

Guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary school level in district Skardu, Pakistan

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Abstract

This current study was intended for the determinations of guidance and counseling provision at the higher secondary school level in Skardu district. The primary objective was to know the current status of guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary level within the district Skardu, while also pinpointing areas that require enhancement. The assessment encompasses various aspects such as the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of these services. The main focused goals of this study were included determining extent of counseling and guidance services available at the higher secondary level, assessing the utilization of the counseling services at this level and also the demand for counseling and guidance among higher secondary students in Skardu. This research was followed a quantitative approach, utilizing self-structured questionnaires and employing a descriptive survey design. Data analysis were involved the systematically applying the logical and statistical techniques to summarized, evaluate and described the collected data. Based on the findings, the need assessment was offer recommendations and actionable insights aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of counseling and guidance services for the higher secondary school's students in the district Skardu.

Keywords: Guidance services, counseling services, higher secondary school level, district Skardu

1. Introduction

Guidance has been a part of human history for as long as we can remember. Throughout time, various prophets have been sent to provide guidance to mankind. In today's context, higher secondary school students, who are around eighteen to twenty-two years old, are in a critical phase of

adolescence. Given the issues discussed, schools play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. One effective approach is for schools to offer group guidance services, which can help improve students' concentration and focus on their studies. Samarinda, (2020/2021) describes this is a pivotal period in their lives where proper guidance and counseling are essential for helping them choose the right path. Adolescence is a significant chapter in a person's life, and making the right choices during this time can lead to a successful future.

However, several challenges impact the effectiveness of these services, such as a shortage of professionally trained counselors and inadequate facilities. According to Aminu et al. (2022) stated guidance is a vital part of education, designed to help students adapt to their current situations and plan their futures based on their interests, abilities, and social needs. Harmin and Erikson (2012) also emphasized that guidance enables individuals to solve their problems and follow paths that match their skills and aspirations. Brewer (2014), Counseling involves direct interactions with individuals to assist them in changing their attitudes and behaviors. (Rogers 2013)

Guidance and counseling as systematic and organized educational services provided by trained professionals, Nwachuku (2017) explained that These services help learners of all ages understand themselves and their environments, discover their interests and potential, and learn how to maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses to lead productive lives.

The provision of guidance and counseling services at the higher secondary school level plays a crucial role in supporting students' academic, career, and personal development. In District Skardu, a region characterized by its unique geographical and cultural landscape, the need for effective guidance and counseling is particularly significant. As students navigate the challenges of adolescence and the demands of higher education, access to professional support services can make a profound difference in their academic success and overall well-being.

This study aims to explore the current status of guidance and counseling services available to students at the higher secondary school level in District Skardu. It seeks to understand the extent to which these services are integrated into the educational system, the qualifications and training of the staff involved, the types of counseling offered, and the challenges faced in delivering these essential services. By examining these factors, the study will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of current practices and identify areas for improvement to better support the students of Skardu in achieving their full potential.

The scope of guidance and counseling, noting that as life becomes increasingly complex, students need expert help to navigate their problems. Nayak (2001). Experts assist students in selecting educational courses that match their interests, placing them in the next stage of their education, choosing profitable occupations, and maintaining their mental health.

Counselors also identify students who are struggling and help them

achieve their full potential. Effective teaching is intertwined with proper guidance and counseling at the secondary level. Guidance & counseling play an important role in shaping students, helping them choose the right paths to achieve their life goals. Counseling is a learning process where counselors assist students in adopting positive behaviors that support their growth, development, and adjustment in educational, vocational, and personal aspects of life (Hasnain, 2014).

Guidance and counseling services is like a back bone in any institutions which play a vital role in schools, helping students grow personally, socially, academically, and in their careers.

The current research was aimed to determine the current status of guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary school level in Skardu. The main aim of this study was to determine current provision status of guidance and counseling services in higher secondary education. Additionally, the study delves into the prevalent personal and academic challenges encountered by students in their advanced educational pursuits. The main objective of the study was

- 1) To find out current status of guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary school level in district Skardu (Pakistan)

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant provision of guidance and counseling services at the higher secondary level in district Skardu

2. Literature review

Various national and international scholars have explored the current situations and effectiveness of guidance and counseling services. This section of the study reflects on the lessons learned from both developing and developed countries regarding successful guidance and counseling practices. The discussion then links these insights to the current research, focusing on current status of guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary school level within the public educational institutions of Skardu city.

Azeez Sumangla (2015) highlighted that adolescence is a crucial phase characterized by 2significant emotional and physical changes. During this time, young people often face emotional turbulence and require counseling support to help them navigate social, personal, educational, and psychological challenges. As adolescents start thinking about their future careers, they also seek vocational guidance. The literature provides a foundation for setting standards to evaluate the effectiveness of these services.

Most of the research in this field originate from west countries where the counseling is prevalent. This presents two significant challenges for those engaged in counseling literature. Azeez Sumangla (2015) emphasized that adolescent is critical period marked by emotional turbulence and rapid physical and emotional changes. They argue that adolescents require counseling support to navigate social, personal, educational, and

psychological challenges. Adolescent students often seek vocational guidance as they contemplate their future careers. They value freedom of expression and choice, as well as economic and social security.

Lunenburg (2010) asserted that counseling and guidance services are indispensable in the area of educational, social emotional and vocational development. School administrators should introduce these services in their institutions to ensure students fully benefit from them. Lunenburg examines the goals of guidance and counseling programs, the counselor's role in schools, key services offered, counseling methods, and program evaluation.

The review underscores the urgent need for thorough research to gauge the effects and achievements of present guidance and counseling services operating on Skardu district at higher secondary schools. The children not privileged to attend school were feral, they were often involved in one form of delinquent behavior or the other. To curtail delinquency, reinforcement was employed to assist the adolescents in selecting employment that was appropriate to their requisites and aptitudes.

According to Crow and Crow (2018), guidance is said to be the support received from qualified persons to help in directing lives, cultivating attitudes, making choices, and bearing loads. In their article Hamrin and Erickson state that guidance is a formal plan in the educational environment aimed to assist learners to adapt to the existing circumstances.

Malek et al. (2013) noted the increase of guidance and counseling services in Malaysian institute mirrors the trajectory observed in the United States. Initially focused on vocational guidance, these services have evolved to prioritize personal growth, increased personal development, and their integration into the school system. Vocational guidance was crucial in helping students choose educational paths based on their abilities and talents, facilitating future career planning.

Hollis and Hollis (2017), outlined eight principles of a guidance program: the dignity of the individual, individual differences, concern for the individual in their social setting, action based on personal perceptions, self-enhancement, innate ability to learn, continuous guidance from early childhood through adulthood, and the need for professional assistance. Guidance is a comprehensive process that includes counseling as a key function.

2.1 Overview of Guidance and Counseling in Pakistan

Guidance and counseling services in Pakistan, especially in rural and remote areas like District Skardu, have traditionally been underdeveloped. Research shows that while urban areas may have more established counseling programs, rural regions often struggle with a lack of resources, trained personnel, and institutional support (Naz & Kausar, 2015). The National Education Policy of Pakistan (2009) emphasizes the importance of integrating counseling services into schools for the overall development of students. However, the implementation of these services is uneven across the country.

2.2 The Role of Guidance and Counseling in Education

Guidance and counseling play a vital role in education, particularly at the higher secondary level, where students face significant challenges related to academics, careers, and personal development. As Khan and Alvi (2017) point out, effective counseling services help students make informed decisions about their future, manage academic stress, and address personal and social issues. However, these services are often limited by a shortage of trained counselors and a lack of awareness among educators and parents about the importance of such support.

2.3 Challenges in Providing Guidance and Counseling in Skardu

District Skardu, located in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, faces specific challenges in offering guidance and counseling services due to its remote location, cultural factors, and limited access to educational resources. A study by Ali and Hassan (2018) found that schools in Skardu often lack qualified counseling professionals, adequate infrastructure, and face cultural resistance to seeking psychological help. Additionally, the harsh geographical conditions and limited connectivity further complicate the establishment of comprehensive counseling services in the area.

2.4 The Importance of Cultural Sensitivity in Counseling

In Skardu, as in many rural areas, cultural norms and values greatly influence how students perceive counseling services. Iqbal and Jabeen (2016) stress the need for culturally sensitive counseling practices that respect local traditions while addressing the specific psychological and social needs of students. This includes being aware of the local language, customs, and the significant role of family dynamics in decision-making.

2.5 Success Stories and Best Practices

Despite the challenges, there are successful examples of guidance and counseling programs in similar rural settings that could serve as models for Skardu. For instance, initiatives in other parts of Gilgit-Baltistan have shown the effectiveness of community-based counseling programs that involve local leaders and educators (Zafar & Haq, 2019). These programs demonstrate the importance of community involvement and adapting counseling practices to fit the local context.

2.6 Current Status in Skardu

Recent reports and observations indicate that while there have been some efforts to introduce guidance and counseling services in Skardu's higher secondary schools, these efforts are still in the early stages. The services currently available are often limited, focusing mainly on academic counseling rather than providing comprehensive support (Bashir & Amin, 2020).

There is an urgent need for more holistic programs that address all aspects of students' needs, including career guidance, personal counseling, and mental health support. The literature shows that while more people are recognizing the importance of guidance and counseling services in Pakistani schools, the implementation in District Skardu is still quite limited. The

challenges are tough, but they can be overcome. By learning from successful programs in similar areas and focusing on culturally sensitive approaches, there's a real opportunity to enhance these services in Skardu, which would greatly benefit students in their academic, personal, and professional growth. This review gives us a clearer picture of where things stand in Skardu and underscores the need for more research and development in this vital area.

3. Methodology

This study was focused as a mixed method, the data were collected through the survey method as well as a questionnaire and interview from teachers. By applying mixed-method research techniques researchers get more variables used using a wide range of research procedures. By using this method, the researcher observes and measures the variables in this study. The study discussed the research approach and process that were employed to look into the research problem.

3.1 Delimitations of the study

The present study was delimited to

- 1) only Skardu district in Gilgit Baltistan
- 2) only Public and higher secondary school level were included in the study
- 3) Both male and female of higher secondary school's students were the part of the study

3.2 Population

According to, a population is a set of complete people with specific characteristics. The target population of the study consisted of 4 public male and female higher secondary schools in district Skardu. A total of 10 teachers and 120 students from public higher secondary schools were the population of the study.

3.3 Sample

According to, a sample is the set of individuals who actually take part in the research. The sample of the study were 4 public higher secondary schools in district Skardu which consist of 10 teachers and 120 students of higher secondary school students were sampled of the study. A simple random sampling technique was used for this research study.

3.4 Tools and data collections

After going through the relevant literature review, self-developed closed ended questionnaire for students and one structured interview for teachers were used. The researcher developed the questionnaire using a five point Likert scale based on the literature review and under the guidance of the supervisor, stated that a research tool is used by a scientist to find, measure, and examine the data.²⁴ One closed-ended questionnaire for higher secondary school students and one structured interview protocol for higher secondary teachers.

3.5 Reliability of Questionnaires

In order to evaluate the questionnaire's validity and reliability,

the researcher conducted a pilot study on it. Four public higher secondary level schools were the sites of the pilot testing as it was necessary to check whether the objectives of the study were meet or not. The questionnaire was finalized after ten experts provided their opinions based on the results of the pilot testing. On the questionnaire, errors related to some items were left omitted. Using Cronbach’s alpha reliability was determined. The result of the Cronbach’s alpha as shown in the table given below.

Table 3.1

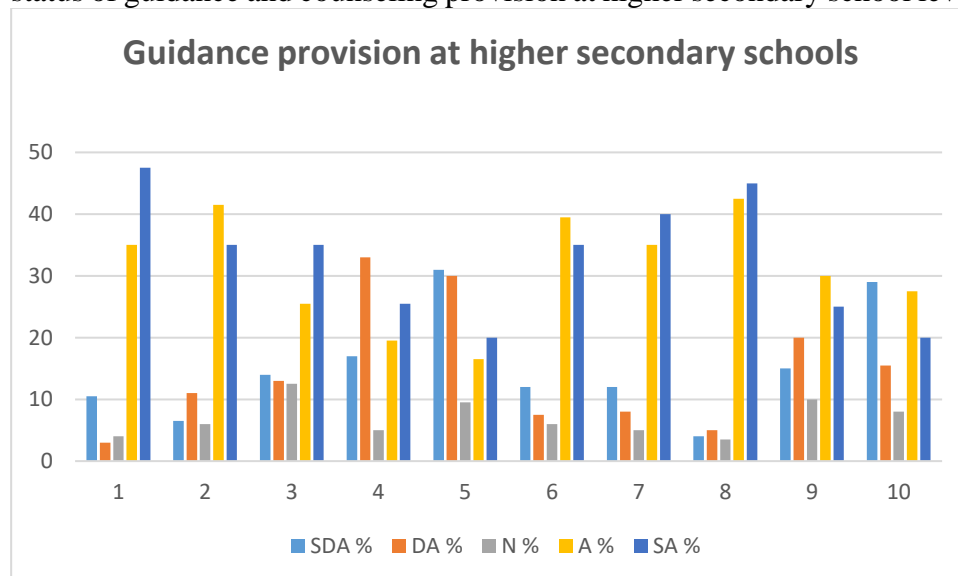
Total No of Items	Cronbach Alpha Reliability
40	0.987

4. Results

This part highlighted the responses ratio through data collection techniques as well the analysis interpretation of the data collection using study instruments which consist of SPSS version 29.0.2.0 was employed to analyze the dataset, utilizing mean, percentage, standard deviation, and correlation measures. The researcher organized the data by ranking statements in tabular format. Ratings ranged from,1 (indicating strongly disagree) to 5 (indicating strongly agree), with 1 representing the lowest achievable score in terms of mean and 5 representing highly achievable score in term of mean values.

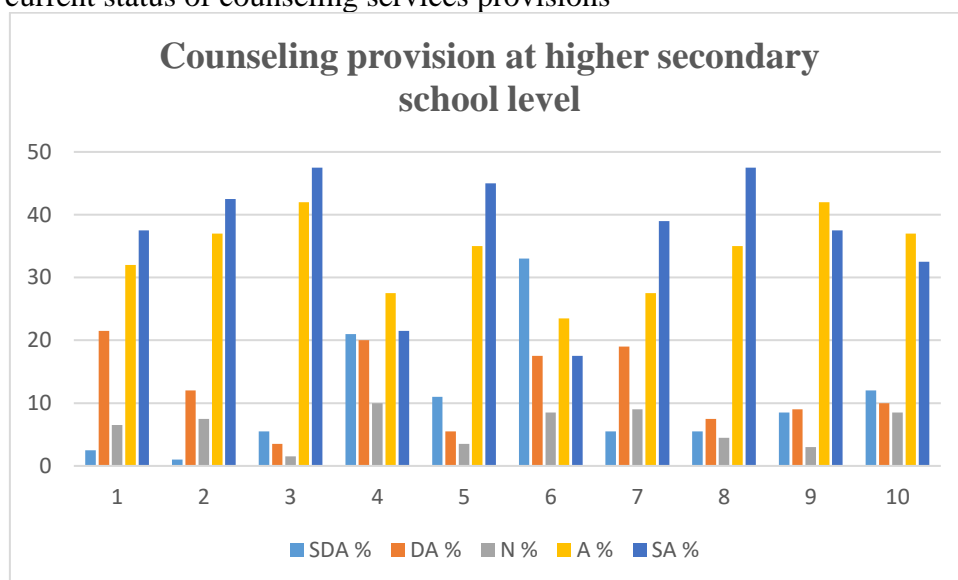
Section A: Students responses about the current status of guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary school level in district Skardu (Quantitative Analysis)

Figure 1.1 higher secondary student’s responses about the current status of guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary school level



The figure 1.1 showed the current status of guidance provision at higher secondary school level which were explored from 120 higher secondary students by asking the statement:1,majority of students 47.5% strongly agree, 35% of students agree, 10.5% of students strongly disagree, 4% of students' neutral, and 3% of students were disagree, statement:2 has majority of students 41.5% agree, 35% of students strongly agree, 11% of students disagree, 6.5% of students strongly disagree, and 6% of students were neutral. Statement:3 has majority of students 35% strongly agree, 25.5% of students agree, 14% of students strongly disagree, 13% of students disagree, and 12.5% of students were neutral. Statement:4 has majority of students 33% disagree, 25.5% of students strongly agree, 19.5% of students agree, 17% of students strongly disagree, and 5% of students were neutral. Statement:5 has majority of students 31% strongly disagree, 30% of students disagree, 20% of students strongly agree, 16.5% of students agree, and 9.5% of students were neutral. Statement:6 has majority of students 39.5% agree, 35% of students strongly agree, 12% of students strongly disagree, 7.5% of students disagree, and 6% of students were neutral. Statement:7 has majority of students 40% strongly agree, 35% of students agree, 12% of students strongly disagree, 8% of students disagree and 5% of students were neutral. Statement:8 has majority of students 45% strongly agree, 42.5% of students agree, 5% of students disagree, 4% of students strongly disagree, and 3.5% of students were neutral. Statement:9 has majority of students 30% agree, 25% of students strongly agree, 20% of students disagree, 15% of students strongly disagree, and 10% of students were neutral. Statement:10 has majority of students 29% strongly disagree, 27.5% of students agree, 20% of students strongly agree, 15.5% of students disagree, and 8% of students were neutral.

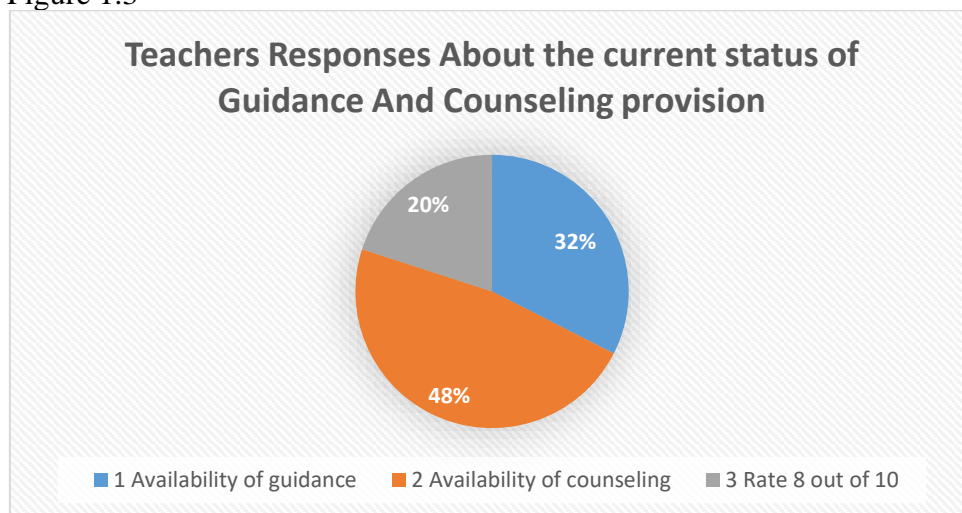
Figure 1.2 higher secondary school student’s responses about the current status of counseling services provisions



The figure 1.2 showed the current status of counseling provision at higher secondary school level which were already explored from 120 students by asking statement:1 has majority of students 37.5 strongly agree, 32% of students agree, 21.5% of students disagree,6.5% of students' neutral, and 2.5% of students were strongly disagree. Statement:2 has majority of students 42.5% strongly agree, 37% of students agree, 12% of students disagree,7.5% of students' neutral, and 1% of students were strongly disagree. Statement:3 has majority of students 47.5% strongly agree, 42% of students agree, 5.5% of students strongly disagree,3.5% of students disagree, and 1.5% of students were neutral. Statement:4 has majority of students 27.5% agree, 21.5% of students strongly agree, 21% of students strongly disagree,20% of students disagree, and 10% of students were neutral. Statement:5 has majority of students 45% strongly agree, 35% of students agree, 11% of students strongly disagree,5.5% of students disagree, and 3.5% of students were neutral. Statement:6 has majority of students 33% strongly disagree, 23.5% of students agree, 17.5% of students strongly agree,17.5% of students agree, and 8.5% of students were strongly neutral. Statement:7 has majority of students 39% strongly agree, 27.5% of students agree, 19% of students disagree,5.5% of students strongly disagree, and 1% of students were neutral. Statement:8 has majority of students 47.5% strongly agree, 35% of students agree, 7.5% of students disagree,5.5% of students strongly disagree and 4.5% of students were neutral. Statement:9 has majority of students 42% agree, 37.5% of students strongly agree, 9% of students disagree,8.5% of students strongly disagree, and 3% of students were neutral. Statement:10 has majority of students 37% agree, 32.5% of students strongly agree, 12% of students strongly disagree,10% of students disagree, and 8.5% of students were neutral.

Section B: Teachers interview responses about the need assessment of guidance and counseling services at higher secondary school level (Qualitative Analysis)

Figure 1.3



An interview with open ended questionnaires were developed for 10 teacher of higher secondary school level to check out the current status of guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary level.

Figure 1.3 represented that majority of teacher with 48% showed that there is availability of counseling services at their institution for higher secondary students which increased the positive impact on students’ academic performance, while the teacher also showed 32% with the availability of guidance services for students which need to be considered for further improvements. However, the teachers with 20% rate 8 out of 10 with the availability of guidance and counseling services in their higher secondary school.

Figure 1.4

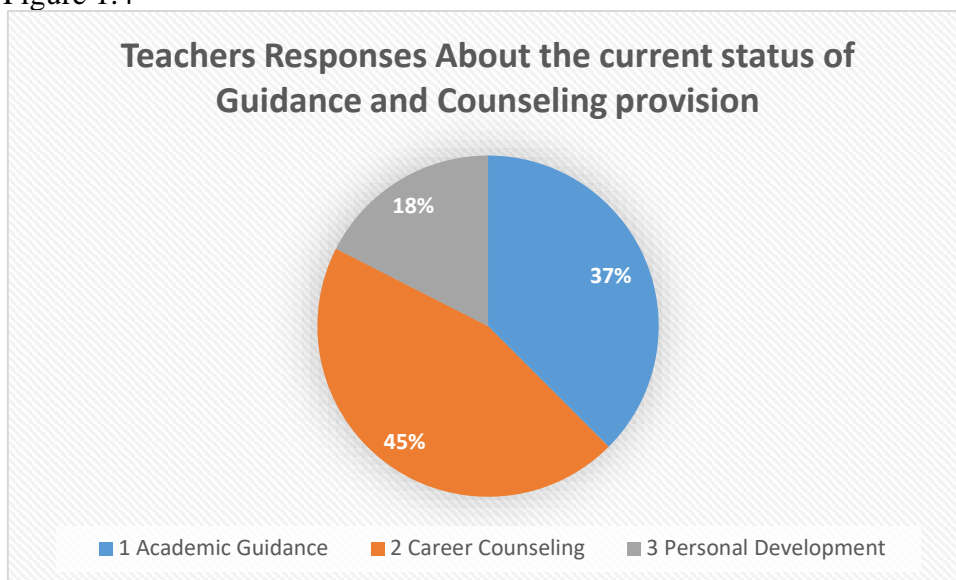


Figure 1.4 showed that the 45% of teachers were agreed that their institution should conduct career counseling services for higher secondary students for the development of students’ academic performances. For academic guidance 37% teachers agreed that in seminars academic guidance areas should be focused because after completing their higher secondary school students should easily make decisions that in which areas/field they need to get admissions in universities/institutions. However, 18% of the teachers stated that by conducting career counseling seminars and academic guidance seminars their personal development of teachers was also increased as they are providing full guidance and counseling services for the students.

Table 1.1 Chi square analysis

Variables	N	DF	(Sig)	Crit (χ^2)	Calc (χ^2)	Decision
Guidance Services	120	1	0.05	6.583	65.87	Accepted
Counseling services	120	1	0.05	4.181	53.63	Accepted

Table 1.1 shows the chi-square analysis of the variables under study. Current status of guidance and counseling services provision at higher secondary school level: the critical value of the chi-square is 6.583. When the calculated value of the chi-square test is larger than the critical value, the research question is rejected; conversely, if the calculated value of the chi-square test is less than the critical value, the research question is accepted. We accepted and rejected the null hypothesis based on the computed and crucial values of the chi-square, which are displayed in the above table.

Table 1.2 Guidance and counseling

S.No	Variables	Correlation Coefficient	Significant level (1 tail)
1	Guidance	0.782**	<.000
2	Counseling	0.940**	<001

Table 1.2 shows the correlation value between current status of guidance services which is .782, which shows a moderately positive association between both variables. The P value is < 0.01, which means the relationship is statistically significant. So, we can say that the need assessment of guidance and counseling services increased. Table 1.2: Variable counseling services Correlation Coefficient Sig. (1 tailed) need assessment of counseling services which is .940** with significant level of <001

Table 1.3: Interview Analysis from teachers about the current status of guidance and counseling service provision.

S.no	Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Availability of guidance	13	30.95
2	Availability of counseling	19	45.23
3	Rate 8 out of 10	8	24.12

Table 1.3 explored that the majority of the teachers' stated that the availability of counseling services in their higher secondary school is still increasing which increased positive behavior in students' learning. Some teachers also showed that the availability of guidance services create a friendly environment in classroom. While some of teacher's rate 8 out of 10 for the availability of guidance and counseling services for higher secondary school students

Table 1.4 Enhance the provision of guidance and counseling services

S.no	Responses	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Conducting seminars (career counseling)	30	60.10
2	Students should know the future scope of different academic departments	7	30.80
3	Define the importance of guidance and counseling services	3	9.10

Table 1.4 indicated that the majority of teachers conducting seminar in higher secondary school on the topic/area career counseling. Most teachers defined that by conducting such seminar students come to know the future scope of different academic departments. It was also described by some teachers that student also know the importance of guidance and counseling by conducting such seminars in higher secondary school.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the current status of guidance and counseling provision at higher secondary schools in District Skardu. The predetermined objectives of research provide a roadmap for the investigator, facilitating the achievement of their intended aims. Through the utilization of factual evidence derived from the findings, a research endeavor is refined into its conclusive form, enabling the computation and analysis of final conclusions. The process of generalizing these conclusions enhances both their reliability and validity, ensuring accessibility to the broader audience, particularly in educational research contexts. Such conclusions represent pivotal findings in this study.

Hypothesis 1:

The hypothesis was that there is no significant provision of guidance and counseling services provisions at higher secondary school level which was tested by statistical method using chi square test and it was found that X^2 value is 6.583, the correlation value was 0.782 and the significant level was $<.000$ which means that it is statistically significant and moderate negative correlation.

6. Summary

The current status of guidance and counseling provision at the higher secondary school level in District Skardu was conducted to evaluate the current state of counseling services and identify areas for improvement. Initial findings suggest a lack of adequate guidance and counseling services in higher secondary schools within the district. Many students struggle with academic, personal, and career-related issues, but there are limited resources available to address these concerns. Additionally, cultural factors and societal norms may contribute to the stigma surrounding mental health, making it difficult for students to seek help when needed. The assessment also highlights the importance of implementing comprehensive counseling programs that address the diverse needs of students. This includes providing training for school counselors, raising awareness about the importance of mental health, and fostering partnerships with community organizations to enhance support services.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, the current status of guidance and counseling provision highlights the importance of prioritizing guidance and counseling services at the higher secondary school level in District Skardu. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing targeted

interventions, schools can better support the academic, personal, and career development of their students, ultimately fostering a healthier and more resilient student population. Concluding the current status of guidance and counseling provision at the higher secondary school level in District Skardu reveals critical insights into the challenges and opportunities for supporting the mental health and well-being of students. Through a comprehensive evaluation of the existing services and stakeholder perspectives, several key conclusions The status underscores the urgent need for enhanced guidance and counseling services in higher secondary schools in District Skardu. Students face a myriad of academic, personal, and career-related challenges, and the current level of support available is inadequate to meet their needs.

8. Recommendations

- 1) It was recommended that higher secondary school should increase funding and resources dedicated to guidance and counseling services within schools to improve the status of guidance and counseling provisions
- 2) Higher secondary schools should provide regular training and professional development opportunities for school counselors to enhance their skills in addressing the diverse needs of students. Offer workshops and seminars on topics such as mental health awareness, crisis intervention, and career counseling.
- 3) Schools should also Launch awareness campaigns to destigmatize seeking counseling services and promote a culture of openness and support for mental health issues

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