

A NEED ASSESSMENT ON EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS OF HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL

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Abstract

This study aims to assess the necessity of educational guidance and counseling support services for male and female students at the intermediate level within the context of Pakistan. The primary objective is to underscore the importance of integrating these support services as a fundamental component of education. The study population comprised 15,000 male and female students and 700 teachers from Islamabad Model Colleges for Boys and Girls. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 300 students (equally representing urban and rural areas) and 100 teachers (balanced by gender and location). Data were collected through two structured survey questionnaires designed for students and teachers, respectively. Descriptive statistical methods, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage, and range, were utilized for analysis via SPSS. The findings revealed that over 80% of student and teacher respondents identified a critical need for educational guidance and counseling support services for higher secondary students. The study concludes that students struggle to navigate their educational journeys effectively without proper guidance, emphasizing the role of counseling as a directional compass. It is recommended that educational guidance and counseling services be recognized as a priority by educational leaders, policymakers, and planners. These services should be systematically integrated into educational leadership, policy development, and management to better support students' academic and personal development.

Keywords: Educational guidance, Counseling support services, Support services.

Introduction

Sharing thoughts fosters the enrichment of knowledge and learning. As Abraham Lincoln aptly stated, "If we exchange one dollar, we both have one dollar each. If we exchange one good thought, we both have two good thoughts each." Similarly, the adage "Two heads are better than one" holds true in the context of guidance and counseling. Guidance and counseling represent a two-way process of understanding and helping others to understand (Herr & Cramer, 1996). The core principles of guidance and counseling include sharing, consultation, guidance, and mutual understanding. This interdisciplinary field integrates various domains, including education. In the educational context, guidance encompasses a range of services aimed at helping students adjust to their academic environment. It serves as an educational program designed to assist students in achieving their academic, personal, and career goals.

According to Khurshid et al., (2021) in the educational context guidance and counseling are the systematic and organized support services program. These services are provided by a professionally trained counselor and experienced guide to a person in need of guidance and counseling. Purpose is to help him in self-understanding and exploring opportunities outside. Counseling is different from guidance, but the purpose of both services is to facilitate students in their educational journey. Counseling and guidance are allied services needed simultaneously or separately. Counseling is a complex helping process based on a trusting and confidential working relationship. According to Dhami (2020) a focal point is problem-solving

and decision-making for the learning and development of the client Guidance is a general and collective program designed for a specific group. Educational guidance empowers students to achieve their goals effectively and efficiently.

Counseling and Guidance are the process of supporting and facilitating students discover and develop their educational, vocational, and psychological potentialities and thereby to achieve an optimal level of educational goals. Holistically, educational guidance and counseling aim at addressing the educational needs of students. Growing educational needs make guidance and counseling support services inevitable to solve problems faced by students (Elizabeth et al., 2016). Educational problems can be broadly categorized into academic challenges and transition difficulties, such as moving between academic levels or transitioning to vocational roles after graduation. Academic challenges often lead to related issues, including low self-esteem, depression, and stress. Poor academic performance often serves as a symptom of deeper, unresolved issues, such as lack of motivation, mismatched parental expectations, social or behavioral challenges, and learning disabilities. In some cases, these challenges manifest outwardly as behavioral issues, while in others, they internalize as physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches.

Statement of Problem

Focus of National Education Policy is market oriented or job oriented guidance regardless of students and teachers' perspectives. It emphasizes on industry demand driven guidance in order to tailor students to market needs. It is the traditional and conventional approach of guidance. There is no mention of guidance for holistic development. Similarly, focus of counseling is intervention not prevention. There is an urgent need to assess the educational guidance and counseling requirements from the perspective of stakeholders, particularly students. The current educational landscape is rife with unmet needs and persistent challenges, which are often addressed in a divided manner. A thorough educational diagnosis is essential to understand what students need to succeed academically and personally. By systematically assessing these needs, it is possible to bridge the significant gap between students and other educational stakeholders, ensuring that students receive the necessary support to excel in their educational journeys.

Research Objectives

- **To assess the guidance support services needs of higher secondary students.**
- **To assess the counseling support services needs of higher secondary students.**

Research Questions

- I. What are the guidance needs of higher secondary students?
 - What type of educational guidance support services are needed for higher secondary students in career goal setting?
 - What type of educational guidance support services are needed for career transition of higher secondary students?
 - What type of guidance support services are needed for career orientation of higher secondary students?
 - What are the counseling needs of higher secondary students?
- II. What type of counseling support services are needed for motivation of higher secondary students?
 - What type of counseling support services are needed for raising self-esteem of higher secondary students?
 - What type of counseling support services are needed to manage peer pressure among students of higher secondary?
 - What type of counseling support services are needed to manage exam anxiety among students of higher secondary?
 - What type of counseling support services are needed to manage bullying among students of higher secondary?

- What type of counseling support services are needed to avoid drug addiction among the students of higher secondary?

Conceptual Framework

Following is the conceptual framework of the study in which main concepts or constructs like educational guidance and counseling support services have been shown. Components of this framework have been taken from Egan s' skilled helper model (2002) and the humanistic theory. Egan s' Skilled model was based on theoris of Carkuff's theory of high-level functioning and Strong's Social influence theory.

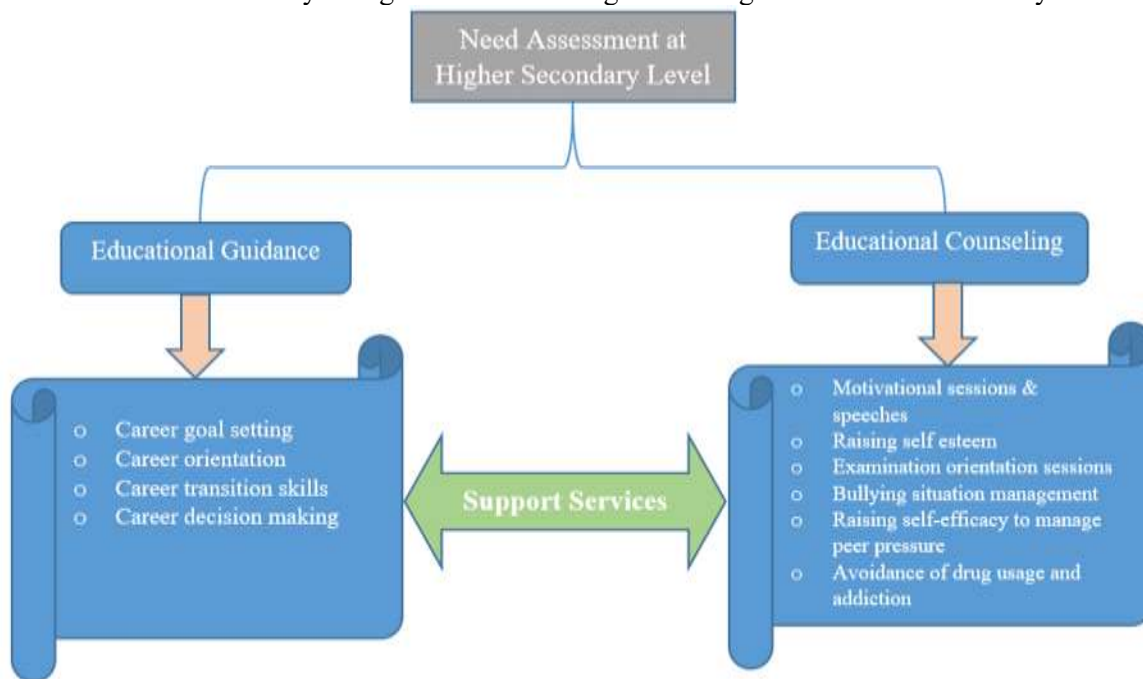


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Educational guidance is a process designed to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their academic and career paths (Kottler et al., 2018). The literature consistently defines educational guidance as a comprehensive process that supports individuals, typically students, in making decisions related to their education and careers. Gysbers and Henderson (2014) and Myrick (2017) highlight various types of educational guidance, including academic, career, personal, and social guidance. Erford (2019) and Whiston and Rahardja (2019) further elaborate on such kinds. Academic guidance focuses on helping individuals achieve educational goals, such as course selection and study skills. Career guidance assists in exploring career options and making informed decisions about future careers (Whiston & Rahardja, 2019). Personal and social guidance addresses emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making skills (Erford, 2019).

The literature also identifies hybrid and integrated approaches to guidance, recognizing that individuals often require support across multiple domains. To address problems like academic stress and emotional well-being at the same time, for instance, a holistic approach might integrate academic and personal counseling (Myrick, 2017). These diverse forms of guidance play a crucial role in supporting individuals' academic, career, personal, and social development.

Guidance is a two-way process of understanding and making others understand, same is the core of guidance. It is an interdisciplinary field that supports education as well as other areas of life. Educational advising is a complex process designed to help people make well-informed decisions about their

educational and career trajectories, as noted by Gysbers and Henderson (2014) and Whiston and Rahardja (2019). It includes a range of activities aimed at improving academic and personal growth, such as goal-setting, counseling, information sharing, and assessment. The main goal of educational advising is to assist people in identifying and pursuing career and educational objectives that complement their values, skills, and interests. The literature emphasizes how the field of educational assistance is dynamic and ever-evolving, adapting to the shifting demands and difficulties of people in educational environments. Its nature includes both preventative and remedial elements, as mentioned by Baker and Hughey (2018) and Myrick (2017), since it entails actions meant to avert academic and career-related challenges and offer assistance when they do occur. Additionally, Gysbers and Henderson (2014) believe that educational counseling is client-centered, emphasizing each person's particular needs, abilities, and goals. Guidance is a form of advise or help that someone who is more experienced in the subject gives to people, especially students, on matters like selecting a career or course of study, working, or getting ready for a vocation.

The literature emphasizes that the scope of educational guidance extends beyond academic and career-related decisions to include personal, social, and emotional development. According to Erford (2019) and Whiston and Rahardja (2019) it operates at various levels, including individual, group, and systemic, and encompasses services provided in educational institutions, community agencies, and online platforms. The scope of educational guidance is inclusive, aiming to address the diverse needs of students across age groups and backgrounds. It's the procedure for directing, supervising, or steering someone in a specific direction. The goal of the guidance is to make pupils or persons aware of the correctness or incorrectness of their actions, their options and the significance of their decisions, which will determine their future.

As discussed by Gysbers and Henderson (2012) Counseling is a developmental process, in which one individual (the counselor) provides to another individual or group (the client), guidance and encouragement, challenge and inspiration in creatively managing and resolving practical, personal and relationship issues, in achieving goals, and in self-realization. Counseling is an art and Science. Educational counseling is a personalized and collaborative process that assists individuals, often students, in addressing academic, career, and personal concerns. It involves providing guidance, information, and support to help students make informed decisions about their educational and career pathways, manage challenges, and develop essential life skills. It is a short term, theory based interpersonal helping profession. Its aim is to resolve developmental and situational difficulties. Counseling helps to bring change in life: Change in thought; Change in emotion; and change in behavior. Both the American Counseling Association (ACA) and Division 17 (Counseling Psychology) of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010) have defined counseling on numerous occasions.

Important Common Points of APA and ACA Definitions on counseling.

- Counseling is a profession.
- Counseling deals with personal, social, vocational, empowerment, and educational concerns.
- Counseling is a process in which clients learn how to make decisions and formulate new ways of behaving, feeling, and thinking.
- Counseling encompasses various subspecialties.

Thus, counseling can be more precisely defined as relatively short-term, interpersonal.

Educational counseling is client-centered and solution-focused, aiming to empower individuals to overcome obstacles and achieve their educational goals (Borders & Drury, 1992). Counselors employ various counseling techniques, including active listening, assessment, and goal setting, to address academic struggles, career exploration, and personal development. Theory-based processes of helping persons who are basically psychologically healthy resolve developmental and situational problems.

Kabir (2017) also pointed out counseling activities are guided by ethical and legal standards and go through distinct stages from initiation to termination. Personal, social, vocational, and educational matters are all areas of concern; and the profession encompasses a number of subspecialties. A practitioner must complete a required course of study on either the master's or doctoral level. The scope of educational counseling encompasses a wide range of services, including academic advising, career counseling, mental

health support, and crisis intervention (Whiston & Sexton, 1998). It extends from helping students choose appropriate courses to assisting with college admissions, addressing emotional well-being, and fostering resilience in the face of challenges. These points highlight the concept as a personalized, collaborative process, the nature as client-centered and solution-focused, and the broad scope of educational counseling support services in addressing academic, career, and personal development needs of individuals.

According to Sultana (2019) challenging problems are due to lack of access to information about educational and career choices, lack of guidance from parents, and an lack of formal counseling services within schools. Similarly, Sultana, (2019) and Usha and Abhijith (2017) consider that in such contexts, guidance and counseling programs play a crucial role in helping students make informed decisions about their future academic and career paths. The literature highlights that students in developing countries often face with psychosocial and emotional issues, such as stress, anxiety, and peer pressure, during their higher secondary years. Similarly, according to Pandey et al., (2020) inadequate adjustment mechanisms and a lack of emotional support can lead to adverse effects on their mental health and overall well-being.

Similarly, Pandey et al., (2020) and UNESCO (2017), also consider guidance and counseling services are effective in addressing these issues, providing students with the necessary emotional support and coping strategies to pass through the challenges they face. For kids to succeed academically and personally, guidance and counseling services in schools are essential. Guidance and counseling services in schools are planned to support students' overall development and vocational readiness, according to Gysbers and Henderson (2012). As noted by Nelson et al. (2013) guidance and counseling services provide students with emotional support, career guidance, and academic support that can help them make informed decisions about their futures.

Educational guidance and counseling is originated from various theoretical perspectives on guidance and counseling. Theoretically like Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences , students are referred with garden and role of teachers is considered as of a Gardner. Educational philosophers strongly oppose treating student as a stone and role of teacher as a mason. According to popular theories like Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, education is not limited only to conceptual and technical skills rather than it is a process of whole person development particularly with more emphasis on humanistic aspect.

As described by Gysbers and Henderson (2012), several theoretical perspectives have been used to conceptualize guidance and counseling services in schools. One of these perspectives is the humanistic approach, which emphasizes the importance of providing students with a supportive environment that fosters personal growth and development. Students should not be dictated rather than guided to explore their potential. Provide them opportunity to initiate for learning within a supportive environment. They should not be treated like products or processes instead deal according to human nature. "According to Lent, Brown, and Hackett's Social Cognitive Career Theory (1994), self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations play a crucial role in career decision-making.

Career satisfaction and success are believed to be higher when individuals work in environments that align with their personality type. "Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (1950) helps educational counselors understand the social and emotional challenges faced by students at various stages of development." Erik Erikson's theory emphasizes the psychosocial development of individuals across the lifespan. It outlines eight stages, each associated with a unique developmental crisis that individuals must navigate. Educational counselors can apply this theory to understand how students' social and emotional needs evolve as they progress through different developmental stages. The social cognitive theory is another perspective that is commonly used to explain the process of decision-making in guidance and counseling services (Bandura, 1986). This theory proposes that students learn from observing the behavior of others and that they can develop self-efficacy through successful experiences and modeling. Human intellect is the greatest asset of human beings it need to be developed so that mental faculty should be fully utilized. Social capital also plays important role in learning. Guidance and counseling process is an inside out journey.

Research Design

The research for this study was designed using a Positivist/Empirical paradigm, which is well-suited for exploratory descriptive research. The study utilized a descriptive research design. A quantitative approach was employed, and the survey method was used to collect data from HSSC Part 1 and 2 students (both boys and girls) studying at Islamabad Model Colleges (formerly FG Colleges) under the Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad. The descriptive research design aimed to systematically and quantitatively describe the sample population.

Sampling

Proportionate random sampling was not used in this study because the primary objective was to ensure representation from both strata (students and teachers) while maintaining manageable and statistically robust sample sizes within each group. Given the significant difference in population sizes (15,000 students vs. 700 teachers), proportionate sampling would have resulted in a very small number of teacher participants, potentially undermining the ability to analyze their perspectives effectively. By using stratified random sampling combined with cluster sampling, the study ensured equitable representation and maintained statistical rigor while addressing the unique characteristics and smaller size of the teacher population.

Table 1 Sample size and its distribution

Sampling stages and strata	Urban			Rural			Total
	Boys	Girls	Sub Total Urban	Boys	Girls	Sub Total Rural	
Sample size of Students	75	75	150	75	75	150	300
Sample size of Teachers	Male 25	Female 25	50	Male 25	Female 25	50	100

Research Instruments and Tool Development

The tools were developed based on the following dimensions derived from the literature review and institutional needs:

- Educational Guidance Support Services: Focused on academic and career-related guidance.
- Educational Counseling Support Services: Addressing psychological, emotional, and social challenges faced by students.

The questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

- Part I: Demographic Information: To collect basic information about the respondents (gender, area).
- Part II: Educational Guidance Support Services: Questions focusing on the availability, quality, and need for guidance in academic and career-related decisions.
- Part III: Educational Counseling Support Services: Questions addressing emotional and social support, drug abuse prevention, and peer pressure management, and exam-related stress.

The Likert scale (1 = No Need; 2 = Little Need; 3 = Average Need; 4 = Great Need) was chosen to measure the level of need and availability following the previous researches in the field. Then questionnaire items were developed to address various aspects of guidance and counseling services. Examples include:

- Availability of educational counseling services at the institution.
- Teachers' role in supporting students' career decisions.
- Preventing drug abuse and managing peer pressure.

- Providing resources for academic progress and career planning.

Data Collection

The quantitative data was collected by the researcher through sending questionnaires on Google forms from respondents that is teachers and students. Respondents were followed to get the data. Field visits and briefing helped in successfully collecting data.

Results

Teacher's Responses

Overall Educational Guidance and Counseling Support Services

Table 2 Overall educational Guidance Support Services Need

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Career Transition	4.3283	.27316
Career Goal Setting	4.6742	.29833
Career Orientation	4.7091	.22563

Table 2 shows the most required educational guidance support services is career orientation with highest mean. Other educational guidance support services as shown in the table are also highly needed with marginal differences. It also shows inter relationship of the above variables as means of these variables are almost same with minor differences. It shows central tendency of data. Similarly, standard deviation which is measure of dispersion is also almost same. All above support services matter for a student in choosing a career, pursuing it and in some cases changing it.

Table 3 Overall Educational Counseling Support Services Need

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Career Motivation	4.3409	.22882
Drug Addiction	3.3212	.20640
Exam Anxiety	4.3447	.19230
Peer Pressure	4.3591	.23540
Bullying Management	4.3344	.17812

Table 3 showing overall educational counseling support services needs reveals career motivation and peer pressure the most sought services followed by others. All type of counseling support services are equally important. Counselling is more individualized and professional service than educational guidance support services.

Table 4 Institutional Educational Guidance and Counseling Support Services Need

Items	Great Need%	Average Need%	Neutral%	Little Need%	No Need%	S.D	Mean
Guidance counseling	115(87.1)	17(12.5)	-	-	-	.3362	4.871
Career decision making	105(79.5)	26(19.7)	1(.8%)	-	-	.4286	4.778
Guidance desks.	80(60.6%)	51(38.6)	1(.8%)	-	-	.5073	4.286
Guidance education	83(62.9)	48(36.4)	-	1(.8%)	-	.4644	4.345
Scholarships Guidance.	87(65.9)	44(33.3%)	-	1(.8%)	-	.5261	4.286

The results in table 4 reveal a strong consensus among respondents regarding the critical need for institutional educational guidance and counseling support services. Guidance counseling emerged as the most significant requirement, with 87.1% of respondents considering it a "great need" and 12.5% identifying it as an "average need." No respondents rated it as "neutral," "little need," or "no need," resulting in a high mean score of 4.871 and a low standard deviation of 0.3362, indicating strong agreement. Similarly, career decision-making was identified as a "great need" by 79.5% of respondents, with 19.7% rating it as an "average need" and only 0.8% as "neutral." The mean score of 4.778 and a low variability (S.D. = 0.4286) underscore its significance. Guidance desks were also recognized as important, with 60.6% of respondents rating them as a "great need" and 38.6% as an "average need," yielding a mean score of 4.286 and a slightly higher standard deviation of 0.5073.

Guidance education and scholarship guidance were similarly prioritized, with 62.9% and 65.9% of respondents, respectively, identifying them as a "great need." Both items had over 33% of respondents rating them as an "average need," with minimal "neutral" responses (0.8%). Their mean scores of 4.345 and 4.286, accompanied by standard deviations of 0.4644 and 0.5261, reflect their perceived importance and moderate agreement among respondents. Overall, the results emphasize a widespread recognition of the need for these services, particularly guidance counseling and career decision-making, as essential components for supporting students in their educational journeys.

Students Responses

Table 5 Overall Educational Guidance Support Services

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Career Goal Setting	4.6987	.18239
Career Orientation	4.6039	.25534
Career Transition	4.6224	.22107

Table 5 shows results of the views of students' respondents about overall educational guidance support services need. Career goal setting is the most sought need among other services for students.

Table 6 Overall Educational Counseling Support Services

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Career Motivation	4.6039	.25222
Drug Addiction	4.6217	.24412
Exam Anxiety	4.5822	.27637
Peer Pressure	4.6112	.25383
Bullying Management	4.6138	.23813

Table 6 shows results of the views of students on overall educational counseling support services need. All services have high mean values particularly drug addiction and bullying management showing the great need for such services.

Table 7 Institutional educational guidance and counseling support services Need

Items	Great Need%	Average Need%	Neutral%	Little Need%	No Need%	S.D	Mean
Availability at Institute	233(76.6)	71(23.4)	-	-	-	.4238	4.766
Need Assessment	270(88.8)	34(11.2)	-	-	-	.3157	4.888
Role of Teachers	197(64.8)	95(31.1)	2(.7)	10(3.3)	-	.4060	4.793
Financial aid Information	241(79.7)	63(20.3)	-	-	-	.6755	4.576
Developing Study Skills	191(62.8)	110(36.2)	-	3(1.0)	-	.5463	4.609

Table 7 shows the most needed institutional support needed for educational guidance and counseling is availability of such services at institutions. The second significant need is need assessment of such services. Very few respondents are indifferent or show less need for such services.

Discussion

The importance of guidance and counseling has been elaborated by Babu (2020) that guidance is help provided by one person to another to make choices and solving problems at the individual level. For the effective survival of us and our children guidance is a significant tool. It is a Universal and natural need of human beings from cradle to grave as a life compass. It is a mission to reach the life goals including education. Furthermore, Akpan (2010) stated that the educational guidance and counseling support services enable students in understanding self and prepare for the future careers. Lunenburg (2010) says that the guidance and Counseling services in the areas of social, educational, vocational and development of emotions is necessary.

Students of higher Secondary have to decide about their future career path. According to Wong and Yuen (2019), the career readiness of students cannot be achieved without career counseling and guidance programs. This is an important decision to which our schools/colleges do not pay significant attention and show least concern. It is astonishing to note that in Pakistan a majority of even college students do not have any clear plans about their future career paths. Similarly, Riaz (2014) cited that students of higher secondary become rolling stones while choosing fields among various institutions. Our education system lacks a comprehensive guidance and counseling program like program of studies and activities.

The results of the study on “A Need Assessment on Educational Guidance and Counseling Support Services for Students of Higher Secondary at Islamabad Model Colleges” indicated that several factors affect the effectiveness and lack of educational guidance and counseling support services in Islamabad Model Colleges. The students and teachers identified a lack of trained counselors and resources as the primary barrier to effective guidance and counseling services. Similar findings are of the Karp (2013) in large part, Public sector colleges have not been able to implement an effective model of guidance and counseling due to structural problems; such as, limited funding, professional staffing and organizational structure. The students’ participants of the study responded that they were not able to avail guidance and counseling services due to lack of resources, such as counselors and counseling materials. The teachers’ respondents also identified a lack of resources and a counselor as significant obstacle to provide effective guidance and counseling services.

The study also found that the cultural and social values of the students and their families affected the effectiveness of educational guidance and counseling support services. According to the students, they were reluctant to seek treatment because of the social and cultural taboos associated with it. The teachers also revealed that cultural and societal norms greatly stopped the provision of effective guidance and counseling services. However, students suffer as a result of peer and family pressure.

The results showed that among upper secondary students, the most often needed educational guidance and counseling support services were career counseling, academic counseling, and personal counseling. According to the students, there is a high need for counseling and support services linked to career goal setting, including details on different career options, opportunities for vocational training. They also highlighted the importance of academic counseling in relation to study skills, time management, and test-taking strategies. At last, the students agreed that they needed personal counseling services that included mental health support, interpersonal communication skills, and stress management.

According to the results of the data analysis, there is a enough need for educational guidance and counseling support services among higher secondary students at Islamabad Model Colleges. According to the survey, both teachers and students felt that these programs were critical, especially in remote areas. The report also noted a number of implementation-related hurdles, such as lack of funding and teacher preparation. According to the survey, educators thought that counseling and educational advising services would help students' mental, social-emotional, and academic well-being.

As a whole, conclusions show how important it is to provide comprehensive educational counseling and support services to address students' career-related needs and help them effectively go through their academic and professional paths. Khan and Aslam (2019) found that Educational guidance and counseling support services are important parts of the educational system since they have been shown to positively affect students' progress. The study highlights the importance of providing comprehensive educational counseling support services to address all aspects of students' academic performance.

Research on the topic emphasize the significance of creating a supportive educational environment that offers comprehensive institutional support services and empowers teachers to play an active role in supporting students. Institutions should consider these findings when designing and implementing counseling and support programs to address the identified needs of students effectively. Azeez and Sumangla (2015) described that the college going age is the most critical period of life. The basic problems of this age are emotional problems; fast change in physical and emotional thoughts. He is strongly agreed that students of this age need guidance and Counseling support services when they have to face with social, personal, educational and psychological issues.

Conclusion

Inquiring the need for educational guidance and counseling support services among higher secondary students at Islamabad Model Colleges was the aim of this study. 300 students and 100 teachers participants in both rural and urban areas provided data for the study, which used a quantitative research design. The study's primary objective was to assess the students' need for support in areas such as setting career goals, transition issues, orientation, motivation, enhancing self-esteem, coping with drug addiction, exam anxiety, and peer pressure. Moreover, the role that institutions and educators have in providing these services was also assessed. The study's findings focus how important counseling and educational support are for children at this stage. Most teachers and students agreed that these programs were essential for solving academic, professional, and personal challenges. The study also revealed significant bottlenecks to the provision of these programs, primarily due to a lack of money and adequate training for teachers.

This research study provides beneficial information particularly Islamabad Model Colleges, but its generalizability is limited by the chances for bias in research participant selection and the failure to extend findings outside this context. Being these limitations, the findings have important impacts on educational policy and practice. There is a pressing case for policy makers to prioritize the development and promotion of school-based counseling and educational support programs. Teachers are supported to seek out more training and resources in order to better satisfy the intellectual and emotional needs of their students. The study concluded that educational guidance and counseling support services are not only useful but also essential for higher secondary students, specifically those enrolled in Islamabad Model Colleges. These services play a pivotal role in fostering students' overall well-being and success, and addressing these needs could have a profound impact on their future academic and career trajectories .

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the provision of educational guidance and counseling support services and to serve as a foundation for future research in this field.

- Educational guidance and counseling needs should be assessed at local levels to ensure they are context-specific. These findings should inform the development of a comprehensive national-level policy.
- Key components of educational guidance, such as career goal setting, career transitions, and career orientation, should be systematically integrated into the higher secondary curriculum.
- Topics covered under educational support services, such as career motivation, drug addiction, peer pressure, exam anxiety, and self-esteem enhancement, should be included as essential components of guidance programs.

- Educational guidance and counseling programs should be introduced alongside academic programs to provide holistic support to students.
- Career guidance and counseling should be offered as part of pre-education readiness programs to help students make informed decisions about their academic and career paths.
- Regular career guidance and counseling seminars should be conducted before the start of each academic session to help students align their career goals with their interests and aspirations.

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