



Exploring School Counseling Experiences Concerning Teachers’ Involvement in School Counseling: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The intervention of school teachers in counseling is explored based on the perceptions and experiences of both school counselors and teachers. This qualitative study also aims to differentiate the roles of counselors in school from that of school teachers. The experience of teacher’s intervention by the counselors are focused to understand during the study. The study collected data through in-depth interviews with two school counselors and two school teachers from different schools of Kathmandu, Nepal. Thematic analysis revealed four key themes: “Antibiotic vs. Therapy,” “Rays of Hope,” “Collaboration Helps,” and “Delineate the Roles.” The findings highlight the challenges counselors face due to the teacher’s quick fix mentality, the positive impact of collaboration, and the importance of counselor’s ethics. The study concludes that aligning teachers’ expectation with counselor’s ethics, collaboration be fostered and role definition should be well established in order to create a supportive school environment that promotes academic upgrades and learner’s well-being.

Keywords: School counselors, teacher’s intervention, qualitative study, collaboration, counselor’s ethics, Nepal.

Introduction

Though school counselors face multiple barriers that hinders the delivery of effective services, one of which is the improper intervention by school teachers in counseling, it holds a crucial role in addressing the mental health, emotional and social needs of students (Dahir et al., 2010). The first person to connect with students are teachers and these teachers may lack the essential



skills and knowledge to provide appropriate guidance. This can adversely affect counseling outcomes. Focusing on the experiences of counselors and teachers in Kathmandu, where school counseling is still in nascent stages, this study explores the school teachers' intervention in counseling activity.

Background of the Study

The study was conducted as motivation for the researcher's experience as a teacher transitioning to school counseling. The overlap and differences between the roles of teachers and counselors became apparent, especially wherever the teacher attempted to intervene in the counseling process. Despite the increasing importance of counseling at schools, there is a lack of clarity regarding the roles of counselors and teachers. Particularly in Nepal, where counseling services are not yet mandatory roles remain ambiguous (Shah, 2013). The study aims to fill the gap by exploring the experiences providing insights into how the roles of teachers and counselors can be better defined and integrated.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers often attempt to address student's non academic issues without referring them to the counselors, leading to potential misdiagnosis and conflict of interest (Khansa, 2015). This study investigates the impact of teachers' intervention in counseling and explores how collaboration between teachers and counselors can mitigate these issues. The research also examines the responsibilities allocated to counselors and how they differ from those of teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the consequences of teachers' intervention in student counseling and to differentiate the roles and responsibilities of school counselors and teachers. The study aims to provide insights into how alliance between educators and counselors can efficiently support students' well-being.

Research Questions

1. Where does the role of counselors differ from school teachers?
2. How do counselors experience the intervention of teachers in counseling?
3. What are the responsibilities of counselors at schools?

Literature Review

Understanding School Counseling

School counseling is a program designed to address students' academic, personal, social, and career development needs. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) defines school counselors as professional educators who lead, advocate, and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students (ASCA, 2019). Nevertheless, the profession continues to



struggle with role ambiguity and conflict, particularly in contexts where counseling is not well established, such as Nepal (Dodson, 2009).

School Counseling in Nepal

In Nepal, school counseling is not yet mandatory, and there is no specific policy or legislation governing its practice (Kandel, 2020). Counselors are often hired based on individual school's needs, and their roles are not definitive. This lack of perspicuity leads to confusion among all school stakeholders making it challenging for counselors to perform their duties effectively.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies displayed that teachers can play significant roles in promoting students' mental health and well-being. Whatsoever, their interventions are most effective when they get together with school counselors (Diamond & Hopcus, 2004). The meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011) found that teacher interventions had a small to moderate positive effect on students' psychological health outcomes, particularly when focused on prevention and early intervention.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Carl Rogers' person centered theory, which emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive and non-judgmental environment for learners to explore their thoughts and feelings (Cain, 2013). The study also draws on Albert Bandura's social learning theory which highlights the role of observational learning and modeling in shaping behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Methodology

Research design

This work employs a qualitative research design, using narrative inquiry to range over the experiences of school counselors and teachers. The research is guided by an interpretative paradigm, which emphasizes the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals bring to their interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The research involved two school counselors and two school teachers from two different schools in Kathmandu, Nepal. The participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they had relevant information, experiences and insights into the research questions.

Data Collection

Statements were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to share their experiences and perceptions in their own words. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.



Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the data. The process involved coding the data, grouping similar codes into categories, and developing themes based on these categories. The themes were then interpreted in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework.

Results and Discussion

Antibiotic Vs. Therapy

One of the key themes that emerged from the data was the tension between teachers' expectations of quick fixes and counselor's ethical obligations to provide therapy. Teachers' often viewed counseling as a prompt solution to a student's problems, expecting immediate results. This created challenges for counselors, who emphasized the importance of building trust and rapport with students over time.

Rays of Hope

Despite the challenges, both teachers and counselors acknowledged the value of collaboration. Teachers appreciated the support provided by counselors, while counselors recognized the importance of teachers in referring students and providing background information. This collaboration created the sense of hope for future improvements in school counseling.

Collaboration Helps

Collaboration between teachers and counselors was identified as a key factor in supporting students' well-being. Teachers referred students to counselors and [provided valuable background information, while counselors offered guidance and support. This collaboration was most effective when counselors had clearly defined roles and were not overloaded with non-counseling tasks.

Delineate the Roles

This study highlighted the need for clear role definitions for counselors and teachers. Teachers focused on instruction and classroom management, while counselors focused on students' well-being and social-emotional development. Clear role definitions were seen as crucial for avoiding confusion and maximizing collaboration.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the importance of aligning teachers' expectations with counselors ethics, fostering collaboration, and establishing clear role delineations. By integrating these elements, schools can create a more supportive and holistic learning environment that fosters the social emotional well-being and academic success of all students. The study also highlights the need for further research with a larger and more diverse sample to strengthen the generality of the findings.



Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for counselors, educational institutions, policymakers, and future researchers. Counselors can use the findings to advocate for clear role definitions and ethical practices. Educational institutions can use the findings to develop comprehensive school counseling programmes that promote collaboration between teachers and counselors. Policy makers can use the findings to develop policies that support the integration of services of counseling in schools. Future researchers can use the results as a basis for further investigation on the role of collaboration in school counseling.

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