

## Availability of counselling services and psychosocial adjustment among students in secondary schools in Luweero district, Uganda

\*<sup>1</sup> Kayanga Miriam, <sup>2</sup> Mghweno Penueli, <sup>3</sup> Bantu Edward

<sup>1,2</sup> Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, Bugema University, Kampala, Uganda

<sup>3</sup> Senior Lecturer, School of Graduate Studies, Bugema University, Kampala, Uganda

### Abstract

This study was conducted in secondary schools in Luweero District to find out the forms of counseling services available to students in secondary schools, to establish the different forms of behavioral problems among them, and to find out the relationship between counseling services and students psychosocial adjustment. The study was carried out in fourteen (14) secondary schools in Luweero District and it involved 212 students. Descriptive and correlation research designs were used in this study. The findings indicate that there is moderate counseling services in selected secondary schools, at a mean of 3.16 and in most schools, these services are provided by teachers. The moderate counseling services have resulted into moderate psychosocial adjustment by students in those schools at a mean of 3.26. The multi-regression indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between individual counseling services and students' psychosocial adjustment at  $B = 0.40$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . The results also indicated that there is a negative relationship between group counseling services and students' psychosocial adjustment at  $B = -0.36$ ,  $P = 0.00$ . It is concluded that there are moderate counseling services in selected secondary schools in Luweero District consequently moderate levels of psychosocial adjustment among student.

**Keywords:** counseling, psychosocial, adjustment

### Introduction

Establishing high quality career guidance and counseling programs is important in any training system because it promotes improved course selection for students leading to benefits for learners in terms of satisfaction on their selection, and benefits for technical and vocational training leading to a lower drop-out rate. Good career guidance can also help decrease the gap between education and underemployment on one hand, and productive livelihoods on the other.

The first school counselors emerged in the late 1800s, as an outcome of the American public schools' response to the Industrial Revolution. The vocational counselor was often a teacher who inherited the position of counselor along with a list of duties, with no relief from his regular teaching duties. These vocational counselors who functioned under the services model were viewed as a mechanism by which schools could assist in better preparing students for the work world. A primary role of school is to prepare students to go to work, and vocational counselors could assist in the sorting of students into the appropriate work paths <sup>[1]</sup>.

School guidance and counseling in Africa, formally started as a result of the Geneva meeting of the Ministers of Education held in October 1996. The governments of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, the Kingdom of Swaziland, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe (referred to as the original parties), agreed to establish a regional centre for guidance and counseling and youth development in Lilongwe, Malawi with the help of the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The parties later in April 1997 made a commitment to set up more counseling centers and train more guidance and counseling

personnel in order to expand the services throughout the school system and other sections of their countries <sup>[2]</sup>.

Guidance and Counseling happens to be one of the developments in the field of Education in Nigeria. It became popular with the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 educational system <sup>[3]</sup>. In Uganda, the educational sector has registered a number of challenges in regards to behavior (social) and emotional (psychological) health of the learners and teachers in schools. It has also registered challenges in delivering that education which is functional and responds to the needs of individual learners while achieving national goals and vision. The behavior problems exhibited by students range from simple undesirable emotional expressive behaviors such as anger and anxiety, to more complex forms of students deviant behaviors such as drug abuse, violent strikes, depression and traumatic stress disorders. These are mainly a result of the challenging social and economic conditions aggravated by war, HIV and Aids and poverty especially in developing countries. Counseling students is one of the basic functions of the school guidance program. Counseling skills are needed by school principals, teachers, athletic coaches, and club sponsors as well as by professional counselors. Although, counseling of serious emotional problems is best handled by professional counselors, teachers and other faculty personnel find themselves daily in situations where counseling is necessary <sup>[4]</sup>. Availability of counseling services in schools promote students achievement if the programs provided are well-articulated and developed. Within this scope, school counselors engage in appropriate counseling duties that involve not only counseling, but also involve collaboration between school leadership and student advocacy <sup>[5, 6]</sup>.

According to Opiro <sup>[7]</sup>, Guidance and Counseling programs in

school are important in the psychological and social adjustment and the educational achievements of learners. The Ministry of Education and Sports, in Uganda has therefore, put emphasis on the following six major areas of focus for school Guidance and Counseling program; Career and Vocational Guidance, Personal & Social Guidance, Educational Guidance, Psychosocial Care and Support Services, Counseling Services and School Social Work Services. Despite the above programs, some schools in Luweero have continued to experience behavior problems among students in terms of school strikes and other behaviors. The aim of this study was to find out the availability of counseling services in the various secondary schools in Luweero district and the impact of these services on students' psychosocial adjustment especially in schools where they claim to have these services.

**Methodology**

The study used descriptive and correlation research designs. Descriptive research was used to describe students' behavior and the forms of counseling services available in secondary schools, while correlation was used to find out the relationship between counseling services and students behavior adjustment. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze data since the study involved the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques, and investigation of some social phenomena without using statistical, mathematical or computational techniques, respectively.

The sample size of 212 was purposefully drawn from 734 Senior two students from 47 secondary schools. The sample was determined according to Newman<sup>[8]</sup> who recommends a sample of 30% for a small population of less than (150,000). Senior two students were targeted since they are the ones that were reported by most schools to be most troublesome and it is also the same group that was reported by most schools to start off or majorly involve in school strikes. The forty seven (47) secondary schools were such that, fourteen (14) schools were selected five (5) were government schools and nine (9) private schools which is thirty percent of each category. Thirty percent of students in senior two were selected in each of the fourteen secondary schools (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Sampling Frame

Name of the school	Number of students in senior two	30% of the students
Luweero seeds	40	12
Nalinyalwantale girls school	45	14
Mpigi secondary school	70	21
Bombo SS	63	19
Victoria Model SS	62	19
Butanza secondary school	34	10
New life SS	51	15
Luweero Progressive	76	23
Kakoola High School	30	9
Kazinga Secondary School	28	8
Ndejje High School	51	15
Luweero High School	81	24
Kayindu SS	21	6
Kasana SS	82	25
Total	734	212

**Results and Discussion**

The demographic characteristics of the respondents that

influenced the study findings were gender and age (Table 2). In terms of gender, female dominated 129 (60.8%), while male were 83 (39.2%). Findings accrued portray very crucial lessons that female students dominated the study by 129 (60.8%). This means that majority of the views in this research were dominated by female respondents.

**Table 2:** Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Item	Description	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	129	60.8
	Male	83	39.2
Age	13-15	46	21.7
	16-20	154	72.6
	20 and above	12	5.7

Sources: Primary Data n = 212

**Forms of Guidance and Counseling Services Offered to Students in School**

**Table 3:** Forms of Counseling Services Offered to Respondent Students

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Individual counseling	2.98	1.14	Moderate
Group counseling	3.34	1.19	Moderate
Grand Mean	3.16	1.17	Moderate

n= 212

Legend: 1.00-1.80: Very Low; 1.81-2.61: Low; 2.62-3.42: Moderate; 3.43-4.23: High; 4.24-5.00: Very high

The forms of counseling services offered to respondent students was found at a Mean of 3.16 (Table 3), which is moderate level indicating a uniform distribution of responses. This means that students in secondary schools receive counseling services (individual counseling, and group counseling) at a moderate level. This is represented by the Mean of 2.98, and a Mean of 3.34 for group counseling. However, the accrued mean shows that students receive more group counseling comparing to individual counseling. This means that school counselors, school administrators, visiting counselors, and teachers mostly meet with students in groups concerning the psycho social challenges they face and few of them meet students at individual (one to one) level. The finding is supported by the study by Kim<sup>[9]</sup>, who noted that groups counseling help students perceive their needs of belonging, power, freedom, fun, and responsibility through goal setting, and plan implementation. The findings are also in line with Sink's findings<sup>[10]</sup>, where he reported that the process of delivering a comprehensive school counseling program includes individual and small group counseling, large and small group guidance, consultation, case management, and coordination of services. He also reported that the very nature of comprehensive programs limits one-to-one counseling only as a primary intervention for students suffering emotional and personal stress.

**Students Behavioral Problems in Secondary Schools**

The indicators under the variable in this objective were: substance abuse, violence, truancy, premarital sex, and vandalism of school property, and were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation (Table 4).

The findings indicate that students are involved in substance abuse, specifically using alcohol (at a Mean of 2.02) and

cigarette (at a Mean of 2.16). This means that substance abuse is a problem in secondary schools in Luweero district. However much the level is low, it can be disastrous an of damaging effect to the young generation. Substance abuse is an indicator of psychological and social challenges among students, which most of the time is a behavior learnt from fellow students or used as a way of forgetting or postponing some of the challenges they may be going through. The findings are in line with the research findings of Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse (PADA) [11], conducted in Nakssongola, Mukono and Wakiso district. It was revealed among secondary schools that, students are taking alcohol due to peer pressure and that the alcohol is sold in sachets in some school canteens, which encourage more students to get involved in the drinking.

**Table 4:** Students' Behavior in Secondary Schools in Luweero District

Items Rated	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Substance abuse</b>		
Drinking of alcohol	2.02	1.31
Use of Cigarettes	2.16	1.28
Accrued Mean	2.09	1.29
<b>Violence</b>		
I have seen students fighting fellow students at school	3.11	1.44
I have been involved in fighting at school	2.65	1.29
I have ever seen students fight with teachers	2.62	1.48
Bullying of new students is common	2.44	1.39
I have ever participated in strike at school	2.64	1.49
I have seen students being involved in violent strikes at school	2.43	1.45
Accrued mean	2.65	1.42
<b>Vandalism of property</b>		
I have been involved in breaking of school property	3.05	1.48
I have seen student breaking school property for more than one time	3.08	1.42
Accrued mean	3.07	1.45
<b>Truancy</b>		
Sometimes I have disappeared from school without the knowledge of my parents and teachers	3.10	1.43
I miss school due to unknown reasons	3.19	1.38
I have seen students keep out of school due to unknown reasons	3.31	1.35
Accrued Mean	3.25	1.37
Total	2.77	1.38

n=212 *Sources:* Primary Data

Legend: 1.00-1.80: Very Low; 1.81-2.61: Low; 2.62-3.42: Moderate; 3.43-4.23: High; 4.24-5.00: Very high

The above findings are also in line with the findings by the National Drug Authority (NDA) [12], which indicate that the key risk periods for drug abuse are during major transitions in children's lives especially when they leave the security of the family and enter high school. The finding is however in disagreement with the PADA results which indicate that there is a lot of smoking habit in schools. This may be due to the fact that the PADA research was carried out in a districts other than Luweero District.

The study further indicates that there is violence in school. This include students fighting fellow students where by 50%

of students said that they have personally been involved in the fighting as indicated by the Mean 2.65. Students fighting teachers is indicated by the mean of 2.62. This means that fighting among students and students with teachers exists in secondary schools in Luweero district though the level is generally moderate as indicated by the mean of 3.11, 2.65 and 2.62. This means that students have unresolved psychological and social challenges which lead them into fighting. The findings are in line with the literature by Kettie [3], who noted that students' misbehavior is a prevailing problem affecting schools across many nations around the world. She says that such behaviors interfere with the teaching and students learning and is thought to be a precursor to later school dropout and similar negative social outcome.

In addition, the findings indicate that there is vandalism of school property by students in Luweero district (Mean 3.07). Vandalism of school property is an indicator of violence in school and this means that students have unsolved grievances which need to be handled by the school administrators, teachers or counselors. The findings are supported by the Police Report [14], where it was reported that in Uganda between April 7, and March 11, 2009, there have been 95 fire incidents in schools all over the country, which started with the burning of a dormitory at Budo Junior school killing 20 children. In most of these incidents, police blamed the fires on arsonists, indiscipline among students and negligence among other factors.

The results also indicate that some students in secondary schools in Luweero District have either witnessed or participated in school strikes this is indicated by the mean of 2.64 and 2.43, respectively. This is an indicator that students sometimes have challenges that affect them as a group which require general intervention or group intervention. In this case, the administrators or school counselors should meet the students as a group and have them air out their challenges and the possible solutions to those challenges. This helps them to feel that the school administrators care about their problems and are willing to help. The result is in agreement with the report by the DPC of Luweero district [15], which stipulates that the number of strikes have increased in schools in Luweero district where by 11 school strikes were reported in the period between January to July as compared to two strikes in 2011 and one school strike in 2009. Luwaga, *et al.* [16] also noted that, striking among students in secondary schools has consistently become means of seeking attention through destruction of school property.

Findings also revealed bullying in school as indicated by the Mean of 2. This means that some students in school still lack respect for fellow students. This requires counseling services to help students understand the need to respect the right of fellow students. However, the low level of the practice indicates high level counseling services and other disciplinary programs in school aimed at reducing the behavior. The finding is in agreement with the research findings of Heath and Sheen [17] who stated that bullying is a common occurrence in most schools. In addition, according to the American Psychological Association [18], approximately "40% to 80% of school-age children experience bullying at some point during their school careers".

The results on truancy indicate that a number of students miss out of school without the knowledge of parents and teachers as indicated by the Mean 3.25. This means that some students

have personal psychosocial challenges, which are not known to or may not feel free to share with their parents and teachers, which are even affecting their studies to the level of missing out of school. Truancy indicates a need for counseling service to help the students to stabilize in school. If such students are not followed up, they may drop out of school completely and are in a danger of getting into other risky behaviors. The result is in agreement with the US Department of Education <sup>[19]</sup>, which defines truancy as the first sign of trouble and a first indicator that a young person is giving up or losing his/her way. Opiro <sup>[7]</sup>, asserts that truancy is the major cause of many antisocial behaviors including delinquent acts and psycho social difficulties children exhibit in school.

**Relationship between Counseling Services and Students Psychosocial Adjustment**

Multi-regression analysis was used at a significant level of 0.05 to establish the relationship between counseling services and students’ psychosocial adjustment in secondary schools in Luweero District.

**Table 5:** Analysis of Counseling Services and Students’ Psychosocial Adjustment

Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients (B)		t	Sig.(P-Value)	
(Constant)	41.31	2.21		18.69	.000
Individual counseling	3.37	.583	.40	6.49	.000*
Group counseling	-2.87	.499	-.36	-5.74	.000*

\*Significant at 0.05 level of significance

**Individual Counseling Services**

The study revealed that individual counseling services significantly influence students psychosocial adjustment as indicated by the figures (B = 0.40, P = 0.000) compared to the group counseling (B = - .36, P = .000) (Table 5). The results suggest that the moderate individual counseling services received by students contributed 40% to their psychosocial adjustment. This means that an increase in counseling services in school especially individual counseling services will lead to higher levels of student’s behavior adjustment. This means that when students with behavior problems are sent to the counselor and they talk to the counselor at a one to one level it helps student to come to an understanding of their problems and together with the counselor come up with the best way to deal with the situation. The counseling relationship created is likely to result into high levels of psychological and social adjustment of the student in school. These findings also are in line with the literature by Bigman and Campbell <sup>[20]</sup>, who say that counseling facilitates change in students by making them aware of their emotional problems and providing an enabling environment that helps students to express their problems, which will facilitate healing and enable students to adopt and practice new behavior.

**Group Counseling Services**

The study indicated that group counseling negatively influence the psychosocial adjustment of students in secondary schools as indicated by the figure (B = - 0.36, P = 0.00), and the contribution is -36 percent (Table 5). Generally, students who were talked to in groups concerning their behavior problem did not improve on their behaviors instead their behaviors became worse. The study also shows that students mostly

receive counseling services from teachers and results in table 3 also indicate that students received more of group counseling compared to individual counseling. This means that talking to students in a group where by the teachers or administrators or school counselors or visiting counselors talked to students in a group concerning their antisocial behaviors does not help students much to think critically about their problems and to change accordingly. Students instead become stiff necked and their behaviors became worse. The findings are in contrast with the work of Bermak <sup>[21]</sup>, and Kim <sup>[9]</sup> who suggest that group counseling lead to greater results in students with at risk behaviors. According to Kim <sup>[9]</sup>, group counseling help students to perceive their needs of belonging, power, freedom, fun and responsibility, and also lead to self-esteem which is in disagreement with the results of the study. However, Hoag and Burlingame <sup>[22]</sup>, point out that group counseling interventions are an important component of the delivery system of comprehensive developmental school counseling programs. In addition, the knowledge of the types of group interventions is most effective for specific issues/problems and for specific student sub-populations and critical.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, it was discovered that students in secondary schools in Luweero District exhibit a number of behavior problems including violent school strikes. They also receive counseling services at a moderate level from teachers, counselors and lastly school administrators. It was further concluded that there is a positive relationship between individual counseling services and students’ psychosocial adjustment in Luweero District. Whereby, an increase in individual counseling services results in an increase in the psychosocial adjustment of students. There is, however, a negative relationship between group counseling and students’ psychosocial adjustment where by an increase group counseling results into negative psychosocial adjustment among students.

Basing on the findings of the study as presented in chapter four, the researcher has the following recommendations, the Ministry of Education and School Administrators should consider employing professional counselors in school to handle students with challenges and help them to adjust to the school environment, counselors are professionally trained to handle students with a myriad of challenges both at a one to one basis and in a group as compared to teachers who may be too busy to handle individual challenges of students. In addition teachers being disciplinarians may not be easily approached by students with personal challenges. This brings about a need for counselors to help such students. The Ministry of Education and the School Administrator also need to improve the counseling environment by provide counseling rooms to ensure privacy, especially for individual counseling since it has been considered to bring about great psychosocial adjustment among students. Lastly, there is need for further research on the influence of professional counselors on student’s adjustment in school, to ensure higher improvement in student’s psychosocial adjustment.

**References**

- Gysbers NC. Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs: The evolution of accountability. Professional School Counseling. 2004; 8(1):1-14.

2. Bongyeire EG. Get AHEAD Career Education Quarterly Issue No.1 Ministry of Education Uganda. 2008.
3. Egbochuku EO. Assessment of the Quality of Guidance and Counseling Services. Retrieved on 19th 10 2012 from [www.eurojournals.com/rjis\\_8\\_04](http://www.eurojournals.com/rjis_8_04).
4. Coleman H. Counselling in school. 2009. Retrieved on 19/10/2012 from [www.nationalforum.com/.../Lunenburger,%20Fre](http://www.nationalforum.com/.../Lunenburger,%20Fre).
5. American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The ASCA national model: A framework for comprehensive school counseling programs. Alexandria, VA: Author. 2003.
6. House RM, Hayes RL. School counselors: Becoming key players in school reform. *Professional School Counseling*. 2002; 5(4):249. Retrieved December 11, 2012, from Academic Search Premier.
7. Opiro WG, Ajilong MH, Sizumu KC, Apio M, Izzizing R, Bongeire GE *et al*. Journal of Guidance and Counseling. Ministry of Education and Sports Uganda. 2012.
8. Newman L, Wiegand B. Formular for Determining sample size. 2011. - Retrieved on 15<sup>th</sup> /11/2012 from [www.drtoconnor.com/3760/3760lect03.htm](http://www.drtoconnor.com/3760/3760lect03.htm).
9. Kim Paleg, Arthur E. The Group Therapy Treatment Planner. 2006. - [books.google.com/.../The\\_Group\\_Therapy\\_Treatment\\_Planner.html?id](http://books.google.com/.../The_Group_Therapy_Treatment_Planner.html?id).
10. Sink CA. Contemporary school counseling: Theory, research, and practice. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 2005.
11. Pada-Uganda. [www.padauganda.org/index.php](http://www.padauganda.org/index.php) preventing and mitigating Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and HIV/AIDS among Youth populations in. 2011. ... Retrieved on 20 /10/2012.
12. National Drug Authority (NDA) report. 2012. <http://hmu.go.ug/documents/Policies/NDA%20Report.pdf> . Retrieved on May 17, 2014.
13. Kattie KB, Ken L, Bums T, Write A, Gill M. Violence and Indiscipline in Schools: Research Study. 2003. - [Guardian.co.uk](http://Guardian.co.uk) Retrieved on 21/10/2012 [image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/.../2003/.../NASUWReport.pdf](http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/.../2003/.../NASUWReport.pdf).
14. Police report of the Government of Uganda. So who is burning the schools and markets, and where will the fires go next?. 2009. Retrieved on 21<sup>st</sup> /7/2012 from [www.independent.co.ug/cover-story/781-who-is-burning-the-country](http://www.independent.co.ug/cover-story/781-who-is-burning-the-country).
15. Bamuzimbire DPC. School strikes in Luweero District, a police report on the causes of the strikes and the effects as given by students and teachers. 2012.
16. Luwaga B, Birungi. Katikamu SDA Secondary School Closed over Fresh Strike Macherine. 2011. [ugandaradionetwork.com/a/story.php?s=35533](http://ugandaradionetwork.com/a/story.php?s=35533) [signalfire.org/?p=12477](http://signalfire.org/?p=12477),
17. Heath MA, Sheen D. American Psychological Association (APA). Bullying: A module for teachers. 2011. <http://www.apa.org/topics/bullying/>. Retrieved on March 15, 2013.
18. American Psychological association APA. Psychology topics: Bullying. 2011. <http://www.apa.org/topics/index.aspx>. Retrieved on March 15, 2013.
19. Witmer D. Parentingteens.about.com/cs/.../a/truancy.htm-. Retrieved on 10 /8/2012 [www.nationalforum.com/...Sam](http://www.nationalforum.com/...Sam) Houston State University. 2012.
20. Brigman G, Campbell C. Helping students improve academic achievement and school success behavior. *Professional School Counseling*. 2003; 7:91-99.
21. Bemark. Group counseling skills Implications for School System. 2005. Retrieved 15/10/ 2012 from [www.oxfordscholarship.com/.../acprof-9780195394641-chapter-5?](http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/.../acprof-9780195394641-chapter-5?).
22. Hoag MJ, Burlingame GM. Evaluating the effectiveness of child and adolescent group treatment: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*. 2012; 26:234-246.