

INDISPENSABILITY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING AS PREDICTOR OF SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MWANZA REGION.

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Abstract

The study sought to investigate the indispensability of psychological counselling services as a predictor of school effectiveness in public upper secondary schools in Mwanza Region in Tanzania. The study was informed by a need to establish the impact of counselling services on students' behavior, academic achievement, and school effectiveness. A mixed-methods convergent parallel design study was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The population of the study comprised 1076 from three districts of Mwanza region with the Sample size of 36 including students, heads of school, school teacher counsellors and educational officers. The instruments validated through piloting study. Quantitative data from students collected through questionnaires named Psychological Counselling (PCQ) and School Effectiveness (SEQ), Interviews on Psychological Counselling (IPC) and Interview on School Effectiveness (ISE) utilized to gather qualitative information from Teachers and Educational Officers, Quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS Version 27 it generated descriptive statistics and reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging from 0.93 that indicated excellent. Qualitative data analyzed through thematic and narrative analysis. The results showed that psychological counseling services have an essential impact on enhancing students' academic performance, emotional well-being, and behavior. A substantial number of students reported the positive impact of counseling services on enhancing students' academic performance. It was also noted that counseling services have an impact on key areas like mental health problems, peer pressures, self-understanding, and career counseling, among others. These areas are vital in enhancing school performance. However, the study noted areas of unawareness of counseling services among the students. The study establishes that psychological counselling services are indispensable in promoting school effectiveness, although their effectiveness can be impeded by weak implementation and resource limitation. The study recommends improving counselling programs, increasing awareness, training professional counselors, and improving resource allocation to enhance the effectiveness of advanced secondary schools in the public sector.

Keywords: Psychological Counseling, School Effectiveness and Counseling Services

Introduction

Public secondary public schools in Tanzania have the responsibility of preparing students not only for higher education institutions but also for active contribution to the wider community. However, the performance of these schools is often impaired by various psycho-social difficulties like stress, peer pressures, and domestic instabilities. Psychological counseling is an organized intervention designed to assist the students in coping effectively with the various challenges they face. This improves the students' capacity to succeed academically and socially. Lyimo et al. (2025) argue that counseling is an essential intervention because it is useful in addressing the various psycho-social difficulties facing Tanzanian students. These difficulties have a direct impact on the students' performance, hence affecting the school's performance. Therefore, without counseling, the school would be graduating students who are academically proficient but emotionally unstable. It has been demonstrated that counseling interventions are beneficial to students' motivation levels, self-efficacy, and learning strategies. Parekh (2025) explains that counseling is beneficial to the students since it enhances their capacity to set realistic academic goals and utilize effective learning strategies. In Tanzania, public schools are often characterized by large student populations. In such an environment, counseling is an essential system for maintaining academic excellence. Mbilinyi (2025) demonstrated the significance of counseling services to the students since they are able to overcome academic pressures and enhance concentration levels. In essence, counseling is the core determinant of students' success in secondary schools. It is agreed that discipline is an essential factor of school effectiveness. In this case, counseling is instrumental in encouraging positive behavior.

A school counselor works with the teacher to ensure the elimination of disruptive behavior among students. In turn, the American School Counselor Association (2025) states that schools with effective counseling programs have reduced the number of suspensions and expulsions. Rodríguez (2025) adds that counseling eliminates the use of disciplinary action by getting to the root of the misbehavior. This improves school effectiveness by ensuring the elimination of disruptions and the active engagement of the students. Outside of academics and discipline, counseling plays a vital role in the holistic development of students. This is because counseling enables students to build emotional resilience and social skills, which are vital in the development of healthy interpersonal relationships. Bennett (2025) highlights that counseling enables students to build coping skills to deal with life issues, which are vital in ensuring that students are successful in life. In Tanzania, students are facing various socio-economic issues in life. Counseling provides a platform where students can express themselves emotionally. Khotele (2025) highlights that holistic counseling enables students to develop into well-rounded individuals who can positively contribute to society. This is a vital aspect of measuring a school's success. Currently, in most African countries, counseling activities are still in their developmental stages. In most cases, culture has been seen as a hindrance to the effective implementation of counseling activities.

According to Lyimo et al. (2024), cultural perceptions of counseling activities have been seen to discourage students from participating in such activities, thus limiting their effectiveness. However, there is evidence that culturally sensitive counseling activities can enhance the effectiveness of schools in African countries. According to Dereje (2024), culturally sensitive

counseling activities can help in addressing issues such as gender-based violence, substance abuse, and peer relationships, which are common in most African schools. However, counseling in public secondary schools in Tanzania is affected by various challenges, such as a lack of trained counseling staff, insufficient funds, and lack of integration into the school's governance. According to Mbilinyi (2025), in many public secondary schools in Tanzania, there is a lack of professional counselors. As a result, teachers are being tasked with providing counseling services, although they are not trained to do so. This is a major reason why counseling in public secondary schools in Tanzania is not effective and requires serious consideration in the form of policy changes. In addition, the lack of funds makes counseling in public secondary schools in Tanzania less effective. It can be deduced that psychological counseling is indispensable for school effectiveness in the public advanced secondary schools of Tanzania. By enhancing performance, discipline, and overall development, psychological counseling ensures that schools deliver on their mandate of producing competitive and emotionally stable graduates.

Enhancing psychological counseling services, therefore, is essential for improving the effectiveness of public secondary education in Tanzania. As Gudaga et al. (2018) posit regarding higher education governance, effectiveness cannot be considered independently of support systems, and school effectiveness cannot be considered independently of the indispensability of psychological counseling. Psychological counseling services are acknowledged as an integral component of school systems. It is an indispensable tool for ensuring the emotional well-being, academic success, and school effectiveness of students. A successful counseling service is expected to enable students to deal effectively with academic demands, social pressures, and individual concerns.

In the end, it is anticipated to boost student discipline, motivation, and performance. In public advanced secondary schools, psychological counseling services are expected to be a vital predictor of school effectiveness. It is anticipated to enable both students and teachers to attain educational goals. However, the public advanced secondary schools across Mwanza Region are facing serious challenges regarding the provision of psychological counseling services. In many of the public advanced secondary schools across the region, the counseling units are understaffed or even lack the services. In some cases, the teachers are not trained to offer counseling services. In addition, the students are not aware of the counseling services. As a result, the psychological needs of students are often neglected despite the rising cases of stress, anxiety, indiscipline, and poor performance. Besides, if psychological counseling is not provided, students may experience poor performance, high dropout rates, indiscipline, and poor involvement in school activities. Also, psychological issues may have a negative impact on the school environment, thereby limiting the ability of schools to attain their desired educational goals. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the indispensability of psychological counseling as a predictor of school effectiveness in public advanced secondary schools in Mwanza Region.

Specific objective

To determine the influence of psychological counselling services on school effectiveness in public upper secondary schools in Mwanza Region.

Research question

How do psychological counselling services influence school effectiveness in public upper secondary schools in Mwanza Region?

Literature Review

Psychological Counselling Services and School Effectiveness

In this regard, psychological counselling services in the modern education system have increasingly become recognized as a critical factor in ensuring effective school performance in terms of promoting students' well-being and academic performance. For instance, Marsh and Mathur (2020) observed that the integration of psychological counselling services in public schools through a multi-tiered approach is associated with a decline in disruptive student behaviors, increased student attendance, and engagement in classroom activities. These factors have commonly been identified as some of the factors associated with effective school performance, as student behaviour and attendance have often been identified as key factors in determining student performance. Additionally, Suldo et al. (2021) observed that psychological counselling services in public schools have been associated with a decline in anxiety and depression among students, as well as enhanced student performance and attendance. Similarly, Gyasi et al. (2025) observed that students who access psychological counselling services in public schools have better health literacy and performance compared to those who do not access such services. This can be seen in areas such as student discipline, behaviour management, and academic retention. According to Rosales et al. (2021), psychological intervention programs in schools greatly reduce substance abuse behaviour among students, which in turn increases academic retention and thus boosts school effectiveness.

In a similar context, Menikdiwela (2020) observed that misbehavior among students, such as aggressive and unstable behaviour, has a negative effect on school effectiveness; however, psychological counselling in schools was seen as a solution to such challenges. Supporting the importance of counselling in school effectiveness, Yusoff and Abdullah (2021) observed that "Counselling programs play a key role in managing student discipline and creating a conducive environment for learning." In addition, Odeka and Kinzi (2022) observed that schools with effective counselling services experience minimal cases of disciplinary behaviour among students, which indirectly boosts school effectiveness.

Another key area where psychological counseling services play an integral role in ensuring school effectiveness is the improvement of student retention. According to Ndanu et al. (2023), schools whose counseling services are active have reported higher student retention levels than those whose services are passive. In addition, the number of dropout cases is reduced. In the same vein, Nyaga (2025) noted that students whose counseling services are active have shown improved school belonging, concentration, and behavior. These are key areas that predict school effectiveness. In a broader sense, the World Health Organization (2023) noted the rising demand for counseling services across various sectors. It noted that the psychological and social challenges facing students require an active system of support to ensure active student participation. In Tanzania, Kazimoto (2022) noted that psychological counseling services have helped students overcome various challenges, such as stress, anxiety, and behavior. As a result,

the students have shown improved active participation in various school activities. In the same vein, Kwalevele (2022) noted that the absence of counseling services often results in poor performance among students. In addition, the absence of counseling services often results in indiscipline among students. It also results in an unfavorable school climate.

Even though these studies have collectively validated the significance of psychological counselling services in promoting school effectiveness, certain limitations are noted. Firstly, a majority of studies have been based on secondary data, as noted in studies by Marsh & Mathur (2020) and Suldo et al. (2021), which are limited in establishing causality. Secondly, a large number of studies have been conducted in developed nations; however, resources and structures differ in developing nations like Tanzania. Thirdly, a majority of studies have been focused on specific aspects like discipline, retention, or mental health but have failed to consider all aspects of school effectiveness indicators like instructional quality or institutional performance. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct further studies to establish the indispensability of psychological counselling services as a predictor of school effectiveness in public advanced secondary schools in Tanzania's Mwanza Region.

Methodology

The pragmatists, like John Dewey, recognize the importance of flexibility in having a multiplicity of perspectives and worldviews in solving research problems. Pragmatist philosophy believes in a quantitative worldview and the subjective experience of stakeholders. The pragmatist paradigm worldview provides an opportunity to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. According to pragmatism, mixed methods enhance the researcher's ability to gain an in-depth understanding of research problems and their solutions (Abouria & Elgeddawy, 2024). In this case, this research study was based on the pragmatism paradigm because it employed mixed methods to determine the indispensability of psychological counseling services as a predictor of school effectiveness in public advanced secondary schools. This research method was considered most appropriate for this research study as it enabled the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative research data, thereby ensuring a comprehensive research understanding.

A convergent parallel design was adapted in this study, in which the researcher converged or merges quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. This is because it enabled the collection of quantitative research data and qualitative research data from the respondents. To select the sample for the study, a mix of sampling strategies was adopted. Simple Random Sampling was used to select the students so that an equal chance of being selected is provided to the participants. Purposive Sampling was used to select the Heads of Schools, School Teacher Counselors, and District Educational Officers based on their positions.

The population of the study was 1076 respondent from three district of the Mwanza region, while one public upper secondary school selected randomly from each district. The researcher calculated the sample size from population by using Slovin's formula with number of margin error of 0.19 means 19%, giving a sample size of 36 including 27 students. Other respondents were 3 school heads, 3 school teacher counsellors and 3 Educational Officers who participated purposively according their status and responsibilities . The research instruments was validated

through piloting study under the supervision of expertise from St. Augustine University of Tanzania department of Education Foundation. During piloting of the study, Data collection methods used included structured questionnaires tagged psychological counselling (PCQ) and School Effectiveness (SEQ) and semi-structured interviews.

The structured questionnaire used had two parts, one for demographic information and another for psychological counseling services and school effectiveness. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale for recording responses. Interviews were conducted with key informants for collecting qualitative and specific data, and observations and document reviews were used as supplements for validating the collected data. For instance, the data collected was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Quantitative data analysis used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 27, which provided descriptive results for the data collected. Reliability calculated using Cronbach's alpha formula coefficient correlation was 0.93 that indicated excellent. On the other hand, qualitative data analysis used thematic and narrative analysis, which included data coding and categorizing. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data provided a comprehensive analysis of the data collected in this study.

Results

Table 1: *Impact of Counselling Services on Students' Behaviour and Academic Success (n = 27)*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	13	48.1
No	9	33.3
I don't know	5	18.6
Total	27	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings in Table 1 indicate that 13 students (48.1%) reported that the implementation of Counselling services had a positive impact on their behaviour and academic success. This suggests that nearly half of the respondents acknowledge the importance of these services in helping them improve their academic performance and personal conduct within the school environment (Rafiq et al., 2022).

However, 9 students (33.3%) indicated that Counselling services had not helped them, which may suggest that some students either do not fully benefit from the services or have limited access to them. This could also imply that the services are not effectively implemented or that some students are not actively involved in the programme (Akdemir, 2023).

Furthermore, 5 students (18.6%) reported that they did not know whether the services had an impact or not. This response may indicate that these students have little awareness of the Counselling programme or have not participated enough to observe their benefits. Therefore,

the findings of the research show that despite the fact that a significant number of students are aware of the positive impact of the school guidance and counseling services, there is still a need to enhance the services as well as the awareness of the students in order to allow them to benefit from the services provided in improving their academic performance and behavior.

Table 2: *The Influence of Psychological Counselling Services on School Effectiveness (n = 27)*

S/N	Issues Addressed Through Guidance and Counselling	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Managing peer pressure	3	11.1
2	Career, professional, and vocational choices awareness	2	7.4
3	Psychological adjustment and management of related issues	3	11.1
4	Academic and social challenges awareness and overcoming	2	7.4
5	Financial trouble and disaster management	2	7.4
6	Behaviour and moral-related issues	2	7.4
7	Controlling intellectual abilities and disabilities	2	7.4
8	Examination fever, anxiety, and phobia management	2	7.4
9	Technological and environmental management	2	7.4
10	Mental health challenges awareness and recovery	4	14.8
11	Self-awareness and maladjustment management	3	11.1
Tot al		27	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 2 presents students' responses regarding the issues addressed through Counselling services in schools. The findings indicate that counselling services support students in addressing different academic, psychological, and social challenges that may affect their academic success and personal development.

Mental health challenges awareness and recovery

The findings show that 4 students (14.8%) indicated that Counselling services in their schools address mental health challenges and recovery. This suggests that mental health support is among the important services provided to students through school counselling programme. During the interview, one respondent explained that:

In many cases students experience emotional stress caused by academic pressure, family problems, and peer conflicts. Through Counselling services, we provide them with a safe

environment where they can openly discuss their challenges and receive professional advice. This support helps them overcome emotional difficulties and concentrate on their studies effectively. (*HoS 1, May 2026*)

This finding indicates that counselling services play an essential role in supporting students' emotional well-being. When students receive psychological support, they are more likely to develop coping mechanisms that help them manage stress and maintain academic focus. This finding is supported by Gysbers and Henderson (2012) who argue that school counselling programme play a crucial role in promoting students' mental health and emotional stability, which contributes to improved academic performance. Similarly, American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019) emphasizes that counselling services help students manage emotional challenges and develop resilience necessary for academic success.

Managing peer pressure

The results further reveal that 3 students (11.1%) indicated that Counselling services help them manage peer pressure. Peer pressure is a common challenge among adolescents, especially in secondary school environments where students are influenced by their peers' behaviors. During the interview, one respondent explained:

Students at this stage of development are easily influenced by their friends. Some students may be tempted to skip classes, engage in risky behaviors, or neglect their academic responsibilities. Counselling programme helps students understand the consequences of such behaviors and guide them to make independent and responsible decisions that support their educational goals. (*STC 1, May 2026*)

This suggests that counselling programme equip students with decision-making and self-control skills that help them resist negative peer influence. According to Santrock (2018), adolescents often face strong peer influence that can affect their behaviour and academic engagement. Effective Counselling programme helps students develop personal responsibility and positive decision-making skills. Similarly, Corey (2017) emphasizes that counselling interventions help young people develop self-confidence and independence in making responsible life choices.

Psychological adjustment and self-awareness

The findings also show that 3 students (11.1%) reported that counselling services support psychological adjustment and self-awareness. This indicates that counselling programme help students understand their emotions, strengths, and weaknesses. During the interview, another respondent argued that:

Counselling sessions help students reflect on their behaviour and understand their emotional reactions to different situations. When students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, they begin to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour, which improves their confidence and academic participation. (*DEO1, May 2026*)

This finding suggests that counselling programme promote personal awareness and emotional control among students. According to Goleman (1995), self-awareness is an essential component of emotional intelligence that helps individuals understand their emotions and

behaviours. Similarly, Yuzarion et al. (2024) argue that students who develop self-awareness are more capable of managing their emotions and improving their academic performance.

Career and academic guidance

The results further show that career awareness and academic challenges were reported by 2 students (7.4%), indicating that counselling services assist students in planning their academic and professional future. During the interview, another respondent stated:

Counselling services are important because they help students understand different academic pathways and career opportunities available after secondary education. When students receive appropriate guidance, they can make informed decisions about their subject combinations and future careers. (*DEO2, May 2026*)

This implies that counselling programme play a critical role in helping students develop realistic career aspirations. According to Herr, Cramer, and Niles (2004), career counselling helps students understand their abilities, interests, and opportunities in the labour market. Similarly, Brown and Lent (2013) emphasize that career guidance programme enable students to make informed educational and occupational choices.

Behavioural and moral development

The findings also indicate that 2 students (7.4%) reported that counselling services address behavioural and moral issues among students. This highlights the role of counselling in promoting discipline and responsible behaviours within the school environment. another respondent argued the following during interview

Through counselling programme, we guide students to understand the importance of discipline, respect, and responsibility. Many behavioural problems in schools arise from lack of guidance, therefore counselling sessions help students develop positive attitudes towards their studies and interactions with others. (*HoS 2, May 2026*)

This finding suggests that counselling services contribute to shaping students' character and promoting positive behaviour. According to Gladding (2018), counselling programme help individuals understand their behaviour and develop positive personal values. Similarly, Sink & Stroh (2003) argue that effective school counselling programme promotes students' behavioural development and academic engagement.

Conclusion

The study concludes that psychological counselling services form a fundamental part of school effectiveness enhancement strategies for public advanced secondary schools within Mwanza Region. This is due to the findings from the research, which suggest that these services have a positive influence on the performance of students, management of their behavior, and overall school environment. The research findings suggest that students who receive such services have shown significant ability to cope with challenges, and schools that have these services have shown significant discipline and engagement. Nevertheless, there is a likelihood that some students have not shown significant benefits from these services, and as such, despite its

significance, psychological counselling services need to be enhanced to realize its full potential as a predictor of school effectiveness.

Recommendations

- v. Schools should develop and strengthen psychological counseling programs in order for all students in schools to access counseling services for their various academic and psychological challenges.
- vi. The government and relevant stakeholders in education should invest in training teachers as professional counselors in order to improve and enhance counseling services in schools.
- vii. Schools should develop awareness programs and orient students on the significance of counseling services in order for them to access and utilize these services.
- viii. Psychological counseling services in schools should be integrated into school systems and management in order for it to be considered a key factor in improving school performance and not supplementary.
- ix. The government and relevant stakeholders in schools should provide enough resources for effective counseling programs in schools.

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