors with tools for appraisal and placement. Chinonyelum (2013) also noted that the guidance and counselling programme was not well funded in Nigerian schools and where funds were available, very little was earmarked for guidance and counselling purposes. Baker and Green (2019) concluded that the guidance and counselling programs need adequate funding that will enable to put up infrastructure and purchase the required facilities.

3.1.4 Lack of parental involvement

In the current educational landscape, the role of parents in the teaching and learning of guidance and counseling has evolved significantly. Traditionally, parents were seen as key stakeholders in their children's academic progress and well-being. However, in recent times, there has been a shift towards a more integrated approach where guidance and counseling are no longer treated as separate entities from other subjects. This shift has led to some parents feeling disconnected from their children's academic journey and the importance of guidance and counseling, they are now not involved in the academics of

the children thus this increases the work load on the teachers. It was also suggested that guidance and counselling subject should be treated like other subjects since it is a normal subject too. Some parents believe that the responsibility for their children's education lies primarily with teachers and the school system rather than with themselves. *"Parents are not involved during the teaching and learning since the subject is no longer treated separately from the other subjects. Some parents are being disconnected from the learner's academic progress and the importance of guidance and counselling because of cultural barriers, they believe that the education of the children is primarily responsible for the teachers and the school system rather than the parents."* Teacher 1.

Parents are not fully aware of the importance of guidance and counseling in supporting their children's academics, social, and emotional well-being. This lack of understanding leads to limited parental involvement. They do not realize how their active participation can positively impact their children's educational journey and overall well-being *"Parental involvement is limited because they are not aware about the importance of guidance and counselling"* Teacher 3 noted.

Okonkwo et al (2017) made a similar observation and concluded that inclusion of parents can help to measure the progress of guidance and counselling as they can mention the problems of their children, since they were not involved according to their study. Furthermore, Baker and Green (2019) noted that it is important that parents are provided with necessary support, not only from the school administration but also from parents.

3.2 Impacts of the Challenges on the Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling.

3.2.1 Increasing student mental health issues

The study has found that increasing student mental health issues hinders the effectiveness of the program in various ways stated by the teachers which is not limited to inadequate training and resources and lack of collaboration among teachers. Inadequate training was found to be one major impact, that hinder the ability of teachers to provide adequate support, caused by the challenge of lack of funding. When teachers lack the necessary training and resources, they struggle to address students' mental health concerns effectively, leading to a decrease in the overall effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs. *"Inadequate training and resources hinder the teacher's ability*

to provide the learners with the necessary support and information to address their concerns and improve their mental health.” stated teacher 2.

The teachers also mentioned that the lack of training leave teachers feeling ill-equipped to recognize and respond to students’ mental health issues. It makes the teachers struggle to identify and address students’ mental health needs and thus hinders the entire guidance and counseling process. *“Lack of training make teachers struggle to identify and address the learner’s mental health needs effectively. It hinders the overall impact of guidance and counselling initiatives.”* Narrated teacher 3.

These findings are in line with those of Amanyama, Ngeno and Sitienei (2017) who reported that neglecting the guidance and counselling program results in increasing cases of mental health issues among students which the affects their academic performance. The study further concluded that this may be as a result of poorly equipped teachers, lack of funding and teaching equipment and lack of interest from teacher and or students.

3.2.2 Lack of professional development

The study also reveals that insufficient allocation of funds for professional development of staff member on counselling limits the opportunity for growth and development or improvement of the subject matter. It hinders the acquisition of new skills and strategies by professionals thus reducing the effectiveness of the program. The teachers also suggested that high staff turnover disrupt the continuity of training and development. The teacher counsellors do not receive adequate training to fully manage guidance and counselling classes due to inadequate funding for the program. *“Schools often struggle to allocate sufficient funds for staff training and development, which can limit the opportunities for growth and improvement. This lack of funding hinders the acquisition of new skills and strategies, ultimately affecting the quality of guidance and counselling services provided to students.”* Teacher 3.

The lack of training in specific areas such as career guidance, mental health counselling, or special education needs was also found to be affecting the effectiveness of the program. Without proper training and ongoing professional development, the teachers

struggle to provide appropriate guidance and support to students facing various challenges.” *Counsellors do not receive adequate training in specific areas, such as career guidance, mental health counselling, or special education needs. This leads to ineffective guidance and counselling services for students with diverse needs.*” Narrated teacher 5.

These findings are in contrary with Mafumbate (2019) who asserted that seminars and workshops were enough to enhance counsellors’ professionalism. It is in these workshops and seminars where new development in counselling is made known. However, Amanyama, Ngeno and Sitienei (2017) supported the guidance and counselling teachers by stating that quality training is important in motivating school counsellors by increasing their self- efficacy in offering quality guidance and counselling services. If not well trained, the program does not thrive since teachers lack necessary skills (Oji et al, 2017).

3.2.3 Reduced academic performance

The study found that the challenges faced by guidance and counseling teachers negatively impact students' academic performance, hindering the effectiveness of the subject. Teachers reported that students struggle to cope with academic pressure, personal and emotional issues, leading to stress and anxiety, which subsequently impacts academic performance. *“Some students struggle to cope with academic pressures, personal issues and emotional challenges. There is an increase stress and, anxiety and even depression among students, ultimately affecting their ability to focus on their studies and perform well academically. Since this is not an examined subject, the learners are relaxed, they are only interested in the topics which are sexually related.”* Narrated teacher 1.

The students then do not receive enough support and motivation thus these tempers with their performance in academics. The lack of support results in disengagement in learning, reduced interest in school activities. It also results in student receiving inadequate support from the counsellor.. *“The lack of proper training and guidance and counselling leads to learners not receiving adequate academic support. Some of them they do not understand the curriculum, they struggle with course work, they face difficulties in time management*

and organization. As a result, they experience a decline in their academic performance, lowering their chances of achieving their academic goals." teacher 5 lamented.

These findings are in line with those of Amanyama, Ngeno and Sitienei (2017) who reported that neglecting the guidance and counselling program in anyway may results in stress and anxiety issues among students which the affects their academic performance.

3.2.4 Selection of wrong career choices

The study has also concluded that the challenges faced by guidance and counseling services can result in students making incorrect career choices later in life. Students may experience lower grades and struggle to pursue further education. Even if they manage to pursue higher education, they may still make ill-advised career decisions due to inadequate or ineffective guidance and counseling. *"Some students struggle academically, leading to lower grades and decreased chances of pursuing higher education and career opportunities. There is failure to choose the right subjects in some learners, which are in line with their career paths. Learners who do not receive proper guidance and counselling are not aware of various career options available to them, which could limit their choices in the future."* Teacher noted¹.

It was also found that students who do not receive proper guidance and counseling also tend to have low self-esteem and fail to make informed decisions about their future career choices. They also have social and emotional challenges which affect their choices. *"Learners who do not receive proper guidance and counselling develop lower self-esteem and confidence, which hinders their ability to make informed decisions about their future. They face social and emotional challenges that can affect their career outcomes."* Narrated teacher 2

Similarly, Ates and Kadioglu (2018) concluded that a student who has not undergone the proper program, or who presents negative attitudes towards the program consequently make wrong career choices and tend to regret in the long run, while those who present a positive attitude towards the program make informed career choices.

3.3 Attitudes of students and teachers towards guidance and counselling

The study has found that both students and teacher hold a positive attitude toward guidance and counselling classes. They mentioned that these classes help students develop life skills, deal with mental health issues and also help student choose the right careers. Teachers went further to explain the importance of Guidance and counselling. They openly shared the attitude that guidance and counselling is very important for students, *“These programs can play a vital role in promoting mental health and well-being among students. Adolescence can be a challenging time for many individuals, as they face various social, emotional, and psychological challenges. Counselling services can provide students with a safe and supportive environment to discuss their concerns and receive appropriate guidance. This, in turn, can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and improve overall mental health.”* Teacher 4 said.

On the same note, as much the teachers reported that student understands and appreciate the importance of guidance and counselling, there are teachers not involved in guidance and counseling that developed a negative attitude, they are not comfortable with students opening up about their problems to guidance and counselling teachers in the school. They prefer an external counsellor as opposed to the use of school counselors. *“Students recognize the importance of these program in helping them navigate through the complexities of adolescence and in preparing them for their future careers.* However, other teachers are not comfortable with us dealing with students’ personal issues. They now see us as enemies” Explained teacher 2.

The study has found that both students and teacher hold a positive attitude toward guidance and counselling classes. They mentioned that these classes help students develop life skills, deal with mental health issues and also help student choose the right careers. These findings collide with those of Ebralidze (2019) who reported that teacher counsellors have wrong perceptions toward guidance and counselling as they lack the necessary skills that are required. While Amanyama, Ngeno and Sitienei (2017) agreed with the findings by stating that incentives for teachers are important to ensure that they are committed and effective in offering quality guidance and counselling services. In most African countries teachers complain about their salaries and expected a reward of some

sort since they viewed guidance and counselling as an unnecessary overload to their work (Ates & Kadioglu, 2018). It was noted in the case of Eswatini that the guidance teachers get extra cash for being a school counsellor. Ebralidze (2019) pointed out the importance of training by stating that guidance and counselling needs psychology and skills to be able to apply on clients and it is only possible through training. This is an indication that guidance and counselling teachers need to be well trained and be knowledgeable to perform their work confidently.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the challenges faced by guidance and counseling teachers in the Manzini region, focusing on time constraints, lack of support from administration, inadequate funding, and limited parental involvement. **Time constraints** emerged as a significant challenge. The limited number of teaching hours allocated to guidance and counseling, often just one period per week, hinders comprehensive coverage of the curriculum and restricts the implementation of in-depth counseling activities. Overcrowded classrooms due to a shortage of qualified guidance and counseling teachers further exacerbate this issue, limiting individualized attention to students. **Lack of support from administration** was another critical concern. Teachers reported inadequate support in terms of resources, workshops, and professional development opportunities. **Inadequate funding** significantly impacts the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs. Limited resources hinder the acquisition of essential materials like textbooks, workbooks, and assessment tools, affecting the quality of instruction and the support available to students. Lastly, **limited parental involvement** also poses a challenge. Many parents are unaware of the importance of guidance and counseling and their role in supporting their children's academic and emotional well-being. This lack of engagement increases the workload on teachers and hinders the overall effectiveness of the program.

These challenges have significant impacts on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs. They contribute to increasing student mental health issues, limit professional development opportunities for teachers, and negatively impact student

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academic performance, potentially leading to incorrect career choices. While both students and teachers recognize the importance of guidance and counseling, some teachers harbor negative attitudes towards the subject, preferring external counselors over school-based counselors.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to address the challenges faced by guidance and counseling teachers in Eswatini and improve the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs. **Firstly**, increasing the allocation of teaching hours for guidance and counseling is crucial. This will allow teachers to cover the curriculum more comprehensively, conduct in-depth counseling activities, and provide more individualized attention to students. **Secondly**, enhancing support from the administration is essential. This includes providing adequate resources, such as textbooks, workbooks, and technology; organizing regular workshops and professional development programs for guidance and counseling teachers; and actively addressing the challenges faced by these professionals. The administration should also ensure that guidance and counseling is prioritized and integrated into the overall school improvement plan. **Lastly**, securing adequate funding for guidance and counseling programs is critical. This will enable schools to purchase necessary resources, provide competitive salaries and incentives for guidance and counseling teachers, and support professional development initiatives.

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