

# School-Based Counselling Practices and Learning Behaviors of Pupils with Learning Difficulties: A Case of Centre Scolaire George Defour

Ingabire Marie Therese<sup>\*1</sup>, Safari Ernest<sup>1</sup> & Philothere Ntawiha<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>Mount Kenya University <sup>2</sup>University of Rwanda, College of Education Kigali, Rwanda <sup>\*</sup>Email: <u>theregraces(@gmail.com</u>

# Abstract

This study focuses on counselling practices for learners with learning difficulties in Centre Scolaire George Defour. The specific objectives were to establish the ways of identifying learners with learning difficulties at CSGD, to find out the behavioural factors influencing learning difficulties among learners and to assess the impact of school basedcounselling practices to pupils with learning difficulties. A descriptive survey design was used. The study targeted a total of 180 parents of pupils with learning difficulties, 16 teacher-counsellors and 4 administration members were simply randomly and purposively selected respectively. Data were collected by use of questionnaires and document review for teachers, students and school administrators. Data were analysed using SPSS. The coefficient of multiple regression R was 0.177 and its percentage square was 3.1% implying that there was a positive but very weak relationship between school counselling and pupils' behaviours and learning difficulties. The findings revealed that Poor class performance was one of the ways of identifying learners with learning difficulties at the extend of 40%, one of forms of misbehaviour is rudeness to teachers which formed 70%. From the respondents most of misbehaviours issues originate from family background (51.5%), counselling practices used to address learning difficulties were peer learning and reward system to encourage hard work on about 30%, talk therapy takes 26%, modelling to foster good behaviour is 8.5% and individual counselling is the last one with 5.%. All respondents (100%) strongly agree that counselling practices help to develop a very free and friendly environment and it improves pupils learning habits and increases performance (100%). This study recommends that counsellors, teachers, head teachers and parents should be in alliance as stakeholders to solve problems of students with learning difficulties. **Key words:** School-based Counselling Practices; Learning Behaviours; People with learning difficulties

## 1. Introduction

Over the years, countries around the world have made great efforts to achieve inclusive education that enables pupils with learning Problems to study in mainstream schools. Of course, teachers have some challenges. Each student is different and has different learning difficulties, which can make the situation even more delicate. Signs of positive learning behaviours include but not limited to students' happiness and positive attitude towards lessons. Learners can also develop sense of responsibility in learning such as revise by themselves and taking care of the learning materials. Building friendships with their peers by showing a smiling face in class is important in class. Learning behaviour can be seen through love toward doing class work and homework, wanting to show homework to their parents, and love of the school. All the above factors will make them develop self-confidence in studies (Maulana, 2016).

On the other hand, signs of learning problems include depression or anxiety, dyslexia. Other signs incorporate faulting teachers for awful grades, bullying their physical peers' sicknesses, such as stomach throbs or cerebral pains. In addition, learning issues can be seen through not doing homework, assignments, refusing to go to school, hiding homework and self-critical remarks and so on (Wright, 2015). The goal of Rwanda's strategic plan for education is to guarantee that its population have the necessary and suitable information, abilities, skills and attitudes

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to continue the nation's social and economic transformation and to compete globally. (ESSP2018/19 to 2023/24). Students that exhibit psychological, educational phobias or problems, emotional disturbances, and social behaviour disorders are considered to have learning disabilities, per the policy. They struggle with learning, and this is why they perform poorly on academic assessments.

According to Shukla (2005), learning difficulties can include problems with listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling or math, as well as defects in basic psychological processes that determine how a child learns. Therefore, it is assumed that students with learning problems are intellectually inferior and socially affected. These students are at risk of failing courses or dropping out altogether. Children who participate in these activities may be seen as troublemakers, which can prevent their learning difficulties from being identified. Outbursts of anger, stubbornness, mood swings, impulsivity, lack of concentration, disobedience, and other behavioural problems can also be signs of poor learning. Behavioural or emotional disturbances may manifest as sudden changes in attitude or behaviour, such as an increased tendency to become agitated or anxious, blaming others, or withdrawing from society in socialization and isolation (Nduka-Ozo, 2005). According to Carew (2009), counsellors are trained primarily for "normal" children but must be prepared to deal with obstacles posed by students with different characteristics. Counsellors need to be imaginative and creative in how they use their counselling skills to help these students build healthy relationships with others and with themselves. Therefore, Carew (2009) recommends that counsellors demonstrate compassion and concern, patience and tolerance, psychological stability and control, and sensitivity through warmth, pressure and empathy.

In addition, school counsellors must also show flexibility and affection. Indeed, students with learning difficulties were more likely to have negative biases on academic and social or emotional tests. This is not necessarily due to an absolute lack of knowledge, but rather to deal with it at the same speed as others. Teachers' role in this case is to develop counselling practice among learners with learning difficulties whereby most of them have family related problems like being single parented family children among many more. Therefore, teachers or counsellors will help them to develop the following signs of learning behaviour including happiness, developing sense of responsibility in learning, building friendship with their peers, showing a smiling face in class. Developing love toward doing class work and homework, love of the school, wanting to show parents homework and developing self confidence in studies are great signs of learning behaviour (George, 2016). In this case, this research will assess the school-based counselling practices and learning behaviours of pupils with learning difficulties with a case study at Centre Scolaire Georges Defour/ Kigali.

Learners with learning difficulties may encounter many obstacles in the educational process including discrimination pertaining to their special circumstances (Milsom, 2006). Indeed, pupils can experience difficulties with learning for many different reasons. These include, for example, hearing and visual impairments, physical impairments, emotional, social or behavioural difficulties, prior education experiences, and experiences at home, attention and concentration issues in class; and cognitive or intellectual difficulties. Many of these learners will usually drop out of schools, owing to their inability to normally perform some duties like their peers. Many of these learners need counselling services to help them complete their studies. Almost 75 % of learners recognized with learning inabilities and worries show some social skill scarcities that differentiate them from their non-learning behavioural issues peers (Vaughn, 2012). There is a problem of learning behaviour management within Centre Scolaire Georges Defour. Can school-based counselling services solve this problem? In this regard, this research tried to find a solution to the above-mentioned problem by assessing impact of the school-based counselling practices on pupils with learning difficulties and the outcomes of the behaviour. The paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i) To identify learners with learning difficulties at CSGD
- ii) To determine factors influencing learning difficulties among learners at CSGD
- iii) To find out counselling practices used to address learning misbehaviours and difficulties,
- iv) To assess the effect of school based- counselling practices on pupils with learning difficulties at CSGD.

## 2. Research Methods

This study used a convergent parallel research design and a mixed technique approach to better understand the study problem, gather both quantitative and qualitative data, combine them and analyse the results. With the convergent parallel study design, the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data from single parented students, teachers, and school leaders utilizing questionnaires, interview guides, and observation checklists.; Analyses both data

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sets individually, compares the outcomes of both dataset's analyses, and determines if the findings support or contradict one another (Creswell, 2016).

To this end, this design was judged appropriately for this study because it aims at collecting both data on single parented children's learning behaviour and the counselling skills and techniques used to help them with the purpose of comparing the data to assess how the school-based counselling practices contribute to pupils with learning difficulties (Heyson, 2015).

A set of people that share the same characteristics or traits and were of interest to the researcher is referred to as a population. All single-parented children at Centre Scolaire Georges Defour, as well as their instructors and school officials, were the study's target group. According to CSGD annual report (2021) emphasized on 180 pupils from P1 to P3, 16 teachers, and 4 members of school administration. Single parented were targeted because they will be observed and interviewed to get information on their learning behaviors. Teachers and school leaders were targeted because they are supposed to give real information of pupils with learning difficulties.

A sample, according to Stangor (2011), is a subset of the population whose findings can be applied to the complete population. A sample design, in this sense, refers to the blueprint that guides the choice of a research sample and affects many other crucial pertinent of the study variables. The sample size and sampling techniques are described in this section relying on duration and objective of the research, the sample size should be as high as possible for external validity (Wallen, 2016). As a result, parents of learners with learning problems, teachers and the school leaders at CSGD were included in this study for the sake of external validity.

Table 1: Sample Size				
Designation	Females	Males	Total	
Parents	100	80	180	
Teachers	10	6	16	
School administrators	4	0	4	
Grand Total	114	86	200	

Source: CSGD School report (2021)

Creswell (2012) defines sampling as the procedure of obtaining elements from a population in such a way that the obtained elements standards for the entire population and the findings for these elements can be extrapolated to the full population. For the present study, purposive sampling was used as all members of the population were sampled based on the idea that they are in good position to provide information about the pupils with learning behavioural problems as well as the counselling techniques used to counsel then.

The study sought to use a survey in form of questionnaires to collect data from schools based in Kigali. The questionnaires were distributed to all selected schools and the data was collected by the researcher to ensure authenticity of data collected. A questionnaire with closed-ended questions was developed and distributed to the selected schools. To gather information for this study, questionnaires, interview guide and document review guide have been utilized. For gathering information on school counselling techniques and practices, a questionnaire made of close-ended questions were used. According to Stangor (2011) Close-ended questions provide a number of advantages, including the capacity to generate precise responses that are straightforward to evaluate, the opportunity to compare groups, and the ability to save time.

An interview is a series of oral questions in which the investigator collects data from participants such as teachers, students and parents through direct verbal interaction (Stangor, 2011). To that purpose, an interview with both teachers and school administrators were held in order to tabulate the data that has been rectified through the questionnaires.

An observation is a procedure where persons evaluate the ongoing process in the research process and then classify and records relevant events according to a predetermined scheme (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2010). Documentation is a method of data collection involving delivering information by carefully studying written documents or visual information such as textbooks, newspapers, articles, speeches, reports, pictures, and/or audio-visual documents. For this study, different documents were reviewed to get information related to the topic under investigation. To enhance

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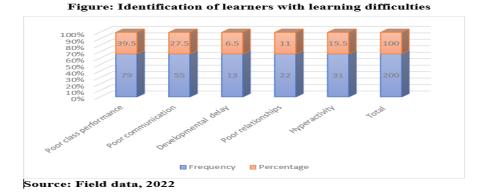


the validity and reliability of the data collected, questionnaires were administered via email while adhering to the standards of development and sharing questionnaires to respondents.

## 3. Analysis Result

The presentation of research findings was based on research objectives which were to display how to identify learners with learning difficulties at CSGD, to determine factors influencing learning difficulties among learners at CSGD, to ascertain counselling practices used to address learning misbehaviours and difficulties, and to assess the effect of school based- counselling practices on pupils with learning difficulties at CSGD.

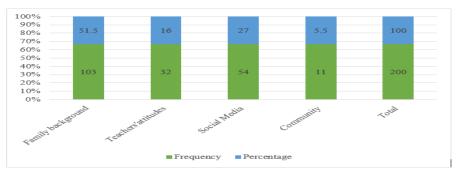
# 3.1. Ways of identifying learners with learning difficulties at CSGD



The findings show the ways of identifying learners with learning difficulties and the findings revealed that; Poor class performance was one of the ways of identifying learners with learning difficulties at the extent 39.5%, followed by 27.5% of the respondents noted that poor communication is another way, 15.5% of respondents identified them through hyperactivity in class, 11% said that these learners show poor relationships in school and 6.5% are identified through development delay. This is confirmed by the idea of Hong, J.S. (2015) who stated that pupils with learning difficulties are identified when there are poor language and communication, poor performance in class, poor relationships, lack of self-esteem, hyperactivity, anxiety, and shame. It may be due to a lack of interest in learning, or it may be a delay in the development of learning abilities.

# 3.2 Factors influencing learning difficulties among learners at CSGD

The researcher obtained results from parents, the school teachers and the administration questionnaires to obtain factors influencing learners' misbehaviours. The outcomes are represented in the figure below:



Source: Field data, 2022

Figure: Factors influencing learners' misbehaviors

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From the respondents most of misbehaviours issues originate from family background (51.5%), social media influence (27%). Other causes include effects from the teachers' attitudes (16%) and the community (5.5%). Rogers, (2013) denotes parenting styles, parental monitoring, family problem solving strategies, disciplinary approaches, level of conflict and family interactions are factors in the family that affect the child behaviour. Positive attitudes from the teacher lead to success while negative attitudes lead to failure and as a result success can lead to positive ego attitudes while failure leads to negative ego attitudes (Gecer, 2002). The local community need to be sensitized on the impact of family education and social media on shaping behaviours of learners.

# 3.3. Counselling practices used to address learning misbehaviours and difficulties

The researcher attained results from parents, the school teachers and the administration questionnaires to reveal counselling practices used to address learning misbehaviors and difficulties. The products are represented in the figure below.

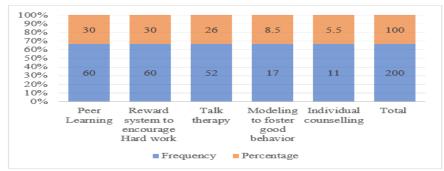


Figure: Counselling practices used to address learning difficulties

The researcher realized that counselling practices used to address learning difficulties were peer learning and reward system to encourage hard work on about 30%, talk therapy takes 26%, the modelling to foster good behaviour is 8.5% and individual counselling is the last one with 5.5%. This implies that the school doesn't have enough time for treating individual's problems of Pupils. According to Abdullahi (2009), peer counselling practices like peer learning can improve absence rates, reduce antagonism, and increase performance faculty overall. Based on research done by VanDuijvenbode et al (2015), the early attempts to use CBT on pupils with learning problems have indicated that the intervention of CBT is of success as teachers use systematically rewards on particular occasions when they have successfully shown adequate and new reactions towards crucial situations.

# 3.4. Psychological Interventions on Learning Outcomes

The researcher grasped results from parents, the school teachers and the administration questionnaires to reveal psychological interventions on learning behaviour outcomes. The researcher realized from respondents that psychological support improves behaviours towards difficulties in learning at 54%, reduces drop out from schools at 19%, ameliorate learning outcomes at 16%, helps learners be able to complete their studies at 8.5% and reduces attention and concentration issues in class at 2.5%. This goes hand in hand with results shown by A research done by Lillis (2012) felt that 60% of learners who obtained psychological support were able to complete their studies and enter to tertiary education. Furthermore, Palmer, Maramba, and Holmes (2012) define psychological intervention or support as the action that intends to enhance and ameliorate learning outcomes for student with learning difficulties. The outcomes are represented below:

No	Psychological support	Parents	Teachers	School administrators	Total	%
1	Reduce drop out from the school	35	3	0	38	19
2	Improved their behavior toward their difficulties in learning	100	7	1	108	54
3	Helps learners be able to complete their studies	15	1	1	17	8.5

## Table: Psychological interventions on learning outcomes

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4	Ameliorate learning outcomes	25	5	2	32	16
5	Reduces attention and concentration issues in class	5	0	0	5	2.5

From Table above, the researcher realized from respondents that psychological support improves behaviours towards difficulties in learning at 54%, reduces drop out from schools at 19%, ameliorate learning outcomes at 16%, helps learners be able to complete their studies at 8.5% and reduces attention and concentration issues in class at 2.5%. This goes hand in hand with results shown by research done by Lillis (2012) felt that 60% of learners who obtained psychological support were able to complete their studies and enter to tertiary education. Furthermore, Palmer, Maramba, and Holmes (2012) define psychological intervention or support as the action that intends to enhance and ameliorate learning outcomes for student with learning difficulties.

## Factors that obstruct effective school-based counselling services in school

The researcher grasped results from parents, the school teachers and the administration questionnaires to disclose factors that obstruct effective school-based counselling services in school. The outcomes are represented in the table below.

	Designation	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Strongly agree	Agree	%
1	Teachers do not have enough time for counselling due to too much workload	0	0	0	200	0	100
2	Inadequacy of trained teacher counsellors to head counselling services	0	0	0	180	20	100
3	Lack of policy framework for implementation	10	10	140	20	20	10
4	Deficiency of resource materials used in counselling sessions	10	10	20	160	0	80
5	Absence of private rooms for counselling	0	0	0	170	30	85
6	Kids are not used to counselling practices	5	5	20	50	120	25
7	Some parents don't sign on time informed consent for their kids	10	25	15	120	30	60

## Table: Factors that hinder effective school-based counseling services in school

100% of respondents strongly agreed that teachers do not have enough time for counseling because of their heavy w orkload, the lack of trained teacher counselors to oversee counseling services, the lack of private counseling rooms, t he lack of resource materials for counseling sessions, the fact that 60% of parents do not sign their children's inform ed consent on time, and the fact that 25% of children are not accustomed to counseling were all mentioned by respon dents. These results demonstrate that not all teachercounselors have the necessary training and that counseling service es lack the necessary tools to improve service quality. According to Salgong (2016) research, the lack of certified teacher counsellors to oversee counselling services and teachers' excessive workloads prevent them from having enough time for counselling. This hinders counselling in schools.

# 3.5. Correlation Analysis: School based- counselling practices and pupils with learning difficulties

The researcher established the relationship between School based- counseling practices on pupils with learning difficulties. In this regards a correlation was done for establishing either positive or negative, significant or insignificant correlation between dependent or independent variables. Karl Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to investigate the correlation between School based- counseling practices on pupils with learning difficulties. The decision rule was based on p-value approach. P-value approach said that if the levels of significant to hold the decision to either reject or uphold the null hypothesis was 5% or 0.05, which mean 95 percent degree of confidence level. Then, the probability obtained a sample mean given the value stated in the null hypothesis was true stated as p-value. If p-value is less or 5% (P<= 0.05), the null hypothesis will be rejected and accept alternative hypothesis vis- versa.



Correlations							
			Peer lea	arning	Collaborative learning	Modeling	Cognitive behavioral therapy
		Pearson Correlation	1		.750	.348**	.780
Peer Learning		Sig. (2-tailed)			.002	.001	.002
		N	200		200	200	200
Collaborative Learning		Pearson Correlation	.750		1	.878	.790
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002			.003	.007
		Ν	200		200	200	200
		Pearson Correlation	.348**		.148	1	.149
Modeling		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.004		.007
		Ν	200		200	200	200
Comitivo hob	behavioral	Pearson Correlation	.348**		.148	.138	1
0	avioral	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.004	.006	
therapy		Ν		200	200	200	200

School based- counseling practices and pupils with learning difficulties

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in Table 17, there are significant correlations between: School based- counselling practices and pupils with learning difficulties. The correlation results showed that peer learning was weakly positive correlated (r=.348\*\*, p=.001) to pupils with learning difficulties, collaborative learning influence was strongly positive correlated (r=.750\*\*, p=0.002) to pupils with learning difficulties, Modelling and cognitive behavioural therapy were weakly correlated to pupils with learning difficulties (r=.148\*\*, p=.004). These correlations were statistically significant given that the p value was < 0.05 suggesting that School based- counselling practices influence the pupils with learning difficulties.

## 4. Discussion

This paper addressed concerns regarding how counselling services provided in schools affect the learning behaviours of pupils who struggle with learning. With the aim of finding what was previously known and, thus, identifying the knowledge gap that permitted the current study to be done, pertinent literatures were organized. According to the literature study, counselling services provided in schools have an impact on how learners with learning difficulties behave. Counselling allows students accept behavioural adjustments so they can concentrate on future life outcomes while overcoming obstacles and dealing with the realities of their social, physical, and educational environments.

Parents' stress can have a variety of emotional effects on their kids, including anxiety, depression, low selfesteem, fe elings of abandonment, increased rage and frustration, sadness, and difficulty connecting with others. It can also incr ease the likelihood that kids will engage in violent behaviors in response to traumatic events. School based-counselling practices help to develop a very free and friendly environment and it improves pupils learning habits and increases performance. Counselling reduces tension and increases discipline in school. It decreases suspicion and build reliance between teachers and learners, allows pupils to open up and release their worries, frustration and anxiety that can ruin their life, permits pupils to cope with changes on their daily lives end environment. Counselling increases motivation, self-esteem, confidence, and concentration of learners in front of lessons and upturns the teachers and learners' relationship.

Most head teachers agreed that guidance and counselling create a free and friendly atmosphere, all agreed that it builds trust, reduce tension improves student study habits and helps students cope with changes in their daily lives and environment. Some parents don't sign on time informed consent for their kids. Results of proposed strategies included allocation of more time for counselling which should be regular, using peer educators in guidance, training teacher counsellors through workshops and seminars to improve their services, having a professional counsellor associated 82

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with schools to deal with referral cases and equipping the departments with resources. The psychological support improves behaviours towards difficulties in learning, reduces drop out from schools, ameliorate learning outcomes, helps learners be able to complete their studies and reduces attention and concentration issues in the class.

## 5. Conclusions

Results showed that Poor class performance was one of the ways of identifying learners with learning difficulties, the most common misbehaviours were rudeness to teachers, inattention and bullying others aggressive and disruptive behaviours, most of misbehaviours issues originate from family background, and to stop forms of misbehaviours most of schoolteachers suspend learners from the class or call parents at school instead of mostly counselling pupils. Counselling contributes on correcting pupils learning difficulties, but it is not working properly because there are no trained counsellor as other teachers has a lot of workloads, there are no adequate resources and private room for counselling sessions and pupils are not well used to such practices. The services can be improved and made effective if the suggestions and recommendations below are taken into consideration.

## 6. Recommendations

These findings indicate that school-based counselling is a handy tool in building understanding, a positive attitude, directing behavior and coping with changes. The government needs to include counselling program in educational system as it is important in solving problems of students with learning difficulties.

The Centre Scolaire George Defour is requested to increase the number of the training session to enhance counselling skills among teachers. This study recommends that counsellors, teachers, head teachers and parents should be in alliance as stakeholders to solve problems of students with learning difficulties.

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