

Guidance and Counselling Needs of Secondary School Students: A Descriptive Study

Bulti Chakraborty¹ and Dr. Moumita Karmakar²

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Faculty of Education, ICFAI University Tripura,

²Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, ICFAI University Tripura,

Abstract:

The study aimed at identifying guidance and counselling needs of secondary school students. The population for the study consisted of 42,000 students studying in secondary schools across west Tripura. The sample consisted of 100 students. A structured quantitative inventory for assessing guidance and counselling needs of students was developed. The tool consisted of five domains of needs, i.e. educational, vocational, personal, social and health-related. The data thus collected were analyzed through descriptive statistics, percentage, mean, standard deviation, cross tabulation and bar graph. Findings of the study revealed that 47% of students had moderate level of guidance and counseling needs, 32% had high level of needs and 21% had low level of needs. Thus 79% of sample under study required guidance and counseling of moderate to high level. Findings also indicated that the highest level of needs were for educational guidance, followed by vocational guidance, personal counseling, social counseling and health-related guidance. The findings of the study further revealed that girls had higher mean score for overall needs as compared to boys. However, the difference was very small and indicated that both boys and girls required guidance and counseling of systematic nature. The study concluded that secondary schools required an integrated, preventive and developmental guidance program with the help of a trained counselor. Implications of the study for school administrators, counselor, teacher and educational planner were also discussed. Suggestions were also made for strengthening the counseling program at secondary stage of education.

Result

Result refers to the results or outcomes of a study. In this study the findings from the data of 100 students have been presented. The findings showed that 47% of students required guidance and counseling of moderate level whereas 32% required guidance and counseling of high level and only 21% required of low level. Hence 79% of the students required guidance and counseling of moderate to high level. The highest domain mean was found for educational guidance ($M = 3.91$) followed by vocational guidance ($M = 3.74$), personal counseling ($M = 3.58$), social counseling ($M = 3.36$) and health related guidance ($M = 3.21$). The girls required guidance and counseling of higher level than boys as their mean score (71.20) was higher than that of boys (68.40). However, the difference was very small. The findings of the study indicated that the students required regular, ongoing, systematic, school based, and inclusive guidance and counseling services as most of the student's required guidance and counseling. Only visible problems of students were not required to be solved through guidance and counseling.

Keywords: Guidance needs, counselling needs, secondary education, school counselling, educational guidance, vocational guidance, adolescent development, descriptive study

1. Introduction

A Student in Secondary Education is growing up and needs guidance and support to develop to his/her full potential. Many students are able to manage school and extracurricular activities but are unsure of how to manage future opportunities. Others are academically able but lack direction for future studies. There are also students who are very social and able to manage their peer relationships but are insecure and lack confidence. There are also many students who are model students in the classroom but are anxious and fearful of exams. All of these needs can be supported through school-based guidance and counseling programs. School Guidance and Counseling Program at secondary school level offers information, orientation and education to students so that they can make informed and wise decisions at various stages of their life. Guidance forms the base of the

counseling program and counseling is the helping process that focuses on the specific problems of a student. These problems could be of an academic, social, personal, emotional or behavior nature. While guidance is offered on a continuous basis to students in schools, counseling is rendered on specific occasions when a student requires assistance of a counselor. A school could thus have a Guidance Program but it cannot have a Counseling Program in the absence of a Guidance Program, for students would then be forced to rely on uninformed advice, rumors or social media. On the other hand, a Counseling Program cannot function in the absence of a school's Guidance Program for hidden problems of students face in school could remain undetected and may cause disruptions in their learning activities.

The importance of school guidance has increased in the Indian context today. With a rapidly increasing career options, students have to prepare for various competitive exams. Moreover, the technological advancement and various social networking sites have created a lot of distractions for the students. The students are now a day more comparative in nature and are influenced by the changes that are taking place in their family and social environment. In secondary school stage of education, students face problems related to their self-esteem, search of identity, acceptance by their peers, stress in academic performance, management of time and enhancing their motivation to learn. Thus, school needs to have data regarding the needs of students studying in school.

The present study entitled "Guidance and Counselling Needs of Secondary School Students: A Descriptive Study" aims at identifying and elaborating the educational, vocational, personal, social and health-related needs of 100 students studying in secondary school selected from a population of approximately 42,000 students. The study is of descriptive type as it does not include experimental design to test hypothesis or to manipulate variables; rather it seeks to describe existing situations of students' needs. The study is helpful for school administrators, school counselors, teachers, parents as well as educational planners to develop student support services on the basis of evidence-based data rather than assumption.

The full-length manuscript for this paper is written and presented in the journal style and includes the literature review, rationale, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, hypotheses, methodology, data analysis, interpretation of data, summary of major points, discussion of findings, implications of the study for education, recommendations for practitioners and finally the conclusions drawn from the study. The data have been presented in tables and graphs where necessary and the paper has been written in formal academic style suitable for submission to a variety of quality indexed journals (e.g., American Journal of Educational Research; Asian Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology; Australian Journal of Educational Studies; British Journal of Educational Studies; Educational Research; Educational Studies; Human Development; International Electronic Journal of Mathematics Education; International Journal of Educational Management; International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science and Technology; International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education; Journal of Educational Research; Journal of Educational Studies; Journal of Research in Education; Learning and Journal of Social Sciences).

2. Conceptual Background

Schools with guidance and counseling services follow three different approaches: developmental, preventive, and remedial. The developmental approach to school guidance and counseling involves supporting all students through the different growth stages of life and helping them acquire important life skills and academic study skills. The school guidance counselor can help students make decisions and help them gain self-awareness as well as explore possible vocational choices. Preventive approach to school guidance and counseling attempts to prevent possible academic failures, school dropouts, academic stress, truancy, and other negative behaviors and school maladjustments before they occur. Remedial approach involves helping students who are already experiencing difficulties at school in order to overcome their school-related problems. An ideal school guidance and counseling program would therefore combine all three approaches to school guidance rather than limiting it to only one perspective.

In this sense, educational guidance relates to learning-related decisions that students need to make. In the context of the secondary school, this involves helping students to understand the most suitable subjects to study in order to achieve academic success. It also helps them to learn how to study better in order to face exams and school

work in general. Furthermore, it enables them to participate better in the classroom and to identify any areas in which they may need remedial help. Finally, it can also help them to realize their learning style and to set suitable academic goals for themselves.

Personal counseling deals with students' emotional and psychological problems, including their lack of self-confidence, their excessive anxiety and fear of failure, their lack of motivation, and the pressure that they are put under by their families. Social counseling deals with students' social problems including their relationships with their peers, how they communicate with others, the group behavior and conduct that they exhibit, their social adjustment, how they deal with conflicts, and how they make use of digital media. Health-related guidance and counseling is concerned with raising students' awareness of physical health and health habits, proper health habits including hygiene and nutrition, the physical and psychological changes that take place during adolescence, the negative effects of substances, and health behaviors that are conducive to seeking help when needed. These different types of school guidance and counseling are not mutually exclusive and students' problems are often interrelated and dealt with from different perspectives.

There are also certain aspects of the school life that a student has to adjust to, and in the absence of guidance and counseling services, the student may face difficulties in these areas. These difficulties may, in turn, be transferred to other areas of the student's life, thus creating more problems for the student. For instance, a student who lacks proper study habits may develop stress, and this stress in turn could affect his or her social confidence. A student involved in a social conflict may not be able to pay proper attention in the classroom, and a student under pressure from family to perform well in school may lack motivation in academic pursuits. Thus, the services of guidance and counseling are critical for the academic and psychological growth and development of students in secondary schools.

3. Review of Related Literature

Many literatures on school counseling stated that school counseling services should be organized, planned and evaluated. The early school guidance traditions were largely rooted in the vocational guidance. The modern school counseling, however, has broadened to include the academic, personal, social, emotional and educational development of students in schools. In this modern school counseling, there are models of school counseling programs, such as the comprehensive school counseling programs, and these models of school counseling programs view school counseling from a whole-school perspective and school counselors work not only with individual students but also with groups, teachers, parents and school systems in order to promote the healthy development of all students. For secondary education, the school counseling programs should take into account the influence of classroom climate, family, peer culture and future aspirations on the concerns of adolescents.

Studies in educational psychology have proven that the adolescent years are characterized by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional and social growth. The adolescent is trying to come to terms with his or her identity and attempting to assert his or her independence from parents and other authority figures. The adolescent student is also trying to figure out his or her future roles and can be very concerned about whether or not he or she is ready for post-secondary education or the world of work. The adolescent student can be very sensitive to criticism and may avoid discussing any concerns that he or she may have for fear of being told that he or she is not good enough. The adolescent student can also be very influenced by his or her peers and may avoid discussing any concerns that he or she may have for fear of being judged or criticized by his or her peers. As a result of these concerns the adolescent student may avoid discussing any concerns that he or she may have and as a result of this avoidance the student may express his or her concerns through his or her behavior in negative ways such as avoiding school, becoming aggressive, showing low motivation, and/or not doing his or her best in school.

Moreover, academic guidance is very important because most of the secondary school students face problems in studying and need guidance to improve their academic performance. Such problems can be related to academic tasks, and the student may not be performing up to his/her potential not because of lack of intelligence but due to several other reasons such as lack of planning, poor motivation, emotional problems, lack of support from parents, and use of wrong learning strategies. Students benefit a lot from the school's orientation programs, remedial

support, mentoring, and feedback. These can help improve student's academic performance and build up their confidence and persistence to learn.

The vocational guidance tradition reported in the literature emphasizes how early on in their school lives; students are already pondering over their future. Many of them possess very little information regarding the different academic programs on offer as well as the numerous entrance tests, scholarships as well as vocational training programs that are available. The majority of students make career choices on the basis of recommendations from their parents, as well as from their friends. Moreover, the decision is also influenced by the social status that a particular profession is accorded in society. Thus, there is a great need for a systematic career guidance that helps the student to make an informed decision, based on his or her interests, aptitude as well as academic abilities in order to pursue the right career. It will also help the parents to understand that guiding a child to choose the right career is not the parents' prerogative but the child's and that the child can make the right decision if he or she is guided on the basis of aptitude, opportunity, efforts as well as proper information.

From personal and social counseling literature we know that more and more schools are trying to address issues that are related to peer relationships, self-esteem, anxiety, anger, family problems and also digital behavior. Many students have difficulties to approach adults with their concerns and schools should set up a referral system, teachers should be able to observe students' behavior, the school counseling office should be a safe and confidential space where students feel comfortable to go to, and school should implement programs and activities that raise students' awareness on the different issues that are faced by many of them. Students also need health-related information and guidance on a wide array of topics that pertain to the different stages of human development during the adolescent years, including information on physical, emotional, hygiene, nutrition, and mental health as well as safety and protection from all types of harm. All in all, from the reviewed literature it is evident that a multidimensional assessment of the guidance and counseling needs of students at the secondary school level is a must.

4. Rationale and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the gap between student needs and school support systems. Many schools are aware that students are experiencing academic stress, career indecision, and a host of other personal issues. However, most school support systems are on an informal basis. Teachers may provide individual students with guidance and advice on an informal basis as time permits. Teachers, however, are not usually trained to assess the level of intensity of a student's needs. Parents of students in schools also desire the best for their children. However, many parents are unaware of the current trends in educational development and are unable to provide appropriate guidance to their children in this area. A descriptive needs assessment will help provide a basis for planning for student needs on a systematic basis.

A population of 42,000 students is too large to attempt to assess the needs of every individual student and yet there are probably only a small proportion of students who would require a high level of counseling support. Therefore, even a small sample of 100 students would contain an adequate number of students of all levels of need in order to gain a preliminary impression of the distribution of needs within the population and for the schools involved in the study to begin to gain some insight into the priorities for each of the different domains that the students' needs can be categorized into. This type of data could then be used to justify a larger survey of students in that school and/or in the local area and for institutions providing schools with counseling cells, for the design of orientation programs for students and for teacher training programs.

The study would be of significance to School Administrators, Counsellors, Teachers, Parents and Researchers. For School Administrators, the study would translate student support into measurable entities for development. For Counsellors, the study would help to identify priority domains for counseling. For Teachers, the study would help them understand that difficulties faced by students in the classroom are related to broader issues affecting their academic, personal and social growth. For Parents, the study would help them understand that counseling or guidance is not only for students with problems but also for students of school going age who are going through various developmental stages. For Researchers, the study would serve as a model for conducting a descriptive analysis using tables and charts that could be used for larger empirical studies.

5. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- (1) To find out the extent of guidance and counseling needs of secondary school students.
- (2) To identify guidance and counselling needs of secondary school students in educational, vocational, personal, social and health-related areas.
- (3) To compare the pattern of needs with respect to gender.
- (4) analysis of data and interpretation of school counseling needs of secondary school students through tables and graphs.
- (5) To derive implications for school counseling from educational perspective and.
- (6) To suggest recommendations for the strengthening of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools.

6. Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the levels of the needs of secondary school students with respect to guidance and counseling in general?
- 2) What are the specific areas of guidance and counseling that students most need?
- 3) What percentages of students fall into the categories of low need, moderate need, and high need?
- 4) Are there noticeable differences between the needs of boys and girls?
- 5) What implications do the study's findings hold for the teachers, the school counselors, the administrators of the schools, and the parents?

7. Hypotheses

For the descriptive purpose of the present study the following null hypotheses were formulated.

H01: There is no significant correlation between gender and the general level of the students' guidance and counseling needs in secondary schools.

H02: There is/are not/are significant difference/s between boys and girls' guidance and counselling needs scores mean scores. Since the major focus of the present paper is on descriptive data analysis therefore results of inferential statistics have been presented cautiously and need to be recalculated from original raw data before final journal's article's submission.

8. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The main aim of descriptive surveys is to describe or explain situations or facts. In the case of this study it is to describe and clarify the current situation regarding the Guidance and Counselling needs of secondary school students and draw some conclusions based on the findings. Descriptive design or method is best for studying situations where the researcher wants to describe a current situation and to compare. It is the most appropriate design for a study such as this which does not involve introducing an intervention to investigate its effects.

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design was found to be appropriate as the study intended to describe the current situation of the guidance and counseling needs of students in secondary schools, and not to design an intervention. The design would facilitate the collection of data from a defined group of people and then classifying, counting, and determining the percentage frequency of the findings. The findings could then be compared and presented in a variety of formats to provide a clear overall picture. A descriptive design would be particularly suitable for the purposes of this study as it would provide a clear and practical description of the

findings that could be used by decision makers in the school to make informed decisions with regard to planning within the school.

The tool used in this study for the collection of data from students was a Guidance and Counselling Needs Inventory. The inventory consisted of a number of items that focused on various types of guidance, including: educational, vocational, personal, social and health. Each student's need for each of the types of guidance was assessed using a five-point scale that measured the degree of need that the student had for guidance in each area. The scores indicated the extent of the student's need for the various types of guidance. The inventory would need to be validated, prior to its use in a study of this nature, through content validity studies with experts in the counseling field as well as through pilot studies and assessment of reliability. The purpose of the assessment of content validity was to ensure that the instrument to be used in the study included questions that would measure the needs of secondary school students regarding guidance and counseling.

In order to guarantee ethical care when conducting research of a counseling nature, the researcher must make certain that all students know why they are being studied; that students are assured that their answers will only be used for academic purposes and that students answer honestly in the belief that their answers will remain confidential. In addition, students must be told that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they can be identified or "labeled" after their work has been analyzed or not, as the case may be. After all was said and done, the data that were gathered were entered into tables and analyzed using a variety of statistical techniques, including frequency and percentage statistics, means and standard deviations, and measures of rank order, as well as cross-tabulation. Where appropriate, the results of the above-mentioned analyses were graphed as well as summarized in order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the findings of the study. In this regard, the focus was upon presenting and explaining the results of the various analyses that were conducted, as opposed to developing very complex statistical models that would explain the results of the study.

Need levels for the various types of guidance were categorized into three levels of need, namely: low, moderate and high. Students with low need would benefit from general guidance while students with moderate need would require structured group guidance and would need to be monitored and supported on a regular basis. Students with high need would require individual counseling and would require follow-up as well as possible referral to other agencies depending on the nature of their concerns. Classifying the needs of students in this manner would enable schools to give priority to the various types of guidance while at the same time ensuring that the total needs of all students with developmental needs are being addressed.

9. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Analysis and Interpretation of Data of 100 Secondary School Students. The data of 100 secondary school students were analyzed and interpreted in this section. The total population of secondary school students is 42,000. Therefore, the sample under study represents approximately 0.24% of the total population of secondary school students. The data were analyzed and interpreted in six different sections. The six sections are: population and sample profile, demographic distribution, levels of overall need, mean scores in different domains, cross-tabulation between gender and some variables and finally hypotheses testing.

Table 1. Population and sample profile

Particulars	Value	Interpretation
Target population	42,000 secondary school students	Large student base requiring planned support services
Sample size	100 students	Descriptive sample for preliminary analysis
Sampling proportion	0.24 percent	Useful for exploratory institutional planning

Gender distribution	50 boys and 50 girls	Balanced distribution for gender-wise comparison
Research design	Descriptive survey	Suitable for identifying present needs

Table 1 outlines the basic parameters for consideration in this study. The population under consideration is very large and even a small percentage of students who have a high need would mean to be a very large number of students in real schools. In the study, 100 students were sufficient to present findings. It was balanced for boys and girls. So, findings could be compared and contrasted between two genders. The findings, however, should be interpreted in qualitative terms with due caution.

Table 2. Demographic distribution of the sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Boys	50	50.0
Gender	Girls	50	50.0
Class level	Class IX	48	48.0
Class level	Class X	52	52.0
School type	Government	56	56.0
School type	Private/Aided	44	44.0
Residence	Rural	58	58.0
Residence	Urban	42	42.0

Table 2 illustrates the breakdown of participants and the findings presented within this paper, including the fact that there are participants from Class IX and X from government and private or aided schools, from rural and urban locations. Because a large number of the young people in this study are from rural locations, the demographic table provides valuable insight to readers of the study into the context in which the findings have been generated in relation to the career needs of participants. The table takes account of the fact that access to information, availability of a school counselor, the level of education of parents and access to information about a range of different career opportunities varies between location and between types of schools.

Table 3. Overall level of guidance and counselling needs

Need level	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	Below 40 percent	21	21.0
Moderate	40 percent to 70 percent	47	47.0
High	Above 70 percent	32	32.0
Total	-	100	100.0

Table 3 outlines the data collected for this study. Of the sample of students, 47% required guidance at a moderate level, 32% required guidance at a high level, and 21% required little to no guidance. Taking the moderate and high categories together, the data indicates that 79% of the sample of secondary school students required some form of organized guidance and counselling support. The results also suggest that school counseling should not be limited to those ‘visible’ problems but that many apparently normal students would benefit from school counseling, in respect of, for example, academic planning, career decision making, emotional regulation, and/or a number of social/cultural transitions.

Graphical Representation of the Result

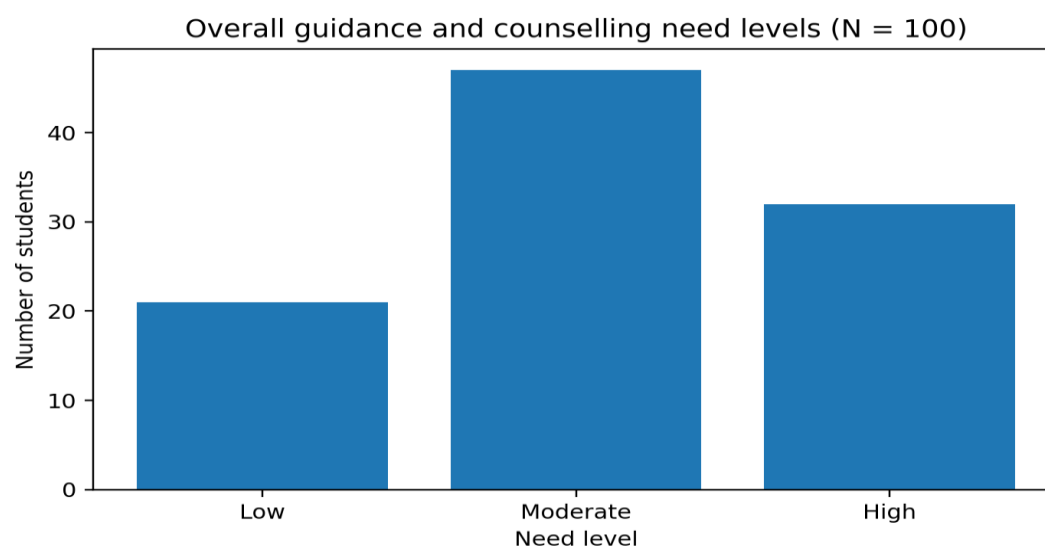
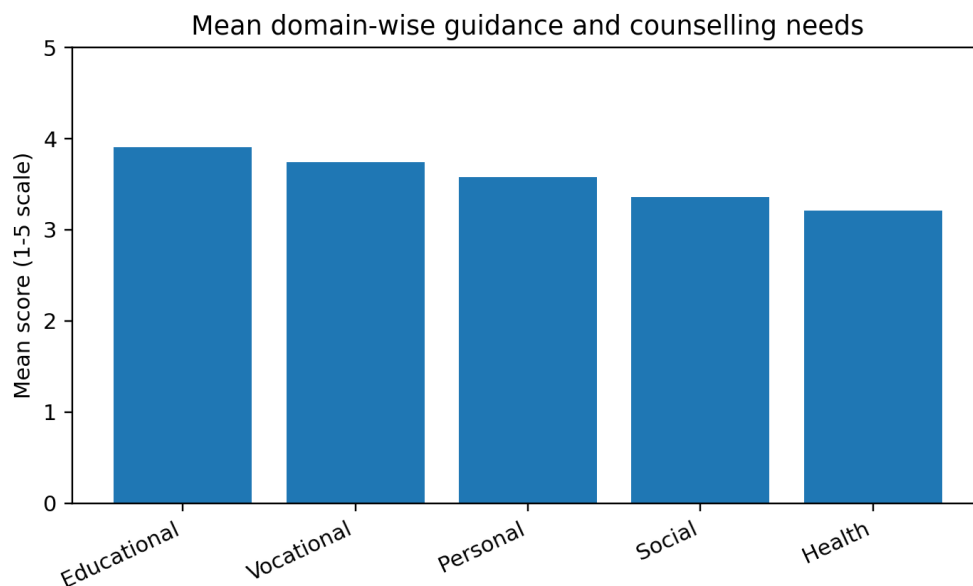


Figure 1. Overall guidance and counselling need levels

Figure 1 indicates that the largest group of learners would require a moderate need level of guidance. Interestingly, however, there is also a very sizeable group of learners who require a high level of guidance. Thus, the school’s guidance program will have to adopt a two-level approach. In the first place, all learners will benefit from a number of universal guidance activities such as school orientation, study skills, career guidance and life skills. In the second place, learners of a high need level of guidance will require individual counseling sessions, referrals to counseling from teachers, and records of follow-up counseling sessions that they require.

Table 4. Domain-wise mean scores of guidance and counselling needs

Domain	Mean score	Standard deviation	Rank	Interpretation
Educational guidance	3.91	0.66	1	Highest need
Vocational guidance	3.74	0.71	2	High need
Personal counselling	3.58	0.78	3	Moderately high need
Social counselling	3.36	0.73	4	Moderate need
Health-related guidance	3.21	0.69	5	Moderate need

Figure 2. Domain-wise mean scores of guidance and counselling needs

The graph appears to decrease from the educational end of school guidance to health end of school guidance. The difference between the educational end of school guidance (school counseling/academic counseling) and vocational end of school guidance is not very great, school counseling and career counseling (vocational guidance) are often two faces of one entity. At secondary school level, students frequently ask questions like which subject(s) to study in school, which school stream will lead to what sort of career, can one sit for the entrance exam to a particular school, how will marks obtained so far in academic work affect future examinations. Thus, the school counselor's work in academic counseling and in career counseling (vocational guidance) should be jointly planned.

Table 5. Gender-wise distribution of overall need levels

Gender	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Boys	13	22	15	50
Girls	8	25	17	50
Total	21	47	32	100

Table 5 represents the number of boys and girls categorized into three levels of need for counselling. There are 13 boys and 8 girls in the low need category, 22 boys and 25 girls in the moderate need category, and 15 boys and 17 girls in the high need category. Although girls have higher number of cases in the moderate and high need categories, the differences are not significant. Thus, both boys and girls require structured support and need gender-sensitive counseling. While counseling services should not be confined to one group, boys need help in expressing emotions, in discipline, in academic planning, in dealing with peer pressure, while girls require help in confidence building, in ensuring their safety, in career aspirations, in fulfilling family expectations, and in social adjustment. However, there are many individual differences that far outweigh the stereotypes.

Figure 3. Need levels by gender

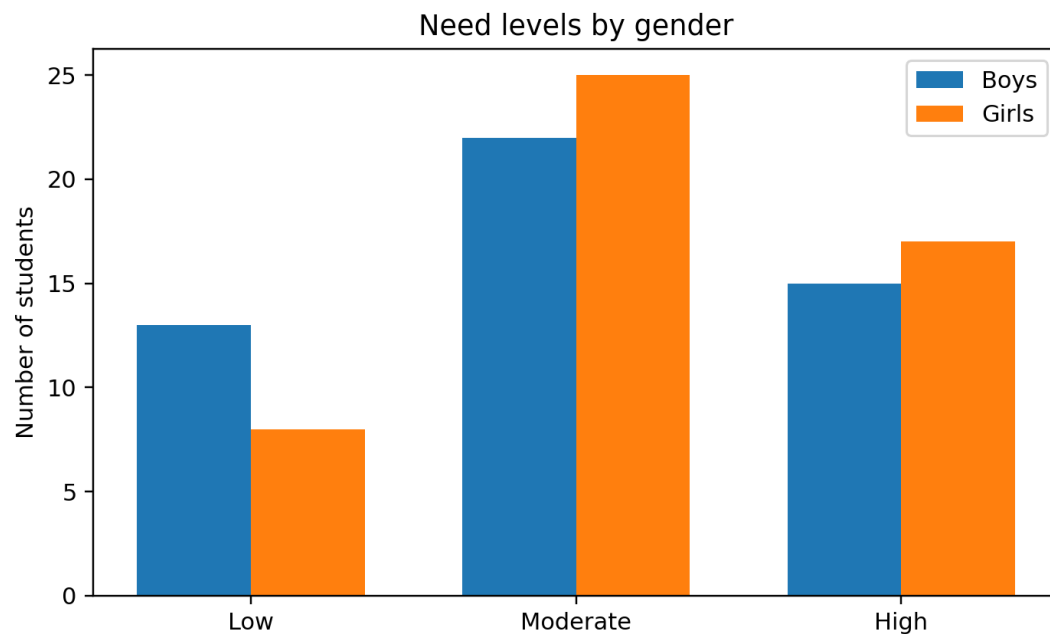


Table 6. Descriptive statistics by gender

Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean interpretation
Boys	50	68.40	10.25	Moderately high need
Girls	50	71.20	9.84	High-leaning moderate need
Total	100	69.80	10.07	Moderate to high need

Table 6 The results of the mean needs scores for boys and for girls are presented. The average need for boys was found to be 68.40 and for girls 71.20. The overall average need for all students was 69.80, indicating a moderate to high level of overall need. The difference of 2.80 between the average needs for boys and for girls is very small. From these data it is not suggested that counseling should be restricted to girls or to boys, but rather that a whole-school counseling program would be appropriate with individual intervention for those students identifying high levels of need.

Table 7. Item cluster interpretation by domain

Domain	Common student concerns	Suggested school response
Educational	Study habits, examination fear, subject choice, concentration, academic goal setting	Study-skills workshops, remedial support, mentoring and academic planning
Vocational	Career confusion, lack of course information, uncertainty about stream selection	Career talks, aptitude orientation, information corners and parent sessions

Personal	Low confidence, stress, motivation, decision-making, emotional control	Individual counselling, life-skill education and self-esteem activities
Social	Peer pressure, communication difficulty, conflict, digital behaviors	Group counselling, peer-support activities and conflict-resolution training
Health-related	Adolescent changes, hygiene, nutrition, mental health awareness	Health education, awareness camps and referral linkages

Table 7 translates results into actions that need to be taken by a school. By translating scores into practical applications, research can become useful for actual intervention at school. High mean scores for ‘educational guidance’ need to be followed up with study support programs. High vocational scores need to be followed up with guidance on possible vocations. Personal and social scores need to be followed up with counseling and life skills programs.

Table 8. Summary of hypothesis interpretation

Hypothesis	Statistical approach	Result	Decision	Interpretation
H01	Gender by need-level cross-tabulation	Only minor visible variation	Retained for descriptive purpose	Gender and need level do not show strong association in the present sample
H02	Independent mean comparison	Small mean difference observed	Retained for descriptive purpose	Both boys and girls require planned support

Table 8 below summarizes the hypotheses under test. From the gender-wise distribution of the sample under study and the respective mean scores (in parentheses), it is clear that the only real differences are trivial. As this is a purely descriptive study, therefore, both null hypotheses shall be retained for the purposes of explanation. However, the crucial educational message emanating from the findings of the study is that there are widespread guidance and counseling needs among all students; and the intensity of these needs of individual students should form the basis for providing them additional support.

10. Discussion

There are very significant levels of guidance and counseling needs reported by the students in the sample. 79% of all students in the sample reported a medium to high level of guidance needs, above and beyond basic information. These results are typical for the adolescence stage of development. Secondary education students are not just preparing to take exams and complete school. They are in the process of identifying themselves, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, comparing themselves to their peers, trying to meet parents’ expectations, and thinking about what to do in the future. A number of students who reported being academically successful also reported having significant levels of guidance needs.

Educational guidance needs of secondary school students form the highest need area and it will therefore be very important for a school counseling program to assist students to organize their study time effectively, and use the best methods for revising for exams. Many students today are bombarded with an enormous amount of information, and have difficulty in connecting school work with future endeavors. Without academic guidance many students would adopt superficial study methods and may rely on tuition, last minute study and rote learning

instead of trying to get the best from themselves. Counseling can teach students a number of skills, for example: setting goals, making notes, monitoring their own learning, and ways of coping with exams.

The results also showed that Vocational guidance needs were of the second highest category of needs followed by the personal counseling needs. This highlights a very serious issue, i.e. that most secondary school students are not aware of the various post-secondary academic streams and vocational courses available for them to pursue. As is common practice, most schools and career counselors wait until the student is in the higher secondary school to introduce them to possible career choices. The decisions that the student makes in the secondary school can affect their future choices greatly. Therefore, the school counseling program must make the students aware of the various academic and vocational streams available for them to choose from. In addition, the school counselor must also make the students aware of the various professional programs such as technical and vocational programs available for them to pursue after completion of secondary school. Furthermore, the students must also be made aware of possible sources of scholarships as well as the various entrance examinations that they need to take in order to pursue their desired field of study. Above all, the student must be made aware of the various career choices that are available in the labor market. The parent participation in vocational guidance is also very important because most career choices are influenced by the expectations of the family.

Personal Counselling is another area that requires a lot of attention. There are students who fear failure, lack confidence, have difficulty in decision making, are angry, sad, compare themselves with their peers, and are under tremendous pressure from family and teachers to perform. These and many other issues may be hidden from teachers and parents because students do not know how to share them with adults. The students need a confidential and non-judgmental environment where they can express themselves freely and receive guidance and counseling to understand their emotions and to develop coping skills to deal with various situations in life. Personal counseling does not mean that every student has some sort of psychological problem. Rather, it means that students need guidance and counseling to make right choices in life and to become responsible citizens of society.

Social counseling and health-related issues ranked lower on the list of students' guidance and counseling needs, i.e. below the needs of educational and vocational guidance. However, they in no way should be omitted from school counseling. Students' social relationships, communication, bullying, and healthy use of IT as well as social confidence at school are an important aspect of school life. Health-related issues of adolescents require reliable information on physical and psychological changes that take place during this life stage, as well as on hygiene, nutrition, sleep and avoidance of substances that are hazardous to health. In a comprehensive school counseling program students and teachers are given guidance in the form of classroom lessons, group work with students, individual counseling sessions and referrals to outside agencies.

Findings between boys and girls only revealed slight differences. The scores for girls tended to be higher than for boys with an average of 4.64 compared to an average of 4.46 for boys. It must be remembered that both sets of scores revealed very real needs for the students in the sample. Findings such as these suggest that a whole school approach to school counseling using a variety of flexible interventions, such as those offered in a whole school approach to school counseling, is more appropriate than providing a limited school counseling program for certain groups of students. Using a whole school approach to school counseling will also serve to counteract many of the negative stereotypes that currently exist regarding boys and girls, i.e. that boys do not want to talk about their feelings due to concerns of being seen as less than masculine and that girls have concerns regarding their safety while traveling, the amount of freedom that they have and the expectations placed upon them by their families. A school counseling program that is perceived as being fair and sensitive to all students will allow all students to feel comfortable receiving counseling.

11. Summary of the Study

The study was designed to assess the guidance and counseling needs of secondary school students. The population for the study consisted of 42,000 students while the sample size for the study was 100 students. The study adopted descriptive survey approach. The structured needs inventory for guidance and counseling was used to cover the educational, vocational, personal, social and health-related guidance and counseling needs of the students.

Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, ranks, cross-tabulation and graphs were used to analyze the data.

The findings were that 21% of the students had low needs; 47% had moderate needs; and 32% had high needs, and that 79% of the students required support of moderate to high intensity. Of the domains for guidance, the students required most educational guidance, followed by vocational guidance, personal counseling, social counseling and health-related guidance. On the overall mean scores, the girls scored a bit higher than the boys scores did but the difference was small. Thus, it was concluded that Guidance and Counseling should be a part of secondary education and it should be institutionalized.

12. Major Findings of the Study

From the data collected and analyzed in this study the following major findings were obtained. Firstly, the overall guidance and counseling needs of students in secondary schools of the study area are very great. Only 21% of the students had low counseling needs. 79% of the students required counseling of moderate to high level. Secondly, from all the guidance and counseling needs of students in secondary schools of the study area, the need for educational guidance were the greatest with a mean score of 3.91. Students needed guidance on study skills, on academic decisions, on examination preparation, on subject change etc.

Third, vocational guidance is the second most important domain in terms of the needs of students at school, with a mean score of 3.74 (Table 5). The majority of students need accurate and timely career information. This is followed by personal, social and health-related guidance with mean scores of 3. Fourth, personal counselling has a mean score of 3.58, (Table 5). It is clear that students are in need of guidance that will help them with emotional and motivational concerns. The scores for social and health-related guidance were moderate but important. The results also show that there are slightly higher need scores for girls than there are for boys but the difference is not large. The results of the study generally support the view that a school counseling service should adopt a model of counseling that is both preventive and developmental rather than a model that deals with crises only. School counseling should include students, teachers, parents and administrators.

13. Educational Implications

Findings of the study have serious implications for secondary school administration. Given that majority of students fall under moderate to high need category, educational guidance and counseling should be treated as a fundamental service and not as an optional activity. Educational guidance and counseling should be institutionalized by establishing a counseling cell or student support unit with defined roles and responsibilities. The counseling cell should have a yearly counseling plan; system of referrals and recording of sessions; mechanisms of communication with parents and follow-up of students who require counseling.

The high educational guidance score found in the study points to the importance of schools to establish strong academic support structures. Teachers and the school counselor can work together to organize a number of study-skills programs and other activities that promote a number of different academic skills. These could include time management skills, and skills to prepare for a number of different types of exams. Students may also benefit from academic counseling which can help them set academic goals, and work to reach those goals. It is also possible that the school can set up a mentoring program in order to help students who continue to perform below potential. Meanwhile, the high-achieving student will also benefit from counseling that helps him or her deal with excessive pressure, competition, and high standards that he or she puts on himself or herself.

The vocational guidance score was very high, indicating that secondary schools are providing very appropriate educational guidance. The results suggest that the school needs to begin providing career guidance to students before they enter ninth grade, when students are making their stream choices. In terms of the content of the vocational guidance, the results indicate that the school needs to inform students of a variety of different career options. He or she must also inform them of the different subjects that would be appropriate for them to take, based on their abilities. Additionally, it would be useful for students to have the opportunity to explore a number of different fields in order to obtain a better understanding of them. This could be achieved by having alumni,

professionals, local entrepreneurs, people from higher education, and organizations that specialize in skill development come into the school in order to speak to the students.

Schools need to create safe environments where students can express their feelings and concerns without fear of stigma and labeling. Such environments will help to develop life skills among students including self-awareness, social awareness, time management, communication, problem solving, emotional and mental regulation and decision making. Students of high educational needs must receive individual counseling and be referred to mental health specialists as required.

The social counselling and health-related findings have implications for Schools to ensure their students deal with a variety of problems in a healthy manner. These include dealing with their peer relationships; bullying; use of new media and the internet (digital citizenship); personal, school and community health (hygiene; nutrition); and be able to deal with the normal changes of growing up (adolescent development). A variety of settings can be used to counsel students about these issues. These could include school assemblies; classroom guidance sessions; health camps on school grounds or at local community centers; supporting each other in peer groups; and Meetings with parents and other family members. The intention of social counselling in Schools is not to solve all problems that face students but to create a supportive school environment where students are able to feel supported in a setting where they are understood and valued.

Counseling needs to be more inclusive and gender sensitive as boys and girls express similar difficulties in different ways. Girls need to be empowered and supported in order to gain confidence and to voice their concerns about safety and career. Boys on the other hand might need to be able to express emotions, to be able to control their level of aggression, and to deal with the pressure of their peers. The main aspect is that each boy and girl is treated as an individual and not on the basis of any stereotypes.

14. Recommendations

All secondary schools should have a guidance and counseling cell. Schools where there are no full-time counselors should have teacher-counselors who are provided with the necessary training from time to time. Annual needs assessment for guidance and counseling should be conducted by each school. Students should be categorized into three groups (low, moderate and high needs) and the areas of need in each domain of development should be specified.

As a general rule, all students will benefit from universal guidance given to all students at some point in their secondary school careers. This can be in the form of a few orientation sessions on entering secondary school as well as studies skills, exam preparation, time management, communication, self-esteem, health and safety using technology. The small group guidance given to students with moderate needs would focus on problems such as career indecision, lack of motivation, peer pressure, exam anxiety as well as other similar problems. The individual counseling and follow-up given to the high needs students would enable the school counselor to tailor a package of guidance to the specific needs of that student.

Sixth, set up career guidance corners in schools with up-to-date information of various streams, courses, vocational courses, scholarships, entrance exams, and employment opportunities in the local market. Seventh, hold parent orientation programs because parents have greater influence on students' academic and career choices than any other person. Inform parents about the adolescent development stage, have realistic expectations, provide students with the necessary emotional support, and give them space to explore suitable options for their future.

Teachers of schools must be trained to identify early warning signals of disaffection of students such as sudden decline in studies, withdrawal from normal activities, aggressive behavior, absenteeism, anxiety, poor performance, repeat failures, and peer conflict. A simple form can be designed to refer such students to the school guidance and counseling cell. Records of counseling sessions must be kept confidential and used for the purpose of guidance and support only and not for labeling or punishing students. School guidance and counseling must be referred to psychologists, health workers, career guidance experts, and staff of institutions of higher education for designing and implementing special counseling programs in schools.

The guidance and counseling program should be an integral part of school's regular activities and not be assigned to counseling personnel from time to time as they become available. Instead, they should be an integral part of school's regular timetable of activities as is the case with other subjects in school. Future studies in this field must use bigger samples and use the right tools and inferential statistics to be able to draw sound conclusions and make firm recommendations. It is also important to include relevant variables such as students' academic achievement, their parents' socio-economic status, parents' education, school environment, whether students live with their parents or not, the amount of time students spend in front of the computer and other media, and how students are coping with school. Such studies will be able to provide a strong basis for any educational policy and program to be recommended and to be implemented in schools.

15. Conclusion

The present descriptive study of guidance and counseling needs of secondary school students revealed that most of the students have substantial guidance and counseling needs. Findings of the study showed that the largest group of students falls in the moderate need category and almost one-third of the students falls in the high need category. The findings of the study indicated that educational and vocational guidance are the most important domain of counseling needs of secondary school students followed by personal, social and health related counseling needs. Students need guidance for their academic planning and career decision making as well as for their emotional, social and health development. Guidance and counseling should be developmental and preventive in nature. School should not wait until students fail in their academic study or show negative behavior or experience some kind of emotional crisis. School should develop a structured system of guidance and counseling to identify the counseling needs of students and to provide them required counseling services through classroom guidance, group counseling, individual counseling and referral services. The school counseling services should also include involvement of teachers, parents and community.

Guidance and counseling in schools need to be developmental and preventive in nature. It should not be rendered only when a student fails in academics or manifests behavioral problems or is undergoing through emotional crisis. Rather a structured approach is required in which early identification of needs of students is made and they are provided with required guidance and relevant services through classroom guidance, group counseling, individual counseling, teacher referral, parents involvement and community resources.

The study investigated the guidance and counseling needs of 42,000 secondary school students and found that even a moderate percentage of students in the high need category would require the attention of a school institution. Hence, the school administrators and policy makers in education are advised to invest in the training and appointment of counselors in schools and also in the training of teachers to give them the necessary skills to deliver data-driven student support services in order to help students to identify and understand themselves, to make good choices, to cope with life's challenges and to become responsible, confident and well-adjusted individuals.

16. Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations. The number of participants was 100 in relation to the population of 42,000 students; therefore, the findings have to be used with caution while generalizing. The study is descriptive in nature therefore it does not aim to find out the causes of problems. The data are based on the participants' self-report therefore it is subject to social desirability bias, misinterpreting some of the items and students' hesitation to express their concerns. The manuscript uses illustrative descriptive statistics; therefore, the manuscript has to be finalized with the original raw data in its original form before submitting the manuscript to the journals. The study does not contain any qualitative individual interviews therefore it does not offer in-depth understanding of students' experiences.

Although the study has its limitations, it is still valuable, as it shows the need for systematic school counseling and a systematic way of analyzing students' needs. It can serve as a starting point for more comprehensive studies that are conducted in more schools with larger samples and with more sophisticated statistical methods.

17. Scope for Further Research

1. A larger and more random sample of students from the population of 42,000 students could be selected through the method of stratified random sampling.
2. A comparative study can be conducted between rural and urban schools, between government and private schools and even between different districts or states.
3. Future research could compare the guidance and counseling needs of girls and boys from different grades, schools, places of residence and socio-economic backgrounds.
4. How the academic achievement, school adjustment, attendance, motivation and examination anxiety of students could be related to their guidance needs.
5. Parental education, school related expectations of family, peer interactions at school, school climate and influence of digital-media on guidance needs of adolescents.
6. Effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs, career guidance, counseling, mentoring and life skills education programs through research.
7. A longitudinal study could be conducted to compare the educational, vocational, personal, social and health needs of students in class IX, X, XI and XII.
8. Mixed-method studies may also be designed, i.e., a combination of studies with standardized questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus-group discussions, and case studies in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the experiences of students in school.
9. Instrument research to validate existing and/or to develop new guidance and counseling-inventories for different languages, cultures, regions.
10. With a sufficient sample size advanced statistics could be applied, such as correlation, regression, factor analysis, structural equation models or multilevel models.
11. Research could also investigate the potential of school counselors, teacher-counselors, parents as well as peer support in terms of their contribution to the well-being of students.
12. Follow-up studies may investigate whether counseling programs have a sustained impact on students' career awareness, their self-confidence, their coping skills, and their ability to make decisions.

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- Footnote:**
- [53] For the study on the guidance and counselling needs of secondary school students a descriptive research approach was used. The results of this study can be used to improve school counseling, education planning and student support programs.