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Perception of guidance counseling and engagement with the role of guidance counselor among senior high school students in selected private schools in the city of Binan, Laguna

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Abstract. Guidance counseling is crucial in supporting the academic, emotional, and social development of Senior High School (SHS) students, especially as they face career choices and personal challenges (Gysbers & Henderson, 2020; ASCA, 2020). While its impact on academic and emotional outcomes is recognized, less is known about how students perceive and engage with guidance services—particularly in private school settings where cultural attitudes and access may vary (Lapan, 2020). This study aimed to examine students' perceptions and levels of engagement with guidance counselors in selected private SHS in Biñan, Laguna. The study utilized a descriptive-correlational design and surveyed SHS students from selected private schools in Biñan, Laguna. Data was gathered through questionnaires focused on demographics, perceptions of guidance counseling, and engagement levels. The theoretical framework was anchored on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), emphasizing how personal beliefs and contextual factors influence career-related behaviors. The study revealed that most respondents were female, Roman Catholic, and from middle-income families, with household heads primarily employed in the private sector or owning businesses. Students generally held a favorable perception of guidance counseling, with an average weighted mean of 3.44. However, their level of engagement with guidance counselors was low, reflected in a mean score of 1.95, indicating limited participation, especially in one-on-one counseling sessions. Statistical analysis showed that economic status significantly influenced students' perceptions of guidance counseling ($p < 0.05$), with middle-income students reporting more favorable views, while gender and religion had no significant impact. In terms of engagement, there were no notable differences across all demographic variables. Importantly, a significant positive correlation was found between students' perceptions of and their engagement with guidance counselors ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that students with more positive perceptions were more likely to engage with counseling services. These findings informed the creation of a targeted action plan aimed at improving students' perceptions and increasing engagement with guidance services in private SHS settings in Biñan, Laguna. The study concludes that while students recognize the value of guidance counseling, they seldom engage deeply with it. Economic status influences how students perceive these services, with middle-income students generally showing more favorable attitudes. Lack of engagement may be due to misconceptions or limited accessibility. Addressing these gaps through targeted programs, inclusive policies, and improved counselor-student interaction is recommended. A contextualized action plan for private schools in Biñan, Laguna was proposed to enhance guidance services and student well-being.

Keywords. Guidance Counseling, Guidance Counselor, Role of guidance counselors, Perception on guidance counselling

The problem and its setting

Introduction

Guidance counseling plays a crucial role in the academic, emotional, and social development of students. In Senior High School (SHS), where students face critical transitions in career choices, personal growth, and academic challenges, guidance counselors serve as key support figures (Gysbers & Henderson, 2020). Their role extends beyond academic advisement, encompassing mental health support, conflict resolution, and career counseling (American School Counselor Association, 2020). However, despite their importance, there remains a gap in understanding how students perceive guidance counseling services and how engaged they are with the role of guidance counselors.

The effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs relies not only on the competence of the counselor but also on how students view and engage with these services. Studies suggest that students in private schools may have varied perceptions of counseling based on accessibility, cultural attitudes, and institutional support (Lapan, 2020). In private schools, where resources and student demographics may differ, perceptions of guidance counseling may vary significantly. Exploring this issue is vital in enhancing counseling services and ensuring students receive adequate support.

Existing studies have focused on the impact of guidance counseling on academic performance, mental health, and career decision-making (Smith & Brown, 2021; Gonzalez, 2020). Research indicates that students who actively engage in counseling services perform better academically and report higher levels of emotional well-being (Aladağ & Kağnici, 2020). However, there is limited research that specifically examines the perception and engagement of Senior High School students in private schools regarding the role of guidance counselors.

Furthermore, studies often emphasize quantitative aspects, such as student participation rates, but fail to delve into the qualitative aspects of perception, trust, and willingness to seek guidance counseling (Lapan et al., 2020). In the context of Biñan, Laguna, where private schools cater to diverse student populations, there is a need to assess whether students fully understand and appreciate the role of guidance counselors. Misconceptions, stigma, or lack of awareness about counseling services may hinder student engagement, limiting the effectiveness of these programs (Fye, Cook, & Baltrinic, 2020). Addressing these gaps can contribute to the development of strategies that improve the delivery and accessibility of guidance counseling in private educational institutions.

This study aimed to examine the perceptions of Senior High School students toward guidance counseling and their engagement with the role of guidance counselors in selected private schools in Biñan, Laguna. Additionally, this study hoped to contribute to the improvement of guidance counseling programs in private Senior High Schools and strengthen student-counselor relationships.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in several theoretical perspectives that inform the understanding of guidance counseling perception and engagement among senior high school students. The first theory guiding this study is Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), derived from Albert Bandura, which was expanded upon by scholars like Lent, Brown, and Hackett. SCCT posits

that career development is influenced by interactions between personal factors (e.g., self-efficacy, interests), environmental factors (e.g., school context, family support), and behavioral factors (e.g., career exploration, decision-making). Yuen et al. (2022) underscore that in the context of this study, SCCT helps explain how students' perceptions of guidance counseling influence their career-related decisions and actions. The theory's emphasis on the interplay between personal beliefs and environmental contexts aligns well with the challenges faced by senior high school students in making informed career choices, as highlighted by Brown and Lent (2021).

Another pivotal theory is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the impact of various environmental systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem) on human development. Evans (2024) applies this theory to guidance counseling, suggesting that students' interactions with counselors are influenced by their immediate school environment (microsystem), interactions with peers and teachers (mesosystem), and broader societal factors (exosystem). This theoretical perspective is particularly useful for understanding the multi-layered influences on students' perceptions and engagement with counseling services, as noted by Johnson and Lee (2023).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, is also integral to this study. SDT focuses on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, positing that individuals are motivated to pursue goals that fulfill their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Applied to guidance counseling, SDT helps explain why students may seek or avoid counseling services based on their perceived autonomy in decision-making, the competence of counselors in providing relevant guidance, and the quality of relationships established with counselors. Recent studies, such as those by Chen et al. (2023), have demonstrated that students' motivation to engage with school services, including counseling, is significantly shaped by how these services align with their intrinsic goals and needs.

Operational Framework

The operational framework of the study integrates key constructs and variables to elucidate the factors influencing senior high school students' perception of and engagement with guidance counseling. The independent variable of the study included the profile of the respondents. Moreover, the dependent variable of study included the perception of students with the role of Guidance Counseling or how students perceive the role, effectiveness, and relevance of guidance counseling in their academic and personal development.

Operational Model

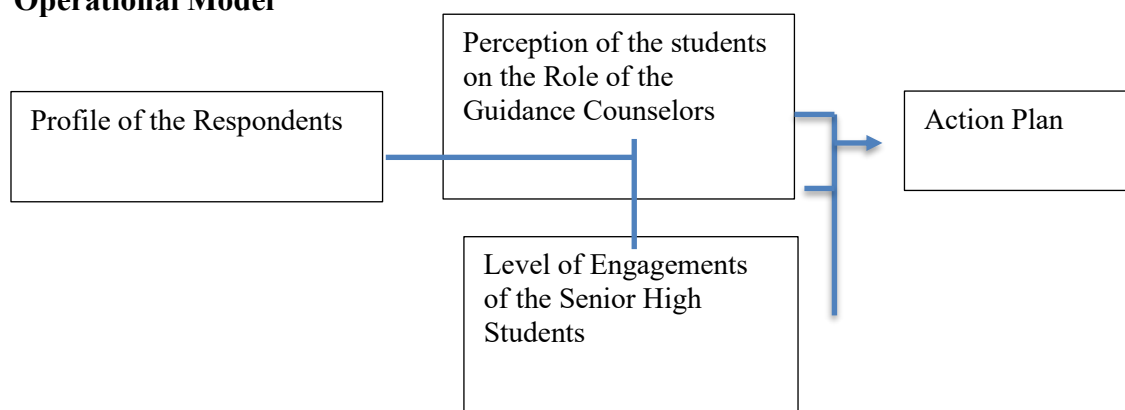


Fig.1: The Operational Model of the Study

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to determine the perception of the senior high school students on guidance counseling and level of engagement with the role of guidance counselor in selected private schools in Binan, Laguna. Specifically, it sought answers to the following sub-problems:

1. What is the demographic profile of respondents in terms of;
 - 1.1 Sex;
 - 1.2 Religion;
 - 1.3 economic status; and
 - 1.4 Household Head Occupation?
2. What is the students' perception of guidance counseling?
3. What is the level of engagement of students with guidance counselors in selected private schools in Binan Laguna?
4. Is there a significant difference in the students' perception of guidance counseling when grouped according to profile variables?
5. Is there a significant difference in the students' level of engagement when grouped according to profile variables?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the level of perception and level of engagement of students with the role of guidance counselors in selected private schools in Laguna?
7. Base on the findings what action plan can be developed to improve the current perception and level of engagement of senior high school students with their guidance counselors?

Statement of Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the students' perception of guidance counseling when grouped according to profile variables.
2. There is no significant difference in the students' level of engagement when grouped according to profile variables.
3. There is no significant relationship between the students' level of perception of guidance counseling and their level of engagement with guidance counselors.

Assumption of the Study

This study rested on the following assumptions:

1. Guidance counseling services are reasonably accessible to all senior high school students within the selected private schools in Laguna. Students have adequate opportunities and channels to seek counseling support as needed.
2. Guidance counselors possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and training to effectively fulfill their roles in supporting students' academic, career, and personal development.
3. Senior high school students in the selected private schools are aware of the availability and purpose of guidance counseling services.
4. Students voluntarily participated in counseling sessions or sought guidance when they perceived a need for support.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focused on exploring the level of perception of guidance counseling and the level of engagement among senior high school students in selected private schools located in the City of Binan, Laguna, Philippines.

The study involved senior high school students from selected private schools in the City of Binan, Laguna enrolled during Academic Year 2024-2025. The selection of schools was based on specific criteria such as diversity in student demographics and school resources.

The primary variables of interest included students' perceptions of guidance counseling (effectiveness, relevance, accessibility) and their engagement with guidance counselors (frequency of visits, types of issues discussed).

The study explored various factors that might influence students' perceptions and engagement, including counselor characteristics, perceived counselor competence, school environment, and student demographics (e.g., socio-economic status, academic performance).

In terms of the delimitation, the researcher adhered to ethical guidelines regarding participant consent, confidentiality, and the responsible use of data, which may influence the scope and implementation of research activities.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the students' perception of guidance counseling and their engagement with the role of guidance counselors among Senior High School students in selected private schools in Laguna could hold significant importance for several stakeholders and might contribute to the broader field of education in several ways:

To **Guidance Counselor**. By identifying how students perceive and engage with guidance counselors, the study could inform strategies to enhance counseling effectiveness. Insights gained could help counselors tailor their approaches to better meet students' academic, career, and personal development needs.

To **School Management**. Findings from the study could guide the development of more responsive student support systems within private senior high schools in Laguna. This includes improving counseling services, establishing mentorship programs, and enhancing resources for student well-being.

To **Policymakers and educational administrators**. They might use the study's findings to advocate for policies that strengthen guidance counseling frameworks in private schools. This could involve allocating resources, implementing professional development programs for counselors, and integrating counseling into the broader school curriculum.

To the **researcher**. As Master in Psychology student, the study could acquire a better understanding about role guidance counselor and the engagement of students in guidance counselling program that the school may offer.

To the **students**. Results of the study could give valuable idea to the students with regard to the importance of guidance counselling, particularly their perception of and engagement in guidance counseling.

To **future researchers**, The study would contribute empirical data to the field of educational research, particularly in the context of guidance counseling in private school settings in the Philippines. It could add to the body of knowledge concerning factors influencing counseling engagement and effectiveness among secondary school students.

Definition of Terms

For a better understanding of the discussions of this paper, the following terms are defined both conceptually and operationally:

Perception of guidance counseling is operationally defined as the attitude, beliefs, and level of awareness individuals have regarding the role and effectiveness of guidance counseling services.

Level of perception in guidance counselling is defined as the extent to which individuals- such as students, parents, teachers, or employees- understand, recognize, and value the role of guidance counseling services

Guidance Counselling is conceptually and operationally defined a service provided in educational institutions where trained professionals, known as counselors, assist students in their personal, academic, and career development. This service aims to help students understand themselves better, overcome challenges, make informed decisions, and achieve their full potential both academically and personally. Guidance counseling encompasses a range of activities, including individual and group counseling, career planning, academic advising, and addressing social or emotional issues

Review of related literature

This chapter highlights the literature and studies related to the research work. The literature and studies are presented from general to specific topics, taking into account the variables of the study. They served as bases for the conceptualization of the study's research problem, design and research methodology. A synthesis of the reviewed literature and gap/s bridged by the present study are also provided at the end of the chapter.

Guidance Counseling in Schools

The perception of students toward guidance and counseling services plays a critical role in determining the effectiveness and utilization of these services within educational institutions. A study in Rwanda revealed that students generally perceive guidance and counseling services as vital to their academic success and personal growth. These services were found to enhance students' academic performance by promoting better study habits, reducing exam anxiety, and fostering positive attitudes toward learning (RSIS International, 2020). Similarly, a Kenyan study emphasized that guidance and counseling significantly contribute to behavior modification, including reducing school-related crimes, improving self-esteem, and cultivating discipline among students (RSIS International, 2020).

Despite these positive insights, challenges persist. A study in Kenya pointed out that some students harbor negative perceptions toward counseling services.

Approximately 60% of respondents expressed a lack of confidence in the abilities of school counselors, citing factors such as limited professionalism, confidentiality concerns, and insufficient follow-up (RSIS International, 2021). Such negative perceptions hinder the utilization of counseling services and suggest a need for institutional reforms to build trust and improve the credibility of school counselors.

Guidance counseling in schools plays a pivotal role in fostering students' academic, personal, and social development. The role of the guidance counselor has evolved significantly over the years, shifting from a focus on vocational guidance to a more comprehensive approach that includes emotional and psychological support.

A study conducted in Kenya explored the influence of a tripartite framework of guidance and counseling on student outcomes in selected public secondary schools. The research found that the framework significantly improved students' behavior, self-awareness, and academic performance. The study emphasized the role of parental involvement and trust

enhancement as key factors in the success of counseling interventions, leading to positive behavior changes and better academic results (Majimbo et al., 2023).

A qualitative study investigated the lived experiences of guidance counselors in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research revealed challenges such as limited opportunities for intervention and lack of support, but also highlighted coping mechanisms like building linkages and establishing communication for effective intervention programs. The study suggested that guidance counselors be better equipped and provided with further training to adapt to the new normal (Calamba & Calla, 2024).

In terms of the student perception of School Counseling Services a study found that students who frequently used counseling services reported better emotional and academic outcomes. The research emphasized the need for schools to promote awareness and accessibility of counseling services to improve student well-being (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

Research has shown that effective guidance counseling programs positively impact students' academic performance and personal development. Williams and Clark (2022) conducted a meta-analysis that found significant positive effects of school counseling interventions on students' academic achievement, behavior, and social skills. Similarly,

The increasing reliance on digital platforms for school counseling, especially during the pandemic, has reshaped the landscape of guidance counseling. Studies highlight both the benefits, such as increased accessibility and flexibility, and the challenges, including technology gaps and privacy issues (Garcia & Lee, 2023).

The importance of cultural sensitivity in guidance counseling has been underscored by recent literature. Adaptations of counseling programs to fit the cultural contexts of students are shown to be more effective, particularly in non-Western countries (Tanaka & Kim, 2021).

Literature suggests that parental involvement is crucial in the effectiveness of school counseling programs. Active engagement from parents not only supports the counselor's efforts but also reinforces positive behavior and academic outcomes in students (Martinez et al., 2022).

The global mental health crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has brought to light the critical role of school counselors in addressing students' mental health needs. Recent studies emphasize the need for expanded counseling services and resources to meet the growing demand (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Literature on peer counseling highlights its effectiveness in providing emotional support to students. Peer counseling programs are particularly beneficial in reducing anxiety and depression, fostering a supportive school environment (Williams & Clark, 2022). Long-term studies indicate that consistent engagement with school counseling services leads to significant academic and personal benefits, including higher graduation rates and better career readiness (Brown & Taylor, 2023).

Counseling interventions have been shown to be effective in reducing incidents of school violence, including bullying. Literature emphasizes the role of counselors in creating safe and supportive school environments (Nguyen & Tran, 2021).

The role of career counseling in schools is increasingly recognized as vital in preparing students for life beyond school. Recent literature suggests that career counseling not only aids in academic success but also in the smooth transition to the workforce (Davis & Smith, 2024).

Literature highlights various challenges faced by school counselors, including high caseloads, lack of resources, and the need for ongoing professional development. Addressing

these challenges is essential for the effectiveness of counseling programs (Calamba & Calla, 2024).

Recent innovations in school counseling, such as the integration of technology and the adoption of holistic frameworks, are reshaping the field. These approaches are aimed at addressing the diverse needs of students and enhancing the impact of counseling services (Majimbo et al., 2023).

Role of Guidance Counselors

Guidance counselors are pivotal in preparing students for life after school. Davis and Smith (2024) found that career counseling programs significantly enhance students' readiness for the workforce, helping them make informed decisions about their future educational and career paths.

Recent literature emphasizes the expanding responsibilities of guidance counselors beyond academic advising to include emotional and mental health support, career guidance, and crisis intervention. Studies suggest that a comprehensive counseling approach is essential for the well-being and success of students (Smith & Johnson, 2021; Garcia & Lee, 2023).

Numerous studies have shown that guidance counselors contribute significantly to improving student academic outcomes. For instance, Brown and Taylor (2023) conducted a longitudinal study that found consistent counseling services were correlated with higher graduation rates and better overall academic performance.

The global mental health crisis, particularly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted the critical role of school counselors. Studies by Martinez et al. (2022) and Nguyen and Tran (2021) demonstrate that effective school counseling can mitigate mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, thereby improving students' ability to focus on their studies. In multicultural school settings, the ability of guidance counselors to adapt their approaches to fit the cultural contexts of students is critical. Tanaka and Kim (2021) discuss how culturally sensitive counseling programs lead to more effective student support, particularly in non-Western countries.

Peer counseling has emerged as a valuable supplement to traditional guidance counseling, particularly in fostering a supportive school environment. Williams & Clark (2022) highlight the effectiveness of peer counseling in reducing anxiety and promoting positive peer relationships.

The integration of technology in school counseling, accelerated by the pandemic, has both benefits and challenges. Digital platforms have made counseling services more accessible, though issues of equity and privacy remain. Garcia and Lee (2023) discuss these dynamics and suggest strategies for optimizing digital counseling services.

Parental involvement is crucial to the success of counseling programs. Martinez et al. (2022) emphasize that active parental engagement enhances the effectiveness of counseling interventions, leading to better student outcomes both academically and behaviorally.

Despite their importance, guidance counselors face significant challenges, including high caseloads, lack of resources, and the need for ongoing professional development. Calamba & Calla (2024) discuss these challenges and recommend strategies for addressing them to improve counseling services in schools.

Senior High School Student Behavior Requiring Guidance Counselor Intervention

The transition to Senior High School is a critical period in a student's life, marked by significant academic and social changes. During this phase, students often exhibit behaviors

that may require intervention from guidance counselors. One of the most common behavioral issues among Senior High School students is academic underperformance. Studies have shown that students may struggle with the increased academic demands, leading to stress, anxiety, and disengagement from school activities. According to Smith and Johnson (2021), academic stress is a significant contributor to anxiety among high school students. The study found that students who struggle with time management and study skills are more likely to experience high levels of stress, which can lead to academic disengagement.

Procrastination is another common issue among Senior High School students. Research by Garcia and Lee (2023) suggests that procrastination is often linked to poor time management skills and fear of failure. Guidance counselors play a crucial role in helping students develop effective study habits and overcome procrastination.

Test anxiety is a specific form of academic anxiety that affects many Senior High School students. Brown and Taylor (2023) found that students with high test anxiety are more likely to perform poorly on exams, which can further exacerbate their anxiety. Guidance counselors can provide interventions such as relaxation techniques and test-taking strategies to help students manage their anxiety.

Social and emotional challenges are also prevalent among Senior High School students, often requiring intervention from guidance counselors. Bullying remains a significant issue in high schools, with negative impacts on both the victims and perpetrators. Nguyen and Tran (2021) highlighted the importance of guidance counselors in addressing bullying through mediation and conflict resolution strategies. They also emphasized the role of counselors in fostering positive peer relationships. Emotional regulation is a key factor in a student's ability to cope with stress and adversity. Martinez et al. (2022) found that students who struggle with emotional regulation are more likely to exhibit aggressive or withdrawn behaviors. Guidance counselors can help students develop resilience and coping strategies through individual counseling sessions and group workshops.

The prevalence of depression and other mental health issues among high school students has been on the rise, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Williams and Clark (2022) reported that students with untreated depression are at a higher risk of academic failure and social isolation. Guidance counselors are essential in identifying students at risk and providing appropriate interventions or referrals to mental health professionals.

The increasing use of social media among teenagers has led to new challenges, including cyberbullying. Tanaka and Kim (2021) explored the impact of cyberbullying on students' mental health and academic performance, highlighting the need for guidance counselors to address this issue through education and intervention programs.

Senior High School students are often in the process of exploring their identities, which can lead to confusion and conflict. Davis and Smith (2024) found that students who struggle with identity issues are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse or truancy. Guidance counselors can support students in their identity exploration by providing a safe space for discussion and self-reflection. Low self-esteem is a common issue among teenagers and can manifest in various negative behaviors, including withdrawal from social activities, academic underachievement, and susceptibility to peer pressure. Calamba and Calla (2024) emphasized the role of guidance counselors in helping students build self-esteem through positive reinforcement and skill-building activities.

Issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity are particularly challenging for many high school students. Majimbo et al. (2023) discussed the importance of guidance

counselors in providing support to LGBTQ+ students, helping them navigate the challenges associated with coming out and dealing with discrimination.

Family conflict is a common source of stress for high school students, which can negatively affect their behavior at school. Smith and Johnson (2021) found that students from families with high levels of conflict are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems such as aggression or withdrawal. Guidance counselors can work with students and families to improve communication and reduce conflict.

Parental pressure to succeed academically can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety in students. Garcia and Lee (2023) explored the impact of parental expectations on student behavior, finding that excessive pressure can lead to burnout and disengagement. Guidance counselors can mediate between students and parents to set realistic expectations and provide support.

Substance abuse is a serious issue among high school students, often linked to family dynamics and peer influence. Brown and Taylor (2023) reported that students who abuse substances are more likely to have poor academic performance and engage in risky behaviors. Guidance counselors play a crucial role in identifying at-risk students and providing interventions such as substance abuse counseling or referrals to specialized services.

Synthesis of the Related Literature

Studies from various contexts have consistently shown that effective guidance counseling programs positively impact student outcomes. For instance, research conducted in Kenya highlighted the success of a tripartite framework in improving students' behavior, self-awareness, and academic performance. This study emphasized the crucial role of parental involvement and trust in counseling interventions (Majimbo et al., 2023). Similarly, in the Philippines, qualitative research during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that while guidance counselors faced significant challenges, they developed coping mechanisms such as building linkages and improving communication to maintain effective intervention programs. This points to the need for further training and support for counselors to adapt to evolving educational environments (Calamba & Calla, 2024).

Student perceptions of school counseling services are another important aspect that influences the effectiveness of these programs. Research has demonstrated that students who frequently use counseling services report better emotional and academic outcomes, underscoring the importance of promoting awareness and accessibility of these services (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Moreover, digital platforms have emerged as both a boon and a challenge in the realm of school counseling. While they increase accessibility and flexibility, issues such as technology gaps and privacy concerns need to be addressed (Garcia & Lee, 2023).

Cultural sensitivity in guidance counseling is also critical, particularly in non-Western contexts where tailored counseling approaches have proven more effective. Adaptations that consider the cultural contexts of students lead to more successful outcomes (Tanaka & Kim, 2021). Additionally, the involvement of parents in the counseling process significantly enhances the effectiveness of these programs, as parental engagement reinforces positive behaviors and academic success in students (Martinez et al., 2022).

The global mental health crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has further underscored the vital role of school counselors in addressing students' mental health needs. Effective school counseling is shown to mitigate issues such as anxiety and depression, thereby enabling students to focus better on their studies (Nguyen & Tran, 2021; Williams & Clark, 2022). Peer counseling programs, which provide emotional support and foster a supportive

school environment, have also been highlighted as effective, particularly in reducing anxiety and promoting positive peer relationships (Williams & Clark, 2022).

Gaps Bridged by the Present Study

From the above review of related literature and studies like the study of Smith and Johnson (2021), has underscored the impact of student utilization of counseling services on emotional and academic success. However, there were limited insights into how students perceive and engage with these services, particularly in Philippine private schools. This study aimed to bridge this gap by focusing on senior high school students' perceptions, addressing how these views impact their willingness to engage with guidance counselors.

Research methodology

This chapter provides a detailed description of the four components of the research design, namely: the method of research utilized, the respondents of the study, the method of selection (total enumeration), the various sources of data, their construction, validation, and scoring, as well as the statistical techniques used for data interpretation.

Research Design

This study examined senior high school students' perceptions of guidance counseling and their engagement with the role of the guidance counselor in selected private schools in Binan City, Laguna. It employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationships between these variables.

The findings provided valuable insights into students' perceptions of guidance counseling and their level of engagement with guidance counselors. Through quantitative analysis, the study identified key factors influencing students' interactions with counseling services, offering recommendations for improving guidance programs in the selected private schools in Laguna.

Sources of Data

The researcher collected the primary data needed for the study through surveys and questionnaires, which were essential tools for gathering quantitative information directly from students. These instruments were designed to capture students' perceptions of guidance counseling, their level of engagement with guidance counselors, and their overall experiences.

Secondary data included records of counseling sessions, reports on student participation in counseling programs, and statistical data on student engagement and outcomes. By combining primary and secondary data sources, the study achieved a comprehensive understanding of senior high school students' perceptions of guidance counseling and their engagement with guidance counselors. This multifaceted approach ensured that the collected data was robust, diverse, and reflective of various aspects of guidance counseling in the selected private schools in Laguna.

Population of the Study

The study population consisted of 100 Senior High School students from the City of Binan, Laguna. The respondents were selected using a stratified random sampling technique, a probability sampling method that ensures representation of subgroups within a population based

on specific characteristics. This approach allows for a more balanced and representative sample (Musa & Alkassim, 2020).

The respondents were drawn from five private schools in Binan City, Laguna, namely: (1) University of Perpetual Help System Laguna, (2) Trimex Colleges, (3) Saint Michael's College, (4) South City Homes Academy, and (5) Citi Global Colleges.

Instrumentation and Validation

The researcher used a self-developed questionnaire to collect the necessary data. It was structured as a checklist for ease of response and included three parts: (1) respondents' profiles, such as age, gender, and employment status of the head of the family; (2) perceptions of guidance counseling; and (3) engagement with the role of the guidance counselor among Senior High School students in selected private schools in Laguna.

The questionnaire was validated by consulting the thesis adviser, who evaluated the content and appropriateness of the items. Additionally, the researcher sought the opinions of three other experts to ensure that the indicators used in the questionnaire were relevant to the study. A statistician was also consulted to assess the suitability of the scale, ensuring that the collected data could be analyzed using appropriate statistical methods. Suggestions and feedback from these consultations were incorporated before the distribution of the questionnaire.

Evaluation and Scoring

To determine the perception of students on the role of guidance counsellor, the following scale was used:

Assigned Points	Numerical Ranges	Categorical Responses	Verbal Interpretations
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Favorable
4	3.41-4.20	Agree (A)	Favorable
3	2.61-3.40	Neutral (N)	Moderately Favorable
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree (D)	Less Favorable
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Least Favorable

To determine the students' engagement with counsellors, the following scale was used:

Assigned Points	Numerical Ranges	Categorical Responses	Verbal Interpretations
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Engaged
4	3.41-4.20	Agree (A)	Engaged

3	2.61-3.40	Neutral (N)	Moderately Engaged
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree (D)	Less Engaged
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Least Engaged

Data Gathering Procedure

The survey questionnaire was deemed the most appropriate data-gathering instrument for this descriptive research study. The prepared questionnaire was presented to the adviser for review and revision to identify areas for improvement.

After receiving approval, the researcher gathered data on the total student population and coordinated with respondents to determine their availability for answering the questionnaire. Once validated, the questionnaire was distributed, accompanied by clear instructions for completion. Respondents were assured of the privacy and confidentiality of their information. The completed questionnaires were collected by the researcher, who then organized, analyzed, and interpreted the data. The gathered data was tabulated and subjected to appropriate statistical treatment.

Statistical Treatment of Data

To address the specific research questions and test the study's hypotheses, the following statistical tools were used to analyze and interpret the data:

1. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of gender, religion, economic status and occupation of the household head.
2. Weighted mean was used to describe the respondents' a) perception of guidance counseling and b) level of engagement with guidance counselors.
3. Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine the difference in the perception of guidance counseling and level of engagement with guidance counselors when the respondents were grouped according to their gender and religion.
4. Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine the difference in the perception of guidance counseling and level of engagement with guidance counselors when the respondents were grouped according to their economic status and occupation of the household head.
5. Pearson r Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the respondents' perception of guidance counseling and their level of engagement with guidance counselors.

Presentation, analysis and interpretation of data

This chapter presents the gathered data, which were analyzed and interpreted to enhance understanding of the study. The analysis and interpretation are guided by the research questions stated in Chapter 1.

1. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1

Profile of the Respondents

Profile Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	38	38.0
Female	62	62.0
Religion		
Roman Catholic	90	90.0
Born-Again Christians	10	10.0
Economic Status		
High income	9	9.0
Middle income	73	73.0
Low income	18	18.0
Household Head Occupation		
Business Owner	22	22.0
Private sector employee	22	22.0
Government employee	19	19.0
OFW and manager	4	4.0
Self-employed	18	18.0
Seaman	2	2.0
Unemployed	13	13.0
N=100		

As shown in “Table 1, the profile of the respondents in the study revealed a diverse group of students in terms of sex, religion, economic status, and household head occupation.

Sex: A total of 62% of the respondents were female, while 38% were male. This indicated a higher participation of female students in the survey, which reflected the broader student population dynamics at the school. The female representation was notably higher, but both male and female students were included, ensuring a balanced perspective.

Religion: The majority of the respondents (90%) identified as Roman Catholic, which was consistent with the predominant religious affiliation in the region. Only 10% of the respondents identified as Born-Again Christians, highlighting the religious diversity, albeit with Roman Catholicism being the dominant faith.

Economic Status: A significant portion of the respondents (73%) came from middle-income households, while 18% were from low-income households, and only 9% were from high-income families. This economic distribution showed that the student body was largely middle-income, with smaller numbers from higher and lower income brackets. The data reflected the socio-economic diversity within the student population, which could have influenced their access to resources such as guidance counseling services.

Household Head Occupation: In terms of household head occupation, the respondents came from varied backgrounds. A considerable number of students had household heads who were business owners or private sector employees (22% each). This was followed by government employees (19%) and self-employed individuals (18%). A smaller percentage of respondents came from households with heads who were Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) (4%), managers (4%), seamen (2%), or unemployed (13%). The diversity in the occupation of the household head suggested that the respondents’ family backgrounds were varied in terms

of socio-economic status and exposure to different professional environments, which may have impacted their engagement with school-based services such as guidance counseling.

In summary, the respondents in this study predominantly came from middle-income, Catholic households with a mix of family backgrounds in terms of occupation. The sex distribution was skewed toward females, and the sample provided a comprehensive view of the various factors that may have influenced student experiences and engagement with guidance counseling services.

2. Respondents' Perception of Guidance Counseling

Table 2

Respondents' Perception of Guidance Counseling

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. The guidance counselor is approachable and easy to talk to.	3.41	Favorable	6
2. Guidance counseling is important for my personal and academic development	3.91	Favorable	3
3. I feel comfortable seeking advice from the guidance counselor.	2.90	Moderately Favorable	4
4. Guidance counseling sessions help me cope with personal and academic challenges.	2.85	Moderately Favorable	8
5. The guidance counselor provides helpful career advice and guidance	3.49	Favorable	5
6. Guidance counseling is relevant to the needs of students.	3.96	Favorable	2
7. I understand the role of the guidance counselor in our school.	3.98	Favorable	1
8. The guidance counselor creates a supportive and non-judgmental environment.	3.02	Moderately Favorable	7
Average Weighted Mean	3.44	Favorable	

The respondents' perception of guidance counseling, as shown in Table 2, indicated a generally favorable outlook, with an overall weighted mean of 3.44. This suggested that students recognized the importance and relevance of guidance counseling in their academic and personal lives.

Among the indicators, the highest-rated statement was "I understand the role of the guidance counselor in our school" (WM = 3.98, Rank 1), signifying that students were well aware of the counselor's responsibilities and functions. Similarly, "Guidance counseling is relevant to the needs of students" (WM = 3.96, Rank 2) and "Guidance counseling is important for my personal and academic development" (WM = 3.91, Rank 3) further affirmed the students' belief in the value of counseling services.

However, areas that received moderately favorable ratings suggested opportunities for improvement. "I feel comfortable seeking advice from the guidance counselor" (WM = 2.90, Rank 4) and "Guidance counseling sessions help me cope with personal and academic challenges" (WM = 2.85, Rank 8) indicated that some students may have hesitations in seeking counseling support. Similarly, "The guidance counselor creates a supportive and non-

judgmental environment" (WM = 3.02, Rank 7) suggested a need for further reinforcement of trust and rapport between students and counselors.

Results of the study support the study of Sink and Stroh (2023) who found the importance of positive outlook of guidance counselling and that school counseling programs contribute to improved academic performance, particularly when counseling services are integrated into the school's curriculum. Despite the benefits of guidance counseling, some students hesitate to seek counseling support. According to a study by Harris and Coy (2023), students often refrain from approaching school counselors due to concerns about confidentiality, fear of judgment, and lack of awareness regarding available services.

3. Respondents' Level of Engagement with Guidance Counselors

Table 3

Respondents' Level of Engagement with Guidance Counselors

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. I visit the guidance office when I need academic advice.	1.73	Least Engaged	5
2. I seek emotional or personal support from the guidance counselor.	1.68	Least Engaged	6
3. I attend career guidance sessions or workshops.	1.93	Less Engaged	3
4. . I participate in programs and activities organized by the guidance office.	2.42	Less Engaged	1
5. . I discuss my future goals and career plans with the guidance counselor.	1.76	Least Engaged	4
6. I feel motivated to consult the guidance counselor when needed.	2.19	Less Engaged	2
Overall Weighted Mean	1.95	Less Engaged	

As shown in Table 3, the results revealed a low level of engagement with the guidance office, with an overall weighted mean of 1.95, categorized as "Less Engaged." The highest level of engagement was observed in "participating in programs and activities organized by the guidance office" (Mean = 2.42), suggesting that students were more likely to engage with structured events rather than seeking one-on-one counseling. However, direct interactions with the guidance counselor, such as seeking academic advice (Mean = 1.73), discussing career plans (Mean = 1.76), or receiving emotional support (Mean = 1.68), were ranked as the least engaged activities. This indicated that students were not actively reaching out to the guidance counselor for personal or academic support.

The results of the study support the idea that a common barrier to engaging with guidance counseling services is the stigma surrounding counseling, with the belief that it is only for students with severe personal or academic issues. According to Harris and Coy (2023), many students avoided seeking counseling due to fears of being labeled as "troubled" or "weak." This stigma stemmed from cultural and social perceptions that discouraged students from admitting they needed help. In their study, the authors found that students were reluctant to approach school counselors, viewing counseling services as a sign of personal failure rather than a supportive resource.

This view is consistent with a study by Rickwood et al. (2020), who identified that students often equated seeking counseling with vulnerability and emotional instability. As a result, they

avoided engaging with counselors due to concerns about confidentiality or fear of judgment. This reluctance posed a significant barrier to the effective utilization of guidance services.

4. Difference in the Perception of Guidance Counseling when Grouped According to the Respondents' Profile Variables

Table 4

Difference in the Perception of Guidance Counseling when Grouped According to the Respondents' Profile Variables

Profile Variables		Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Gender	Male	50.64	U=1172.500 Z=-.039	.969	Failed to reject H ₀	Not Significant
	Female	50.41				
Religion	Roman Catholic	51.29	U=379.000 Z=-.819	.413	Failed to reject H ₀	Not Significant
	Born Again	43.40				
Economic Status	High Income	39.89	$\chi^2=7.061$.029*	H ₀ rejected	Significant
	Middle Income	55.01				
	Low Income	41.00				
Occupation of the Household Head	Business owner	50.36	$\chi^2=21.598$.001*	H ₀ rejected	Significant
	Private sector employee	44.16				
	Government employee	69.71				
	OFW and manager	2.50				
	Self-employed	45.94				
	Seaman	67.00				
	Unemployed	51.92				

Table 4 revealed differences in the perception of guidance counseling based on selected profile variables. The results indicated that gender ($p = .969$) and religion ($p = .413$) did not significantly affect students' perception of guidance counseling, as the computed p-values were above the 0.05 level of significance. This suggested that both male and female students, as well as Roman Catholics and Born-Again Christians, shared similar views regarding the relevance and effectiveness of guidance counseling services.

However, a significant difference was found in the perception of guidance counseling based on economic status ($p = .029$). The results showed that students from the middle-income group (Mean Rank = 55.01) had a more favorable perception of guidance counseling than those from the high-income (Mean Rank = 39.89) and low-income groups (Mean Rank = 41.00). A possible explanation for this is that middle-income students may have had greater access to

guidance services compared to low-income students, who may have faced financial or social barriers. On the other hand, high-income students might have relied more on external support systems, such as private counseling or family-provided guidance, which reduced their engagement with school-based counseling services.

Another significant difference was observed in the perception of guidance counseling when grouped according to the occupation of the household head ($p = .001$). The data indicated that students whose household heads were government employees (Mean Rank = 69.71), seamen (Mean Rank = 67.00), and unemployed (Mean Rank = 51.92) tended to have a better perception of guidance counseling than those whose household heads were OFWs and managers (Mean Rank = 2.50). A possible explanation for this is that OFW parents may have had limited direct interaction with their children due to geographical distance, making students less exposed to guidance counseling discussions at home. This finding supports studies such as Garcia (2021), which found that students with physically present parental figures were more likely to seek guidance counseling, as they were more familiar with the process and benefits of these services. The findings align with existing research suggesting that economic and family background significantly influence students' perceptions and access to counseling services. According to Smith & Reyes (2020), students from middle-income families tend to utilize counseling services more frequently as they see them as an essential support system, while high-income students may have alternative sources of guidance, such as private therapists. Furthermore, the study by Torres et al. (2020) found that students with household heads working overseas are less likely to engage in school counseling services due to emotional detachment and lack of parental reinforcement regarding mental health support.

5. Difference in the Level of Engagement with Guidance Counselors when Grouped According to the Respondents' Profile Variables

Table 5

Difference in the Level of Engagement with Guidance Counselors when Grouped According to the Respondents' Profile Variables

Profile Variables		Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Gender	Male	53.63	U=1059.000 Z=-.850	.395	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	Female	48.58				
Religion	Roman Catholic	49.27	U=339.500 Z=-1.277	.202	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	Born Again	61.55				
Economic Status	High Income	41.06	$\chi^2=1.137$.566	Failed to reject H_0	Not Significant
	Middle Income	51.85				
	Low Income	49.75				
Occupation of the Household Head	Business owner	69.89	$\chi^2=26.903$.000*	H_0 rejected	Significant
	Private sector employee	48.59				
	Government employee	59.58				

	OFW and manager	9.00				
	Self-employed	43.37				
	Seaman	36.00				
	Unemployed	32.38				

*Significant at .05

The results from Table 5 showed differences in the perception of guidance counselors based on respondents' profile variables. The analysis revealed that, for most profile variables, there were no significant differences in students' perceptions of guidance counselors. Specifically, gender ($p = .395$), religion ($p = .202$), and economic status ($p = .566$) were found to have no significant impact on students' perceptions. This meant that, regardless of whether students were male or female, Roman Catholic or Born-Again, or belonged to different income groups, their views of the guidance counselors did not differ significantly.

However, the occupation of the household head emerged as a significant factor. Respondents whose household heads were business owners (Mean Rank = 69.89) had a higher level of engagement with guidance counselors compared to those whose household heads were OFWs (Mean Rank = 9.00), self-employed (Mean Rank = 43.37), or unemployed (Mean Rank = 32.38). The p -value (0.000) was less than 0.05, rejecting the null hypothesis (H_0) and indicating that the household head's occupation did affect students' perception of the guidance counselor.

Students with OFW parents exhibited significantly lower levels of engagement with guidance counselors. This finding was consistent with research showing that children of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) often face emotional and psychological challenges due to parental absence, which can lead to a lack of direct parental involvement in school activities, including guidance counseling (Garcia, 2021). Furthermore, OFW parents may not have been fully informed about the school's counseling services and may have had limited influence in encouraging their children to engage with them.

The self-employed and unemployed groups also showed lower engagement with guidance counseling. This could be because self-employed parents may have had more irregular schedules and may not have prioritized guidance services, while unemployed parents may have been dealing with financial stress, leading to lower awareness or perceived need for counseling services. Studies indicate that students from families facing financial instability are less likely to seek help from guidance counselors, as they may have been more focused on immediate survival and less on long-term career or academic guidance (Smith & Reyes, 2020).

The findings supported the hypothesis that family dynamics, particularly the occupation of the household head, played a significant role in shaping a student's perception and engagement with guidance counseling. Specifically, students from business-owning families showed greater engagement, while those from OFW, self-employed, or unemployed households tended to engage less, likely due to the absence of direct parental influence and the lack of awareness of available services. These results aligned with previous studies that highlighted the importance of family structure and economic stability in students' access to and utilization of support services, such as guidance counseling.

6. Relationship Between the Respondents' Perception and Level of Engagement with Guidance Counselors

Table 6

Relationship Between the Respondents' Perception and Level of Engagement with Guidance Counselors

Variables	Statistical Treatment	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Perception and engagement	r=.369 (low correlation)	.001**	Null Hypothesis Rejected	Significant
**Significant @ 0.01				

For the relationship between the respondents' perception of and level of engagement with guidance counselors, a Pearson's r value of .369 was obtained, indicating a low correlation. Meanwhile, a p -value of .001, which was lower than the test of significance at .01, implied that there was enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis, showing a significant relationship between the variables. This means that the more positive the perception of guidance counseling, the higher the level of engagement with guidance counselors.

The observed low correlation indicated that, while perception and engagement were related, other factors might have also influenced the level of engagement with guidance counselors. The positive relationship suggested that students who viewed guidance counseling positively tended to engage more with the service. This could be explained by the fact that perception shapes behavior—if students perceived the guidance counselor as supportive, helpful, and approachable, they were more likely to seek guidance when needed. Conversely, if students held a negative or neutral view of guidance counseling, they might not have actively sought assistance, leading to lower engagement.

Several factors could have contributed to the positive perception of guidance counselors, including the counselor's approachability, the relevance of counseling services to students' needs, and the perceived effectiveness of the counseling sessions. Students who believed that guidance counseling helped them in personal, academic, and career-related matters were more likely to have utilized the service. Moreover, previous positive experiences with the guidance counselor could have encouraged further engagement, as students would associate the service with beneficial outcomes.

This finding aligned with the study conducted by Garcia (2021), which found that students with a positive perception of guidance counselors exhibited higher levels of engagement with counseling services. Garcia's study emphasized that students were more inclined to engage with guidance counselors when they viewed them as trustworthy, helpful, and responsive to their needs. This supported the notion that perception directly influenced engagement and reinforced the idea that building trust and improving counselor-student relationships were essential for increasing students' utilization of guidance services.

Additionally, research by Smith and Reyes (2020) suggested that students who felt supported by their counselors were more likely to actively seek advice for academic challenges, career guidance, and personal issues, leading to higher engagement. This further emphasized the role

of counselors' perceived supportiveness and expertise in motivating students to use counseling services.

7. Proposed Action Plan

Rationale

The proposed action plan aims to enhance students' perception of guidance counseling, which is crucial for ensuring that students fully recognize the value and relevance of counseling services in supporting their academic, personal, and social development. Although guidance counseling can have a positive impact, many students may still hold misconceptions, feel uncomfortable seeking help, or be unaware of the services available to them. By implementing a well-structured action plan, the school can address these barriers, reduce stigma, improve accessibility, and foster stronger relationships between students and counselors. Ultimately, enhancing students' perceptions of guidance counseling will lead to greater engagement, promoting a more supportive and effective learning environment.

Objective	Strategies	Activities	Person Involve	Time Frame	Budget	Success Indicator
To enhance students' perception of and engagement with guidance counseling services by promoting awareness, building trust, expanding programs, involving parents, and training counselors.	Promoting Awareness	Launch an awareness campaign via school bulletin boards, social media platforms, newsletters, and school assemblies to inform students and parents about the counseling services available. Use testimonials from students who have benefited from these services to provide real-world examples.	Guidance Counselor, Students, Parents	June to August 2025	20,000	70% student participation
Establish a safe, trusting environment where students feel comfortable seeking guidance.	Building Trust and Approachability	Implement an anonymous feedback system (e.g., online forms, suggestion boxes) where students can voice concerns or suggest improvements to counseling services without fear of judgment.	Guidance Counselor	Whole-year-round	5,000.00	Increase of 20% guidance counselling consultation
Offer a wider range of counseling services that cater to personal, academic, and career-related challenges.	Expanding Programs	Develop targeted counseling programs for students facing unique challenges (e.g., dealing with stress, preparing for college applications, managing career choices). These	Guidance Counselor, School Director/Principal	Whole-year-round	10,000.00	Increase of 20% guidance counselling consultation

		could be group sessions or workshops tailored to the students' specific needs.				
Increase parental involvement, especially for families with OFW and self-employed parents, in the guidance counseling process.	Parental Involvement	Hold parent-specific workshops on topics like supporting children's mental health, understanding academic pressures, and the importance of guidance counseling in their child's academic and personal growth.	Parents	October 2025	10,000.00	70% of parent participation
Equip counselors with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively address the diverse needs of students.	Training Counselors	Organize regular training sessions and workshops for counselors on topics such as diversity and inclusion, mental health awareness, career counseling, and effective communication with students from varied backgrounds.	Teachers, Guidance Counselor	November-Feb 2026	20,000.00	At least 3 Training programs to be conducted.

By implementing this action plan, schools will be able to enhance students' perceptions of and engagement with guidance counseling services, foster a more trusting environment, and ensure that the programs are tailored to meet the diverse needs of students. Collaboration between counselors, students, parents, and the broader school community will be key to the success of these initiatives.

Summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions drawn, and recommendations derived from the study. It aims to further enhance the concepts and facts discussed in the previous chapters based on the results of the data analysis conducted for the research. A descriptive analysis was employed to obtain comprehensive and accurate information, presenting aspects of the findings through words, tables, or charts. While the data analysis reveals statistical relationships, the approach remains purely descriptive. The descriptive design is focused on providing solutions to the research problem.

Specifically; it sought to answers to the following sub-problems:

1. What is the demographic profile of respondents in terms of
 - 1.1 sex,
 - 1.2 religion,
 - 1.3 economic status,
 - 1.4 Household Head Occupation .

2. What is the students' perception with regards to Guidance Counseling?
3. What is the level of engagement of students with Guidance Counselors in selected private schools in Laguna.
4. Is there any significant difference with the Students' perception in guidance counseling when the respondents are group according to profile variables?
5. Is there any significant difference in the level of engagement when grouped according to profile variables.
6. Is there any significant relationship between the level of perception and level of engagement of students with the role of guidance counselors in selected private schools in Laguna.
7. What action plan can be developed to improve the current perception and level of engagement of Senior High School students with their guidance counselors.

Summary of Findings

The significant findings of the study are as follows:

1. **Demographic Profile of Respondents**
The result showed that majority of the respondents were female, Roman Catholic, belonged to the middle-income group, and 22% of them were business owners and private sector employees.
2. **Students' Perception of Guidance Counseling**
The respondents' perception of guidance counseling was generally favorable with an average weighted mean of 3.44.
3. **Level of Engagement with Guidance Counselors**
The respondents' level of engagement with the guidance office was low or "less engaged" with an average weighted mean of 1.95.
4. **Significant Differences in Perception Based on Profile Variables**
Gender and religion did not significantly affect students' perception of guidance ($p > 0.05$). However, a significant difference was found in the perception of guidance counseling based on economic status ($p < 0.05$). Students from the middle-income group and whose household head is either a business owner or private sector employee had a more favorable perception of guidance counseling than those from high-income and low-income groups.
5. **Significant Differences in Engagement Based on Profile Variables**
There were no significant differences in students' perceptions of guidance counselors regardless of gender religion, economic status, and type of occupation of household head ($p > 0.05$).
6. **Relationship Between Perception and Engagement with Guidance Counselors**
There was a significant relationship between the respondents' perception of and level of engagement with guidance counselors ($p < 0.05$). The more positive the perception of guidance counseling, the higher the level of engagement with guidance counselors.
7. **Action Plan to Improve Perception and Engagement.**
An action plan was developed to enhance students' perception of and engagement with guidance counselors.

Conclusions

From the summarized findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. A typical student respondent is female, Roman Catholic, belongs to the middle-income group, and has a household head who is a business owner or employed in the private sector.
2. The students generally perceive guidance counseling positively, recognizing its importance in both personal and academic development.
3. The level of engagement with guidance counselors is generally low. Students are more likely to participate in structured activities organized by the guidance office but show limited engagement in one-on-one counseling sessions.
4. Gender and religion do not significantly affect students' perceptions of guidance counseling. However, a significant difference is found based on economic status, with middle-income students showing more favorable perceptions. Additionally, students whose household heads are government employees, seamen, or unemployed tend to have a better perception of guidance counseling compared to those with OFW parents or managers.
5. There are no significant differences in students' engagement with the role of guidance counselors. Specifically, gender, religion, and economic status have no significant impact on students' engagement.
6. The study shows a significant relationship between the perception of guidance counseling and the level of engagement with guidance counselors. This means that the more positive the perception of guidance counseling, the higher the level of engagement with guidance counselors.
7. Based on the findings, a comprehensive action plan should be implemented. This will help the schools better support students' emotional and academic well-being, leading to a more effective guidance counseling program.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are endorsed:

1. To Guidance Counselors. Ensure that counseling services are equally accessible to students from various socio-economic backgrounds. Develop special programs or outreach initiatives for students from lower-income households to fully benefit from available counseling services.
2. To School Administrators. Invest in promoting the relevance and benefits of guidance counseling more effectively. Regular workshops, seminars, or informational sessions should be held to educate students on the importance of guidance counseling in their personal, academic, and career development. Focus on creating a more welcoming and supportive environment to make students feel comfortable seeking help.
3. To Guidance Counselors and School Administrators. Customize counseling services to meet the needs of students based on their family background and socio-economic status. Offer differentiated support for middle-income students, who may have better access to resources, versus students from low-income or OFW households, who may face more challenges in accessing counseling services.
4. To Guidance Counselors and School Administrators. Explore ways to encourage more direct engagement with guidance counselors. This could include extended office hours, easier appointment booking systems, or walk-in hours for quick consultations. Programs tailored to students' specific needs (e.g., career advice, academic challenges, personal growth) should be structured to appeal to those who might not initially seek one-on-one counseling. Group workshops or targeted activities based on students' interests and challenges could increase overall participation.

5. To School Administrators and Guidance Counselors. Target specific groups with lower engagement, such as students from families with OFW parents or self-employed parents. Develop family-focused programs and resources, including virtual or remote counseling options to better reach these students. Additionally, engage parents from self-employed or unemployed backgrounds through workshops on the value of counseling and its positive impact on their children's academic and emotional growth, even if they cannot be physically present on school grounds.
6. To Guidance Counselors and School Administrators. Foster trust between students and counselors by maintaining regular follow-ups with students who have previously sought counseling. Implement feedback mechanisms, such as surveys or focus group discussions, to assess the effectiveness of counseling services. This feedback will help identify areas for improvement and provide students with an avenue to express their concerns or suggestions.
7. To School Administrators and Guidance Counselors. Implement the proposed action plan to enhance the perception and engagement with the role of guidance counselors among private schools in the city of Biñan, Laguna.

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