



Effects of guidance and counselling on the academic performance of learners

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Abstract

This article reviews the studies conducted in the area of guidance and counselling. The studies were reviewed in terms of their findings, and their strengths and weaknesses. The reviewed studies have shown that school guidance and counselling improves educational outcomes of learners, improves learner discipline and reduces school dropout rates among learners.

Keywords: guidance and counselling, pupil discipline

Introduction

Preparing children for the transition to adulthood has always been one of humanity's great challenges. Robinson (1996, p.12) [65] states that "social experimentation in drugs and sexual relationships have left some casualties among students." A significant number of students also indulge in prostitution, truancy, poor discipline and other misdemeanours (Sexton, 1996; Luzzo & Macgregor, 2001) [66, 51]. In the light of all these problems, schools should be more involved in conducting student needs assessment and developing comprehensive guidance and counselling services. This article, reviews the literature on the effect of guidance and counselling on the academic performance of learners. The article also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the studies reviewed.

Literature review

Studies on academic performance

Guidance and counselling programmes that are implemented well have been shown to positively impact student outcome and educational experiences. Two large scale (state wide) evaluations have been completed and produced positive findings related to the implementation of such programmes (Lapan, Gysbers & Petroski, 2001) [45]. School data from the Missouri accreditation programme was gathered and hierarchical linear modelling was used to study the relationships between the level of guidance and counselling programme implementation and a variety of student outcomes. These studies indicated that in schools with more fully implemented guidance programmes, students reported earning higher grades.

Boutwell and Myrick (1992) [11] found that "The go for it counselling club," a club designed to assist students in reaching academic goals was successful in helping students improve academic achievement. 76% of students under study showed academic improvement after only one week. In the second trial, 72 % of the 29 students involved in the study improved during the first week with 83% reporting improvement in the second week (Boutwell & Myrick) [11].

The sample in this study was however, too small to permit generalisation of the findings.

Hudesman (1986) [37] conducted a study to compare the impact of the structured and non-directive counselling styles on academic performance of high risk students. Results of the study indicated that students in structured counselling condition had higher grade on point average than those in non-directive counselling conditions at the end of the semester. Francis (1987) [27] also examined the positive effects of counselling on student communication patterns, study habits and academic achievement. The results revealed that counselling services in schools contributed to high academic achievement. Bhatnagar and Gupta (1999) [7] are also for the view that for better student achievement, guidance and counselling programmes are necessary.

According to Braddock (2001) [12] the purpose of guidance and counselling services for school children are to; improve academic achievement, foster positive attitudes towards school, learning, and work, increase acquisition and applications of conflict resolution skills and decrease dropouts. In modern times, the complexity of life has intensified the need for organized guidance services. Students need to be guided to develop good study habits and adequate preparations to sit for examinations.

These results sound promising; there were however, several measurement problems with these studies. The studies themselves do not prove that the implementation of guidance and counselling programmes was responsible for the positive outcomes noted. Given the condition relational nature of the studies, it could just as well be for example that, the schools that were fully implementing these programmes might also have been implementing other educational programmes that might have directly impacted on their academic achievement.

Goodman (2001) [32] tested the impact of school counsellor-directed intervention on student achievement and school success behaviour using a group counselling and classroom guidance approach called Student Success Skills (SSS). In the SSS guidance curriculum, Goodman focused on

developing students cognitive, social and self-management skills by conducting a well-controlled experimental study with lower achieving fifth, sixth and tenth grade students, the results indicated that about 70% of student in the experimental group improved on average 22 percentile points, as measured by the school social behaviour scale. On the other hand, 82% of the students receiving the guidance intervention improved in their Mathematics and reading scores respectively.

Akos, Turnbull and Mvududu (2008) ^[1] examined the differences between Washington state schools that had implemented comprehensive schools counselling programmes and those that had not, while they found minimal differences between students in schools that had implemented comprehensive school counselling programmes and those that had not, they did find Significant differences in academic achievement scores for students who attended schools with at least five years of comprehensive school counselling programme implementation. Akos *et al.* (2008) ^[1] study therefore, provides further evidence that the longer comprehensive school counselling programmes are implemented in schools, the more the pupils are likely to grasp the academic value of the guidance programmes and that more students benefit academically.

Sink and Stroh (2003) conducted a large scale state-wide project that examined the question “do school counselling interaction in elementary schools with comprehensive developmental guidance programmes foster higher academic achievement test score in student?” In their study Sink and Stroh randomly selected one hundred and fifty elementary schools from across the state of Washington. Schools were then divided into treatment group and the comparison group based on the level of implementation of the comprehensive counselling programme within each school. Sink and Stroh found that early elementary students who attend the same schools for three or more years where a comprehensive counselling programme was in place performed better academically. Additionally, students who remained in the same schools for multiple years with a fully implemented comprehensive school counselling programme earned high achievement test scores than students who attended schools where no such programmes were in place (Sink & Stroh, 2003).

Unfortunately, random assignment studies discussed above are time consuming and expensive. To some extent, it may also seem ethically questionable to deny (by putting them in a control group) students an intervention that might help them achieve at high level.

In 1998, a two-year project was funded through an Annenberg foundation grant in Florida. The aim of the project was to increase direct counselling services to students in order to increase academic achievement and school success behaviour. Approximately 180 students (30 from each of the six schools) were selected randomly from those scoring between the 25th and 50th percentile on the 2000 academic achievement test in Mathematics and reading scores.

The primary interactions provided by school counsellors, were group counselling and classroom guidance, both related to school success. Collaborations between school counsellors, administrators, teachers and parents to focus on these skills were highlighted.

The school success skills in this project were selected based

upon two reviews of research; Mustern and Coatworth (1998) ^[56] reviewed twenty years of research to determine the most critical factors associated with children and adolescents, developing the academic and social competence needed to be successful. Wang (1994) reviewed fifty years of research looking at “what helps students learn.” Both reviews found very similar group of skills that were critical. These skills included:

Cognitive and metacognitive skills, such as goal setting, progress monitoring and memory skills. Social skills, such as interpersonal skills, social problem solving, listening and team work skills. Self – management skills, such as managing attention, motivation, and anger. Focusing on these critical skills during counselling lead to significant gain. The preliminary results indicated approximately seven out of every ten students’ improvement in Mathematics. The average amount was twenty percentile points. Approximately five out of ten improved in reading. The average amount of improvement was fifteen percentile points.

Carn and Carns (1991) ^[15] found that a study skill guidance programme resulted in drastic increases in students standardized achievement scores. This programme for secondary school students was designed to increase self-efficacy, awareness of metacognitive skills and knowledge of learning styles. This research revealed that, on average, students who participated in the guidance programme improved three years one month (3.1) grade equivalents in terms of academic achievements. These results should be cautiously interpreted because the sample was quite homogeneous (upper social economic levels). The study by Andrea and Daniels (1995) in the area of guidance curriculum with elementary students indicated that multicultural guidance programmes were effective in increasing social development with elementary students from diverse backgrounds leading to good academic performance.

Wilson (1996) ^[73] focused on counsellor intervention with low achieving students and their parents to determine whether school counselling interventions were effective in boosting academic achievements as measured by grade point average (GPA). This review included nineteen studies over a twenty-year period. Summary findings suggested that, counselling interventions can have positive effects on academic achievement.

Gerler and Drew (1990) ^[28] conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of a ten (10) sessions, multimodal guidance unit called “succeeding in school”, which was designed to improve academic performance. The results of this study demonstrated that students improved their awareness of how to succeed in school after intervention.

Borders and Drury (1992) ^[9] cited studies in America that show increased academic achievement, academic persistence, school attendance and positive attitude towards school and others as a result of school counselling. Lee and Ziegler (1991) ^[47] on the other hand, found similar results that American classroom guidance lessons led by counsellors can positively influence academic achievement in Mathematics. In the same country, improved academic achievement resulting from receiving school guidance and counselling (SGC) services is also reported by Sink and Stroh (2003), Swanson and Parcover (1989) ^[70], Jones (2000) ^[41] and Mullis and Otwell (1997) ^[55]. Hui (2002) ^[40] reported similar experiences in Hong Kong. American

students, parents and teachers viewed the SGC services as having positive impacts on students' academic life (Hughes, 1998)^[38].

In a survey by Hughes (2002)^[39], public secondary schools were asked to report the extent to which guidance programmes emphasized four goals: helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after secondary schools, helping students with personal growth and development, helping plan and prepare for post-secondary schools and helping students with their academic achievement in secondary schools.

The results were as follows: Helping students with their academic achievements in secondary schools was the most emphasized goal of public secondary school guidance programme. 48% of schools emphasized this goal. Fewer schools reported that most emphasized goal of their guidance programmes was helping students plan and prepare for post-secondary schooling. Only 26% reported helping students with personal growth and development. The survey indicated that schools were least (8%) likely to report that their most emphasized guidance goal was helping students plan and prepare for their work roles after high schools (Hughes, 2002)^[39].

Borg and Drury (1992)^[10] state that, effective SGC services in Scotland remove some barriers to learning that students may face and consequently, teachers concentrate on their major task of teaching. This results in better academic results. Related to the above is Chapman and Demasi's (1991, p. 228) view that American school counselling "helps students develop education strategies that will allow them to meet academic requirements and at the same time develop soft skills and attitudes that are typically learnt in applied contexts." Carr (1997)^[16] add that academic achievement in American schools is to be best understood within a comprehensive framework that included activities such as problem solving, classroom performance, work-based performance standardized test scores and vocational skills development.

However, the limitation associated with these studies may be that the correlation that was found could have been as a result of the schools under study implementing other educational programmes that could have influenced the research outcomes. Additionally, Edmondson and White (1998)^[22] argued that more complete guidance implementation and high student grades might both result from the school's organizational structure, leadership and / or personal strength rather than being causally related to each other.

St Clair (1989)^[69] completed a comprehensive qualitative school counselling outcome research at the public high school level, the intervention reviewed were relaxation training, group counselling and career programmes. The outcome measured included academic achievement, behaviour, self-concept and attitude. The results of the review indicated that short academic skills workshops can increase secondary schools students' grades and that a short non-traditional career workshop can alter secondary school student's occupational choice, students also reduced referrals for disciplinary problems. The problem with such type of research is that there was no traditional institutional data collected to cross- validate information students, teachers or counsellors were reporting. They are chances that other factors could have accounted for high academic performance.

Studies on Pupil discipline

Research done by Lapan and Sun (1997)^[44] revealed that counselling decreases classroom disturbances. It supports teachers in the classroom in order to enable them to provide quality instructions designed to assist students in achieving high standards. Students in schools that provided counselling services indicated that their classes were less likely to be disrupted by students who had received counselling. This study therefore, shows that school counselling intervention, can positively affect school behaviour.

Carrell (1987)^[17] conducted a study to determine whether smaller student to counsellor ratios were related to better student outcomes. In her research, she used linear regression modelling based on the data from one large district to estimate the impact of reducing elementary student to counsellor ratios on the student discipline problems. She found persuasive evidence that smaller ratios would result in fewer disciplinary problems. She further argued that, determining the most appropriate student to counsellor ratios is a critically important professional issue. The establishment of guidelines for student to counsellor ratios has this far being based on professional judgment rather than on empirical research. This study was therefore, an important pioneering effort in empirically establishing that more favourable ratios produce better educational outcome.

A similar study was conducted by Figlio (2005)^[24] on the effect of student to counsellor ratio and also provided evidence that lower student to counsellor ratios decreases the recurrences of student disciplinary problems and improves pupil academic performance. These effects were greater for minority and low income students. The empirical methodologies employed in this research produces unbiased estimates as long as the variation in the student to counsellor ratio is not driven by unobserved factors that affect disciplinary outcomes.

Passarol (2004)^[61] reported that at risk secondary school students who were supported with a reality therapy intervention in an in-school support room showed a 42% improvement in their average daily behaviour rating as well as 12% decrease in the total number of out of school suspensions over the course of an academic year. This research has shown that reality therapy techniques may be effective in producing changes in students' locus of control orientation allowing students to see how their own actions may affect their personal outcomes.

Lloyd (2005)^[50] suggested that school counsellors, who employ choice theory, effectively teach students to satisfy their needs in appropriate and effective methods, which may help decrease disruptive and destructive behaviours. Glaser (2001)^[30] on the other hand, advocated that choice theory is strong in terms of its preventive power. The knowledge students get from this theory of counselling becomes a framework for a set of life skills that can guide the students beyond school counselling.

Adolescence with lower levels of self – esteem/concept are more likely to have mental and physical health problems, diminished economic prospects and higher levels of criminal behaviour as adults (Trzesniewski, 2006)^[71]. How others view children and adolescents regarding their emotions and behaviours play a significant role in their well-being and development. There is mounting evidence connecting poor self- concepts and severe behavioural

problems among secondary school pupils (Levy, 2001) ^[48]. In a two-year research study of eighth and tenth grade students, Cruz and Ruthfold (2002) ^[19] found that students having problems with peer relationships and acceptance have more academic problems and come to be seen by teachers as more disruptive as well as showing socially inappropriate behaviour. These problems tend to get worse with time. The researcher recommended that guidance and counselling sections in schools must be well equipped to address such challenges.

A longitudinal study conducted by Pisecco (2001) ^[62] of the students at ages seven, nine, eleven, and thirteen indicates that low academic self-concepts is a risk factor for later development of behavioural problems. To meet these challenges, teachers must communicate and collaborate with their school counsellors and rely on them for help and support with students experiencing emotional and behavioural problems (Beesly, 2004) ^[6]. Addressing students' behavioural problems is clearly part of a professional school counsellor's responsibility.

A study by Arudo (2008) ^[4] on peer counselling experience among selected Kenyan high schools found that school counselling is effective in reducing victimization by assisting victimized children, reducing bullies' victimising behaviours and modifying the school climate and structure. The study also revealed that different forms of intervention when used together by school counsellors and teachers can reduce some victimisation related behaviour.

Quarto (1999) ^[63] investigated teacher perception of school counsellors with and without teaching experience. The study examined perception of teachers on counselling effectiveness of experienced and inexperienced school counsellors in the United States. A total of 152 teachers participated in the study from four States. The researcher found that teachers perceived school counsellors with prior teaching experience to be the most effective in carrying out general counselling function followed by those with community health mental experience and those with insurance experience. Teachers also perceived the type of prior work experiences to be a significant factor in how effective school counsellors are in interviewing a student with an emotional or behavioural problem. Teachers perceived school counsellors with teaching experience to be most effective in addressing the emotional or behavioural issues. Finally, teachers were asked to indicate which counsellor they would prefer to work with based on the counsellor description given above. 93% indicated a preference for the school counsellor with prior teaching experience, six per cent for the school counsellor with community mental health experiences, and one per cent for the school counsellor with insurance experience (Quarto, 1999) ^[63].

The most extensively researched curriculum designed to improve student behaviours is the second step violence prevention curriculum developed by Gossman (1997) ^[33]. Grossman conducted a randomized field trial of the second step curriculum with 790 eighth and ninth grade students in Washington. Outcomes measured were teacher ratings on the Achenbach child behaviour scale and school social behaviours scale, parent ratings on the Achenbach and the parent-child rating scale, and behavioural observations using the social interaction observation system. Outcomes were measured prior to the curriculum intervention, two weeks after the intervention, and six months after the

intervention.

The findings were that, observed physically aggressive behaviour decreased significantly in playground and cafeteria settings and that observed neutral, pro social behaviour increased significantly in the same settings. Parents and teachers rating did not change significantly. Despite these modest findings, this study used a repeated measure design that controlled many mediating factors and it used reliable and valid instruments to measure outcomes. This makes this research a powerful evidence of the value of this curriculum intervention that school counsellors can use in their effort to regulate pupil behaviour in schools.

Flannery (2003) ^[26] implemented the Peace Builder curriculum group during counselling sessions which focused on reducing aggressive behaviours and increasing social competence with grade tens. He found increases in pro social behaviour and decrease in teacher reported aggressive behaviour.

The merits of this study was that, the researcher took into consideration the covariance of special education status or learning disorders, behavioural problems, family composition, primary language used, classroom atmosphere and academic performance in their analysis of the impact of the intervention.

Despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (in Kenya) to democratize the school administrative system, as evidenced by the ban of the cane in schools through legal notice of Number 56 of Kenya Gazette (supplement No.25 199 of 30th March, 2001), unrest has continued in secondary schools with a new dimension. Not only are these violent and destructive but they are also premeditated and planned and have caused maximum harm to human life. There seems to be lack of effective alternative strategy to contain student indiscipline.

This can be realized from the fact that the whole country has been experiencing student violence. 'The report of the task force on students discipline and unrest, Republic of Kenya, 2001' recognized the use of guidance and counselling in the management of the students discipline in schools due to its proactive approach. These findings are related to the findings by Simatwa (2007) ^[67] who stated that if students are well guided, by teachers, they will do the right things related to learning and will become disciplined. On the other hand, Griffin (2009) ^[34] argued that if students were not properly guided, they can cause discipline problems. Bakhoa (2004) ^[5] maintains that, group counselling is very important for the prevention of student disturbances and to help develop a very free and friendly atmosphere.

A recent meta- analysis of data from fifteen United Kingdom based evaluation studies of person centred or humanist counselling in schools found a weighted mean effect size of 0.81 from pre-post counselling; with 82% of young people on average describing their counselling as helpful or very helpful. Another research from the United Kingdom also indicated that school based counselling services are feasible to implement and are highly acceptable to young people and they help regulate pupils behaviour (Birmaher, 2009) ^[8].

One of the most prevalent issues facing school personnel today is school violence and the threat of this behaviour to safe school environment. Between 1997 and 1988, several schools shooting occurred across the United States from Peducal, Kentucky to Littleton Colorado, resulting in forty deaths (Macallair, 1998). The most frequent motivation for

these shootings was the revenge for being bullied (Dedman, 2000) ^[20]. Bullying is the repeated unprovoked aggressive behaviours that can either be physical or psychological or include verbal harassment, gestures and exclusion or simply pressure to conform in which there is an actual or perceived power imbalance between the bully and the victim (Brantley & Li, 1995) ^[13]. Brewster and Railsback (2001) ^[14] reported that 16000 pupils were absent from school daily due to fear of an attack or intimidation by a bully, 10% of eighth graders stay home at least once a month because of bullies, and 20% of students are scared throughout much of the day. Brewster and Railsback further suggested that these percentages underestimate actual occurrences of bullying. Many students do not report bullying because they believe that adults are unsympathetic and rarely try to stop bullying even when they are informed (Limber, 2002) ^[49]. According to Ginter (2004), school counsellors are the greatest resource to deal with all types of violence occurring in school systems. Herman and Finn (2002) ^[35] stated that school counsellors are both ethically and legally positioned for keeping students safe in school.

According to Lea (2007) ^[46] an estimated 25.8% of Korean students (about 54,611 students) exhibit behavioural or suicide and emotional problems; including many with a learning disability or with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). About 26% of students are also addicted to the internet and other computer-related activities. In addition, more than 90% of middle and secondary school students report having witnessed bullying in their school, and it is estimated that approximately 60% of students in South Korea are involved in bullying either as a victim, as a bully or both. As societal problems grow in South Korea, school violence has become a salient issue (Kim & Lee, 2005) ^[42]. The extent of emotional problems is illustrated by the fact that suicide is the leading cause of death among teenagers in South Korea.

Despite persistence remedial efforts, adolescent problems continue to grow and also becoming evident among younger age groups in South Korea. According to Kim and Lee (2005) ^[42], if there were no prevention efforts, the violence problems evident among children and youth could create an astronomical amount of societal cost in the future. In addition, the increasing complexity of problems facing today's youth and families suggest that new ways of preventive interventions are needed. School counselling services thus have a major role to play. Good counselling services lead students to develop positive self-image and in turn, satisfying relationships with friends and others. Having good counsellors in the school systems helps children and youths make good decisions and deal with life's challenges more positively. Unfortunately, most young people with mental health problems had so far not received appropriate treatment in South Korea. To prevent growing school violence among adolescents, the government has established school counsellor's positions within school settings.

Epstein and Voorhis (2010, p.11) ^[23] noted that "when counsellors communicate effectively with families and involve them in activities focused on student's behaviour, schools reported fewer discipline action from one year to the next". Today's school counsellors collaborate with students, parents, staff and the larger learning community to meet family needs for information regarding child/ adolescent development including issues of drug and alcohol abuse, early sexual behaviour, peer pressure, and discipline

problems.

Nearpass (1990) ^[58] examined counselling and guidance in secondary schools and found that interventions with upper level secondary school students were more effective than those interventions directed at lower level students. He found programmes using individual counselling and interventions that focused on improving school behaviour effective in regulating pupil behaviour. In a particularly well designed study Rathron (1991) ^[64] examined a test preparation unit with under achieving middle school students. He wanted to see whether a classroom guidance format or a small group format was more effective. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between either of the formats and neither of the groups was significantly different from the control group. On the other hand, Wiggins (1992) ^[72] found that counsellors who predominately used individual counselling were more effective than those counsellors who predominately used classroom guidance activities. Caution should be used in concluding that individual counselling is more effective because none of the results in Wiggins study were analysed statically.

The discovery programme, a developmental programme designed to promote the moral development of young children identified as having discipline problems, were evaluated by Brakes and Gerler (1994) ^[28]. After participating in a fifteen week programme that was followed by a role – taking experience of helping a Kindergartner, the boys exhibited a significant decrease in inappropriate behaviours. In addition, the participants were significantly different from those in the control group in positive attitudes towards school, but were not significantly different in moral development with children who displayed aggressive behaviours and hostile behaviours. Omizo and Hershberger (1998) ^[60] found that group counselling was very successful. In the group counselling sessions, Omizo and Hershberger (1998) ^[60] incorporated cognitive behaviour techniques, modelling, a role playing and positive reinforcement and this resulted in a significant decrease in the participant aggressive and hostile behaviours as rated by the teachers.

In an interesting example of action research, Gomezi and Lenc (1993) ^[31] investigated the effectiveness of integrating family systems approaches to resolving school behaviour problems. In a secondary school with more than 90% Hispanic, Asian, American students, they established a school attendance and review board (composed of school counsellors). This team addressed behavioural problems at school and worked with students and parents using a variety of family intervention approaches. The researcher indicated that the 77% of students who participated in this study either completely met their objectives or made progress in meeting their objective of behaviour improvement. Only 22% of these successful students either had significant relapses or were referred again. Other evaluation information suggested that this programme was more effective with families before problems escalated to a crisis stage. This counselling intervention was recommended to be used in American schools as a way of solving the issue of pupil discipline.

Suicide prevention is often part of a counsellor's responsibility. The importance of suicide prevention activities are usually increased when suicide occurs at school, because indications are that many adolescents are prone to imitate this suicidal behaviour. Hazell and Lewin (1993), found previous suicidal ideation and behaviours, and

proximity to a friend who had either attempted or completed a suicide ideation were significant predictors of current suicidal ideation and behaviour. They suggested that school counsellors must initiate preventive programmes when suicide occurs in a school. However, the study showed that the programmes counsellors initiated did not prove to be successful.

School counsellor involvement in non-guidance activities is not uncommon (Napier & Parson, 1995) ^[57]. School counsellors often manage external pressures to engage in certain roles that may not be consistent with their counselling roles. In a survey of 86 pre service school administrators Fitch (2001) ^[25] found that while participants did endorse counselling and consultation roles as important, they also highly supported school counsellor's involvement in roles related to discipline student's record and registration. Additionally, Amatea and Clark (2005) ^[2] found that school administrators conception of school counsellors ranged from viewing them as Quasi – administrators to engaging them as collaborative school leaders. The findings reflected historical trends in school counselling such as traditional guidance and advising roles and current emphasis on leaderships and advocacy.

Mourey (1989) ^[54] found that peer counsellors were most helpful in discussing plans for the future and school problems with students and least helpful in discussing drug and alcohol problems. Morey (1993) ^[53] found that students who were self-referred reported greater overall satisfaction than students who were referred by teachers or counsellors. The findings also indicated that, the students who were self-referred had learnt problem solving strategies. Furthermore, higher peer counselling ratings were associated with an emphasis on improving relationship difficulties that included resolving relationship problems both at home and at school.

School-wide positive behavioural support is becoming an increasingly popular and effective way to reduce behavioural disruption in schools. Results from a four year study examining the effects of these programmes in a public secondary school indicated significant reduction in percentage of behavioural referrals, suspension and instructional days lost, but effect sizes were small. Research indicates that school based prevention programmes particularly comprehensive school wide interventions are effective in stopping behavioural problems (Wilson & Lepsy, 2007) ^[74]. Scot (2001) also found that school positive behavioural support counselling decreased behavioural referrals. Although the effect sizes were small, the clinical significance of these decreases in problem behaviours can have a favourable impact on the school environment.

For instance, the 56% decrease in instructional days lost in Scot (2001) study was important considering research linking increased attendance with higher grades and achievements on standardized test scores (Konstanto, 2006). Increasing instructional days is also considered an important variable in reducing the secondary school drop-out because problem behaviours at the secondary school level have been noted as one of the leading indicators in the identification of students at risk for dropping out of school. Evidence based upon the school counsellor's experiences suggested that positive behaviour school programmes are particularly beneficial for students with behavioural – emotional problems.

The study by Devoe (2000) ^[21] revealed that after counselling interventions, there was a significant decrease in schools violence among secondary schools, students who reported being afraid at school decreased from 12% in 1995 to 6% in 2003. Between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of children reporting that they had a fight on school premise in the past year declined from 16% to 13%. The percentage of students carrying a weapon at school thirty days after the intervention declined from 12 % to 6%.

Studies show that some form of school counselling sessions that address how to improve communication between peers may help reform adolescents who bully. After twelve weeks of a programme called 'brief strategic therapy' students reported fewer acts of bullying and less anger (Nickel, 2005). In another controlled experimental study, secondary school boys were enrolled in a training programme designed to teach children to avoid attributing hostile intention to peers. After the intervention, boys who had been identified as aggressive showed marked improvements. Teachers rated them as less aggressive and when tested the boys were less likely to assume hostile intervention in ambiguous situations (Hudley & Graham, 1993) ^[36].

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that comprehensive guidance and counselling bring about improved academic performance of learners, improves learner behaviour and reduces school dropout.

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