



Perceived Influence of Career Guidance and Counselling Services on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance: A Case of Tanga City, Tanzania

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Abstract: *This study examined the perceived influence of career Guidance and Counselling Services (GCS) on secondary school students' academic performance among secondary schools in Tanga City. The study employed a mixed method approach that utilized a correlation design and a case study design. The sample size was 423 respondents, including 330 students, 26 heads of schools, 33 guidance and counsellor teachers, 33 academic teachers, and one City Educational Officer (CEO). The study used questionnaires, and semi-structured interview guides for data collection. The study concludes that the academic performance of the students is good; the career GCS services contribute to students' academic performance. Furthermore, there is a significant positive relationship between students' access to career GCS and their academic performance. Therefore, the study recommends the establishment of a strong policy on school GCS which will enable the effective implementation of the career GCS in the schools. Therefore, it is recommended that the services should be strengthened in the schools. The heads of schools should be in the forefront to make sure they establish strong and effective career GCS in their respective schools. Finally, students should be motivated to seek the career guidance services in addressing their academic challenges.*

Key word: Guidance, Counselling, Career Guidance and Counselling Services (GCS), Academic performance

Introduction

Career Guidance and Counselling Services (GCS) is one of the major components of guidance and counselling programs in Secondary Schools. The services assist students in planning for their future career, choosing their subject combinations and getting information on available career opportunities. They also help them in understanding the world of work and assist them in becoming aware of their personal abilities, skills and interests. They also contribute in informing them of training courses and employment opportunities.

Furthermore, Career GCS assist students in understanding the procedures of choosing a career and the possible significant outcomes of their choices. They also assist students in carrying their assessment, aptitude testing and career interest inventories, motivating them to honor and respect their educational pursuit (Zunker, 2002; Mwamwenda 2004).

Bruce and Cockreham (2004) have recorded that students experience a number of problems during adolescence which affect their readiness to learn. In most cases, students face problems that are not dealt with accordingly and therefore frustrations and developmental difficulties surface and affect their wellbeing which in turn affect their academic performance.

Lutomia and Sikolia (2002) also stated that students experience despair and disappointments while in pursuit of their studies because they have a feeling that job opportunities are scarce and they foresee a problem for them to acquire job opportunities. All these result into noteworthy psychological problems which interfere with students' academic performance. It is the outcome of these problems which has led many nations to introduce school guidance and counselling services in the education systems so as to help students to be able to harmonize the learning pursuit with their well-being. In Tanzania, the need to introduce guidance and counselling programs in schools can be traced

back to 1984 following the National October 1984 Arusha Conference where the government endorsed GCS as an integral part of the country's education system (Biswalo, 1996). According to the Government circular number eleven of 2002 (URT, 2002), guidance and counselling program was to meet the numerous problems faced by both students and teachers in their daily interactions.

The academic performance in most secondary schools in Tanzania has been declining due to indiscipline in the schools (URT, 2012). According to Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF, 2014), the quality of education in the country has deteriorated in the last few years as the focus of the government had been on inputs more than outputs and outcomes. In 2012, less than half, 43.1% of all the students who did the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE) passed the examinations (URT, 2013). The report emphasized that both national examinations and independent assessments showed poor learning outcomes.

Several program such as Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP 1) have been implemented in the country's education system to improve quality education by increasing the pass rate for division I to III from 36% in 2004 to 70% in 2009 (URT, 2013). However, URT (2012) reported that academic performance had been deteriorating. At the national level, the pass rate trend for division I to III was as follows: 36.6% in 2007, 31% in 2008, 17.91% in 2009, 11.59% in 2010 and 10.05% in 2011. It was also reported that the best five regions were Kilimanjaro (16.64%), Dar es Salaam (11.97%), Mbeya (12.04%), Coast (11.92%) and Arusha (11.90%) respectively. The last five regions from the bottom in ascending order were Lindi (4.41%), Mtwara (4.99%), Tanga (5.45%), Singida (6.31%) and Rukwa (6.95%).

Further improvement of academic performance resulted from the Big Results Now (BRN). This program strategized to increase the Certificate of Secondary School Education Examination (CSEE) pass rates to 60% by 2013, 70% by 2014 and more than 80% by 2015 (URT, 2013). However, according to ESRF (2014), the Secondary School academic performance in the country has been declining from time to time. A similar study by Atsuwe and Albert (2018) which sought to establish how school guidance and counselling program influenced the Secondary School academic performance in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State Nigeria

found that school guidance and counselling program has a positive influence on students' academic performance. Another study by Ndirangu (2007) which sought to establish the influence of guidance and counselling program on academic performance of selected public secondary school students in Bahati Division, Nakuru District in Kenya also found that guidance and counselling program has a positive influence on students' academic performance. This necessitated the need to conduct a study to find out whether Career GCS among Tanga City Secondary Schools has any influence on the academic performance. Considering all the efforts placed by the government for the purpose of improving the academic performance and the little information which was available on the extent to which Career GCS have been used to assist students in raising their academic performance, this study sought to provide some insights into these issues and establish a possible relationship between Career GCS and academic performance.

Career guidance is a process of helping an individual to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter into it, and progress in it (Mutie & Ndambuki, 2004). Lapan, Whitcomb and Aleman (2012) in their study, indicated that the implementation of the college and career counselling components of a comprehensive school counselling program and lower student - to - school counsellor ratios resulted in promoting students' success in the areas of better attendance and graduation rates as well as lower disciplinary incidents.

Similarly, another study on Comprehensive School Counselling in Rhode Island: Access to services and Student Outcomes which explored the relationships among school counselling practices, secondary school demographics and student outcomes in the state of Rhode island during a 2-year period, the findings showed that there was strong and consistent correlations between increased amounts of school counselling services and positive student outcome (Carey, Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012).

Njoka (2014) in his study in Kenya also indicated that in order for students to benefit from their learning and realise academic success, effective support through professional guidance and counselling founded on sound application of counselling theories is of critical importance. However, although most African countries recognize the important role of organized guidance and counselling program, there are limited studies

conducted to assess the effectiveness of the programmed services being implemented to improve students' decision making processes that lead to improve future benefits (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). According to Chireshe (2006) career GCS helps students to better understand their own interests, abilities and potentials and helps them to develop fully and subsequently make informed career choices.

Therefore, this study sought to establish the perceived Influence of Career Guidance and Counselling Services on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance among the secondary schools in Tanga City. The study was guided by the following five objectives:

1. To establish the students' attitude towards the role of Career GCS on academic performance?
2. To establish the general perception on students' academic performance by the academic teachers, guidance counsellors and students themselves.
3. To establish the relationship between the level of effectiveness of career GCS and students' academic performance.
4. To establish the attitude of academic teachers and guidance counsellors toward career GCS.
5. To establish the perception of heads of schools regarding the role of Career Guidance and Counselling.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted in Tanga City. The study area was selected for the study due to the available evidence of poor academic performance among students in the national examinations in the years 2001-2013 (URT, 2014). The report showed that Tanga was one of the last five regions which had poorly performed in the examinations. This situation prompted the researcher to establish how the academic performance may have or may not have been influenced by the GCS in the schools under study. The sampling procedure for this study was done first through proportional stratification followed by a random sampling technique since the study embraced both government and non-government secondary schools from Tanga City (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

According to URT (2016), Tanga City had 26 government Secondary Schools and 17 non-government Secondary Schools which totals up to 43 Secondary Schools. As per Payne and Payne (2004), the appropriate sample size that matched to 43 Secondary Schools was 37, which participated in the study. Furthermore, the number of form four students from both government and non-government Secondary Schools in Tanga City was 4783 (URT, 2016) and as per Payne and Payne (2004), the appropriate sample size for that population was 356 but the actual number of students who participated in the study was 330. The rest of participants which brought the total of 423 appear in Table 1.

Table 1: Composition of the Sample

Category	School Heads	Guidance Teachers	Academic Teachers	Students	CEOs	Total
Government SS	15	19	19	190		243
Non-government SS	11	14	14	140		179
Educational officials					01	01
TOTAL	26	33	33	330	01	423

Data were collected from 33 secondary schools whereby in each secondary school, the head of school, one academic master, one guidance counsellor teacher, and ten form four students were involved in the data collection exercise. However, the researcher was able to collect data from only 26 heads of school because the remaining seven heads of school were preoccupied by other administrative duties. Data was also collected from the CEO as one of the key informants. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires and semi-structured interview guide.

Each questionnaire included a five point Likert scale for determining the attitudes of the students and teachers towards the practice of Career GCS in relation to their academic performance. This was founded on the fact that career GCSs in school settings are designed specifically for helping students achieve academically. Each statement in the Likert scale represents how the practice of career GCS are geared towards meeting students' needs, improving their self-concept, facilitating personal growth, improving social relationships, self-discipline and henceforth enhancing better achievement in relation to academic performance.

Likert scale is considered more reliable as the respondents provide answers to each given statement included in the instrument (Kothari, 2005). The semi-structured interviews consisted of a set of pre-determined questions which the researcher asked every interviewee. The nature of this study required the explanation on how career GCS had been implemented among the Tanga City Secondary Schools and how their implementation influenced students' academic performance.

Data from the questionnaire was processed, coded and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistical analysis using frequencies and percentages, was used to obtain results which were presented in form of tables. Inferential statistical analysis was done using correlation analysis to measure the degree of association between Career GCS and students' academic performance. In this study the researcher chose to use the students' self-assessment grades as a proxy measure of their academic performance. Ross (2006) asserts that self-assessment, when properly implemented, produces valid and reliable information about student's achievement. The correlation coefficient was used in testing the corresponding research question which was set at $r = 0.01$ significance level. The study further utilized

thematic content analysis to analyze qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews.

Findings and Discussion

This section provides the results of the study regarding the perceived Influence of Career Guidance and Counselling Services on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance. The section was guided by five objectives of the study as follows:

Objective 1: To determine the students' attitude towards the role of Career GCS on academic performance.

The findings in Table 2 show that respondents strongly agreed that career GCS assisted and helped them along the listed areas of concern. The results further show that the average point ranged from 3.71 to 4.56. The highest average point was that the services helped students to cultivate their self-concept and self- image (4.56) and the lowest average point was that the services helped them in inviting guest speakers (3.71). The Mean 4.03 indicates the average strength of students' level of agreement on the perceived influence of accessing career GCS on their academic performance.

Table 2: Students' attitude towards Career GCS on academic performance

SN	Statements in the Questionnaire	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5	
S1	Help me to cultivate my self - concept, self -image...	8	22	9	101	138	4.56
S2	Help me to plan for my future career	9	23	6	97	143	4.23
S3	Assist me in choosing subject combinations	12	28	12	88	138	4.14
S4	Inform me on available career opportunities	10	29	10	120	109	4.03
S5	Include invitation of guest speakers	25	43	13	107	90	3.71
S6	Assist in becoming aware of my abilities, skills.	23	21	8	95	131	4.12
S7	Inform me on training/employment opportunities	26	31	11	113	97	3.8
S8	Assist me in combating career stereotype	17	42	12	117	90	3.79
S9	Assist me in carrying my assessments...	19	40	16	117	86	3.76
S10	Motivate me to honor my educational pursuit	15	21	9	97	136	4.13
The average Strength of agreement							4.03

Objective 2: To establish the general perception on students' academic performance by the academic teachers, guidance counsellors and students themselves.

The study further sought to find out the general observation on students' academic performance by the academic teachers, guidance counsellors and the rating of the students themselves through self-assessment. Findings in Table 3 show that of all the respondents, 36.3% rated them as having an

average academic performance. Respondents who rated the students as having an average performance in their respective categories are academic teachers (48.5%), guidance counsellors (45.5%) and students themselves (33.8%). The findings also show that of all the respondents, 35.8% rated them as having a good performance. The respondents who rated the students as having a good academic performance in their respective categories are academic teachers (36.4%), guidance counsellors (42.4%) and students themselves

(34.9%). It can also be seen that of all the respondents, (25.3%) rated them as having a very good academic performance. The respondents who rated them as having a very good academic performance in their respective categories are academic teachers (9.1%), guidance counsellors

(0.3%) and the students themselves (29.9%). It can therefore be deduced from the findings in Table 3 that more than 50% of all the respondents (25.3%+35.8% = 61.1%) rated the academic performance of the students as good and very good.

Table 3: Rating students' Academic Performance

Rating Academic Performance	Very Good		Good		Average		Poor		Very Poor		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Academic teachers (n=33)	03	9.1	12	36.4	16	48.5	02	6.1	00	0.0	33
Guidance counsellors (n=33)	01	03	14	42.4	15	45.5	02	6.1	01	3.0	33
Students (n=278)	83	29.9	97	34.9	94	33.8	02	0.7	02	0.7	278
Total	87	25.3	123	35.8	125	36.3	06	1.7	03	0.9	344

Table 4: Correlation of Career GCS and Academic Performance

	Student Performance	Career Guidance
Pearson Correlation	1	.162**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.007
N	278	278

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

Objective 3: To establish the relationship between the level of effectiveness of career GCS and students' academic performance.

The researcher's interest was further to establish the relationship between the level of effectiveness of career GCS and students' academic performance. In this particular study, the level of agreement (attitude) towards career GCS was used to measure the effectiveness of the services as a proxy measure. This was founded on the fact that Career GCS in school settings are designed specifically for helping students achieve academically.

The researcher used correlation analysis to determine the relationship between the level of agreement (attitude) of the students toward career GCS and academic performance and whether this relationship was significant or not. Correlation was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables – the level of agreement (attitude) towards career GCS (independent Variable) and academic performance (dependant variable). The Students' level of agreement (attitude) toward career GCS was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (Table 2) and academic performance was measured using students' responses to their academic performance self-assessment. These were run in the SPSS together with students' respective responses from the Likert scale and the results were summarized in Table 4:

The findings in Table 4 indicate that there is a positive and significant relationship between Career GCS and students' academic performance ($r = .162^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). Since $p < 0.01$, there is a significant relationship between students' level of agreement (attitude) towards accessing career GCS and students' academic performance. This suggests that the higher the level of agreement (attitude) of the students toward accessing career GCS, the higher their level of academic performance.

Objective 4: To establish the attitude of academic teachers and guidance counsellors toward career GCS.

The findings in Table 5 indicate that the respondents strongly agreed that career GCS assisted and helped students along the listed areas of concern. The results show that the average point ranged from 3.95 to 4.39. The highest average point was that the services assisted students in becoming aware of their abilities and skills (4.39) and the lowest average point was that the services assisted them in the invitation of guest speakers (3.95). The overall strength of agreement which was the Mean of the average points (4.26) indicate the average strength of agreement of the students on the influence of accessing career GCS on their academic performance.

Table 5: Academic Teachers' and Guidance Counsellors' Attitude towards career GCS

SN	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	R	Total	Mean
		1	2	3	4	5			
S1	Help them to cultivate their self-concept, self-image..	0	1	8	27	30	66	284	4.30
S2	Help them to plan for their future career	0	0	8	30	28	66	284	4.30
S3	Assist them in choosing their subject combinations	0	0	10	26	30	66	284	4.30
S4	Inform them on available career opportunities	0	1	7	27	31	66	286	4.33
S5	Include the invitation of guest speakers	0	1	14	38	13	66	261	3.95
S6	Assist in becoming aware of their abilities, skills...	0	1	6	25	34	66	290	4.39
S7	Inform them on training/employment opportunities	0	1	9	30	26	66	279	4.23
S8	Assist students in combating career stereotype	0	2	10	30	24	66	274	4.15
S9	Assist students in carrying out their assessment	0	1	9	31	25	66	278	4.21
S10	motivate them to honor their academic pursuit	0	0	3	35	28	66	289	4.38
The average Strength of agreement									4.26

Objective 5: To establish the perception of heads of schools regarding the role of Career Guidance and Counselling.

Regarding the findings from the semi-structured interview with the heads of schools, majority 23(88.5%) reported that career GCS helped the students to plan for their future career and that this motivated the students to work hard for excellent performance academically. One of the heads of schools emphasized this by saying:

We know our students and their performance, so we channel them for career GCS consistently and I have witnessed that the school is now performing better. We now have form four students performing very well in science subjects and some of the students joining advanced level schools with science combinations because they received career GCS from their teacher counsellors.

Majority of the school heads reported that career GCS assisted their students in choosing their subject combinations. One of the respondents criticized the choosing of subject combinations in form three by saying: "The choices should be done early enough, at least when they are in form one so that they get into their combinations before their parents and guardians interfere forcing them to take combinations which are not of their choice."

He further emphasized his opinion by saying: "It is important for the parents to be given some psycho-education concerning students' choices of subject combinations and career so that they would understand their position as parents and guardians in the life of their children."

Another head of school reported by saying "Career GCS has helped our students to combat career stereotyping and the students are encouraged to take combinations which lead them to careers of their choice depending on their personal abilities, traits, and interests."

Similarly, another head of school explained by saying:

With the career GCS in the schools, it has been easy to invite guest speakers to provide career information to our students which motivate them to study hard and achieve high grades academically so that they would be selected to join the career of their choice.

The CEO also was of the opinion that career GCS had motivated students in the study area to work diligently in their studies and consequently this improved their academic performance.

Discussion

The findings show that career GCS helped students to cultivate their self-concept, self-image and self-esteem which are important aspects for students' academic achievement. This is supported by Mutie and Ndambuki (2004) who assert that career guidance and counselling program develops an individual's competencies in self-knowledge, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning. When students are aware of themselves, who they are and what they want to be, they can easily be motivated to work diligently in their studies so as to achieve their desires. The study has also found that career GCS have helped students in planning for their future career and in choosing their subject combinations. Secondary Schools as learning institutions are expected to

assist students through the services to plan for their future career and choose subject combinations which will lead them to master the career of their choice. Zunker (2002) asserts that career GCS encompass all components of services and activities in educational institutions, agencies and other organizations that offer counselling and career related educational programs which help individuals to make a choice of a career, organize himself for it, and be ready to join it and develop in it.

The findings also indicate that career GCS have helped students to become aware of their personal abilities, skills, and interests. The findings are supported by Brown and Lent (2005) who asserts that career GCS are designed to help the students make self-exploration of abilities, talents, values, and interests to see how these self –attributes match with their potential career options. This is important to the adolescent student who according to the psychosocial theory of Erik Erickson is in the stage of wanting to know his identity or otherwise he ends in confusion of his roles. This is the time that the adolescent wants to check how far he can go and what are his limits. He wants to practice autonomy and establish his new identity. It is a time when the adolescent wants to know who he is and requires to get explanations on self-identity, his life goals and what life is all about (Corey, 2013). If he fails to attain a sense of who he is, the outcome becomes role confusion. It is during this time that the students need comprehensive career guidance and counselling program to assist them to develop self-identity, self-concept and self- esteem.

The study has also found that career GCS have assisted students in providing them with information on available career opportunities and in carrying out their assessments, aptitude testing and career inventories. It is the work of the guidance/ counsellor teachers to help students in these aspects due to the fact that when students understand themselves, their interests and abilities, they can put more effort in their academics so as to achieve their aspirations. Myrick (2003) argue that counsellors are expected to encourage youths to know and understand themselves in terms of aptitudes, interests and abilities, help them to explore accurate information about career, and encourage planning. This shows that counsellor's work is vital in encouraging students' holistic learning and functioning. This is supported by Pederson, Draguns, Lonner and Trimble (2008) who asserts that counsellors' services encourage

students' holistic learning and personal functioning at the highest possible levels. It calls for counsellors to be aware of various counselling theories and approaches so as to be able to perform their services to students effectively. Njoka (2014) in his study in Kenya also indicated that practitioners of guidance and counselling requires to be grounded in clear understanding of the various guidance and counselling theories and approaches that drive effective support of students.

However, Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) record that in spite of the fact that most African countries are aware of the important role of well-structured school guidance and counselling program, there are few studies done to measure the effectiveness of the programmed services being implemented to advance the decision making processes of the students that lead to increase their benefits in the future. According to Chireshe (2006) Career GCS increased students' understanding of what their own interests, abilities and potential were, and helped them to fully develop and successfully make well-versed career choices. The findings have also indicated that Career GCS assisted students in carrying out their assessment and aptitude testing and career interest inventories an aspect that fostered their academic performance. This is supported by Thompson (2002) who asserts that an all – inclusive, well harmonized career counselling network is indispensable to increasing students' intelligent career choices, and educational planning, as well as providing intermediate services. This effort holds onto acquainting students with many diverse career opportunities, providing information on essentials for success, and leading students to discover their own talents and abilities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that the academic performance of the students under investigation was good. Furthermore, there is a significant positive relationship between students' access to career GCS and their academic performance among Tanga city secondary schools. This indicates that students' access to career GCS relates positively with their academic performance.

The researchers recommend that guidance and counselling services should be strengthened in the schools. The heads of schools should be in the forefront to make sure they establish strong and effective career GCS in their respective schools. Students should be motivated to seek the career GCS.

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