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Effect of Guidance and Counseling on the Students' Academic Performance in Bulgaria

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Abstract

Guidance and counselling are integral parts of modern academic programmes. Guidance and counselling form a crucial part of Bulgaria's education system and aid in shaping learners' behaviour and instilling proper discipline. Thus, the study sought to examine the effect of guidance and counselling on students' academic performance in Bulgaria. The target population was 628 learners from Zlatarski International School of Sofia. The study used a simple random sampling technique to collect the data. The collection of the data was done using questionnaires. The study results showed that guidance and counselling explain 25.8% of Bulgaria's academic performance variations. It was revealed that guidance and counselling is positively and significantly related to academic performance ($\beta=0.489$, $p=0.006$). The findings indicated that when the guidance and counselling increase by one unit, the academic performance will increase by 0.489 units while holding other factors that influence academic performance constantly. Counselling programs prevent educational, individual, social, psychological and emotional issues. Lack of guidance and counselling leads to bad morals and behaviour. This includes school dropouts, substance use, criminal offences and failure to keep jobs. The work of educational guidance and counselling is to allow a learner to change themselves together with their studies by improving their study perspective and getting rid of subject matter challenges. The study recommended guidance programmes should be embedded in the curriculum of schools. School heads should establish an evaluation register for a learner for counselling.

Keywords: *Guidance and counseling, academic performance, Bulgaria.*

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1.0 Introduction

Guidance is commonly regarded as a kind of direction or leadership given to a person to help them make decisions regarding their current and future life. Counseling is viewed as a psychological process of assisting person to be equipped with self-understanding and skills of solving challenges of day-to-day life in different places. Guidance and counseling is an important part of contemporary academic programmes (Scheel, Stabb, Cohn, Duan & Sauer, 2018). Bulgaria has along and recorded background on guidance and counseling. Stakeholders in education encounter myriad of challenges albeit social, spiritual, financial or psychological. The hardly hit individuals have been learners and the teachers. Moreover, guidance and counselling is viewed to be a reliable administration tool for individuals' challenges whether this has been transcended to the sector of academics and particularly academic performance is still looking for solutions (Vehviläinen & Souto, 2022). Zuković and Slijepčević (2020) mentioned that guidance and counselling ought to form a crucial part of Bulgaria's education system. It aids to shape a learner's behavior and instill proper discipline in them. Good guidance assists them attain their targets, well directed and counselled learners know what to do and how to do things in the best possible way (Maree & Che, 2020). Several students perform poorly due to the lack of appropriate attitude to study and do not have the appropriate orientation from family and the society.

In all schools, success is gauged by the level of the learners' academic performance. It is the leading priority for teachers. Stakeholders in education have insisted that the objective of education might not be attained without the incorporation of well trained counselors. Elbedour, Alqahtani, Rihan, Bawalsah, Booker-Ammah and Turner Jr (2020) reported that counseling programs plays a crucial role in preventing educational, individual, social, psychological and emotional issues. In some cases there is conflict between the school heads, teachers and the school counselors and these risks the consideration of guidance programmes in various learning institutions. Learners experience many academic difficulties which they find tough to manage. Lack of proper discipline, substance use, poverty, non-challant mindset of the learners has led to poor academic performance. Because of this, learners require the services of specialist counsellor in school. Effective counselling services are not available or nonexistence in some learning institutions (Arfasa & Weldmeskel, 2020). In some schools where these services are offered, learners who attend these sessions are few. Additionally, other school heads still like to use career masters as opposed to professional counsellors for guidance services. The current and more complex professional academic problem-solving strategies can just be offered by well trained professionals.

Guidance of young people is one of the vital concerns in the strategic framework for advancement of education, training and education (Saputra, Alhadi, Supriyanto & Adiputra, 2021). In Bulgaria, 4 major priorities were found to focus on: Executing an educational method that assists in the advancement of all students and which leads to the development of reasoning requires qualified and proactive individuals well equipped to deal with change and instability. Improving the quality of education and training, and offering an educational environment for equal access to lifelong learning requires active social incorporation and active citizenship (Fathoni, Muhibbin, Arifin, Habiby & Ismail, 2021).

Guidance and counseling services are necessary in learner's growth specifically throughout teen stage (Choiriyah & Al-Kattani, 2020). Teen stage is comprised of rapid development and change: socially, mentally, physically, ethically and intellectually. A lot of teenagers are in high schools, therefore guidance and counseling is very important. Guidance and counseling are the assistances made available by well trained and educated individuals to a person of any age to assist them manage their own life activities, establish their own perspectives, make their own choices and carry on their problem. Additionally, Waheed, Hassan, Aljohani, Hardman, Alelyani and Nawaz (2020) specifies that, the role of guidance and counseling in learning institutions is to improve academic performance, instill proper studying mindsets and behaviors, improve acquisitions and use of dispute resolution skills, and lower dropouts. Lack of guidance and counseling in adolescence stage has led to bad morals and behavior nowadays. This consists of school dropouts, substance use, criminal offenses, and failure to keep jobs. The work of educational guidance and counseling is to allow a learner to change themselves together with their studies by improving their study perspective and getting rid of subject matter challenges. Aslam, Saeed and Muneer (2021) stated that absence of guidance and counseling in schools makes learners' adaptation to be more difficult hence resulting to poor performance, misbehavior and dropout.

Without proper guidance and counseling, several learners loose focus and get involved in bad habits like substance abuse, missing lessons, dropout and more; consequently they do not have both focus and direction leading to failure in life (Karaman, Eşici, Tomar & Aliyev, 2021). Therefore, learners require guidance and counseling to study and make decision on their career. The importance of vocational guidance might not be stressed but there is need to put in place mechanisms like, guidance and counseling in each school to aid in satisfying learners' academic, personal-social, and vocational demands. These guidance programmes help learners to take significant decisions and make favorable changes in life. Hence, educational changes ought to go beyond mere diversification of the curriculum if the changes should be a means of assisting learners to have integrated personality to understand their real capacities. Vocational guidance is consequently anticipated to be a necessary part of the educational system to help learners' decisions in the selection and proper combination of subjects or courses which best suit their potentials and desires for the future world of work (Musset & Kurekova, 2018). Vocational or career guidance assists learners to identify their own talents, strengths and weakness, family expectations, and nationwide needs to sort out the individual relevance of the educational and career choices available.

2.0 Literature Review

Khurshid, Anjum, Khan and Naz (2021) conducted research to determine the effect of guidance and counseling on academic performance in Pakistan. Pre-test and post-test control group design was utilized for the study. An experimental style was utilized as the study structure for the research. 50 learners were chosen; 25 for experimental team and 25 for control team for the research. Two hypotheses were developed to maintain the research in focus. Information from participants was collected by the usage of interviews. The outcomes of the research disclosed that there is no considerable distinction of pre-test scores of experimental and control group. Nonetheless, substantial distinction was noted in between post-test scores of experimental and control team with regards to academic performance. It was suggested that full-time counsellors be selected in every

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learning institution to attend to the current and teething issues of learners. Furthermore, it was recommended that guidance programmes ought to be seriously consisted of in the curriculum of our pre-tertiary schools.

A study by Shizha, Abdi, Wilson-Forsberg and Masakure (2020) discovered that guidance and counseling programme in learning institutions helps learners to integrate their skills, interests and values and thus establish their total potential. All these are propelled towards enhancing the self-image of the learners and helping better accomplishment in academic performance. The research looked for to examine the effect of guidance and counseling program on academic performance of high school learners in Toronto, Canada. The research employed an ex post facto study design. It aimed at all the 985 form 4 learners, 19 educator counsellors and 19 head educators of the 19 picked public high schools in the research region. A random sample of 100 learners, fifteen educator counsellors and fifteen head educators were chosen from the five learning institutions. Information was gathered through giving out questionnaires with the chosen participants. The gathered data was then processed and evaluated making use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The research developed the following outcomes: the learning institutions in the research region had disparity in the number of guidance and counseling services which they had executed. Educator counsellors had little training in guidance and counseling. Stakeholders effectively assisted guidance and counselling program in the learning institutions. Learners were informed on the duty and advantages of career counseling in their institutions. There was poor academic performance amongst learners. Guidance and counseling programme has a favorable effect on the academic performance of learners. According to this research results, the following suggestions were noted: There is necessity for the instructor counsellors to execute all the services needed for a guidance and counseling program. There is demand to increase the degree of training of educator counsellors in guidance and counselling. Instructor counsellors are required to make use of the favorable attitude of the learners to boost career counseling in their learning institutions. Guidance and counselling program ought to be enhanced to raise the academic performance of learning institutions in the region.

Odyek (2021) performed research to examine the effect of guidance and counseling on learners' academic performance at Senior high school, Japan. The research was performed with 2 goals: First, to discover the availability of counseling services in the institution. Secondly, to gauge the impact the services on learners' academic performance. The researcher in developing the research questions put interest in relationships, behavioral and developmental concerns. This is because the many of the learners enrolled in secondary education are teenagers. The researcher utilized a case study layout and data was gathered with making use of the surveys, interviews guide and observations. The researcher focused on a sample size of 271 participants, having 252 learners, 18 educators and 1 school-counsellor. Simple random method and stratified random sampling were used in selecting the target population. Quantitative data were evaluated making use of a descriptive statistic. The qualitative data were assessed thematically by categorizing them to the associated subjects to the research. Frequencies and percentage values were calculated utilizing Statistical Programs for Social Sciences (SPSS). The tool was pretested and received coefficient of 0.7542 revealing its validity and dependability. First of all, the results show that the guidance and counselling services like vocational, career and individual are readily available in the school.

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Secondly, learners do have accessibility to guidance services. Nevertheless, most of the participants expressed their lack of basic information on the importance of the counsellor in their education. According to the outcome of the research, recommendations were made. The head of the learning institution ought to consider the needs of taking care of the requirements of the counsellor: Among the counsellor's demands is the workplace where to conduct her/his services, and sufficient time for counselling associated duties. The counsellor needs to be arranging varieties of educational opportunities such as adventures, career meetings, and counteractive programs for learners. The Ministry of Education (MoE) with the Regional Education Board Assistant (REBA) must have the ability to make sure that counseling services are readily available in schools, particularly to secondary learners.

A study by Chandler, Burnham, Riechel, Dahir, Stone, Oliver and Bledsoe (2018) focused on considering the impacts of guidance and counseling services on learners' academic performance and professional decision in chosen high schools in USA. Descriptive research design was utilized. The researcher picked 10 learning institutions (5 private & 5 public learning institutions), utilizing simple random method. Lastly, simple random sampling was employed in choosing fifty learners in every institution, therefore making an overall of five hundred high school learners who took part in the research. Three hypotheses were created for the purpose of the research. Data was collected making use of a researcher designed tool. The t- test statistics were utilized to check out the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the research indicated that there was no substantial disparity on the basis of institution type. Moreover, a substantial disparity was discovered on the basis of participant's gender and the number of times the learners went to the counselor. It was hence suggested that the government should make sure that guidance and counselling departments are developed in all high schools in USA.

According to Amat (2019) there is a high influence of learners' performance when they get assisted and counseled thus the research set to check out the influence of guidance and counseling on the learner's academic performance. Because of these many problems learners encounter and some problems that guidance and counseling assisted in solving, a goal was established that identified the level to which provision of guidance and counselling tools, socio-cultural, instructor learner association has aided learners' academic performance. The study was accomplished with help of sets of questions, testimonials and documentations that were utilized to collect data. Educators and learners were included in the sample. The outcome of the evaluation reveals that there is a huge effect on learner performance where guidance and counseling is proper in the institution they go to.

Psifidou, Mouratoglou and Farazouli (2021) research was performed to explore the association between guidance and counseling and academic performance of secondary school students in Lyon, France. The research concentrated on determining the level of guidance and counseling, degree of pupils' academic accomplishment and the partnership between guidance and counseling and learners' academic achievement in Senior high schools in Lyon, France. The researcher used a co relational research design utilizing quantitative method to acquire meaning from quantitative information created. The major study tool utilized to acquire data during the research was Likert scaled questionnaires employed and customized to suit the goals of the research. Information gathering was guided by the study questions and goals. A total of 250 participants were purposely

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and arbitrarily sampled from the 8 learning institutions in Lyon. Findings from the research and evaluation revealed that there were substantial association between guidance and counseling and the academic achievement of learners. Results from the research additionally suggested that there is a still really reduced level of academic achievement of high school learners in the region. The level of guidance and counseling was discovered to be rather appropriate. The research recommended that the government needs to integrate guidance and counseling departments in every learning institution so as to bring nearer this services to the learners.

Mulawarman, Susilawati, Syifa and Rifani (2020) research intended to determine the impact of guidance and counseling on academic performance in high schools in Indonesia. The research was based on the psychoanalytic and cognitive development concepts. The research embraced descriptive study layout. The research focused on 16 principals and 32 guidance and counseling educators from all the public high schools in Indonesia. Pilot testing and expert judgment were made use of to identify content and construct credibility of the research tools. Demographics sampling method was made use of to sample all the 16 principals and the 32 guidance and counseling educators from the 16 high schools. The guidance and counseling educators' questionnaires and principals' interview guides were used to gather information. Integrity of the guidance and counseling teachers' questionnaire was determined through the split half strategy, where a coefficient of 0.79 was acquired. Data were evaluated by both descriptive and inferential data. Descriptive data like frequencies, means, standard deviations and percentages were utilized. The created three null hypotheses were tested making use of several regression evaluation. The research found that many institutions lacked consistent specialist guidance and counseling services. Due to absence of reliable guidance and counseling services, the majority of the learners were at risk to false information from various sources. The study three independent variables contributed 69.8% of variance in learners' academic performance ($R^2 = 0.585$). Guidance and counseling in academic problems had one of the most substantial relative contribution to the prediction of learners' academic performance ($\beta = 0.685$, $p < 0.05$), followed by guidance in psychosocial problems ($\beta = 0.521$, $p < 0.05$), while profession guidance had the least impact ($\beta = 0.341$, $p > 0.05$). The research concluded that the majority of the counselor instructors hardly involve themselves with issues associated with their learners' relations at home and which jeopardized learners' academic performance. The study suggested that all the teachers regardless of their school ranking, be involved in guidance and counseling growth workshops and seminars. The understanding and experience acquired from such engagements can be utilized to boost their institutions and the general learners' well-being. These require the teachers' regulatory body to make it compulsory for all teachers to participate in and join these trainings.

3.0 Research Methodology

The target population was 628 learners from Zlatarski International School of Sofia. The study used a simple random sampling technique to collect the data. The collection of the data was done using questionnaires. The analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.0 Findings

The findings of the study were presented in sections.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

The correlation results are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

		Performance	Guidance & Counselling
Performance	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Guidance & Counseling	Pearson Correlation	.781 **	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000

The correlation results from Table 1 show that guidance and counselling is positively and significantly related to academic performance ($r=.781$, $p=.000$). This concurs with Psifidou, Mouratoglou and Farazouli (2021), who articulated that the government needs to integrate guidance and counselling departments in every learning institution to bring nearer these services to the learners so that they may enhance their academic performance.

4.2 Regression Analysis

The section consisted of model fitness, analysis of variance and regression of coefficient. The results presented in Table 2 show the model fitness

Table 2: Model Fitness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.185a	0.258	0.214	0.000057

The results from Table 2 depict that guidance and counselling was discovered to be satisfactory in explaining the academic performance in Bulgaria. This was supported by the coefficient of determination, also known as the R square of 0.258. It indicated that guidance and counselling explain 25.8% of the variations in academic performance in Bulgaria.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.14	1	19.14	518.39	.000b
	Residual	23.15	627	0.037		
	Total	42.29	628			

The results in Table 3 indicate that the overall model was statistically significant. The outcomes reveal that guidance and counselling is a good predictor in explaining academic performance in Bulgaria. This was supported by an F statistic of 518.39 and the reported p-value of 0.000, which was less than the conventional probability significance level of 0.05.

Table 4: Regression of Coefficient

	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.845	0.073		11.58	0.022
Guidance & Counselling	0.489	0.052	0.374	9.458	0.006

According to the results in Table 4, it was revealed that guidance and counselling is positively and significantly related to academic performance ($\beta=0.489$, $p=0.006$). This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 9.458, which is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. The findings indicated that when the guidance and counselling increase by one unit, the academic performance will increase by 0.489 units while holding other factors that influence academic performance constantly. Khurshid, Anjum, Khan and Naz (2021) noted that guidance programmes should be seriously involved in the curriculum of all schools. Guidance and counselling programs ought to be enhanced to raise the academic performance of learners in learning institutions.

5.0 Conclusion

Guidance and counseling is important for all learners particularly at secondary school level. Guidance and counseling increases the achievement of learners. Institution counsellors are experts' education with psychological health perspective. They are trained to handle the different difficulties which learners are going through while in school. School counselors must put more effort to develop and commit adequate time for learners who require guidance. The Ministry of Education has implemented the creation of counselling centers in all learning institutions. The school heads should utilize well trained counsellors and do away with the use of career masters in

schools, since counselors are trained as psychologist and human relation specialist. The institutions heads are giving essential assistance to the counsellor by creating awareness on the relevance of guidance and counseling programmes in the school.

6.0 Recommendations

It was suggested that it is crucial for the national education officer in Bulgaria to conduct a test to determine the level to which counseling services are provided to learners in the learning institutions. Majority of the school heads hesitate to offer counseling services in their institutions whereas it is key to academic performance. The stakeholders in educational sector must give money regularly to; buy materials and facilities required for good counseling. Workshops and seminars should be done regularly for guidance counselors to keep abreast with guidance practices. Learners in Bulgaria are required to change their thinking towards counseling particularly the learners who do not see the relevance of counseling and those who attend counseling once in a term or do not attend totally. Attitude has an impact towards academic performance. Learners must additionally change their attitude towards the counselors whether teacher counselor or anybody else as these individuals know the challenges they experience from the environment and how well they may be solved.

Moreover, employing full-time counselors in every learning institution will address to the existing and teething issues of learners. Guidance programmes should be seriously embedded in the curriculum of schools. There is need for the teacher counsellors to execute all the services needed for guidance and counselling program and it must be emphasized to improve the academic performance of learning institutions in the nation. School heads should establish an evaluation register for learner for the purposes of counseling. These will assist in monitoring the progress of counseling and the frequency of counseling. The school heads will have the ability to know the learners who boycott counseling sessions to ensure that ideal solution could be found as without counseling the expected academic performance cannot be accomplished. It is worth noting that counseling skills are essential for effective counseling, for that reason the school heads in all institutions should guarantee that the educators counseling the learners have the ideal training for the counseling services needed. This is essential because learners avoid counseling due to the counselors themselves.

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