

The Impact of Counseling Services in Addressing Students' Common Problem

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Abstract

This study evaluates the impact of the guidance counseling program at Cantilan National High School in addressing common student problems across family, individual, community, and school domains, anchored in Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Systems Theory. The scope of this study is confined to Cantilan National High School in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. A purposive criterion sample of 151 students participated in the study. Using mixed-methods for the research design, quantitative data were collected utilizing expert-validated surveys to identify prevalent problems and assess the program's perceived impact, while qualitative data from open-ended questions explored student recommendations. Results indicated that online game addiction ($f=120$), bullying ($f=92$), and poverty ($f=76$) were the most prevalent challenges. Despite these pervasive issues, the counseling interventions yielded a positive overall perceived impact ($WM = 3.83$, Agree), particularly excelling in assisting students' adaptation to the school environment ($WM = 4.72$). Qualitative findings underscored an urgent need for structural enhancements, specifically the implementation of comprehensive anti-bullying campaigns and increased counselor availability. In conclusion, while the counseling program effectively mitigates systemic behavioral risks, sustaining its efficacy requires a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach to bolster school resources and directly address pervasive community and peer-level disruptions.

Keywords: guidance counseling, student behavior, bullying, online game addiction, educational interventions.

Introduction

While contemporary education is characterized by escalating academic and health insecurities among vulnerable student populations, a critical gap persists in empirically evaluating the direct impact and readiness of school guidance counseling programs—often hindered by ambiguous role assignments—in mitigating these systemic student challenges (Blake, 2020; Chavez, 2020; Karaman et al., 2021). Every student navigates a complex interplay of external factors that profoundly shape their academic performance and behavioral outcomes (Kokkalia et al., 2019). Today's students confront multifaceted difficulties ranging from the lasting mental health impacts of global disruptions to intricate family dynamics and adverse childhood experiences (Asbury et al., 2021; Crouch et al., 2019). The transition to alternative learning modalities and the subsequent return to traditional classrooms have exposed significant academic and health insecurities, particularly among indigent students striving to adapt under severe learning constraints (Chavez, 2020).

Families are foundational to student behavior, yet many struggle with fundamental support mechanisms. For example, parents with low educational attainment face profound difficulties in assisting their children with modular and distance learning, contributing to academic disengagement and absenteeism (Murro et al., 2023). Compounding these familial hurdles are personal and socio-emotional barriers. Issues such as the pervasive effects of self-doubt on students' public speaking abilities and overall audience reception can severely hinder academic confidence and individual growth (Berry et al., 2025). Furthermore, immigration-related distractions and broader social-ecological strains continue to imperil student well-being, elevating the risk of adverse outcomes such as substance misuse and suicidal ideation (Aytur et al., 2022; Chavarria et al., 2021).

In the community and school environments, negative interactions significantly disrupt learning. Traditional school bullying and cyberbullying remain prevalent, directly correlating with lower academic achievement, mental health problems, and self-harm behaviors among victims (Eyuboglu et al., 2021; Samara et al., 2021). Peer communication dynamics have also evolved, often exacerbating these issues through modern digital mediums. Message patterns that perpetuate online gender-based humor, discriminatory practices, biases, and stereotyping serve as disempowering tools in digital discourse, further alienating vulnerable youth (Chavez et al., 2023). Moreover, prolonged exposure to social media and internet gaming acts as a major peer distraction, negatively affecting students' learning capabilities, social interactions, sleep duration, and overall quality of life (Kolhar et al., 2021; Kwok et al., 2021; Wilksch et al., 2020).

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To understand and effectively address this intricate web of student difficulties, it is imperative to conceptualize the educational environment through a comprehensive lens, such as the Social-Ecological Systems Theory. Adopting a systems approach highlights how an individual's behavioral outcomes are nested within the intersecting systems of the family, school, and broader community (Warren et al., 2023). The abrupt global shifts in these ecological landscapes have amplified systemic vulnerabilities, notably increasing the hidden risks of child maltreatment during periods of isolation (Rodriguez et al., 2021) and severely threatening adolescent well-being and learning capabilities across university and high school cohorts (Capone et al., 2020; Holzer et al., 2021). Consequently, fostering resilience and mindfulness has emerged as a crucial protective factor in mitigating the impacts of adverse childhood experiences on students' emotional stability and happiness (Huang et al., 2021).

Within this ecological framework, establishing a positive school climate acts as a primary determinant of academic achievement and emotional security (Daily et al., 2019). School guidance and counseling programs are the institutional mechanisms best positioned to cultivate this climate. Meta-analytic evaluations consistently validate that structured school counseling interventions yield significant, positive outcomes in student behavior and mental health (Whiston et al., 2017). Effective programs deploy a spectrum of strategies, ranging from solution-focused brief therapy—which actively integrates the client's own knowledge and strengths into the healing process (Zatloukal, 2023)—to comprehensive school-based mental health promotion initiatives that demonstrably reduce risk behaviors among minority and vulnerable youth (Raval et al., 2019). Furthermore, contemporary counselors are enhancing their methodologies by utilizing early warning systems driven by machine learning to identify and support students at high risk of dropping out (Chung & Lee, 2019), while also championing emotional intelligence training to counteract the detriments of academic social networking (Iqbal et al., 2021).

As the educational paradigm evolves, modern support systems must embrace varied and inclusive methodologies. This involves transforming the challenges of online learning into transformative educational practices (Stone, 2019) and instituting targeted rules to empower historically underrepresented students in demanding fields (Arif et al., 2021). Additionally, cultivating a highly ethical and supportive organizational climate has been shown to foster a sense of belonging and improve overall behavioral outcomes within institutions (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020). To maximize engagement, counselors and educators are even expanding psychosocial supports to include novel interventions, such as examining the positive effects of therapy animals on learning environments (Reilly et al., 2020).

Despite the proven efficacy of these diverse interventions, there remains a vital need to evaluate their practical application and impact within specific, localized settings in the Philippines. Therefore, this study evaluates the impact of the counseling services at Cantilan National High School in addressing common student problems across the family, individual, community, and school domains. Specifically, this research aims to:

- (1) determine the demographic profile of the students,
- (2) identify the prevalent problems they face,
- (3) assess the perceived impact of the school's counseling services, and
- (4) generate evidence-based recommendations to improve the program's efficacy.

Methods

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the counseling program's impact. The quantitative component utilized structured surveys to establish the demographic profiles of the respondents and to numerically assess the perceived impact of the counseling services on student behavior. Conversely, the qualitative component employed interviews and focus group discussions designed specifically to explore the students' underlying perceptions, as well as to gather their practical recommendations and suggestions for program enhancement.

Participants and Sampling

The scope of this investigation is confined to a localized educational setting in Cantilan National High School in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The respondents for this study comprised 151 students enrolled at Cantilan National High School during the second quarter of the academic year 2023-2024. Participant selection was executed through non-probability purposive sampling, specifically utilizing a criterion sampling technique. The primary inclusion criterion required that participants be explicitly recommended by their respective classroom advisers as students who were currently in need of counseling or behavioral intervention.

Furthermore, a formal sample size calculation was conducted prior to data collection to determine the appropriate and representative number of participants necessary for both the quantitative survey administration and the subsequent qualitative interview and focus group sessions.

Instruments

Data were collected utilizing a structured, expert-validated survey questionnaire divided into three distinct parts. Part I gathered the demographic profiles of the respondents. Part II identified the common problems faced by the students, formulated in conjunction with a review of the guidance counselor's office records. Part III utilized a Likert rating scale to quantitatively assess the perceived impact of the counseling services on student behavior and concerns. Furthermore, qualitative data were gathered through interviews and focus group discussions to capture students' specific recommendations for program improvement.

Data Gathering Procedure

Following the acquisition of formal approval from the Division Superintendent and cooperation from classroom teachers, the research was conducted in two distinct phases. During the first phase, the researcher directly administered Parts I and II of the survey to the identified students in a standardized classroom setting to establish baseline demographics and ascertain their specific challenges. Based on these initial survey results, the second phase involved the implementation of a targeted, three-week guidance and counseling program by the school. This intervention period included proactive measures such as home visitations for chronically absent students and a comprehensive orientation addressing bullying. Following the completion of the three-week intervention, the final portion of the survey assessing the perceived impact, alongside the qualitative interviews, was administered to the students.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequency counting was utilized to summarize the demographic profiles, specifically age, sex, grade level, and location, as well as to determine the prevalence of the common problems reported by the students. Weighted means were calculated to evaluate the students' perceived impact of the counseling interventions. Finally, the qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions and interviews were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify recurring patterns and key themes regarding program enhancement.

Results

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the 151 student respondents is summarized in Table 1 based on age, sex, grade level, and location. The majority of the respondents were 13 to 14 years old (53%) and female (58%). The distribution across grade levels was relatively even, with each grade (7 through 10) representing approximately 25% of the total sample. Regarding geographic distribution, the highest percentage of respondents resided in Magasang (26%), followed by Pag-antayan (22%) and Linintian (21%).

Table 1. Demographic of the Respondents

Demographic Profile		Frequency	Percentage
Age	13-14 years old	80	53%
	15-16 years old	71	47%
Sex	Male	64	42%
	Female	87	58%
Grade Level	Grade 7	38	25.2%
	Grade 8	37	24.4%
	Grade 9	38	25.2%
	Grade 10	38	25.2%
Location	Magasang	39	26%
	Pag-antayan	33	22%
	Linintian	32	21%
	Magosilom	25	17%

Calagdaan	22	14%
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Common Problems Faced by the Students

Table 2 outlines the common problems reported by the students, categorized into family, individual, community, and school factors. Under individual and school problems, online game addiction (120 instances) and bullying (92 instances) were the most frequently reported challenges, respectively. Within the family domain, poverty (76 instances) and parental neglect (51 instances) were the most prevalent issues. Community problems were predominantly characterized by bullying (51 instances) and the influence of bad company (45 instances).
Table 2. Common Problems Faced by Students (N=151)

Factors/Variables		Frequency
Family Problems	Poverty	76
	Child-Labor	33
	Separation From Parents	25
	Parental Neglect	51
	Violence	23
Individual Problems	Psychological or emotional instability	5
	Early romantic teenage pregnancy	10
	Health issues	15
	Online game addiction	120
Community Problems	Bullying	51
	Influenced by bad company	45
	Lack of community support	14
School Problems	Bullying	92
	Influenced by bad peers	67
	Absenteeism	45
	Peer distraction	75

Impact of the Counseling Services

The perceived impact of the school's counseling services is presented in Table 3. The program received an overall weighted mean of 3.83, corresponding to a verbal description of "Agree". The intervention was rated highest in addressing school problems (average weighted mean = 4.14), particularly in assisting students' adaptation to the school environment (4.72) and addressing issues related to absenteeism and peer distraction (4.39). The program was also rated positively in addressing community problems (3.91), individual problems (3.77), and family problems (3.49).

Table 3. Impact of the Counseling Services

Factors/items	SD	WM	Verbal Description
FAMILY PROBLEM			
The program positively influenced my behavior regarding poverty.	1.10	3.91	Agree
It helped me overcome child labor issues.	1.07	2.99	Neutral
It supported my behavior in coping with parental separation.	1.16	3.58	Agree
It addressed the impact of parental neglect on my behavior.	1.40	3.48	Agree
It assisted me in navigating a divorce or marital conflict.	1.29	3.33	Neutral
It provided guidance and resources for family violence-related behavior.	1.38	3.64	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.49	Agree
INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM			
The program improved my behavior related to psychological or emotional instability.	1.25	4.00	Agree

It effectively addressed behavioral issues associated with early romantic teenage pregnancy.	1.41	3.42	Agree
It helped me manage health issues, positively impacting my behavior.	1.19	3.76	Agree
It provided support for substance addiction-related behavior.	1.24	3.78	Agree
It assisted me in managing and reducing negative behaviors associated with online game addiction.	1.13	3.91	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.77	Agree
COMMUNITY PROBLEM			
The program improved my behavior related to psychological or emotional instability.	1.20	4.11	Agree
It effectively addressed behavioral issues associated with early romantic teenage pregnancy.	.96	4.29	Strongly Agree
It helped me manage health issues, positively impacting my behavior.	1.41	3.93	Agree
It provided support for substance addiction-related behavior.	1.70	3.24	Neutral
It assisted me in managing and reducing negative behaviors associated with online game addiction.	.91	3.97	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.91	Agree
SCHOOL PROBLEM			
The program significantly reduced bullying incidents and promoted positive behavior.	1.70	3.26	Neutral
It improved my behavior by fostering positive relationships with teachers and students.	.94	4.03	Agree
It assisted my adaptation to the school environment, positively impacting my behavior.	.95	4.72	Strongly Agree
It helped me make positive choices in peer relationships.	.75	4.30	Strongly Agree
It effectively addressed behavioral issues related to absenteeism and peer distraction.	1.01	4.39	Strongly Agree
Average Weighted Mean		4.14	Agree
Overall Weighted Mean		3.83	Agree
<i>Legend: 1.00 – 1.80 Strongly Disagree (SD), 1.81 – 2.60 Disagree (D), 2.61 – 3.40 Neutral (N), 3.41 – 4.20 Agree (A), 4.21 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (SA)</i>			

Recommendations for Improvement

Improvement and Development

Students highlighted a desire for physical enhancements to the school environment alongside programmatic developments. They recommended aesthetic and structural upgrades, as well as the implementation of specific activities and rules to foster better academic performance and program efficacy.

"I think we should have an improvement in our school; we should have an activity to develop our performance."

"Put more plants, rooms, and decent artwork on the school walls."

"Have additional rules that are significant for the program."

"The program is good."

Addressing Bullying

Bullying emerged as a highly significant concern among respondents, with students emphasizing the urgent need for dedicated anti-bullying initiatives. Recommendations centered on actionable interventions, including the introduction of an anti-bullying oath, targeted seminars, and broader campaigns to protect vulnerable students and promote a peaceful school climate.

"Bullies should be eliminated."

"This is very helpful to all students, especially to the victims of bullying like me, and those who experience poverty."

"I am suggesting an anti-bullying program for all students because a lot of students here in our school face these problems."

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"It needs to be stopped, and we should provide an anti-bullying oath to protect us and promote peace." "Seminar and workshop for an anti-bullying campaign."

Support and Counseling

The respondents expressed a distinct need for heightened monitoring and more accessible counseling resources. Suggestions focused on expanding the program's capacity by hiring additional guidance counselors, establishing regular monthly counseling sessions that include both students and teachers, and increasing school security to manage disciplinary issues such as class-cutting.

"More checking on some of the students who might be in need of help."

"I suggest having additional guidance counselors so that bullying and other forms of discrimination will be minimized."

"I suggest that every last week of the month, there should be student counseling, including teachers." "Put some extra security because some students are cutting classes."

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a complex web of student challenges that map directly onto the nested environments described in Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Systems Theory. At the microsystem level, students frequently reported severe familial issues, predominantly poverty and parental neglect. These foundational disruptions echo established research indicating that adverse childhood experiences critically impede school success and exacerbate academic and health insecurities among indigent populations (Crouch et al., 2019; Chavez, 2020). Furthermore, these microsystem stressors are often compounded by the challenges faced by parents; for instance, parents with low educational attainment experience profound difficulties in assisting their children with their educational needs, which often leads to student disengagement (Murro et al., 2023).

Within the mesosystem and exosystem, peer interactions and community influences pose substantial risks to student behavior and well-being. The high prevalence of online game addiction identified in this study aligns with contemporary literature highlighting how excessive internet gaming and social media use severely disrupt sleep, social interactions, and academic performance (Kolhar et al., 2021; Kwok et al., 2021; Wilksch et al., 2020). Additionally, the alarming frequency of bullying—both within the school and the broader community—reflects a pervasive threat. Traditional bullying and cyberbullying are established catalysts for cognitive-motivational decline, mental health disorders, and self-harm (Eyuboglu et al., 2021; Samara et al., 2021). These hostile peer environments are increasingly perpetuated by digital discriminatory practices and biases that act as disempowering tools against vulnerable youth (Chavez et al., 2023). Such systemic pressures can manifest in severe individual anxieties, highlighting how phenomena like self-doubt negatively affect students' public speaking and peer reception (Berry et al., 2025).

Despite these multifaceted challenges, the study demonstrated that the targeted guidance counseling program had a perceived positive impact on student behavior (overall WM = 3.83). The program was rated exceptionally high in assisting students' adaptation to the school environment and in addressing issues related to absenteeism and peer distraction. This reinforces the meta-analytic consensus that comprehensive school counseling interventions are highly effective in mitigating behavioral risks and fostering a positive school climate, which is vital for academic achievement (Daily et al., 2019; Whiston et al., 2017). Furthermore, the program's success in improving behavior related to psychological instability mirrors the proven benefits of solution-focused therapies and school-based mental health promotion initiatives (Raval et al., 2019; Zatloukal, 2023).

However, the qualitative feedback gathered from students underscores that institutional counseling must be an evolving, systems-based approach (Warren et al., 2023). Students emphasized the critical need for robust, structural anti-bullying campaigns and increased counselor availability. This suggests that addressing deeply rooted systemic issues requires an integration of direct counseling with broader social-ecological support networks, potentially including emotional intelligence and resilience training to counteract peer distractions (Iqbal et al., 2021).

Limitations of the Study

While the findings present significant insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study's scope was confined to a single institution, Cantilan National High School, utilizing a purposive criterion sample of 151 students, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported survey data introduces potential response bias regarding the perceived impact of the counseling services. External compounding variables, such as ongoing immigration-related distractions or overarching societal crises, may also have influenced student behavior and mental health beyond the program's immediate control (Chavarria et al., 2021; Karaman et al., 2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The evaluation of the guidance counseling program at Cantilan National High School demonstrates its significant positive impact on student behavior and well-being across multiple ecological domains. The program successfully mitigates prevalent issues such as online game addiction, bullying, and the behavioral consequences of poverty and parental neglect. By assisting students in adapting to the school environment and fostering positive peer and teacher relationships, the counseling services act as a vital stabilizing force. Nevertheless, student feedback highlights the necessity for continuous structural enhancements, specifically pointing to the urgent need for comprehensive anti-bullying campaigns and increased accessibility to counseling personnel. Ultimately, a systemic, collaborative approach is essential to sustain and expand the program's efficacy.

Drawing from the empirical findings and student feedback, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the support systems for students facing academic and socio-emotional difficulties. Students should actively utilize available counseling services to develop resilience and emotional coping mechanisms, while also participating in peer support groups and conflict resolution activities to foster a culture of empathy and reduce peer distractions. For schools, administrators must prioritize the recruitment of additional guidance counselors to manage caseloads effectively and provide individualized support. Furthermore, schools should implement strict, comprehensive anti-bullying initiatives, including awareness campaigns and restorative justice practices, while enhancing collaboration between teachers and counselors to identify at-risk students early. To support these institutional efforts, local organizations and community leaders should establish robust partnerships with the school to provide external support networks, mentorship opportunities, and targeted resources that address broader community problems like negative peer influences. Parents are equally encouraged to engage actively in home-school partnerships by participating in educational workshops and school activities. Utilizing provided resources on addressing common student problems at home will strongly reinforce the behavioral support provided by the school. Finally, future researchers should employ longitudinal designs to track the long-term impact of specific counseling interventions on students' academic performance and well-being. Research should also explore how culturally responsive strategies can be tailored to meet the unique needs of diverse and vulnerable student populations.

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