

The State of Guidance Counseling in Philippine Education

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11099713>

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Abstract:

This study delves into the intricate landscape of guidance counseling within the Philippine educational system, uncovering nuanced challenges and promising opportunities. Administrative overload and role ambiguity emerge as significant barriers, diverting counselors from their primary responsibilities. Cultural dynamics, rooted in Filipino hierarchical structures, hinder effective counseling, emphasizing the necessity for culturally sensitive methodologies. The diversity in counselor expertise calls for standardized training programs to ensure consistency across institutions. The issue of low remuneration underscores the undervaluation of counseling, urging a paradigm shift in societal perceptions. The findings collectively advocate for systemic changes—redefining administrative structures, fostering cultural sensitivity, implementing standardized training, and demanding equitable compensation. This study serves as a transformative roadmap, transcending diagnostic boundaries, and guiding stakeholders toward a more supportive and effective guidance counseling landscape in Philippine education. As counselors play a pivotal role in holistic student development, this research sparks a call to action, urging a recalibration of priorities and attitudes to nurture positive change within the educational ecosystem.

Keywords: guidance counselling, Philippine education, administrative overload, role ambiguity

Introduction:

In the realm of education, guidance counseling plays a pivotal role in shaping the academic, emotional, and social development of students (Nkechi, et al., 2016). Guidance counselors in the Philippines find themselves at a crossroads, torn between their passion for aiding children and teenagers and the demanding administrative responsibilities that often overshadow their counseling role. Administrative duties, such as paperwork, record-keeping, and event organization, occupy a substantial 70% of their time, eclipsing the essence of counseling itself (Atici, 2014).

Moreover, the unique socio-cultural context of the Philippines imposes additional challenges. Filipino youths, particularly between the ages of 10–16, exhibit a reluctance to engage with guidance counselors. Deep-seated cultural barriers create a hierarchy, where the young are hesitant to share their perspectives, fearing a lack of acknowledgment. This dynamic hinders the development of trust between the youth and counselors, leading students to seek confidants of their age group for open conversations about their problems (Baker & Gerler, 2001).

Complicating matters, the diversity among counselors themselves poses a considerable challenge. Varied educational backgrounds and specializations among counselors lead to distinct roles within institutions. Some adopt a compassionate approach, while others lean toward a more managerial or disciplinarian role, reflecting the influence of the school environment on shaping their responsibilities (Thomas & Dey, 2020).

In addition to the intricate professional landscape, the financial aspect of guidance counseling in the Philippines presents a significant deterrent. With entry-level salaries ranging from 17,000 to 20,000 PHP, the remuneration does not align with the importance and impact of the counseling role (Institute, n.d.). This discrepancy stems from the prevailing perception that counseling is less critical compared to other faculty roles focused on traditional subjects like math or science.

However, despite the challenges, being a guidance counselor is regarded as a noble profession, akin to the role of a medical doctor. While doctors treat physically ill patients, guidance counselors attend to individuals facing emotional and psychological challenges, effectively saving lives in their respective domains (Sutton, 2021).

The decision on whether working as a guidance counselor in the Philippines is "worth it" becomes subjective and dependent on individual priorities. For those committed to the noble goals of the profession and the genuine service of aiding others, the rewards may outweigh the challenges. However, for those driven primarily by monetary considerations, alternative career paths in prestigious organizations may be more



appealing. This research aims to shed light on the nuanced landscape of guidance counseling in the Philippines, recognizing both its intrinsic value and the obstacles that impede its full realization.

Literature Review:

The landscape of guidance counseling in the Philippines is intricate, marked by a fusion of challenges and opportunities. As this study aims to explore the worthiness of pursuing a career in guidance counseling in the country, a comprehensive review of the existing literature is imperative. This literature review encompasses various dimensions, including the role of guidance counselors, cultural dynamics affecting counseling, the diversity in counselors' roles, financial considerations, and the regulatory frameworks governing the profession.

The role of guidance counselors has undergone significant transformation over the years. Historically, their primary focus was on providing academic and career guidance. However, contemporary guidance counselors are expected to address a broader spectrum of student needs, encompassing not only academic and career guidance but also social and emotional well-being (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). This expanded role is driven by the recognition that students' personal and emotional development is intertwined with their academic success.

In the Philippine context, the evolving role of guidance counselors is evident. The study posits that administrative tasks, such as paperwork, record-keeping, and event organization, consume a substantial portion of counselors' time. This resonates with existing literature highlighting the multifaceted nature of their responsibilities (Borders & Drury, 1992). The challenge lies in striking a balance between administrative duties and the core counseling functions, a delicate equilibrium that significantly influences the effectiveness of guidance counseling programs.

Cultural Dynamics in Counseling:

Understanding the cultural dynamics that shape counseling in the Philippines is crucial. Filipino youths, particularly those aged 10–16, exhibit a distinct hesitancy to engage with guidance counselors, reflecting cultural nuances and hierarchical structures within Filipino society (Natividad, 2011). This cultural barrier has been documented in various studies, emphasizing the importance of culturally competent counseling approaches (Sue & Sue, 2012). The study underscores the prevalence of age-related hierarchies, wherein Filipino youths perceive counselors as figures of authority rather than confidants.

Cultural competence, a cornerstone of effective counseling, involves not only acknowledging cultural differences but also adapting counseling approaches to align with the cultural context (Arredondo et al., 1996). The study's findings highlight the need for culturally sensitive counseling practices that recognize and address the unique challenges posed by the hierarchical structure ingrained in Filipino culture.

The diversity in roles among guidance counselors in the Philippines is a reflection of the varied educational backgrounds and specializations within the profession. This phenomenon is not unique to the Philippines; worldwide, counselors play diverse roles influenced by factors such as school context, organizational culture, and personal orientations (Sink, Akos, Turnbull, & Mvududu, 2008). The study's emphasis on the diversity of roles aligns with literature suggesting that counselors' functions are contingent on the school environment and organizational expectations (Baker & Gerler, 2004).

The concept of role differentiation among counselors is not inherently negative; rather, it underscores the adaptability of the profession to meet the diverse needs of students. However, it necessitates a nuanced understanding of the unique contributions each counselor brings to the educational setting (Borders & Drury, 1992). This diversity, while enriching the profession, also underscores the need for standardized guidelines and professional development to ensure consistency and quality in counseling services.

Financial Considerations and Professional Recognition:

The issue of low remuneration for guidance counselors in the Philippines echoes a global concern – the undervaluation of counseling services in educational settings. Salary differentials between counseling and teaching positions are not uncommon (Erford et al., 2017). The study's observation that counseling is perceived as less critical compared to traditional subjects like math or science mirrors the broader societal attitudes toward the counseling profession (Brott, Myers, & Rounds, 1999).

The financial consideration becomes pivotal in the decision-making process for individuals contemplating a career in guidance counseling. Studies suggest that while intrinsic rewards are often significant motivators for entering the counseling profession, equitable compensation is essential for retaining qualified professionals (Erford et al., 2017). The study's findings underscore the need for advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the vital role of guidance counselors and garner support for equitable compensation.

The regulatory frameworks governing guidance counseling in the Philippines are integral to ensuring the ethical practice of counselors. The study references the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) – Guidance and Counseling Program, highlighting its role in protecting the welfare of Filipino spouses, fiancé(e)s, and other partners of foreign nationals. This resonates with global efforts to establish ethical guidelines and regulatory bodies to oversee the counseling profession (American Counseling Association, 2014).

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors' Code of Ethics presented in the study aligns with established ethical principles in the counseling profession (e.g., autonomy, informed consent, confidentiality) (American Counseling Association, 2014; National Board for Certified Counselors, 2016). The Code provides a valuable framework for ethical decision-making and underscores the commitment of guidance counselors in the Philippines to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct.

The literature review underscores the complexity of guidance counseling in the Philippines, integrating insights from global counseling literature. The multifaceted role of guidance counselors, cultural dynamics influencing counseling interactions, diversity in counselors' roles, financial considerations, and regulatory frameworks collectively shape the landscape of guidance counseling. This review sets the stage for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the profession, offering a foundation for informed discussions and future research.



Methodology:

The research methodology employed for this study involved a systematic literature review to comprehensively investigate and synthesize existing knowledge on the challenges and opportunities in guidance counseling within the Philippine education system. The systematic review followed a rigorous and structured process to identify, select, and analyze relevant literature, ensuring transparency and replicability of the review process.

A systematic and exhaustive search strategy was developed to identify pertinent literature. This involved searching electronic databases such as PubMed, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. The search terms included combinations related to "guidance counseling," "Philippine education," "challenges," "opportunities," and "cultural dynamics."

Inclusion criteria were defined to select studies relevant to the research questions. Peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, and reports published between 2000 and 2024 were included. Exclusion criteria involved studies not conducted within the Philippine educational context or those not directly addressing challenges and opportunities in guidance counseling. An initial screening of titles and abstracts was conducted based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Subsequently, full texts of potentially relevant articles were assessed for eligibility. The screening and selection process was carried out independently by two researchers to enhance reliability.

Data extraction involved systematically collecting relevant information from the selected studies. Key data points included study objectives, methodologies, major findings, and implications. A standardized form was utilized to ensure consistency in data extraction across the selected studies. A quality assessment of the selected studies was performed to evaluate the robustness of the research methodologies employed in each study. Quality appraisal criteria included research design, sample size, data collection methods, and the validity of findings. The synthesis of findings involved a thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns across the selected studies. Key themes related to challenges and opportunities in guidance counseling within the Philippine education system were identified and summarized.

Findings and Discussion:

Administrative Overload and Role Ambiguity:

In the landscape of Philippine education, one of the paramount challenges identified in the study is the pervasive administrative overload and role ambiguity experienced by guidance counselors. This critical finding not only sheds light on the intricate nature of their responsibilities but also underscores the potential impact on the quality of counseling services provided.

Guidance counselors, who play a pivotal role in fostering the holistic development of students, often find themselves entangled in administrative tasks that extend beyond their core counseling responsibilities. The study (Mababa & Fabella, 2023) brings attention to the overwhelming burden imposed by activities such as paperwork, record-keeping, and event organization. These administrative duties, though crucial for the functioning of educational institutions, absorb a substantial portion of counselors' time, raising concerns about the efficient allocation of counseling resources.

The implications of administrative overload are far-reaching, as they divert counselors from engaging in direct, meaningful interactions with students. The essence of guidance counseling lies in establishing connections, understanding individual needs, and providing tailored support to promote academic and personal growth (Elemino, et al., 2024). However, the study underscores how administrative demands erode the time and energy available for these essential counseling activities.

Moreover, the phenomenon of role ambiguity compounds the challenges faced by guidance counselors. The lack of a clear delineation of roles within educational institutions blurs the boundaries of what is expected from counselors, leading to uncertainty about their primary responsibilities. This ambiguity contributes to a fragmented approach to counseling, where counselors may find themselves inadvertently assuming tasks beyond their expertise.

Addressing administrative overload and role ambiguity is crucial for optimizing the effectiveness of guidance counseling services in the Philippines (Lacson, et al., 2024). The study emphasizes the need for educational institutions to reevaluate the distribution of administrative tasks, ensuring a balance that allows counselors to devote ample time to their counseling roles. This reallocation requires a collaborative effort, involving educators, administrators, and policymakers.

Furthermore, the study advocates for the establishment of clear guidelines outlining the specific responsibilities of guidance counselors. Clarity in roles not only enhances the efficiency of counseling services but also contributes to a more cohesive educational environment. By acknowledging and rectifying the challenges associated with administrative overload and role ambiguity, educational institutions can empower guidance counselors to fulfill their vital mission of nurturing the holistic development of students in the Philippines.

Cultural Barriers to Effective Counseling:

The study delves into the intricate interplay of cultural dynamics in the Philippines and their profound impact on the effectiveness of counseling services, especially concerning children and teenagers aged 10–16. It unravels a distinctive challenge shaped by the hierarchical nature of Filipino culture, shedding light on a crucial aspect that significantly influences the counseling landscape.

One of the primary cultural barriers identified in the study (Kumara, et al., 2016) is the pronounced hierarchy embedded in Filipino society. This hierarchical structure erects a formidable barrier between the youth and guidance counselors, creating a perceptible reluctance among students to seek counsel from adults. Instead, many adolescents find comfort in confiding in peers of the same age group. This cultural inclination poses a considerable challenge to the traditional counseling model, where the authority figure assumes a central role in guiding and advising the younger generation (Macario, et al., 2023).

The implications of this cultural dynamic are substantial, as they necessitate a recalibration of counseling methodologies to effectively connect with Filipino youths. Understanding the nuances of Filipino culture becomes imperative for counselors aiming to bridge the communication gap



and establish meaningful connections with their young charges (Orozco et al., 2023). This cultural sensitivity is pivotal for fostering an environment where students feel comfortable sharing their concerns and seeking guidance without apprehension.

Moreover, the study highlights the need for a multifaceted approach that acknowledges the hierarchical structure ingrained in Filipino culture. It advocates for counseling strategies that blend empathy, understanding, and cultural awareness to create a more inclusive and effective support system. By recognizing and addressing these cultural barriers, counselors can adapt their methods to resonate with the unique social fabric of Filipino society, ensuring a more fruitful engagement with the youth (Elemينو, et al., 2024).

The study accentuates the significance of considering cultural dynamics in the design and implementation of counseling services. The hierarchical nature of Filipino culture, while posing challenges, also opens avenues for innovative approaches that align with the cultural ethos. By embracing a culturally sensitive framework, counselors can transcend these barriers, ultimately fostering a more profound and impactful connection with the youth in the Philippines.

Diversity in Counselor Expertise:

The study's exploration into the landscape of guidance counseling in the Philippines unravels a compelling facet – the pronounced diversity in the expertise of counselors, intricately linked to their academic backgrounds and the specific educational institutions they serve. This revelation unveils a significant layer of complexity that demands careful consideration for the enhancement of counseling services.

A crucial observation highlighted in the study (Bognot, 2021) is the spectrum of expertise that counselors bring to their roles. Unlike a uniformed system where counselors universally share a foundational knowledge of child development psychology, the reality is far more variegated. Some counselors indeed boast a robust understanding of child psychology, while others may lack this pivotal knowledge. Instead, they might leverage alternative skills acquired through religious training or assume more managerial roles within their educational institutions.

The implications of this diversity in expertise are noteworthy, urging a reevaluation of the current landscape. The study contends that this variation necessitates the establishment of standardized training programs and robust professional development opportunities (Schots, et al., 2023). Such initiatives are pivotal to cultivate a more uniform and effective counseling approach that permeates all educational institutions.

In advocating for standardized training, the study positions itself at the intersection of educational policy and counseling practice. It calls for a systematic approach to ensure that counselors, irrespective of their academic backgrounds, receive the necessary tools and knowledge to perform their roles effectively. This resonates with a broader vision of fostering a consistent and high-quality counseling experience for students across diverse educational settings. By advocating for standardized training and professional development initiatives, the study charts a course toward a more equitable and effective counseling landscape, ensuring that all students benefit from a comprehensive and well-informed support system.

Low Remuneration and Perceived Importance:

Within the intricate fabric of guidance counseling in the Philippines, the study pinpoints a glaring concern – the pervasive issue of low remuneration for counselors. The revelation of entry-level salaries ranging from 17,000 to 20,000 PHP sheds light on a financial disparity that mirrors the prevailing perception of counseling's importance relative to other educational faculties (Bustos, 2016).

The study asserts that this compensation conundrum goes beyond mere numbers; it signifies a systemic undervaluation of the pivotal role that guidance counselors play in the holistic development of students. The findings prompt a critical reflection on societal attitudes towards counseling, urging a paradigm shift that acknowledges the indispensable contribution of counselors to the educational ecosystem (Lacson, et al., 2024).

This study aligns with a growing chorus advocating for the recalibration of the perceived importance of guidance counseling. It contends that the multifaceted responsibilities should be met with commensurate recognition and compensation. The call for equitable remuneration is not just a matter of financial parity; it's a testament to the acknowledgment of the profound impact counselors have on shaping the future of students.

In light of these findings, the study positions itself as a catalyst for change, pushing for a reevaluation of the educational landscape's value system. By shedding light on the compensation disparities, it prompts a broader conversation about the societal acknowledgment of the pivotal role guidance counselors play (Villarin, et al., 2023). The study advocates for a compensation structure that aligns with the significance of counselors' contributions, emphasizing that investing in counseling is an investment in the overall well-being and development of the student population. The study not only unravels the complexities of compensation but also serves as a clarion call for a more conscientious and equitable approach towards recognizing the worth and importance of guidance counseling within the broader framework of education.

Conclusion:

This comprehensive study on the state of guidance counseling in Philippine education unraveled a tapestry of challenges and opportunities that demand immediate attention and strategic interventions. The multifaceted nature of the findings underscores the intricate web within which guidance counselors operate, necessitating a holistic approach towards reform and improvement.

The study's revelation regarding administrative overload and role ambiguity accentuates the need for a paradigm shift in the delineation of roles within educational institutions. The administrative burdens heaped upon guidance counselors divert their focus from core counseling responsibilities, posing a risk to the optimal utilization of counseling resources. Institutions must heed this call and reevaluate administrative structures to ensure counselors can dedicate ample time to their primary counseling roles.

Cultural barriers emerged as a significant impediment to effective counseling, especially among Filipino youths aged 10–16. The hierarchical nature of Filipino culture fosters a distinct barrier between the youth and counselors, encouraging students to seek solace in peers rather than trusted adults. This finding underscores the urgency of implementing culturally sensitive counseling methodologies to bridge the communication gap and build trust between counselors and Filipino youths.



Diversity in counselor expertise emerged as another key finding, emphasizing the need for standardized training programs. The varied academic backgrounds and roles undertaken by counselors demand a cohesive approach to ensure consistent and effective counseling across educational institutions. Professional development opportunities should be tailored to address these diverse backgrounds, enhancing the overall quality of counseling services.

The issue of low remuneration for guidance counselors, as highlighted by the study, serves as a stark reminder of the undervaluation of their critical role. The findings advocate for a paradigm shift in societal attitudes towards counseling, urging a recalibration of the perceived importance of counselors in the educational ecosystem. The call for equitable compensation is not merely financial; it's a clarion call for societal recognition of the profound impact counselors have on student development.

This study transcends the realms of diagnosis, presenting a roadmap for change. The challenges outlined underscore the need for a systemic overhaul in administrative structures, cultural sensitivity, standardized training, and equitable compensation. As we navigate these challenges, it is imperative to foster an environment where guidance counselors are empowered, valued, and equipped to fulfill their pivotal role in shaping the holistic development of students. This study stands as a catalyst for positive change, urging stakeholders to embark on a journey towards a more effective and supportive guidance counseling landscape in Philippine education.

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