



Does It Matter Who You Are? Demographic Differences in Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Secondary Schools in Vihiga County, Kenya

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Abstract: Guidance and counselling programmes support students' development, but perceptions of their effectiveness may differ across demographic groups. This study examined demographic differences in students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive comparative research design. A total of 287 Form Three students were selected from five secondary schools using stratified, purposive and cluster sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.983, indicating excellent internal consistency. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) summarized students' perceptions, while an independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine differences across demographic groups. The findings revealed that students generally perceived guidance and counselling services as effective in enhancing career readiness ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.72$), personal growth ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.75$) and academic success ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.83$). A statistically significant difference was found in perceptions based on gender, with female students reporting higher effectiveness than male students ($t(285) = -3.29$, $p = .001$). However, no statistically significant differences were observed based on school type ($F(2, 284) = 2.09$, $p = .126$) or residential status ($F(2, 284) = 2.65$, $p = .072$). The study concludes that although guidance and counselling services are generally perceived positively, students' gender influences these perceptions, whereas school type and residential status do not. The study recommends strengthening gender-responsive counselling practices to promote equitable experiences for all learners.

Keywords: guidance and counselling, counselling effectiveness, demographic differences, descriptive comparative.

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1. Introduction

Guidance and counselling programmes have become an integral component of secondary education, providing structured support that promotes students' academic, personal and career development. Contemporary school counselling has evolved from a reactive service designed primarily for students experiencing difficulties to a

comprehensive developmental programme that supports the holistic growth of all learners (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019; Department for Education, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). Through individual counselling, classroom guidance, career planning and psychosocial support, these programmes seek to equip students with the knowledge, skills and resilience required to navigate the challenges of adolescence and make informed educational and career decisions.

The effectiveness of guidance and counselling programmes is often assessed through students' perceptions of the services they receive. Perceived effectiveness reflects learners' experiences with counselling services and influences their willingness to seek support, engage with counsellors and apply the guidance received. Students who perceive counselling services as relevant, trustworthy and beneficial are more likely to utilize them, thereby enhancing the potential for positive educational and developmental outcomes (ASCA, 2019; Wambu & Fisher, 2015). Understanding students' perceptions is therefore essential for evaluating whether guidance and counselling programmes are meeting their intended objectives and for identifying areas requiring improvement.

Although guidance and counselling programmes are intended to serve all learners, students may not experience or perceive these services in the same way. Individual and contextual characteristics can shape learners' experiences with counselling, influencing both service utilization and perceived effectiveness. Gender norms, for example, have been associated with differences in help-seeking behaviour, with male students generally reporting lower willingness to seek counselling than female students. Likewise, differences in school environments, institutional resources and levels of student supervision between public and private schools, as well as boarding and day schools, may influence how learners experience and evaluate guidance and counselling services (Macharia, 2018; Kinyua & Njoka, 2020; Kipkoech & Kyalo, 2019). These variations raise an important question: Does it matter who you are? In other words, do students' demographic characteristics influence how they perceive the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services?

In Kenya, guidance and counselling remains a key component of the education system, supported by the Guidance and Counselling Policy Framework for Basic Education Institutions (Ministry of Education, 2023). Despite this policy commitment, schools continue to face implementation challenges, including inadequate numbers of trained counsellors, competing teaching responsibilities and limited counselling resources, which may influence students' experiences of counselling services (Irungu, 2019; Kavuthai, Maithya, & Kimani, 2024). Understanding students' perceptions of programme effectiveness is therefore essential for informing improvements in guidance and counselling service delivery.

Existing literature has primarily examined the effectiveness, accessibility and implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in schools. However, limited empirical evidence exists on whether students' perceptions of the effectiveness of these programmes differ according to demographic characteristics, particularly within county-specific contexts such as Vihiga County, Kenya. Consequently, it remains unclear whether gender, school type and

residential status influence how students evaluate guidance and counselling services. Addressing this gap is important for informing guidance and counselling programmes that are responsive to the diverse needs and experiences of learners. Therefore, this study examined whether students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services differed across gender, school type and residential status in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although guidance and counselling programmes are widely recognized as an important component of secondary education in Kenya, little is known about whether students from different demographic backgrounds perceive these services in the same way. National policy advocates for equitable guidance and counselling services that meet the needs of all learners regardless of gender, school type or residential status (Ministry of Education, 2023). However, differences in students' experiences, social environments and school contexts may shape how they access, utilize and evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes.

Previous studies have shown that demographic characteristics can influence students' help-seeking behaviour and engagement with counselling services. For example, gender differences have been associated with variations in willingness to seek counselling, while boarding and day school environments may provide different opportunities for accessing counselling support (Macharia, 2018; Wambu & Fisher, 2015). Similarly, disparities in school resources and institutional support may result in different counselling experiences across school categories (Irungu, 2019; Kavuthai, Maithya, & Kimani, 2024). Despite these observations, findings from existing studies remain inconsistent, and it is unclear whether such demographic differences translate into meaningful variations in students' perceptions of counselling effectiveness.

In Vihiga County, guidance and counselling services are implemented across diverse secondary school settings, including boys', girls' and mixed schools, as well as boarding and day institutions of different categories. However, empirical evidence on whether students' perceptions of the effectiveness of these services differ according to demographic characteristics remains limited. As a result, it is still uncertain whether who students are—in terms of their gender, school type or residential status—influences how they perceive the effectiveness of school guidance and counselling programmes.

This study therefore examined whether students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programmes differ across gender, school type and residential status in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. The findings contribute evidence to inform more equitable and responsive guidance and

counselling programmes that address the diverse needs of learners.

1.2 Objective of the Study

To determine whether students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programmes differ according to gender, school type, and residential status in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Students' Perceptions of Guidance and Counselling Effectiveness

The effectiveness of guidance and counselling programmes is commonly assessed through students' perceptions of how well these services meet their academic, personal and career development needs. Counselling programmes are considered effective when learners perceive them as accessible, relevant and responsive to the challenges they experience. Internationally, comprehensive school counselling programmes have been associated with improved student well-being, decision-making and educational adjustment (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019; Abdullah & Marimuthu, 2017). Likewise, Wambu and Fisher (2015) argue that effective school counselling extends beyond disciplinary intervention to promote learners' holistic development through preventive, developmental and career-focused services.

Although guidance and counselling programmes may be implemented using similar frameworks, students do not necessarily experience them in the same way. Their perceptions of programme effectiveness may differ depending on who they are, their individual experiences and the educational contexts within which counselling services are delivered. In Kenya, the effectiveness of guidance and counselling has been linked to counsellor competence, institutional support and programme implementation (Irungu, 2019; Kavuthai, Maithya, & Kimani, 2024). However, less attention has been given to whether students from different demographic backgrounds evaluate these services differently.

2.2 Gender and Perceived Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling

Gender is one of the most widely examined demographic characteristics influencing students' attitudes towards counselling and their willingness to seek professional support. Female students generally demonstrate more positive attitudes towards counselling because they are more likely to express emotional concerns and seek interpersonal support, whereas male students may avoid counselling due to social expectations that encourage emotional restraint and self-reliance (Wambu & Wickman, 2016). Such differences suggest that who students are, in terms of gender, may shape how they

perceive the effectiveness of school counselling programmes.

Research further indicates that the influence of gender is not universal but depends on the prevailing social and cultural environment. In societies that promote greater gender equality, differences in help-seeking behaviour between boys and girls tend to be less pronounced (Goldman & Penner, 2016). Conversely, in more traditional contexts, gender stereotypes may discourage students from accessing counselling services, thereby influencing their perceptions of programme effectiveness (Anouka et al., 2015). These findings imply that students' evaluations of counselling services may reflect not only programme quality but also gender-related experiences and expectations.

2.3 School Type and Perceived Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling

School environments provide different conditions under which guidance and counselling programmes are implemented, making school type a potential influence on students' perceptions of effectiveness. Schools with adequate counselling facilities, trained personnel and supportive administrative structures are generally better positioned to provide comprehensive counselling services that positively influence students' experiences (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2021). In contrast, schools with limited resources often prioritize disciplinary and crisis management roles, reducing opportunities for preventive and developmental counselling (Owens et al., 2014).

These institutional differences suggest that who students are, in terms of the schools they attend, may shape how they evaluate counselling programmes. Within Kenya, disparities in staffing, infrastructure and institutional support continue to influence the implementation of guidance and counselling services across school categories (Wambu & Fisher, 2015; Irungu, 2019). Consequently, students enrolled in different school types may develop varying perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these programmes.

2.4 Residential Status and Perceived Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling

Residential status may also influence how students perceive the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services because boarding and day school environments present different opportunities and challenges. Boarding students generally have greater physical access to counsellors since they spend more time within the school environment. However, limited privacy and continuous interaction with peers may discourage some learners from discussing sensitive personal issues (Johnson & Wang, 2018). Day scholars, on the other hand, may

experience reduced access to counselling because of limited time in school and competing family responsibilities, although they may benefit from stronger family support outside the school setting (Harrison et al., 2017).

These differences suggest that who students are, in terms of their residential status, may shape their experiences with counselling services and, consequently, their perceptions of programme effectiveness. Although both boarding and day students have opportunities to benefit from guidance and counselling, variations in accessibility, school routines and social support systems may influence how useful and effective they perceive these services to be.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive comparative research design to examine whether students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programmes differed according to gender, school type and residential status in secondary schools in Vihiga County, Kenya. The design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to compare mean perceptions across different demographic groups without manipulating the study variables (Creswell, 2014). The study was conducted in Vihiga County, which has 115 public and private secondary schools with an estimated student population of approximately 21,000 learners. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select participating schools and respondents. Schools were first stratified by sub-county and school type to ensure adequate representation across the county. Five secondary schools were then selected, after which cluster sampling was used to select one Form Three stream from each school, yielding a sample of 287 students.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing Likert-scale items measuring students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and

counselling programmes. The questionnaire also captured respondents' demographic characteristics, including gender, school type and residential status. Instrument validity was established through expert review to ensure alignment with the study objectives, while reliability was determined through a pilot study conducted in secondary schools in Kakamega County. The questionnaire yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.983, indicating excellent internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, while independent samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to determine whether statistically significant differences existed in students' perceptions of guidance and counselling effectiveness across the selected demographic characteristics. Ethical principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity were observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained after participants were adequately informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were free to decline or withdraw at any stage without any consequences. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that the information collected was used solely for research purposes and accessed only by the researcher. Anonymity was safeguarded by not collecting participants' names or any other identifying information on the questionnaires.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Academic Success, Personal Growth and Career Readiness

Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Personal Growth

Mean Range Interpretation

3.50 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
2.50 – 3.49	Agree
1.50 – 2.49	Disagree
1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree

Table 1: Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Personal Growth**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have developed better interpersonal relationships through guidance programs.	2873.39	.729	
I feel more valued and included in school because of the counseling programs.	2873.38	.728	
I am able to express my thoughts clearly after receiving counseling support.	2873.36	.675	
I can handle personal challenges more effectively with the advice I receive.	2873.27	.735	
I participate more actively in group activities because of the support from the counselor.	2873.07	.681	
I am more aware of how to respect and support others due to guidance services.	2873.04	.711	
I manage stress better after discussing issues with the school counselor.	2872.75	.828	
I feel more confident managing conflicts with peers due to guidance services.	2872.74	.737	
Overall	3.13	.746	

Table 1 presents students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in promoting personal growth. Overall, students agreed that guidance and counselling programmes positively contributed to their personal development, with an overall mean score of 3.13 (SD = 0.75), indicating a generally favourable perception of the services.

Among the personal growth indicators, students most strongly agreed that guidance and counselling had helped them develop better interpersonal relationships ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.73$), feel more valued and included within the school community ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.73$), and express their thoughts more clearly after receiving counselling support ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.68$). Students also agreed that counselling enabled them to handle personal challenges more effectively ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.74$), participate more actively in group activities ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.68$), and become more aware of respecting and supporting others ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.71$). Comparatively lower, though still positive, ratings were recorded for managing stress after discussing issues with the school counsellor ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.83$) and developing confidence in resolving peer conflicts ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.74$). The relatively larger standard deviations for these two items suggest that students' experiences in these areas were less consistent across the participating schools.

Mean Range Interpretation

3.50 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
2.50 – 3.49	Agree
1.50 – 2.49	Disagree
1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree

These findings indicate that guidance and counselling services are generally perceived as effective in strengthening students' interpersonal relationships, self-expression and sense of belonging, outcomes that are central to positive youth development. This is consistent with Chege and Karanja (2019), who observed that well-implemented school counselling programmes foster learners' social competence and emotional adjustment, and with Mbiti (2016), who reported improvements in students' self-awareness and confidence following participation in counselling programmes. However, the comparatively lower ratings for stress management and conflict resolution suggest that some dimensions of personal growth may not be experienced uniformly by all learners. This raises an important question for the present study: does it matter who you are? Differences in students' backgrounds, such as gender, school type or residential status, may shape how they experience and evaluate these aspects of guidance and counselling, making it necessary to move beyond overall perceptions and examine whether counselling effectiveness is viewed differently across demographic groups.

4.2 Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Academic Success

Table 2: Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Academic Success**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am more focused during classes due to the support I receive.	2873.43	.680	
Counseling has motivated me to improve my school attendance.	2873.28	.823	
Guidance services have helped me identify and overcome learning challenges.	2873.09	.755	
I feel prepared for exams after discussing my study plans with the counselor.	2873.03	.721	
I study more effectively after guidance on learning strategies.	2872.82	.762	
I better understand how to set academic goals through counseling.	2872.74	.918	
I have improved my grades since attending counseling sessions.	2872.61	.798	
The advice from counselors helps me manage my time well.	2872.57	.950	
Overall	2872.95	.831	

Table 2 presents students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in enhancing academic success. Overall, the findings indicate that students perceived guidance and counselling programmes as moderately effective in supporting their academic development, with an overall mean score of 2.95 (SD = 0.83).

Students expressed the strongest agreement that counselling had improved their ability to focus during classroom learning (M = 3.43, SD = 0.68), suggesting that counselling contributes positively to learner concentration and classroom engagement. They also agreed that counselling had motivated them to improve their school attendance (M = 3.28, SD = 0.82), helped them identify and overcome learning challenges (M = 3.09, SD = 0.76), and enabled them to feel better prepared for examinations after discussing study plans with counsellors (M = 3.03, SD = 0.72). Moderate agreement was further recorded for studying more effectively following guidance on learning strategies (M = 2.82, SD = 0.76) and developing a better understanding of academic goal setting through counselling (M = 2.74, SD = 0.92). The lowest ratings were observed for improvement in academic grades following counselling sessions (M = 2.61, SD = 0.80) and the extent to which counsellors' advice helped students manage their time effectively (M = 2.57, SD = 0.95). The relatively higher variability in these latter items suggests that students' experiences with academic counselling differed considerably across the sampled schools.

Mean Range Interpretation

3.50 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
2.50 – 3.49	Agree
1.50 – 2.49	Disagree
1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree

The findings suggest that students perceive guidance and counselling services as contributing more to academic engagement than to direct academic achievement. Counselling appears to strengthen important learning behaviours such as concentration, attendance and the ability to overcome academic challenges, yet students were less convinced that these services translated into measurable improvements in grades, study habits or time management. This pattern is consistent with previous research indicating that school counselling primarily influences academic motivation, engagement and persistence, while improvements in academic performance often require additional instructional and learning support interventions (Mbiti, 2016). Similarly, Wambu and Fisher (2015) reported that guidance and counselling enhances students' academic confidence and educational planning, although its direct influence on academic achievement depends on the quality and consistency of programme implementation. Whether these perceived academic benefits vary according to who the students are remains an important consideration. Differences in gender, school type and residential status may shape how learners experience and evaluate academic counselling, making it necessary to examine whether perceptions of effectiveness are consistent across different demographic groups.

4.3 Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Career Readiness

Table 3: Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Career Readiness

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The school counseling services provide valuable information about job opportunities.	2873	4.6	.624
I know how to search for relevant courses and future opportunities.	2873	4.5	.634
I know how to match my subjects to my career goals because of guidance.	2873	4.3	.660
I have a clear career path in mind due to the guidance provided.	2873	2.3	.718
I feel prepared to make career decisions after speaking with a counselor.	2873	1.0	.748
Counseling sessions have helped me understand my career options.	2873	0.6	.830
Counselors help me understand the skills needed for my desired career.	2873	0.1	.719
I can create a basic career plan thanks to counseling support.	2872	9.4	.687
Overall		3.21	.723

Table 3 presents students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in enhancing career readiness. Overall, students agreed that guidance and counselling programmes contributed positively to their career development, with a composite mean score of 3.21 (SD = 0.72), representing the highest rating among the three domains assessed.

Students reported the highest agreement that school counselling services provided valuable information about job opportunities (M = 3.46, SD = 0.62), enabled them to search for relevant courses and future opportunities (M = 3.45, SD = 0.63), and helped them match their school subjects to their career goals (M = 3.43, SD = 0.66). Students also agreed that guidance services had helped them develop a clear career path (M = 3.23, SD = 0.72), prepare for career decision-making after interacting with counsellors (M = 3.10, SD = 0.75), and better understand available career options (M = 3.06, SD = 0.83). Slightly lower, though still positive, ratings were recorded for counsellors helping students understand the skills required for their desired careers (M = 3.01, SD = 0.72) and assisting them to develop basic career plans (M = 2.94, SD = 0.69). These findings suggest that while students generally perceive counselling programmes as effective in creating career awareness, more individualized support may be needed to strengthen career planning.

The findings indicate that guidance and counselling programmes are perceived to be particularly effective in exposing students to educational and occupational opportunities and in helping them connect their academic choices with future career aspirations. However, students appeared less certain about their ability to translate this knowledge into concrete career plans, suggesting that career guidance in the participating schools may place greater emphasis on career awareness than on structured career planning. These findings are consistent with Chege and Karanja (2019), who observed that school counselling enhances learners' career awareness and informed decision-making by providing information on educational pathways and employment opportunities. Similarly, Wambu and Fisher (2015) reported that guidance programmes improve students' understanding of career options, although personalized career planning and career management skills often receive less attention during programme implementation. Whether these positive perceptions of career readiness are experienced equally by all students is another important question addressed in this study.

4.4 Differences in Students' Perceptions of Guidance and Counselling Effectiveness across Demographic Variables

Gender

Table 4: Significant Differences Based on Gender

Independent Samples Test		
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	Test for	t-test for Equality of Means

								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower Upper
Effectiveness	Equal variances assumed	.672	.413	3.286	285	.001	-.05501	.01674	-.08796 -.02206
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.303	282.430	.001	-.05501	.01665	-.08779 -.02223

From Table 4, An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there were significant gender-based differences in students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between male ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.14$) and female students ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.15$), $t(285) = -3.29$, $p = .001$. Female students reported higher mean ratings of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services compared to male students. This pattern aligns with previous research indicating that female students are generally more receptive to and engaged with school counselling programs than male students. According to Wambu and Fisher (2015), girls tend to view guidance and counselling services as supportive spaces for addressing both academic and psychosocial concerns. Similarly, Kithuka (2019) observed that female learners are more likely to seek help, express personal challenges and value emotional support offered by counsellors. This greater openness and willingness to engage with counselling services may explain their higher effectiveness ratings.

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was not significant ($F = 0.672$, $p = .413$), confirming the

assumption of equal variances. The mean difference ($-.055$) suggests a small but statistically meaningful difference in how male and female students perceive the role of counselling services in supporting their academic, personal and career development. These findings imply that female students may feel slightly more positively impacted by the counselling services provided in their schools than their male counterparts. From a practical perspective, this suggests that school counselling programs might be more effectively reaching or resonating with female students. Male students may face cultural, social, or personal barriers to fully engaging in counselling services, including perceptions of help-seeking as a sign of weakness (Chege & Karanja, 2019). Targeted sensitization and gender-responsive counselling strategies could therefore help bridge this gap and ensure equitable access and impact. Since the p -value (.001) is less than .05, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant difference in students' perceptions of effectiveness of guidance and counselling services based on gender. This finding triangulates with qualitative observations from open-ended responses in which female students more frequently reported positive interactions with school counsellors and valued career and personal development guidance.

School Type

Table 5: Significant Differences Based on School Type

ANOVA					
Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.086	2	.043	2.087	.126
Within Groups	5.824	284	.021		
Total	5.910	286			

As illustrated in Table 5, A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether students' perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services differed significantly based on the type of school

attended (Boys', Girls', or Mixed). The mean scores for the three school types were: Boys' Schools ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.14$), Girls' Schools ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.15$), and Mixed Schools ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.14$)

The ANOVA revealed no statistically significant difference in the ratings across school types, $F(2, 284) = 2.09$, $p = .126$. Although the highest mean was recorded among students from Girls' Schools, post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test confirmed that the differences between all school types were not statistically significant (all $p > .05$). For example, the difference between Girls' and Boys' Schools was not significant ($p = .120$), and similarly for other pairwise comparisons. This indicates that, while minor variations exist, students across all school types generally perceive the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services similarly. This finding is consistent with prior studies suggesting that the structure and objectives of guidance and counselling programs in Kenyan secondary schools are largely standardized across school types (Wambu & Fisher, 2015; Chege & Karanja, 2019). Since guidance services are often implemented under the same Ministry of Education guidelines and are delivered by trained

Residential Status

teacher-counsellors, it is not surprising that students' perceptions of effectiveness do not vary significantly between Boys', Girls', and Mixed schools. Since the p -value (.126) is greater than .05, the null hypothesis is retained. There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of effectiveness of guidance and counselling services across school types. From an implementation standpoint, this suggests that the accessibility and delivery of guidance and counselling services may not be strongly influenced by school composition. In practice, the Ministry's centralized approach through policy circulars and standardized guidance frameworks may contribute to uniformity in students' experiences. However, the slightly higher mean in Girls' Schools could still reflect subtle differences in program uptake aligning with earlier gender-based findings that female students may be more open to and engaged with counselling programs.

Table 6: Significant Differences Based on Residential Status

ANOVA					
Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.108	2	.054	2.650	.072
Within Groups	5.801	284	.020		
Total	5.910	286			

In Table 6, A one-way ANOVA was also used to examine whether perceptions of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services varied based on residential status: day students ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.15$), boarding students ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.14$), and students in the "other" category ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.15$).

The ANOVA showed that these differences were not statistically significant, $F(2, 284) = 2.65$, $p = .072$. Despite the slightly higher ratings from students in the "other" category, post hoc Tukey HSD analysis found no significant differences among any of the three residential status groups ($p > .05$ across all comparisons). This suggests that students' living arrangements do not significantly influence how they perceive the effectiveness of counselling services in their schools. This lack of significant difference may be attributed to the standardized implementation of guidance and counselling programs across schools, regardless of whether students are day scholars or boarders. In most Kenyan secondary schools, counselling services are delivered through a combination of formal scheduled sessions and informal access during school hours. This uniformity may minimize variations in students' experiences (Wambu & Fisher, 2015). Furthermore,

many boarding and day students are exposed to similar school environments during academic hours, which could explain the convergence in their perceptions. Since the p -value (.072) is greater than .05, the null hypothesis is retained. There is no significant difference in students' perceptions of effectiveness of guidance and counselling services based on residential status. From a practice perspective, this finding suggests that living arrangements do not present a major structural barrier to accessing or benefiting from guidance and counselling services. However, the slightly higher mean among students in the "other" category which may include those in hybrid arrangements or under special programs could reflect greater flexibility or different engagement patterns with counsellors. This aligns with research indicating that the intensity of interaction with guidance personnel can vary based on students' daily schedules and responsibilities (Chege & Karanja, 2019).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study established that students in secondary schools in Vihiga County generally perceive guidance and

counselling programmes as effective in supporting their personal growth, academic success and career readiness, with career readiness receiving the highest overall rating, followed by personal growth and academic success. Students particularly valued counselling for enhancing interpersonal relationships, career awareness, classroom focus and school attendance, although relatively lower ratings were recorded for stress management, conflict resolution, time management, grade improvement and structured career planning. The study further demonstrated that who students are matters to some extent in how they perceive counselling effectiveness. Female students reported significantly more positive perceptions than male students, while no statistically significant differences were observed based on school type or residential status. These findings suggest that although guidance and counselling programmes are generally benefiting students across different school contexts, greater attention should be given to gender-responsive approaches and to strengthening the academic and psychosocial components of counselling to ensure that all learners derive comparable benefits.

5.2 Recommendations

From the findings, the following recommendations were established.

1. School counsellors should adopt gender-responsive counselling approaches that encourage greater participation among male students and address barriers that may discourage them from seeking counselling services.
2. School administrators should regularly assess students' perceptions of guidance and counselling services across different demographic groups to identify disparities and improve the inclusiveness of programme delivery.
3. The Ministry of Education should provide continuous professional development for teacher-counsellors on inclusive, learner-centred and gender-sensitive counselling practices to ensure equitable support for all students.
4. Future research should explore the factors underlying the observed gender differences in students' perceptions of guidance and counselling effectiveness and examine other demographic variables that may influence counselling outcomes.

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