

Access to Guidance and Counselling as a Determinant for Academic Performance among Students with Hearing Impairment in Tanzania

Wengi Mohamed Mchuchury¹ & Fidel Dassan Gwajekera²

^{1&2} College of Education, University of Dodoma-Tanzania

E-mail¹: mohamedw765@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines the extent to which access to guidance and counselling influences academic performance among students with hearing impairment in Tanzania. A mixed methods approach was employed to study the randomly selected 138 students with hearing impairment and a group of 12 participants constituting heads of school, academic teachers and school counsellors. It was found that academic performance among students with hearing impairment was determined by a number of factors among others including guidance and counselling services ($p = 0.043$). The study recommends that school administrators must be in the forefront in supporting and promoting guidance and counselling programs in schools.

Keywords: *hearing aids, discipline, school counsellors, learning environment*

Introduction

Guidance and counselling services are important tools in student development especially in improving their academic performance. When guidance and counselling services are missing in schools, students' adaptation becomes difficult, thus leading to low performance, misbehaviour and dropout. Guidance and counselling in Tanzania in different forms and with different interpretations have existed in societies for a long time before the colonial era. The school, as an important social institution, is required to help boys and girls, to develop their intellectual, social, physical and moral capacities.

Guidance and counselling is becoming slowly institutionalized and spread in educational institutions. Schools, for example, have, to a large extent, taken over the task of providing psychological support to boys and girls. Further, the Ministry of Education, has attempted to institutionalize the services within the education system by appointing career masters and mistresses to help students understand and develop interest in appropriate jobs or further education or training; to assess the students talents and capabilities and to encourage them to pursue careers or

further education best suited to them and to help students solve their personal problems which may affect their general progress in school.

Also, in Tanzania, Mgumba (2021) identified that the relationship between a teacher and a student is the most powerful element within the learning environment that forms the basis for social contact in which learning takes place. School counsellors play a crucial role in bridging this relationship between learners with hearing impairment and teachers. School counsellors, when consistently and frequently available and allowed to provide direct services to students, teachers and parents, can be a highly effective group of professionals who positively impact on students' aspirations, achievements, and offer financial aid knowledge (Acheru, 2015). Students appreciate guidance and counselling services in schools because it helps them cope with life challenges, and create good learning environment and develop interpersonal skills. It has been observed that some students with hearing impairment fail to seek counselling because the school counsellor is too old or too young, unpopular or of a gender not preferred by them (Camelford & Ebrahim, 2017).

Moreover, Maganga (2016) conducted a study on guidance and counselling for learners with disabilities in Kenya and found that guidance and counselling was helpful in the improvement of dependency, time wastages, self-regards and self-acceptance amongst many others. Guidance and counselling services cannot succeed if counselling facilities including resources (rooms, chairs, tables etc.), trained guidance and counselling teachers and time are inadequate (Boitt, 2016). , It was also noted that the availability of professionally trained counsellors in schools enhances compliance with the use of hearing aids by learners with hearing impairment through consistent counselling (Boitt, 2016; Oyekanmi, 2021). A teacher is a crucial resource in teaching and learning. Many challenges confront educators of students with hearing impairment, including diversity in the student population, critical period of language acquisition, the nature of linguistic exposure and the effect of amplification of sound to learners with hearing problems in the classroom (Acheru, 2015)

Guidance and counselling services supplement, strengthen, add real meaning to educational aspirations and improve self-understanding. Hence, this reduces social anxiety which then translates into improved performance (Acheru, 2015). Furthermore, Biswalo (1996) noted that schools have a two-fold crucial responsibilities which are to nurture students who have varying abilities, capacities, interest and unlimited potentials and prepare those individuals to become effective functioning members of their changing societies. Lack of specialized guidance and counselling services for students with hearing impairment in schools can lead to a range of negative

outcomes, including academic, social, and emotional difficulties. Thus, effective guidance and counselling services are not only crucial for normal learners, but for all students as noted by Parveen (2017). Therefore, all students require guidance and counselling service in order to develop their academic, social and personal competence.

Despite the recognition of guidance and counselling as essential support services for students with hearing impairments in Tanzania, limited access to these services may be a significant contributing factor to low academic performance among this population. Therefore, this study investigated the extent to which access to guidance and counselling services can determine academic performance among students with hearing impairments in Tanzania. Specifically, the study was guided by three objectives, namely to analyze the factors influencing the academic performance among students with hearing impairment; examine the accessibility of guidance and counselling services to students with hearing impairment and to examine the challenges hindering the provision of guidance and counselling services to students with hearing impairment.

Research Methodology

Research design and area

This study employed a convergent parallel design, which requires a researcher to collect qualitative and quantitative data in the same phase during the research process and integrate the entire data during analysis process. It was conducted in Njombe and Iringa regions and involved public secondary schools. The regions were chosen based on the fact that students with hearing impairment in the selected schools in these regions had good performance compared to other regions. For example, while 4 students with hearing impairment from Iringa region joined the advanced secondary education from 2017 to 2020, in Njombe region 7 students with hearing impairment joined the advanced secondary education. Moreover, the two regions were among the regions with a big number of students with hearing impairments whereby Njombe had 126 and Iringa 106 students with hearing impairment.

Sampling techniques and data collection methods

The population of this study constituted heads of school, school counsellors, academic teachers and students with hearing impairment from the selected schools. This population was considered to have sufficient data on the access of guidance and counselling as a determining factor for academic performance among students with hearing impairment in secondary schools in Tanzania. Out of 150 participants

involved in this study, 138 were students with hearing impairment and 12 came from the category of heads of school, academic teachers and school counsellors. All students were from form One to form Four classes and all participants were drawn from three secondary schools in Njombe and Iringa regions.

The sampling techniques employed in this study were simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. A simple random sampling was employed in selecting 138 students with hearing impairment which included 75 from Njombe and 63 from Iringa regions. The heads of school, school counsellors and academic teachers were selected through purposive sampling because they were considered to have important information about the contribution of guidance and counselling in improving academic performance among students with hearing impairment.

On the other hand, the study employed interview, focus group discussion and questionnaire to collect data from the participants. Semi-structured interview was administered to school counsellors, heads of school and academic teachers. The interview method was administered by an expert who was not a school teacher from the respective schools. There was a pressing need to hire an expert since the researchers did not have expertise in the sign language. Before embarking on data collection, the researchers had to train and orient the sign language expert on the interview questions. Each interview session lasted between one hour and one hour and a half. The interview was employed in this study because it permits flexibility in the sequence of discussions and it makes the participant comfortable in providing in-depth information about the topic under study. Interview provided data on the accessibility of the guidance and counselling services to students with hearing impairment and how guidance and counselling for students with hearing impairment is conducted. The researchers established rapport with participants and created a safe environment in order to allow them to express their views freely.

The questionnaire was employed to collect data about accessibility of guidance and counselling services and factors influencing the academic performance among the students with hearing impairment. The researchers distributed the questionnaires in person to participants and collected the completed questionnaires. This method was useful because the participants were located in the same geographical area, which allowed face-to-face interaction with the participants. The questionnaire method was chosen due to its strength of being free from the bias of the researcher as the respondents answer the questions in their own words and at their own pace.

Conversely, focus group discussion was also employed in data collection. Each focus group discussion comprised eight students; each session lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. This amount of time was sufficient to obtain rich data.

Focus group discussion is considered to be a useful strategy for facilitating people to explore and clarify their views and attitudes in ways that would not easily be achieved in a one-to-one interview (Kitzinger, 1995).

Data analysis plan

The quantitative data were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. The data were coded, entered into the computer and analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The quantitative data were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. Also, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the factors influencing academic performance among the students with hearing impairment. SPSS was employed because of its ability to handle bulky data and to perform all of the analyses covered in the text and much more (Field, 2009). On the other hand, qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis.

Ethical considerations

All ethical considerations were taken into account including obtaining ethical clearance letter from relevant authorities and asking for participants' consent to participate in the study. The researchers explained the purpose of the study to the study participants. Thereafter, the researchers asked the participants to sign the informed consent form for those who were willing to participate in the study. Participants were free to join or withdraw from the study without any harm. In addition, the researchers ensured confidentiality of the obtained information and anonymity of the participants and schools. Schools involved in this study were referred to by letters of alphabet.

Findings and Discussion

Factors influencing the academic performance among students with hearing impairments

The study, among other things, assessed the factors that influence the academic performance among the students with hearing impairment. To achieve this objective, the study analysed the data which were obtained from both students and school counsellors through questionnaire. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the factors influencing academic performance among the students with hearing impairment. The dependent variable which was the academic performance was regressed with independent variables which are guidance and counselling services, availability and usage of hearing aids, teachers' academic

qualifications and professional qualities in teaching. Other independent variables were teaching and learning facilities, availability of teachers, teaching and learning methods, moral and social support, physical environment, learners' motivation for learning, school environment and home environment. Table 2 summarises the factors influencing academic performance among students with hearing impairment.

Table 1: *Factors Influencing Academic Performance among Students with Hearing Impairment*

Model B	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig. Lower Bound	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	Std. Error	Beta				Upper Bound	
(Constant)	4.960	.990		5.010	.000	3.000	6.919
Teachers' Academic Qualifications and Professional Qualities in Teaching	.004	.175	-.002	-.021	.030*	-.350	.343
Moral and Social Support	.090	.095	.084	.945	.346	-.099	.279
Physical Environment	-.156	.153	-.093	-1.021	.309	-.460	.147
Availability and the usage of Hearing Aids	-.323	.416	-.068	-.776	.004*	-1.146	.500
Teachers' Attitude	.042	.117	.032	.356	.723	-.190	.273
Teaching and Learning Methods	-.505	.234	-.196	-2.155	.033*	-.969	-.041
Teaching and Learning Facilities	-.158	.358	-.039	-.442	.015*	-.866	.550
Availability of teachers	-.643	.461	-.124	-1.395	.041*	-1.554	.269
Guidance and counselling services	-.200	.293	.097	-1.035	.043*	-.182	.532
Learners motivation to learn	.014	.097	.013	.141	.688	-.178	.206
School environment	.067	.101	.060	.659	.511	-.133	.267
Home environment	.138	.108	.115	1.283	.202	-.075	.352

Table 2 indicates that academic performance among students with hearing impairment was determined by factors such as availability and the usage of hearing aids ($p = 0.004$), teaching and learning facilities ($p = 0.015$), teachers' academic qualifications and professional qualities in teaching ($p = 0.030$), teaching and learning methods ($p = 0.033$), availability of teachers ($p = 0.041$) and guidance and counselling services ($p = 0.043$). The findings indicate that the availability and usage of the hearing aids by students with hearing impairment may enhance their academic performance due to the fact that some of their teachers rely on verbal communication since they are not conversant with the sign language. So, the usage of the hearing aids helps to amplify the teacher's voice during the lesson. Therefore, being able to hear what is being taught enhances students' academic performance

since the students' difficulties in hearing and understanding the lessons taught by the teachers are minimized.

The study findings correspond with the findings by Srinivas and Venkatkrishnan (2016), who indicated that when there is a lack of hearing aids and the problems are severe, students do not have the necessary resources to facilitate learning and then it is likely that their academic performance will get affected in a negative manner. Hearing impairment imposes problems of listening to the instructions and explanations given by the teachers and it is associated with poor language development. It impedes the communication abilities of students and, hence their academic performance gets influenced in a negative manner (Srinivas & Venkatkrishnan, 2016; Siahi & Maiyo, 2015). On the same breath, the hearing facilities are very crucial for students with hearing impairment when the learning process is practised. Hearing aids help to amplify sounds during the learning process (Gudyanga, Mudihwa & Wadesango, 2014). The findings also showed that teachers' academic qualifications and professional qualities had statistical influence on the academic performance of the students with hearing impairment at ($p = 0.030$). Indeed, the teachers have an imperative role to influence the academic performance of the students as they are bestowed with the authority to direct all the classroom teaching and learning activities.

Moreover, the results indicated that guidance and counselling services have positive influence on academic performance among the students with hearing impairment ($p = 0.043$). This implies that guidance and counselling services are more likely to improve the academic performance among students with hearing impairment. These findings concur with the study findings by Maganga (2016) who reported that students with hearing impairment in secondary schools face numerous problems and difficulties that normal students experience. Some of the students with hearing impairment may even get involved in violent and criminal acts, drug abuse, HIV, other sexually transmitted infections, teenage pregnancies, induced abortions and unemployment. Such factors have a direct impact upon their academic performance and lives and may hamper their psychological approach. The students may, to a larger extent, even experience the problems of depression, trauma or stress. The guidance and counselling services should be effectively provided in schools in an attempt to help the students to provide solutions to their problems, focus upon their studies, and become responsible members of the community (Maganga, 2016).

Access to guidance and counselling services

The second objective of the study sought to examine the accessibility of guidance and counselling services for the students with hearing impairment. To achieve

this objective, quantitative data collected from the students' questionnaire, school counsellors, heads of school and academic teachers were analysed. The students' questionnaire had a set of statements in the form of a Likert Scale in which five scales were used to rate the responses whereby number 1 was rated as 'strongly disagree' and number 5 was rated 'strongly agree'. The analysed data were summarized in terms of mean and standard deviations as depicted in Table 3.

Table 2: *Accessibility of Guidance and Counselling Services*

Statement	Mean	SD
Guidance and counselling services are provided to students on study habits	4.3	1.2
We provide students with guidance and counselling on time management	3.6	0.9
Guidance and counselling services are provided to students with hearing impairment on their self-awareness and discipline	4.6	1.1
Students who experience a sudden drop in their grades are referred to guidance and counselling department in our school	2.9	0.8
School counsellors provide G&C services to the students about their career development	2.7	0.5
We guide students on how to give attention and improve in all subjects	3.2	0.7
Students with hearing impairment are counselled on personal hygiene, good manner and respect to others in the community	4.5	0.2
Guidance and counselling services are provided to students on subject selection	4.2	0.9
We guide and counsel students on how to overcome examination anxiety	2.5	0.5
Guidance and counselling are provided on how to prepare for the end term and national examinations	3.8	0.7
Students were counselled on subject combination choices	2.6	0.9
The school counsellor and other teachers provide G&C services to students with HI to set goals for their future life	1.9	1.0

The results of the study revealed that most of the students were guided on their self-awareness and discipline with the mean score of 4.6. This is based on the fact that there is no success in learning process without discipline. So in order to perform well in their subjects, students are required to be disciplined in terms of time management, performance of the activities related to as well as attending the classes regularly. They should also respect their teachers so as to improve their academic performance. Moreover, to support the findings, the same observation was identified during the interview with the school counsellor when quoted saying:

I provide guidance and counselling services to students in various aspects but mostly in academic issues to which we counsel them in study skills, behavioural education versus education and life skills and their future life. These study skills entail planning time table for their personal studies, as well as subject selection by considering their abilities in the subject.

(Interview with the Counsellor of School C, November, 2022)

In addition, the academic teacher from school A also provided insights into the same aspect and was quoted saying:

Guidance and counselling services are provided in our school for less than hundred (100%) percent because I participate in other school duties but I try as much as I can to provide the G & C services. Most of the guidance and counselling services that I provide to students are centred on good manner and discipline. They also focus on studies, academic performance, counselling on study habit and sometimes, the family challenges. I have a program of contacting the students' parents so as to solve those challenges. This helps to build confidence among the students and improve their academic performance (Interview with academic teacher of School A , November, 2022)

Also, in the same line during the interview with the head of school from school B, she was quoted saying:

In our school, every teacher provides G &C services to students with hearing impairment because teachers are the guardians. So, all the staffs provide counselling in different aspects like hard working behaviour, time management, discipline and so forth. Every teacher sometimes identifies the challenges and gets them transferred to the counselling department. (Interview with the Head of School B, November, 2022)

Further, the majority reported that they were provided with guidance and counselling services regarding the selection of the subject with the mean score of 4.2. The students with hearing impairment are guided and counselled on personal hygiene, good manner and respect to others in the community with the mean score of 4.5. Also, these students are guided and counselled on the study habits with the mean score of 4.3 whereas guidance and counselling services on how to prepare for the end term and national examination are provided to students with hearing impairment with the mean score of 3.8. The statement on guiding and counselling students on time management scored the mean of 3.6. This implies that students with hearing impairments who received guidance and counselling services, were guided and counselled in a variety of areas which aimed at enhancing their learning behaviour and, thus improving their academic performance.

Likewise, Maingi, Mulwa, Maithya, and Migosi (2017) claim that secondary school

education is crucial for career decisions. Teachers should guide the students on the careers and allow them to consult from their own angle and decide on the subjects they should choose for the enhancement of their own dream careers.

On the same way, Ibrahim, Ghavifekr, Ling, Siraj and Azeez (2014) indicate that learners get motivated when studying their preferred subjects. They perform better in the subjects of their choices than those which are compulsory. This is because from within they feel that they have done it on their own free will. No one has pursued them to have the subjects. Also, they get a positive attitude towards what they feel that they have taken with their own free will. Positive attitude gives them the desire to perform better. Even in instances when there is content that they have not understood, they consult and visit the teachers individually to understand better. That is the reason why most students start performing well after choosing subjects even if earlier they were taking the same subject and not performing well on the same. Based on the findings, the study suggested that it is important for the teachers to guide and counsell students about subject selection prior the actual time they are required to make the selection.

In support to that finding, Siah and Maiyo (2015) reported that guidance and counselling is good for learners' improvement in academic performance as they will have better means of understanding what they have learnt in class. They will avoid relating some subjects to certain gender since anyone can do anything and perform well in it (Hill et al., 2016). Therefore, school counsellors and teachers should prioritize guiding students on academic performance through improving their study skills.

Challenges hindering the provision of G&C services to students with hearing impairment

Under this objective, the researchers were interested in finding out the challenges that hinder the provision of guidance and counselling services among students with hearing impairment in the selected schools. Based on the study findings, the respondents revealed that challenges hindering guidance and counselling services include but are not limited to lack of hearing aids, lack of counsellors with sign language specialties, inadequate guidance and counselling facilities and counsellor's workload as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Challenges Hindering the Provision of G&C for Students with Hearing Impairments*

Challenges	Responses	Percent of Cases
Inadequate school counsellors specializing in sign language	113	81.9
School counsellors heavy teaching workload	24	17.4
Insufficient guidance and counselling facilities	86	63.3
Scarcity of hearing aids	138	100

Despite guidance and counselling being provided in these schools, the school counsellors were not qualified for counselling practices and neither they were they competent in sign language which is a common and major means of communication used by students with hearing impairment. To support the findings, the head of school from school A had the following to say:

We use the normal teachers who did not specialize in neither sign language nor guidance and counselling. It is very difficult to practise but we have to practise it and, in fact, it is very useful for the performance of the students with hearing impairment. (Interview with the Head of School A, November, 2022)

The findings are in line with the findings by Parveen (2017) who revealed that there is still insufficient assistance in secondary and higher education institutions to enable students achieve their career aspirations. However, students might, therefore, be encountering an increasing need to acquire relevant career information that will enable them seek better paid jobs. Many schools have previously appointed some teachers as career masters without providing them with the necessary training and facilities for professional advice. Patterson, Hayes and McIntire (1974) argue that the counsellors with such attributes as having interest in student welfare, willingness to serve others, devotion to study, competence, confidence, commitment and, generally, having a good personality makes them best teachers to serve as school counsellors. On the contrary, the school counsellors who have compromised personalities, poor attitudes towards work and lack of commitment result in bad school counsellors.

Similarly, failure to clearly define roles and responsibilities in the implementation process affect the implementation of G & C programs. Lack of continuing professional development of school counsellors is also another factor that affects the implementation of G&C programs in secondary schools in the sense that school counsellors who do not attend such training remain outdated because they are not equipped with new techniques, materials and information among other things (Camelford & Ebrahim, 2017).

The study findings also indicated that the guidance and counselling facilities were inadequate. This implies that proper facilities are needed to ensure the proper

functioning and efficiency of guidance and counselling services. The facilities such as guidance and counselling room, proper furniture, bookshelves and the like are necessary. In order to have the quality guidance and counselling services, there should be a number of facilities which include office space, bookshelves, drawers, files, time and reference books. This finding is consonant with that of Boitt (2016) who noted that guidance and counselling activities or programs cannot thrive if G&C facilities are inadequate. Indeed, inadequate facilities can hinder implementation of guidance and counselling programs in many ways. The findings of the current study indicate that all school counsellors who were involved in the study reported that the limited space for operating hindered the implementation of the guidance and counselling programs. To this effect, the researchers observed that there was limited space for G&C services in all the three schools studied leading to limited provision of G&C services to students with hearing impairment.

Further, in conjunction with the findings, Owusu-Agyeman and Larbi-Siaw (2018) identified that there is slow growth of guidance and counselling in educational systems which are attributed to lack of funds, training facilities, and high turnover of school counsellors to greener pastures and inadequate trained school counsellors. All these factors hinder the provision of guidance and counselling services in one way or another.

The findings comply with those by Parveen (2017) who identified that there is still insufficient assistance in secondary and higher education institutions to enable students to achieve their career aspirations. In addition, school teacher's heavy teaching loads and other responsibilities such as administrative and teaching duties in the school leave little time for them to meet pupils who are in need of guidance and counselling services. However, students today indicate a higher need for career guidance than students in the previous decade. Students might therefore be encountering an increased need to acquire relevant career information that will enable them to seek better paid jobs.

Conclusions

This study has revealed that factors such as scarcity of hearing aids for students with hearing impairment, inadequate number of school counsellors specializing in sign language, insufficient guidance and counselling facilities and the school counsellors' teaching workload seem to negatively impact the provision of guidance and counselling services to students with hearing impairment. The study therefore concludes that, collaborative efforts between different stakeholders such as teachers, counsellors and the school administration coupled with the availability of assistive devices such as hearing aids are key to improving access and quality of guidance and counselling services in schools. In schools where students with hearing

impairments are given enough attention, increasing awareness of the importance of guidance and counselling services for these students is of utmost importance as a way to improve their academic performance. It is therefore right to argue that access to guidance and counselling services is critical for supporting the academic performance of students with hearing impairment in Tanzania.

Recommendations

In view of the results of this study, the following recommendations are made: First, school administrators must be in the forefront in supporting and promoting guidance and counselling programmes by ensuring that guidance and counselling services to students with hearing impairment are given priority because they are the ones mostly affected by various challenges compared to normal students. Secondly, the government should ensure the availability of hearing aids for learners with hearing impairments. Thirdly, school counsellors, who are mostly teachers should be allocated low workloads to enable them to have an ample time to attend students with hearing impairment.

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