Effects of School Heads' Guidance and Counselling Strategy for Students' Character Formation in Public Secondary Schools in Arusha Region, Tanzania

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Abstract:- The study focused on the effects of school heads' administrative strategies on students' character formation in public secondary schools in the Arusha region, Tanzania. The study was guided by one research question and one hypothesis, and it employed a convergent design using a mixed methods approach to examine the problem. The research employed probability and non-probability sampling methods to select 177 teachers, 249 parents, 360 students, and 18 school heads from 18 chosen secondary schools. Data were gathered using questionnaires administered to teachers, parents, and students and interviews conducted with the heads of schools. The instruments were validated, and the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for Likert scale items. For qualitative data, reliability was confirmed through peer review and triangulation. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, frequencies, and percentages, and then presented in tables. A hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression at a significance level 0.05. Qualitative data were analysed using contextual analysis and transcription. This study found that schools had a well-defined guidance and counselling programme in place but needed more professional counsellors, and it needed further improvement through external sources. Furthermore, the findings revealed no significant correlation between the guidance and counselling strategies of public secondary school heads and the levels of character development among students in the Arusha Region. This study concluded that while school heads' guidance and counselling strategy positively affected students' character formation and goal-setting, this was achieved in collaboration with parents and professionals despite challenges and differing viewpoints among stakeholders. The recommendation study encourages teachers to participate actively in counselling seminars and strengthen collaboration with NGOs.

I. INTRODUCTION

Proper education involves not only developing the mind but also nurturing the heart. However, modern education systems continue to grapple with the problem of moral decline and deviant behaviour in many societies. Cultivating good character, which encompasses values, discipline, and a sense of responsibility, fosters harmony in all aspects of life. Trustworthiness, ethics, and high morals are vital qualities that contribute to a person's character. Character is not innate but instead acquired through gradual learning and development. It is crucial in personal growth, influencing decision-making, interpersonal interactions, and positive societal contributions (Khera, 2024).

Character formation is an essential education component for students' overall development. Despite its significance, public secondary schools, particularly in areas such as Arusha, Tanzania, need help effectively incorporating character education into their curricula (Lauwo & Mkulu, 2021). Guidance and counselling (G&C) are pivotal strategies for fostering character formation, yet their implementation in these schools needs to be revised and consistent. The current societal trend prioritises "academic performance, grades, and exams" over students' social and emotional learning (Goh, 2021). Guidance and counselling support students especially, during adolescence a critical period of significant emotional, social, and psychological changes. Effective G&C programmes are designed to be proactive and preventive, equipping students with the necessary skills for self-awareness, problem-solving, and emotional regulation, all vital for character formation (Pedroso et al., 2021).

Research in Indonesia reported growing concern regarding the increasingly strange character events among students (Fatharani & Irwan, 2023). Another problem arises in cultural empathy among counsellor-in-training students in the United States (Karayigit & Ozier, 2023). G&C services facilitate informed decision-making aligned with personal values, promote personal growth, and recognise individual uniqueness; however, a study identified in Nigeria a critical gap in the Almajiri school system that students in this system are not receiving adequate support in exploring career options, developing skills, or making informed decisions about their future (Bolu-Steve & Okesina, 2023).

In the context of Tanzania, the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014 underscores the importance of character formation within secondary education. The policy advocates for the integration of G&C programs to promote the moral and ethical development of students, aligning with national educational goals (URT, 2014). However, despite this policy mandate, the practical application of G&C programs in public secondary schools, particularly in the Arusha region, is often limited by resource constraints and a lack of trained personnel. This has led to a noticeable gap in character education, contributing to prevalent issues such as truancy, bullying, and other forms of indiscipline among students (Samky & Kitula, 2023; Mbanga et al., 2020).

Guidance and counselling plays a crucial role in fostering comprehensive development among students and equipping them with confidence and integrity to navigate the world. However, various factors, such as truancy, drug peddling, bullying, and absenteeism, contribute to deviant behaviours among students. Studies conducted by Martin (2020) in Tabora and Mbanga et al. (2020) in Ilala highlighted the prevalence of truancy, deviant behaviours, and absenteeism in secondary schools in Tanzania. The issue extends to vandalism, including incidents of burning dormitories, as highlighted by Mbaruku & Otieno (2022), particularly in the Longido District of Arusha.

According to Tanzania's Basic Education Statistics (BEST), from 2019 to 2023, many students dropped out due to deviant behaviours such as vandalism of school property and dormitories, as discussed further by Mbaruku and Otieno (2022). These trends highlight the importance of investigating school leaders' challenges in promoting discipline among secondary school students in the Arusha region (Mbaruku & Otieno, 2022; Saiteu & Otieno, 2022).

> *Statement of the Problem*

Tanzania's education system faces significant challenges in character formation, resulting in high rates of absenteeism, dropout, and indiscipline (Mbaruku & Otieno, 2022). Unfortunately, the academic curriculum has been prioritised over social and emotional learning, resulting in moral degradation and deviant behaviour among secondary school students (Goh, 2021). BEST data highlight the urgency of addressing this issue, as many students discontinue their studies due to truancy, indiscipline, and pregnancy (URT, 2020, 2021, & 2023). These rising rates of student discontinuation, vandalism, and absenteeism reflect broader societal concerns and raise questions about the role of guidance and counselling strategies in character formation. Despite the importance of character education in holistic student development, as emphasised in Tanzania's Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, public secondary schools in the Arusha region need help effectively integrating G&C programmes into their curricula. Interestingly, while previous studies (Martin, 2020; Mbanga et al., 2020; Saiteu & Otieno, 2022) have extensively discussed indiscipline cases and their effects on academic performance, none have specifically explored character formation in Tanzania, particularly in the Arusha region. Therefore, this research investigates the effects of school heads' administered guidance and counselling strategies for student character formation in public secondary schools within Arusha Region.**3. Research Question and Hypothesis**

What are effects of school heads' guidance and counselling strategy administered in public secondary schools for students' character formation in Arusha Region?

Hi: There is a significant relationship between the levels of guidance and counselling strategy administered by heads of public secondary schools and the level of student character formation in the Region of Arusha.

> *Significance of the Study*

The objective of this study is to promote character formation (CF) among students in Arusha, Tanzania, as well as globally. The research emphasizes developing traits such as integrity, responsibility, and adaptability, which are essential for personal and professional growth, as well as making positive contributions to society. The study views CF as a process that encompasses self-awareness, responsibility, personal growth, and well-being, ultimately leading to effective leadership and a sense of purpose and happiness in individuals' lives. Moreover, the research aims to raise awareness among guidance counsellors to serve as role models and highlights the significance of collaboration between parents and teachers in fostering character development. The outcomes of the study will guide stakeholders in promoting holistic student development and addressing issues such as absenteeism and disciplinary problems in public secondary schools in Arusha. In terms of knowledge contribution, the

study underscores the crucial role of CF in student development and underscores the importance of guidance and counselling. Furthermore, it sets the stage for future research on teaching methodologies and strategies that enhance character formation in students, thereby contributing to the existing theory of CF and its significance in personal and professional success.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Client-centred therapy, developed by American psychologist Carl Rogers in the 1930s, is a psychotherapy approach that emphasises the client's active role in their treatment, with the therapist acting as a non-directive supporter. This approach is particularly relevant in guidance and counselling in educational settings. The therapy is based on six key factors: Therapist-Client Psychological Contact, Empathy, Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR), Congruence or Genuineness, Client Incongruence or Vulnerability, and Self-actualization. These factors create a supportive environment that promotes self-awareness and personal growth.

Client-centred therapy's strengths in guidance and counselling include fostering positive communication between students and counsellors, promoting self-awareness and personal growth, encouraging students to experience their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, providing a nonjudgmental approach, and demonstrating a caring nature for students. However, the approach also has limitations such as lack of structure, potential for student dependence, slow progress, and limited focus on behavioral change. It may not be appropriate for all students, particularly those with severe mental health conditions.

Despite these limitations, client-centred therapy remains relevant in studies involving parental involvement, guidance counselling, and motivation for students' character formation. It emphasizes the importance of the client's subjective experiences and encourages self-exploration and personal growth, which are crucial for character formation. Incorporating parental involvement, guidance and counselling, and motivation into client-centred therapy can effectively impact students' character formation.

III. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In the course of identifying research gaps to open a door for the current study, the researcher reviewed various empirical studies done world-wide. The presentation of the reviewed empirical studies adopted the funnel approach.

Purwadi et al. (2022) investigated the effectiveness of a peace guidance program based on Markesot principles in reducing student aggression at a school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. They developed and evaluated the program using a two-phase approach. The first phase focused on creating and assessing the programme, while the second phase tested its impact on student behaviour. Results showed the programme was well-received and significantly decreased aggression among students. The study also found that guidance and counselling interventions that use client-centred therapy and promote positive self-confidence, self-concept, and self-esteem could improve students' academic performance. The current study looked at the impact of school leaders' guidance and counselling strategies on SCF without using a control group or treatment.

Troy (2022) submitted his dissertation to North Central University in La Jolla, California, on school counsellor burnout and its impact on programme implementation. The study sought to investigate the relationship between predictor variables of school counsellor burnout and how burnout affects the delivery of a comprehensive school counselling programme among secondary professional school counsellors. Large caseloads contribute to non-counselling-related duties, and role ambiguity increases vulnerability to burnout. Burnout negatively affected the effective implementation of the comprehensive school counselling programme. To build on this, the current study proposed measures to minimize burnout factors to ensure high-quality counselling services that support student character development.

Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020) investigated the state of guidance and counselling services in Ethiopian secondary schools. Their research found that while students and teachers generally viewed the services positively, they were underutilized and often unavailable due to a shortage of qualified counsellors and resources. The current study aims to address these challenges by focusing on effects of school heads' guidance and counselling services provided by school heads in shaping students' character formation in Arusha. This includes ensuring the presence of professionally trained counsellors and necessary facilities supporting the holistic formation and overall development of students.

Knettel et al. (2020) examined the perspectives of various stakeholders on school-based guidance and counseling in Uganda. Their study identified key challenges and priorities for improving these services, including increased resources, enhanced teacher training, and stronger advocacy. The current researcher emphasises the need for more resources, training, and support for school counsellors to ensure the effective and long-term implementation of comprehensive guidance and counselling services that contribute to students' overall academic and personal success.

Chilewa and Osaki (2022) investigated how well guidance and counselling programmes assisted students in Temeke, Tanzania, in planning their future careers. Their research discovered that schools frequently needed more qualified counsellors, had limited resources, and struggled

with time management and support from the government, parents, and educators. Based on these findings, the current research explored how to improve guidance and counselling services by addressing the shortage of qualified counsellors, providing dedicated counselling spaces, and increasing support from various stakeholders. The goal was to create sustainable programmes that positively influence students' academic, career, and personal growth.

➢ *Demonstration of Knowledge Gap*

The examined literature did not fully explore how counselling could enhance academic achievement, self-confidence, self-image, and self-esteem. Additionally, the value of therapy without control groups needed to be investigated, and strategies for preventing counsellor burnout needed to be put forth. There was a knowledge gap about the reasons behind the student minimum usage of counselling services and the solutions to the counsellor shortage resulting from professional training. Finally, more research was required to determine the regional applicability of guiding and counselling as well as its effect on character building.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a convergent design within a mixed methods approach, allowing for the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data to address the research question and hypothesis in a single phase (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Kothari, 2019). This approach combined the data for a comprehensive analysis. The target population in Arusha Region consisted of 176 public secondary schools, 4,857 secondary school teachers, 108,263 secondary school students, and 216,526 parents. The researcher used probability and non-probability sampling techniques to choose a sample size between 10% and 30%, as recommended by Creswell and Clark (2018). Slovin's formula was used to calculate the margin of error for teachers, students, and parents to account for the large population size.. Consequently, the total sample size for the study was 828 participants.

The study included 18 public secondary schools and their heads, representing 10% of the total population. A total of 180 teachers participated, with 10 teachers per school selected through stratified random sampling based on gender. The study also involved 270 parents, with 15 parents per school chosen using a stratified proportionate sampling technique, considering proximity and availability. Additionally, 360 students participated, with 20 students per school selected using stratified random sampling based on gender. These sampling procedures ensured a diverse and representative sample, meeting the criteria of efficiency, representativeness, reliability, and flexibility as recommended by Kothari (2019).

The study used quantitative and qualitative tools, such as an interview guide for principals and a SCF questionnaire for teachers, parents, and students. Four researchers validated these instruments. The researcher obtained a research clearance letter from MWECAU and was introduced to the administrative secretary of the Arusha Region. Pilot testing was conducted to ensure the instruments' clarity, accuracy, and comprehensiveness with two schools, their principals, eleven teachers, eighteen parents, and thirty students. These schools were not involved in the main study. The Cronbach Alpha technique was used to assess the reliability of the instruments for the rating scale questions in the questionnaires for teachers, students, and parents, with results of 0.97, 0.81, and 0.898, respectively. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), a reliability coefficient of 0.5 is sufficient for research purposes, though a higher coefficient is preferable. The reliability coefficient was calculated using 30 items related to the research question. To ensure consistency, the qualitative data was triangulated and peer-reviewed.

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences - SPSS version 22, and the results were displayed in tables showing means, frequencies, and percentages. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation, with a significance level 0.05. For qualitative data, content contextual analysis and transcription were employed from the initial stages of data collection. The researcher continuously reviewed the transcript to identify emerging themes, which were then used to interpret and discuss the findings. The qualitative data was shared as narratives, supplemented by direct quotes. Ethical principles were strictly followed, including obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and adequately citing referenced works per the APA seventh edition guidelines.

V. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Questionnaires were distributed to collect reliable data from teachers, parents, and students, and interviews were conducted with school principals who implemented the SCF guidance and counselling strategy in public secondary schools in the Arusha region. The study participants were 180 teachers, 360 students, and 270 parents across 18 schools. The actual response rates were as follows: data was collected from 786 out of 810 respondents via questionnaires, including all 360 students (100% return rate), 177 teachers (98.3% return rate), and 249 parents (92.2% return rate), resulting in an average return rate of 97%. This high return rate was considered excellent, indicating the data was likely free from biases. Additionally, interviews were conducted with all 18 targeted school heads, achieving a 100% response rate.

➤ *Effects of School Heads' Guidance and Counselling (G&C) Strategy Administer in Public Secondary Schools for SCF in the Region of Arusha*

The research question focused on identifying the effects of school heads' guidance and counselling strategy administered in public secondary schools for students' character formation in Arusha region of Tanzania. Questionnaires and interview guides collected information from teachers, parents, students, and school administrators. Teachers, parents, and students filled out Likert-scale questionnaires, and school leaders were interviewed to determine the strategies used. Ten questionnaire items were used for teachers, parents, and students, and a five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the guidance and counselling strategy. The ratings went from strongly agree (SA) = 5 to disagree (SD) = 1 strongly. For clarity, strongly agree and agree were combined as agree, and strongly disagree and disagree as disagree. The interpretation of responses in Table 4.6 is as follows: strongly disagree for M = 1 to 1.80, disagree for M = 1.81 to 2.60, neutral for M = 2.61 to 3.40, agree for M = 3.41 to 4.20, and strongly agree for M = 4.21 to 5.00 (Eman et al., 2023). The response from the teachers, students, and parents are presented, interpreted and discussed in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Students' and Parents' Responses on Effects of School Heads' Guidance and Counselling Strategy Administered in Public Secondary Schools for SCF

Statements	Respondents	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree		Mean
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	M
i. The school has a well-defined guidance and counselling program in place.	Teachers	4	2	6	3	23	13	80	45	64	36	4.10
	Students	33	9	46	13	56	16	155	43	70	19	3.51
	Parents	4	2	10	4	92	37	90	36	53	21	3.71
ii. The guidance and counselling sessions are making students to set their academic performance	Teachers	13	7	24	14	44	25	63	36	33	19	3.45
	Students	82	23	107	30	48	13	85	24	38	11	2.69
	Parents	4	2	14	6	74	30	96	39	61	24	3.79
iii. The school encourages teachers to actively participate in the guidance and counselling process for students.	Teachers	4	2	5	3	19	11	96	54	53	30	4.07
	Students	16	4	25	7	20	6	167	46	132	37	4.04
	Parents	4	2	17	7	113	45	74	30	41	16	3.53
iv. The school has designated staff or counsellors who are available to support student's social and emotional well-being.	Teachers	4	2	7	4	28	16	68	38	70	40	4.09
	Students	20	6	11	3	26	7	140	39	163	45	4.15
	Parents	12	5	9	4	55	22	98	39	75	30	3.86
v. The school provides resources and materials to teachers to assist in addressing students' personal and emotional needs.	Teachers	6	3	15	8	46	26	73	41	37	21	3.68
	Students	22	6	28	8	44	12	182	51	83	23	3.77
	Parents	6	2	12	5	81	33	79	32	71	29	3.79
vi. Guidance and counselling services are accessible to all students in need.	Teachers	4	2	12	7	30	17	90	51	41	23	3.86
	Students	10	3	9	2	10	3	125	35	206	57	4.41
	Parents	5	2	19	8	70	28	78	31	77	31	3.82
vii. Guidance and counselling sessions positively contribute to students' character development.	Teachers	4	2	2	1	28	16	89	50	54	31	4.06
	Students	22	6	17	5	12	3	147	41	162	45	4.14
	Parents	6	2	8	3	23	9	91	37	121	49	4.26
viii. Teachers receive support and guidance from the school administration in implementing effective guidance and counselling strategies.	Teachers	6	3	8	5	31	18	77	44	55	31	3.94
	Students	32	9	37	10	37	10	152	42	102	28	3.71
	Parents	0	0	25	10	107	43	82	33	35	14	3.51
ix. The guidance and counselling sessions are making students set students' goals for character formation	Teachers	3	2	11	6	29	16	84	47	50	28	3.94
	Students	13	4	15	4	18	5	122	34	192	53	4.29
	Parents	4	2	14	6	74	30	96	39	61	24	3.79
x. The School Head collaborates with parents and other professionals to ensure a holistic approach to students' guidance and counselling needs.	Teachers	0	0	12	7	36	20	95	54	34	19	3.85
	Students	28	8	51	14	22	6	128	36	131	36	3.79
	Parents	2	1	21	8	60	24	101	41	65	26	3.83
Grande Mans	Teachers											3.90
	Students											3.85
	Parents											3.79

Source: Field data (2023) *Key: F = frequency, % = percentage, n = Number of respondents: Teachers' n = 177 and Students' n = 360*

Table 1 presents data indicating that 81% of teachers, 62% of students, and 57% of parents agreed that the school had in place a well-defined guidance and counselling program. Teachers, students, and parents' average score of 4.10, 3.51, and 3.71, respectively, indicated agreement. With support from parents, teachers, and students, most schools offer clear guidance and counselling programs. They also acknowledged the presence of assigned staff members or counsellors. This suggests that the guidance and counselling departments at the schools seemed to be operating on a strong foundation. Though most of the designated staff members and counsellors were not experts, the data did show that they were providing some guidance to the students in the form of orientation. This was confirmed by one of school heads in the interview:

Our school has a guidance and counselling unit. Usually, if a student misbehaves or is unhappy, we can ask him what's wrong. I'm also referring him to the guidance and counselling unit. These will be formed by teachers who have studied guiding counselling. Again, we have course studies or seminars, and the selected teacher will attend training at the district and regional levels, with this unit consisting of two members of each gender. (School head 14, Interview: on 10th October 2023)

Another head of the school responded in this interview by saying:
We do not have professional guiding counsellors here, so we select the teachers. Of course, we involve the student government and select teachers with whom they can share and express their emotions. Thus, we have those teachers. Although it is not to a large extent, a few are getting counselling (School head 12, Interview 09th October 2023).

Although all of the schools lacked professional guiding counsellors, school heads 12 and 14 stated that they had clear guidance and counselling programs in place, and teachers, students, and parents agreed that the school had designated staff or counsellors who could support students' social and emotional well-being. During an interview with a school principal, the following was revealed: "Of course, our guidance counsellors are present. "However, they lack professionalism. The head of school appoints them based on what they learnt in their teacher's training program (School head 01, Interview on September 26, 2023). It is clear that the school had a guidance and counselling unit, but it was ineffective.

The results show that while all schools offer guidance and counselling services, not all of them have access to licensed professional guidance counsellors. To comply with the requirements and expectations of the school, guidance counsellors are appointed by school administrators, or with the assistance of the student government, to whom students feel comfortable confiding their feelings. The notion of client-centred therapy, which emphasises the beneficial relationship between counsellors and students and encourages self-awareness and personal growth to help students change their behaviour and acquire desirable character, lends credence to this viewpoint (Nadzmi et al., 2023).

According to data in Table 1, 62% of teachers, 74% of students, and 61% of parents said that the school gave teachers resources and materials to help them meet the emotional and personal needs of their pupils. It produced mean scores of 3.68, 3.77, and 3.79 for teachers, students, and parents, respectively, indicating agreement that educators had access to materials and resources to help them meet the emotional and personal needs of their pupils. Nevertheless, as one of the school heads said, there were still certain areas that required development, such that the availability of resources meet students' emotional and personal needs and frequent training opportunities.

Of course, guidance and counselling sessions are held regularly. Each month, we have general counselling meetings with students from various classes. They are given the required seminars and information based on their cross-cutting issues concerning discipline and character. We design them to fit the current situation. We might find them, and then we'll talk about something else the next month. We conduct ourselves in this manner and follow up accordingly. We have a platform and even a suggestion box where they can drop points about what they want to communicate to us. (School head 11, Interview 09th October 2023).

The school head 11 interview highlights the value of seminars and workshops and emphasizes the need for better professional development opportunities and frequent training to improve teachers' guidance and counselling abilities as well as those of students. Even though some schools received regular training, some schools did not receive the training that would allow the guidance counsellors to enhance the SCF. In this case, the school may need to offer them extra resources and ongoing training to equip teachers to meet the emotional and personal needs of their children.

The findings showed that teachers and students needed to attend seminars and workshops on counselling offered by non-governmental organisations and volunteer groups. One more crucial element is the application of a suggestion box. In addition, the student government in a few schools elected guidance counsellors for the guidance and counselling departments, which is consistent with the client-centred therapy approach of offering individual viewpoints. Students attending schools in urban areas, for instance, are probably going to have very different requirements and problems than students attending schools in rural areas. When creating a school counselling program, school counsellors should have a broad perspective to examine students' needs (Dana, 2022). The guidance and counselling strategy significantly boosts SCF. To ensure teacher counsellors can address students'

academic and personal needs, their workload should be reduced (Godfrey, 2022). Despite having a well-defined structure in place, continuous attention is required to enhance the contribution of guidance and counselling strategies, along with their resources and materials, to SCF.

Table 1 shows that 84% of teachers, 83% of students, and 46% of parents said the school encouraged teachers to actively participate in the guidance and counselling process for students' character development, with mean scores of 4.07, 4.04, and 3.53, respectively. These mean scores indicate that most teachers and students agreed that the school had designated staff or counsellors available to support students' social and emotional well-being and that the school encouraged teachers to identify and address students' behavioural or emotional issues proactively. Only 46% of parents supported this viewpoint. On the other hand, 45% of parents disagreed with teachers' involvement in the guidance and counselling process for students' character development. This disagreement among parents must demonstrate more vital communication between the school, teachers, and parents regarding guidance and counselling initiatives. There may be irregular feedback mechanisms to gather input from all stakeholders, particularly parents, on the effectiveness and relevance of guidance and counselling services. During his interview, one of the school heads raised a proactive issue:

We may discover that some students are cared for by their grandfathers or grandmothers and thus must be made aware of school-related issues. So, how do you resolve this issue? Very often, the grandparents are not available. Once we determine that grandparents care for the students, we, along with the teachers, organise ourselves and act as parents. So we take the parents' position and take better care of that student. So they can pass through. (School head 08, Interview on 04th Oct 2023).

The same school head 08 described how he encouraged and supported teachers in their guidance and counselling roles.

Despite having yet to attend the workshops or seminars, they must provide guidance and counselling because they have learnt how to do so through their studies. So they provide counselling, and the school appoints the guidance and counsellor. Furthermore, an NGO, Femina Club, serves as a guidance and counselling club, encouraging teachers to address students' behavioural and emotional issues (School head 08, Interview on 04th Oct 2023).

School Head 08 encouraged teachers to work with non-governmental organisations to improve guidance and counselling sessions to shape students' personalities. Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020) found that teachers' active involvement in counselling fosters a supportive environment where students can seek help and guidance. Specialised staff help to provide a more focused and comprehensive approach

to meeting students' social and emotional needs. However, parents believe that teachers should engage more with them.

The findings support the client-centred therapy approach, emphasising proactive identification and personalised support for students' behavioural and emotional challenges. These efforts help build a comprehensive and practical guidance and counselling programme for students' character development. However, parents' responses suggest that guiding counsellors should actively participate in counselling to foster a supportive environment. This supportive environment includes expanding continuous training opportunities and increasing resources to meet students' personal and emotional needs through proactive and personalised support for holistic student character formation (SCF).

Data in Table 1 indicate that 81% of teachers, 86% of students, and 86% of parents agreed that guidance and counselling sessions positively impact students' character development. The mean scores from teachers, students, and parents were 4.06, 4.14, and 4.26, respectively, suggesting that all groups find these sessions supportive of personality development. Additionally, teachers and students reported that students noticed positive changes in their character and emotional balance due to participating in these sessions. This datum highlights that guidance and counselling sessions enhance student participation and emotional balance, contributing to character development. During interviews, one school head expressed a positive approach towards students by saying:

First, we must create a friendly environment where students accept the situation as usual and feel comfortable expressing themselves. I mean, they reveal openly. They may speak openly. (School head 07, Interview on 04th Oct 2023).

School head 07 demonstrated a positive attitude towards students. Elliott et al. (2023) found that client-centred therapy produces positive treatment outcomes such as increased self-esteem and personal empowerment. This approach is consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2000) discovered that when individuals' basic needs for safety and belonging are met, they are more likely to pursue self-actualisation activities, such as personal development through counselling.

The findings emphasise the importance of a positive approach in fostering amicable relationships and interactions between students and counselling services, which are required for effective character development. These positive responses are consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which suggests that students should participate in guidance and counselling sessions to meet their higher-order needs for self-realisation and personal growth. In the educational context, Roffey (2012) emphasised the importance of positive relationships between students and educators, including

counsellors, in creating a supportive and conducive learning environment. As a result, both teachers and students agreed that guidance and counselling help students develop good character.

Table 1 reveals that 55% of teachers, 35% of students, and 63% of parents encountered difficulties in accessing guidance and counselling services. The mean scores for teachers, students, and parents are 3.45, 2.69, and 3.79, respectively, indicating a moderate level of challenge. Conversely, 53% of students disagreed about facing such challenges. This suggests that while teachers and parents often face barriers in accessing these services, students might not fully recognize the efforts and obstacles their parents and teachers encounter. A school head acknowledged the presence of some challenges but noted that they were being addressed.

Many students have difficulty assessing guidance and counselling because they are not open enough to express their emotions. They are unwilling to change and have negative peer groups that influence students' character development. In addition, our school needs a professional guiding counsellor (School head 09, Interview on 05th October 2023)

School head 09 expressed concerns that many students were unable to access guidance and counselling services. This could be due to the limited effectiveness of the available counselling services in meeting student needs. Additionally, students might not be sufficiently informed about the support systems in place, causing them to perceive fewer challenges compared to their parents and teachers.

The findings highlight barriers and limitations in service availability and accessibility, which are critical for crucial stakeholders in students' character development. To improve accessibility, guidance and counselling should be used more effectively to help students develop their character. According to Arfasa and Weldmeskel (2020) and Knettel et al. (2020), shortcomings in guidance and counselling services are caused by limited funding, a shortage of qualified professionals, time constraints, and a lack of understanding of the role of these services.

Data in Table 1 show that 85% of teachers, 87% of students, and 63% of parents acknowledged that guidance and counselling sessions helped students set goals for character traits. The mean scores were 3.94 for teachers, 4.29 for students, and 3.79 for parents, indicating consensus among these groups that the sessions were effective in helping students set goals for their future careers. Additionally, these sessions aid students in setting goals for their academic performance and personality development.

The average scores on goal-setting items demonstrate the importance of counselling in shaping students' academic and character-related goals. As a result, the guidance and counselling sessions assisted students in setting goals for academic performance and character development. The researcher interviewed a school principal, who stated that only selected students were admitted and that they arrived at the school with both a pre-and pro-mindset. The school's head said:

Most of the students have to set a goal because they're brought here for that purpose. It is automatically there, once they join our school, there is a form that explains the goal setting and what they want to become... because they have already set their goal and we track them that has been set. So when they come to our school, they are just given support (School head 14, Interview on 10th October 2023).

The same school head indirectly justified the provision of character formation by stating:

You know, in our school, it might be that we are doing this character formation without knowing. We are doing it but we do not know that we are doing it. By focusing on academics; there is character formation that we are giving here (School head 14, Interview on 10th October 2023).

Although the school head 14 indirectly justified the provision of character formation, the guidance and counselling sessions were consistently integrated into the overall curriculum and school activities to set goals for SCF.

The findings indicated that school heads and the guidance and counselling unit consistently integrate counselling into the overall curriculum and activities to enhance its impact on students' character development. This integration should align with a goal-setting attitude and reflect on academic performance. Client-centred therapy highlights the importance of personalized support in goal setting. Promoting goal setting through guidance and counselling sessions positively influences character formation.

According to Table 1, a significant majority of teachers (73%), students (72%), and parents (67%) believed that the school head works collaboratively with parents and other professionals to address students' guidance and counseling needs holistically. The mean scores of 3.85 for teachers, 3.79 for students, and 3.83 for parents indicate a comprehensive approach to developing children's character traits. All groups agreed that the counseling services had a positive impact on the moral and ethical development of the children.

This demonstrates a positive approach to addressing the critical challenges faced by students. Knettel et al.'s (2020) study on stakeholder perspectives highlights the significance of collaboration in guidance and counselling services, reinforcing the importance of positive parental involvement. During an interview, a school head discussed how their guidance and counselling interventions align with promoting

patriotism and a holistic approach. The school head stated, "We are developing strategies to instil a consciousness of peace and conflict resolution that fosters patriotism. When conflicts arise, we address them as part of our patriotic duty" (Interview on 29th Sep 2023). Additionally, the school head mentioned that students receive faith formation.

In the religion classes, we've invited some church leaders to speak about being faithful and other God-related topics. Pastors educate students on religious matters. As a result, students learn the value of truth, integrity, honesty, and accountability. So, they have faith in God and fear God (School head 02, Interview on 29th Sep 2023).

The interview with the school's principal two and the data revealed that the school had been inviting church leaders to educate students on faithfulness and other religious issues. Pastors taught values such as truth, integrity, honesty, and responsibility. Arfasa and Weldmeskel's research on the challenges of guidance and counselling services is consistent with parents' proactive strategies for dealing with issues, emphasising the importance of support in bullying and moral decision-making (Arfasa and Weldmeskel, 2020). The collaborative and problem-solving nature of G&C programs reinforces the client-centred therapy approach, which emphasises providing individualised support to students facing various challenges.

According to the findings, a holistic approach to education goes beyond focusing on academic achievement and aims to develop a person's personality. It acknowledges that intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and even spiritual aspects are all interconnected and contribute to a child's overall development. The parents' positive attitude towards a holistic approach and the effects of school heads G&C strategy programmes in Arusha region are regarded favourably for their comprehensiveness and support. These findings highlight the importance of collaborative efforts and targeted interventions in promoting student character development. However, there may still be opportunities to investigate specific collaborative strategies and intervention methods contributing to this positive and holistic approach.

Results indicate that in education, a holistic approach transcends mere academic achievement, aiming to nurture the entire personality of an individual. It recognises the interdependence of intellectual, social, emotional, physical, and even spiritual dimensions, all of which contribute to a child's overall growth. Parents' positive attitudes towards this holistic approach, as well as the role of G&C strategy programmes in Arusha region, are praised for their comprehensiveness and support. These findings highlight the importance of collaborative efforts and targeted interventions in promoting student character formation. Nonetheless, there is still room to investigate specific collaborative strategies and intervention methods that complement this positive and holistic approach.

➤ *Hypothesis Testing (Pearson Correlation)*
To determine whether guidance and counselling had a significant impact on students' character formation, the researcher tested the hypothesis. The hypothesis sought to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the levels of guidance and counselling strategy used by public secondary school heads and the levels of character formation among students in Arusha Region. Null hypothesis (Ho): There is a significant relationship between the levels of guidance and counselling strategies used by public school heads and the level of character formation among students in Arusha Region.

Before testing the hypothesis, the researcher checked the normality test using Shapiro-Wilk and found out that the p-value (0.085) was greater than the significant level of 0.05. This meant that the data was normally distributed and the researcher proceeded with hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis testing was determined by a decision rule:
- If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 significant level, reject the null hypothesis (H_0).
- If the p-value is greater than 0.05 significant levels, fail to reject the null hypothesis (H_0).

Table 2: Relationship between the Levels of Guidance and Counselling Strategy used by Heads of Public Secondary Schools and the Levels of Students' Character Formation in the Region of Arusha

Correlations			
		Levels of guidance and counselling	**Character Formation Levels**
Levels of guidance and counselling	Pearson Correlation	1	-.406
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.244
	N	10	10
Character Formation Levels	Pearson Correlation	-.406	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.244	
	N	10	12

Source: Field Data 2023

The data in Table 4 indicates that p=0.244. The data show that the p-value exceeds the significance level (0.05). The null hypothesis was not rejected because the p-value was greater than the threshold for statistical significance. As a result, there is no significant relationship between the levels of guidance and counselling strategy used by public secondary school principals and the levels of character formation among students in Arusha region.

VI. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study found that school principals' guidance and counselling strategies significantly impact students' character formation (SCF) and help students set positive goals for their character traits. It was also noted that school administrators work with parents and other professionals to provide a comprehensive approach to students' guidance and counselling needs. According to teachers and students, schools had a well-defined guidance and counselling programme, but some principals and parents believed schools lacked professional counsellors. Teachers, students, and school administrators stated that schools encouraged teachers to actively participate in the guidance and counselling process for students' character development, whereas parents had different perspectives.

The effects of school heads' guidance and counselling sessions help students set goals for their character traits, but some parents and schools stated that it is a continuous process that requires further improvement. The findings also revealed that schools provide teachers with resources and materials to help them meet their students' personal and emotional needs. However, some parents and school administrators anticipate further improvements due to seminars and meetings on guidance and counselling for teachers and students, which will be provided by voluntary agencies, the government, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

➤ *Conclusion*

The effect of school heads' guidance and counseling strategy administered significantly to students' character formation. School Heads collaborate with parents and professionals to contribute a holistic approach, though some disparities exist in the perspectives of stakeholders. While schools had well-defined guidance and counselling programmes as per teachers and students views, some parents' were of different view. The guidance and counselling sessions effectively contributed to students setting positive goals for their character traits, though ongoing improvement is needed.

➤ *Recommendations*

Heads of schools should ensure the availability of professional counsellors to address students' personal and emotional needs every year. Educational stakeholders should strengthen collaboration between heads, parents, and stakeholders through regular meetings and workshops twice in a year. Heads of schools should capitalize on increased support from the government and NGOs for guidance and counselling programs, teacher training, and specialized services. The heads of schools together with the school board should continuously evaluate and improve guidance and counselling strategies to address evolving student needs. It is also recommended that further research be conducted on the long-term impact and best practices in character formation through guidance and counselling.

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