

# Effectiveness of School Counseling program Based on counseling Activities to Support Mental Health among Basic School Pupils.

Case study Zalingei city- Central Darfur State – Sudan

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## Abstract

The study was conducted during 2013 in Zalingei City - Sudan; the aim of study was to investigate the effectiveness of school counseling program based on counseling activities to support mental health. The researcher used the descriptive statistic method, Questioner technique is used as method of data collection in addition school counseling's program prepared by the researcher. Study group was formed from basic school pupils, (40) pupils were selected randomly from study group as a sample. The data was analyzed by using SPSS program, the results are following: The level of mental health among basic level school is lower, and it significant at the level (0.05), the school counseling program based on counseling activities is effectiveness, and have impact on mental health as supporter, it significant at the level (0.05).the school counseling program based on counseling activities is effectiveness, and it reduce the mental illness symptoms.

**Key word:** Effectiveness, counseling Activities, Support.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Diagnosing a mental health condition can only be done by a qualified health professional. However, some symptoms may raise awareness that there is a concern brewing. Knowing more about the symptoms of various mental health conditions, and how they are diagnosed, can help you better understand if you or a loved one is in need of help.

School counselors provide counseling programs in three critical areas: academic, Personal/social and career. Their services and programs help students resolve emotional, social or behavioral problems and help them develop a clearer focus or sense of direction. School counselors, like all educational Professionals, are increasingly being required to demonstrate evidence of effective practice. School counselors in collaborative efforts can implement both systemic and programmatic changes in schools and communities to prevent students from dropping out of school (Cheek and et al, 2002). School counselors have proven effective in preventing students from committing suicide (Jones, 2001). according to the American School Health Association, the maximum recommended student/counselor ratio is 250:1(Institute of Medicine (1997). Also based to the U.S. Department of Education, the current U.S. average student/counselor ratio is 488:1. The ratio is more than 1,000:1 in some schools. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Basic school counselors influenced their students' future plans by encouraging them to have high expectations (Mau& Calvert, 1998)

Health and mental health care services can play an important role in psychological prevention at all levels (basic, secondary and university), including preventing problem behaviors from developing; identifying and serving specific, at-risk populations; and reducing the deleterious effects of psychological disorders on victims and witnesses (Schaefer & Ginsberg. (2003).

Effective counseling programs are important to the school climate and a crucial element in improving student achievement. The most effective prevention programs start with younger students and portray suicide as a mental health problem, not a dramatic way of ending a life. It is essential that counselors involve the parents of troubled students in the counseling process. (Jones, 2001). Based on Institute of Medicine research, it has concluded that mental health and psychological services were essential for many students to achieve academically, and recommended that such services be considered mainstream, and not optional.

Counseling services support teachers in the classroom and enable teachers to provide quality instruction designed to assist students in achieving high standards. Students in schools that provide counseling services indicated that their classes were less likely to be interrupted by other students, and that their peers behaved better in school. Mullis, F. & Otwell, P. 1997).

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## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Following is a collection of sources that address the effectiveness of school counseling and other student support services, including their contribution to the personal and academic success of students, several studies did by Sink and Stroh (2003) found that elementary guidance activities have a positive influence on elementary students' academic achievement. Studies of Hayes & et al (2002) on high school attrition indicate that preventive counseling, occurring before students are in crisis, reduces the risk of these students dropping out later. In study of Boutwell & Myrick. (1992) on the effects of a small group counseling approach for failing elementary school students, 83 percent of participating students showed improvement in grades. School counseling programs have significant influence on discipline problems. Baker and Gerler (2001) reported that students who participated in a school counseling program had significantly less inappropriate behaviors and more attitudes that are positive toward school than those students who did not participate in the program. Lapan & et al (1997) found in their study that Students who have access to counseling programs reported being more positive and having greater feelings of belonging and safety in their schools. Lapan & et al (2003) pointed that school counselors are very effective in assisting children in the area of career development. Robinson. & et al (1991) found that school counseling programs designed to teach students peer mediation skills are highly effective. In fact, studies show that students trained in peer mediation use these skills in other settings. A study Sutton, & Fall. (1995) shows that school counselor effectiveness was influenced by school climate. In schools with effective counseling programs, principals generally provided enthusiastic support for the programs and encouragement to the counselors. Another common element was a clear understanding between counselors and administrators as to the goals of the school counseling programs. These conditions were generally not present in ineffective programs. Study done by Borders & Drury (1992) shows that effective counseling programs are based on human development theories. Program content, goals, and interventions should reflect this theoretical foundation. A developmental program is proactive and preventive, helping students acquire the knowledge, skills, self-awareness, and attitudes necessary for successful mastery of normal developmental tasks. Developmentally based

programs increase the visibility of the counseling program and ensure that more students are served. There is also substantial empirical evidence that these programs promote student development and academic success.

In study of Boutwell & Myrick on the effects of a small group counseling approach for failing elementary school students, 83 percent of participating students showed improvement in grades.

Others studies address the effectiveness of school counseling on mental health symptoms as individually, study of Cook & Kaffenberger (2003) found that school counseling interventions have reported success for helping students reduce test anxiety. Another study done by Omizo, & Omizo, (1988) reported that group counseling provided by school counselors' significantly decreased participants' aggressive and hostile behaviors. Study of Hanish & Guerra (2000) indicated that school counselors were effective in reducing victimization by assisting victimized children, reducing bullying behaviors, and modifying the school climate and structure. (Lapan, & et al, Y. 1997). Found those students who have access to counseling programs reported being more positive and having greater feelings of belonging and safety in their schools.

The study problem, is school counseling program based on counseling activities can support mental health among basic schools pupils. So that the study sought to:

- 1- Examine the effectiveness of school counseling program based on counseling activities to support mental health.
- 2- Identify and explain the level of mental health among basic school pupils.
- 3- To know what is most psychological symptoms supported by school counseling program.
- 4- To know what is the influence of displacement conditioning on mental health.

To verify these aims the following question should be answering:

- 1- What is the level of mental health among basic school pupils?
- 2- What is effectiveness of school counseling program based on counseling activities to support the mental health?
- 3- What is Effectiveness of school counseling based on counseling activities to reduce the mental illness symptoms?

### **3. MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

**3.1 Research Method:** In this study, the descriptive analytic research technique was used. The technique consists of validated international scale.

**3.2 Study group:** The group formed from basic level pupils in Zalingei city, Central Darfur State-Sudan, that numbered about (500) male, the average of age about 13.6 distributed in seven and eight grades.

**3.3 Sample technic:** the research used the followed the random sample method, the questionnaire was answered by (40) pupils (20) male and (20) female, during fall 2013-2014 (academic period) from two different grade: (20) from grade eighth and (20) from grade seventh.

**3.4 Tools Technique:** the researcher used two tools as following:

**3.4.1 Mental health scales:** formed by (70) item designed by the researcher, this items were distributed in different constructs that are; self-adjustment, anxiety, depression, hysteria, psychosomatic disorders, family adjustment and social adjustment. The scales was constructed considering different already -validated international scales. With the objective of obtaining a trustworthy list of questions, some opinions from experts in this topic were collected. The pilot tests in a random sub-sample of the basic school community were made. The results were analyzed and adjustments in form and format were made. Cronbach's alpha coefficient stability was (0.93).

**3.4.2 Counseling's activities:** formed by five activities designed by the researcher, this activities were distributed in different parts that are; drawing and coloring, sport competitions (football),

drama, art competitions, and singing and pome, with the objective of obtaining a trustworthy, counseling activities distributed to fourth experts who have the long experience in counseling program, according to view of experts the counseling activities developed.

**3.5 Practical Procedures:** The principle of voluntarism was the precondition of participating in study. For the scales, an explanation was prepared. The goal of the research and how the study would be carried out were clearly stated in it. In addition, it was emphasized that the identities of the participants would remain confidential. Consoling activities introduced during (20) counseling class and took place about three month. The researcher applied the scale two times before introduced the counseling activities and after it.

#### 4. RESULTS:

After analyzed the data the result are as following:

##### 4.1 What is the level of mental health among basic school pupils?

To answer this question the researcher used one sample T-test and table (1) shows the level of mental health among basic school pupils.

When the researcher compare the average (50.3) with the average arithmetic (70), he found that average arithmetic less than average premise as phrases as in table (1), and this difference is significant at the level (0.05), because the level of significant greater than SIG, and this means that the level of mental health among basic level school is lower.

##### 4.2 What is effectiveness of school counseling program based on counseling activities to support the mental health?

To answer this question the researcher used independent sample T-test and table (2) shows the effectiveness of school counseling program based on counseling activities to support the mental health.

When the researcher compare the mean of before measurement (65.3) with the mean of after measurement (95.9), he found that mean of after measurement greater than mean of before measurement as in table (2), this difference is significant at the level (0.05), because the level of significant greater than SIG (0.006), and this means that the school counseling program based on counseling activities is effectiveness, and have impact on mental health as supporter.

##### 4.3 What is Effectiveness of school counseling based on counseling activities to reduce the mental illness symptoms?

To answer this question the researcher used independent sample T-test and table (3) shows the effectiveness of school counseling program based on counseling activities to reduce the mental illness symptoms.

When the researcher compare the mean of before measurement for all symptoms (9.3, 8.6, 10.3, 9.5, 8.5, and 10.3) with the mean of after measurement for all symptoms (13.5, 10.2, 13.6, 12.2, 11.6, and 12.3), he found that means of after measurement for all symptoms are greater than means of before measurement, this difference is significant at the level (0.05), because the level of significant (0.05) greater than SIG (0.007, 0.006, 0.008, 0.004, 0.04, and 0.03) in all symptoms, this is means that the school counseling program based on counseling activities is effectiveness, and it reduce the mental illness symptoms.

##### 4.6 Tables show the results:

Table (1) shows the level of mental health among basic school pupils

Variable	Mean	S.D	T	SIG	Result
Mental health	65.3	13.205	12.621	0.001	significant

**S.D** = Standard deviation; **T**= T value; **SIG** = sigma value.

Table (2) shows the effectiveness of school counseling program based on counseling activities to support the mental health

Measure	Mean	S.D	T	SIG	Result
Before counseling program application	65.3	1.023	5.6	0.006	significant
After counseling program application	95.9	2.54			

**S.D** = Standard deviation; **T**= T value; **SIG** = sigma value

Table (3) shows the effectiveness of school counseling program based on counseling activities to reduce the mental illness symptoms.

Symptoms	Measure	Mean	S.D	T	SIG	Result
Psychosomatic	Before application	9.3	0.53	6.6	0.007	Significant
	After application	13.5	0.85			
Hysteria	Before application	8.6	0.64	4.3	0.006	Significant
	After application	10.2	0.85			
Anxiety	Before application	10.3	1.2	3.2	0.008	Significant
	After application	13.6	1.02			
Self-Adjustment	Before application	9.5	0.93	4.11	0.004	Significant
	After application	12.1	0.84			
Depression	Before application	8.5	0.55	2.63	0.04	Significant
	After application	11.6	1.32			
Social-Adjustment	Before application	10.3	0.65	2.84	0.03	Significant
	After application	12.3	1.32			

**S.D** = Standard deviation; **T**= T value; **SIG** = sigma value

## 5. DISCUSSION:

When the data analyzed it revealed that;

**5.1 The level of mental health among basic school pupils is lower**, because of this we conducted this study, the reasons of lower mental health the conditioning of sample community, Darfur state place of sample community suffered and still suffering from war and civil conflict, this wars and conflicts effected in psychological condition, and mental health, because some of them living in camps, other losing theirs family. Unfortunately, mental health care services are often not available or are under-utilized, particularly in developing countries like Sudan (community study), In developed countries, the treatment gap ranges from 44% to 70%. In addition In these countries, limited knowledge about mental illness can prevent individuals from recognizing mental illness and seeking treatment; poor understanding of mental illness also impairs families' abilities to provide adequate care for mentally ill relatives, The majority of individuals with an untreated severe mental illness did not seek care because they believed they did not have a condition that required treatment. The researcher pointed that the community of study suffering from economic problem because majority of them live in camps, that means have power income, Those with low incomes are more likely to suffer from poor mental health and poverty effectively causing or contributing to poor mental health. Observationally, both individual and neighborhood deprivation increase the risk of poor general and mental health. The rates of admission for acute psychiatric care tend to be higher in deprived areas. So that having mental illness has a number of adverse effects on the ability to earn; when unwell, it is more difficult to study and to achieve qualifications, it is more difficult to get a job - mental illness carries a heavy social stigma. Of people actively seeking employment, the

rate of unemployment is much lower amongst those without any medical problems than it is amongst those with physical disability. Those with mental disability face even greater difficulty. It is more difficult to hold down a job - a person with mental illness may need intermittent and unpredictable time off when the illness needs more intense treatment, because of this the researcher designed the school consoling program based on counseling activities.

**5.2 The school counseling program based on counseling activities is effectiveness, and have impact on mental health as supporter.** This result in line with study of Sink and Stroh (2003) it found that elementary guidance activities have a positive influence on elementary students' academic achievement, study of Hayes & et al (2002) on high school attrition indicate that preventive counseling, occurring before students are in crisis, reduces the risk of these students dropping out later. In study of Boutwell & Myrick. (1992) on the effects of a small group counseling approach for failing elementary school students, 83 percent of participating students showed improvement in grades. School counseling programs have significant influence on discipline problems. Baker and Gerler (2001) reported that students who participated in a school counseling program had significantly less inappropriate behaviors and more attitudes that are positive toward school than those students who did not participate in the program. Lapan & et al (1997) found in their study that Students who have access to counseling programs reported being more positive and having greater feelings of belonging and safety in their schools. Lapan & et al (2003) pointed that school counselors are very effective in assisting children in the area of career development. . A study Sutton, & Fall. (1995) shows that school counselor effectiveness was influenced by school climate. In schools with effective counseling programs, principals generally provided enthusiastic support for the programs and encouragement to the counselors. Another common element was a clear understanding between counselors and administrators as to the goals of the school counseling programs. These conditions were generally not present in ineffective programs.

The researcher pointed that schools with more fully implemented model guidance programs had students who were more likely to report that (a) they had earned higher grades, (b) their education was better preparing them for the future, (c) their school made more career and college information available to them, and (d) their school had a more positive climate (greater feelings of belonging and safety at school, classes less likely to be interrupted, peers behaving better). After removing the variables of school enrollment size, socioeconomic status, and percentage of minority students in attendance, positive program effects were identifiable. So that the researcher pointed to the important roles school counselors play in promoting the central educational goals of their schools and support a comprehensive guidance program focus for university counseling faculty who train school counselors.

**5.3 The school counseling program based on counseling activities is effectiveness, and have reduce the mental illness symptoms.** This result is in line with study of Cook & Kaffenberger (2003) found that school counseling interventions have reported success for helping students reduce test anxiety. Another study done by Omizo, & Omizo, (1988) reported that group counseling provided by school counselors' significantly decreased participants' aggressive and hostile behaviors. Study of Hanish & Guerra (2000) indicated that school counselors were effective in reducing victimization by assisting victimized children, reducing bullying behaviors, and modifying the school climate and structure. (Lapan, & et al, Y. 1997). Found those students who have access to counseling programs reported being more positive and having greater feelings of belonging and safety in their schools.

The researcher show that school counseling interventions have a substantial impact on students' educational and personal development. Individual and small-group counseling, classroom guidance, and consultation activities seem to contribute directly to students' success in the classroom and beyond. School counselors should spend the majority of their time performing these interventions. Coordination activities should be confined to those that improve the program's efficiency and accountability. In addition Mental illness can be treated. When someone first starts to develop symptoms of mental illness, it is important to contact a psychological or a community mental health service for help,

## 6. Recommendations:

One of the main recommendations of the need to create centers of counseling in educational institutions, the need to introduce programs of psychological counseling in schools basically like many Arab countries, the importance of introducing school activity to reduce the tension and activating the role of the teacher in solving problems, the need for training courses teacher in the field of psychological counseling.

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