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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# AN EVALUATION INTO UTILIZATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES BY STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH SUDAN. A STUDY CARRIED OUT IN UNIVERSITY OF JUBA AND UPPER NILE UNIVERSITY

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## INTRODUCTION

South Sudan having gone through a 21 years grueling war of independence emerged successfully as a sovereign state in July 2011. Like any other nation in the world, the country has put every ounce of effort in establishing social structures to be at the same level with other nations in the region. Currently, South Sudan is the newest member of the East African Community having successfully gained full membership of the IGAD. The nation has been building systems to match those of the region like education system which grossly suffered also in the subsequent wars that broke out in 2013/14 and 2016. Today, the country boasts of 5 public universities namely University of Juba, Upper Nile University, Dr. John Garang

Memorial University of Science and Technology, University of Bahr-El-Ghazal in Wau and Rumbek University. Over the last 8 years, the country has seen an influx of private universities and others are currently seeking registration by Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Education in South Sudan has suffered several setbacks due to persistent insecurity in several parts of the country, economic recession in the country leading to inadequate funding and low remuneration of teaching staff, difficult transition from former and varied curricular used before and after independence to the New Sudan curriculum, inadequate preparation of teachers to implement the recommended curriculum, among others. According to South Sudan Curriculum Framework, students should be taught not only academic and vocational subjects but also university programme which among others Careers

Guidance and Community Involvement both at primary and secondary university levels. This Framework however is specific on Primary and Secondary levels of education. The proposal in the curriculum framework is feasible but it failed to take into consideration certain prerequisites for success of the proposal. Among them are teacher-counselors' adequate preparation through training in G&C in order to be able to handle students personal and academic issues, proper motivation of heads of departments of counseling in their schools and be well remunerated, support in material resources to make G&C department functional as well as reduction in teaching workload to enable them have adequate time to schedule G&C sessions with their students. This study seeks to uncover the level of students' uptake of G&C services in their universities and the reasons that make the service successful or otherwise in handling student's issues.

**Background of the study:** Guidance and counseling are social service that has gained popularity in educational settings in the last three decades especially in Africa although this existed way back in Western world. In higher education especially, G/C has proved not only necessary but a much-needed service to complement other learning activities. Rintaugu and Ngalamu (2021) notes that students encounter different personal/psychological, academic and socio-economic problems and/or maladjustment, which directly or indirectly affect the quality of education and such problems need the interventions of counseling which is appropriate for the adjustment of the individual in the teaching-learning process. According to Melgosa (2001), the rationale to offer guidance and counseling services to University students is clear. The university years is a periods of academic, social, personal, emotional and intellectual growth for students. By resolving physical, emotional, social and academic difficulties of the students and by helping students understand their learning strengths and weaknesses; their academic achievement can be improved and their overall development can be enhanced. (Himane Chaudhary, 2018). Beside this, the increasing complexities in the society, industrial and technological development, changes of educational system and increasing number of students necessitates the provision of effective guidance and counseling service more than ever before.

Guidance is the process of a dynamic interpersonal relationship that is prepared to influence the person's attitude and follow-up behavior. Learners experience psycho-social problems especially as they transit into university life. Such problems can potentially disrupt their academic, inter-personal and campus-life adjustments (Njeri, Ndungo & Wango 2010) citing International Association of Students Affairs and Services Professionals, 2001). It also aims at assisting students in fulfilling their basic physiological needs, understanding oneself and acceptance of others, developing associations with peers, balancing between permissiveness and controls in the educational setting, realizing successful achievement, and providing opportunities to gain independence (Himane Chaudhary, 2018). The aim of this research paper therefore, is to assess the level of uptake of G/C services in public universities in South Sudan with the aim of making recommendations that can make the service to be provided more efficiently and increase accessibility and availability of the service to all students that need it.

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of the study is to investigate the adequacy of guidance and counseling (G&C)

services in public universities in the Republic of South Sudan. The study takes cognizance of the fact that the South Sudan Curriculum Framework, states that students should be taught not only academic and vocational subjects but also programmes that include Physical activities and sports. Personal development and Life Skills programmes like guidance and counselling, Careers guidance and Community involvement and Peace Education. This Framework however is specific on Primary and Secondary levels of education. This study seeks to uncover the kind of counseling services that are offered to students in Universities, how suitable they are and in case of any challenges encountered in providing the service, how are they resolved.

### Objectives of the study

- To examine if there are G&C services available to be offered to students in public universities in the Republic of South Sudan.
- To evaluate the suitability of G&C services offered to students in public universities in Republic of South Sudan.
- To assess the kind of challenges faced in implementing G&C programme in public universities in Republic of South Sudan.
- Suggest ways in which challenges faced in offering G&C services in public universities in Republic of South Sudan can be resolved.

### Questions

- Are there Guidance and Counseling services offered to students in public universities in the Republic of South Sudan?
- How suitable are Guidance and Counseling offered in public universities in RoSS?
- What are the challenges that may be faced by public universities in rendering G&C services?
- How can challenges faced by public universities in rendering G&C services be addressed?

**Significance of the study:** Findings of this study will aid public universities in taking arrangements on scaling up the services for increased uptake by the students. The study will provide necessary information needed by public universities in South Sudan to make relevant decisions related to what guidance and counseling services to provide, how the service should be provided and how to factor in counseling time in the university teaching program. Such information would assist the university counselors to be more effective in the execution of their duties, thereby maximizing their benefit to the students. Findings here would help Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in coming up with policies that govern provision of G/C services in public universities. Finally, this would open the research space for would-be-researchers in this field to investigate other aspects of G/C like level and adequacy of training of university counselors, attitude of service consumers and their level of awareness in relation to service uptake in universities.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

**G & C services in higher education institutions:** Guidance & counselling are twin concepts and have emerged as essential

elements of every educational activity. Developed countries have been able to implement the two effectively for example the United States of America, whereby, G&C in the universities performs its function according to their definition although in most cases they are handled by the same office and personnel. Tina and Ugochukwu (2014) notes that the word, guidance and counselling have been used either individually or synonymously by various authors; as a result, many texts interchangeably use the term guidance for counselling and vice versa. "The terms guidance and counseling are like two sides of the same coin though there has been a tendency to use them interchangeably. Mubanga (2014) cites UNESCO (1998) which defines guidance as a process, developmental in nature, by which an individual is assisted to recognize their potentials". Muribwathoho (2003) citing Chuenyane (1990) asserts that a guidance programme is designed to facilitate personal, social, educational and vocational choices and decision-making. It aims at enabling and empowering pupils to recognize their strengths and limitations, to make appropriate choices and decisions in order to realize their potential and become self-fulfilled, productive and responsible citizens. Kinra (2008) defined them as an interaction process co-joining the counselee, who is vulnerable and who needs assistance and the counsellor who is trained and educated to give this assistance, the goal being to help the counselee learn to deal more effectively with himself and the reality of his environment. The role of both G&C is to produce a balanced physical, psychological, emotional, social & spiritual growth in an individual.

Rintaugu (2018) points out the goals of counselling as facilitating behaviour change, enhancing coping skills, promoting decision-making, improving relationships and facilitating the client's potential. It is a personalized and individualised process for helping the individual to learn and acquire habits, skills, attitudes and interests which make him a normally adjusted being. Therefore, it is evident that the process and goals of guidance and counselling is to help the client move towards a greater level of self understanding and self - acceptance. Türküm, (2007) observes that University life provides the youth with rich opportunities in terms of gaining independence, discovering their own potentials, self-development, job acquisition, improvement of living conditions and preparation for the next development period. They continue to argue that universities undertaking to train qualified human resource, should also find the source of their problems and seek remedies for the development of their personalities as well as giving their students' knowledge, skills, ideals and good habits. A university environment is a setting having demands and expectations a person cannot get through with the values, attitudes and habits he has gained until that day.

In higher education mostly universities, G/C is always under the Deanship of student Affairs with staffing with trained and well experienced counselor(s) to handle the Department. Besides handling career guidance, the college counselor is also supposed to psychological guidance, academic, psychological, social, personal, economic, health, physical, vocational and spiritual issues. A well-trained and effective university counselor is able to help prepare students for academic, career, and social challenges through relating their university success with the potential success of their future lives. They are a sympathetic ear for the same students to come to when necessary.

University counselors also provide support to teachers by serving an important part of the complete team that addresses the educational goals and needs of their students. They can help plan classroom and group activities that meet the students' needs (Wango, G. M. 2015).

**Why G&C in education institutions?:** The rationale for introducing guidance and counseling services at schools was to provide personal contact and help for a pupil in his development. Shertzer and Stone (1981) lists factors that necessitated the provision of specialized university guidance and counselling service: Changes in the structure of society, pregnancies of unmarried teenagers, early marriages, drug and alcohol abuse, the escalation of juvenile delinquency, lack of knowledge concerning the use of leisure time and pressure on traditional values and norms. Kinra (2008) notes that one aspect of vocational counseling is educational counseling. Activities such as orientation, assistance to cope with exam anxiety and development of efficient study skills in educational counseling make it easy for students to know the educational institutions they attend, to see the courses they will study and the practices they will perform as a whole, to get used to the academic setting in a shorter time and to adopt to the environment more. Such educational PCG services provide students with the opportunity to make use of their energy and time more efficiently. Similarly, Adane (2016) observes that the major goals of university guidance and counseling are to promote personal growth and to prepare students to become motivated workers and responsible citizens. Educators recognize that in addition to intellectual challenges, students encounter personal/social, educational, and career challenges. University guidance and counseling programs need to address these challenges and to promote educational success. Gitonga (1999) observes that guidance and counselling programme is geared to meeting the objectives listed below:-

i) Assist students to appraise their abilities and free their capacities to learn, enable students to explore their objectives;

- Provide help to students with personal problems that hinder academic progress; help individuals with psychological problems to voluntarily change their behaviour; enable students to make wise decisions, clarify their ideas, perceptions, attitudes and goals; and ensure discipline in schools by assisting students with disruptive behaviours, deal with the high dropout rate in schools, youth unemployment, university violence and vandalism, the inability of individuals to make a realistic career choice. Utilization of G/C in South Sudan universities has to do with availability of the service, accessibility of the service to students who are the primary consumers, competence of the staff involved, effectiveness of the programme to address the students needs, awareness about the service to the university community as well as appraisal of the programme. According to Kamuny R.N. (2016), some of the needs that G&C can address in higher education includes giving information about efficient study skills, assisting them to cope with exam anxiety, dealing with students with current problems and providing individual psychological counseling service if required, assisting those who are discontent with the program they have started and want to transfer to another program in field selection, creating opportunities for extracurricular activities and giving information about the existing ones, providing job seeking skills to senior students to enable them to find a job when they graduate, organizing group counseling to help them create a healthy identity and values system, helping them establish clubs and communities

and enabling them to develop a healthy vocational self-concept to make it possible for them to be able to be successful in their fields.

#### **Challenges faced in providing G&C in public universities:**

Many studies have been carried out on the area of challenges faced in providing university counseling. Sampling just a few, the consensus is that it has not been an easy task so far in many educational institutions in their quest to provide quality G&C. It is possibly because in most countries, G&C is a relatively new area compared to other university curriculum areas. In relation to the above therefore, in a study carried out by Deneke (2014) on effectiveness of University G&C services, student-respondents said that its effectiveness is reduced due to the limited amount of time given to such activities as group counseling. A Study carried out by Lwazi (2016) shows that a matter of concern is the issue of lack of expertise in teachers who teach guidance and counseling. There is the issue of lack of resources, as there is very little literature on guidance and counseling, which makes it difficult for teachers to effectively implement some of the programs. This is confirmed further by Kamunyu (2016) in a study of G&C in secondary schools who noted that the problem in the provision of guidance and counseling is related with the quality of human resource. It is essential to have well trained and experienced counselor(s) in secondary universities for effective utilization of the service. Lack of counseling facilities, that is, lack of proper infrastructure also impend the implementation of the guidance and counseling programs in universities.

For G&C to achieve its objectives, it must be adequate in terms of quality and quantity, the latter regarding student-counselor ratio and time set aside for the service. It should be suitable in terms of the program design and administration in order to meet the needs of the learners adequately. However, the case is different because according to Rintaugu (2018), in South Sudan, the general situation in education is that there is inadequate staffing at all levels especially due to low motivation through low level salaries, delay in payment of teachers, stagnation in job groups without regular promotions etc. this conversely may translate to the fact that the few teachers in the teaching service may have heavy workload and may spare little or no time for counseling. Moreover, their professional training may not afford them adequate skills for counseling students. This finally coupled with inadequate resource allocation for this service may make it challenging for schools to establish GC service. Sibandze and Mafumbate (2019) citing Owino (2015) found that most guidance and counselling teachers had no guidelines that were followed in delivering guidance and counselling while others were not even sure whether there were guidelines or not. Teachers complained about heavy teaching loads which do not allow them to consult with others on matters concerning the programme thus rendering the programme a failure. Further, the duo cited Karatas and Kaya (2015) who stated that despite all job definitions for counselling, school counsellors sometimes have to do tasks that are not aligned with their professional responsibilities.

Wambetiet *al* (2016) in study carried out in Meru Central District in Kenya revealed that the following challenges faced by Guidance and Counseling teachers in Kenya:

- Lack of policy framework for implementation,

- Lack of trained teacher counselors to head the counseling departments,
- Lack of resource materials to be used during counseling sessions, too much workload for teachers hence no time for counseling,

Student's failure to take guidance and counseling correction seriously. A study by Mikaye, D (2012) in Kabondo District in Kenya indicated that university G&C is faced by challenges such as lack of cooperation from administration, lack of cooperation from fellow staff members, no support of the department by the principal, students are unwilling to discuss their problems, lack of reading and reference material resources, teacher-counsellor inadequately skilled for the job and heavy teaching load for the teacher-counsellor. Elsewhere, Rakrishnan (2013) found out that universities in India do not have proper counselling facilities. So, children are forced to turn to their peers or other media for support and guidance or they live with their problems. Sibanda (2016), Kamore and Tiego (2015) found that the teachers in charge of guidance and counseling in most schools lack necessary training and competency in handling university discipline issues in their schools. In addition, Gitonga (1999) in his study in Kenya found that counselors were not well trained. These findings also agree with Ngumi's (2003) view who argues that even the trained teachers do not cover sufficient courses in guidance and counseling to enable them to effectively render the guidance and counseling services.

A study carried out to assess the implementation of effective Guidance and Counseling in Secondary schools in South Sudan by Rintaugu and Ngalamu (2021) found out that secondary schools lacked organized G&C program, lacked resources to establish counseling office, teachers are ill-equipped in counseling field and lacked skills to handle learners needs as well as lack of time within the overloaded teaching time table to deal with learners personal or psychological issues.

**Solutions to challenges facing G&C in public universities in the Republic of South Sudan:** Studies done in this area previously have had a lot of suggestions on how G&C can be improved. A good example is a study by Wamugunda, Gachahi and Kimosop (2019) made recommendations that are in tandem with the ones of Mikaye (2012), Ruttoh (2015) and Ndirangu (2007) that for G&C to succeed, secondary schools should sensitize students on the services offered by GC departments and also improve the capacity of GC teachers through training and provision of the necessary resources. Secondly, the study recommends that schools should handle students' discipline issues professionally. However, Oyieyo (2012) added that Student inventory, bulletins on different topics, handbooks for different educational opportunities, books on social psychology, psychology magazines should be provided to the school to improve the department. Similarly, Rintaugu and Ngalamu (2021) suggested that MOEST should facilitate teachers and head teachers in secondary schools by providing minimum guidelines for putting in place guidance and counseling services and provide an office where privacy is made a priority. This will encourage more students to visit the office. The MOEST should set aside a proper budgeting for adequate provision of guidance and counselling materials as well as facilitating guest speakers and paying incentives to the teachers involved in this school programme.

This same budget can be used to invite guest speakers who will provide the counseling services to the students in areas of concern and mentorship on topical issues that they have expertise in. The duo concurs with Wamugunda *et al* (2019) that Guidance and counselling teachers should be well trained on how to carry out their duties by being sent to attend many seminars and workshops to improve on their skills. Irungu (2019) believes that G&C can work effectively to serve students needs if all the teachers regardless of their school ranking are engaged in guidance and counseling development workshops and seminars. The knowledge and experience gained from such engagements can be used to uplift their schools and the general students' welfare. In public universities in South Sudan, there is need for university counselors to work closely with parents in order to help understand some underlying psychological issues of university students. The university administration should establish a wide G&C programme that does not limit itself to the university students alone but also open to the community. This is because mental health and psychosocial issues are not limited to students alone but forms a web of interaction with the family, community, immediate environment, etc. Further, the programme can be revamped by invited the contribution of humanitarian partners who are active in the area of counseling and PSS in the country. They could offer basic counseling skills to university counselors and health workers and help train student's union leaders, select and train Trainers of Trainees (TOTs) and form Peer Counselors clubs in the universities.

**METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH TOOLS AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES:** A research is a cross-sectional survey that will use descriptive approach. A survey is a study where variables are studied as they exist in their current situation. Mubanga (2016) observes that a survey usually involves collecting data by interviewing a sample of people selected to accurately represent the population under study.

**Interviews** for key informants. This was used to collect data from university counselors under the Deans of student affairs who were purposively sampled. Two student counselors were sampled, one from Upper Nile University and another from University of Juba

**Semi-structured questionnaires** were administered to students (3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> year) who were sampled randomly. The three levels were preferred because it was assumed that they have been in the university longer and understand the university programs better and services rendered by Deanship of students Affairs). Therefore, both probability and non-probability sampling were used.

**Sampling technique and sample size.** This paper used both probability and non-probability sampling. Students were randomly sampled because the study coincided with the period when most students were out of campus due to Covid 19 lockdown and only a few were available to answer the questionnaire. The study targeted 50 students who were to be identified through random sampling. The two Deans of students Affairs were purposively sampled from the two universities and one Student counselor in the University of Juba. This is because they are directly involved in providing G&C services to students, therefore deemed relevant in providing information on this subject area. The questionnaire return rate was 80% (40) and only which is deemed good in social sciences (Mugenda 2003).

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The questionnaire return rate was 80%, which according to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 60% and above is good for social research. Both student counselors from the two public universities were interviewed and one student counselor from the university of Juba. 10 students did not return the questionnaire accounting for 20% due to the fact that they were taking their end of semester examinations in Upper Nile university. The questionnaire for the students were divided into two sections. Section A contained items on students bio-data. For ethical considerations, respondents were not required to write their name on the questionnaire and that was optional. The sub-items in the biodata section contained information on;

**Name of the university** – out of 40 respondents, 24 were from University of Juba making 60% while Upper Nile had 8 which accounted for 40%. This disparity in numbers is attributed to the fact that there were end of semester examinations going on and this made some students who were identified for the study fail to take part in the study.

**Gender** – the study was made up of 28 (70%) males and 12 (30%) females. This is a clear reflection of the enrolment by gender in the higher education and other levels of general education in the Republic of South Sudan where males account for more than 80%.

**Age** – in age brackets, no respondent was below 18 years. Those between 19-25 years were 4 (20%), 26-30 years were 20 (50%), 31-35 years were 10 (25%), 31-35 years were 5 (25%) and 1 respondent (5%) was over 36 years.

**Table 4.1. Course of study pursued by the respondent**

Degree Course	Frequency	Percentage
Medicine	2	5
Nursing	4	10
Education	8	20
Engineering	2	5
Agriculture	4	10
Applied & Industrial Sciences	4	10
Management sciences	4	10
Economics & Social Studies	2	5
Arts & Humanities	2	5
Law	2	5
Drama	2	5
Natural Resources	2	5
Public & Environmental Health	2	5
TOTAL	40	100



**Figure 4. 1. Sunburst pie-chart showing course of study pursued by the respondent**

**Year of study-** As stated in the earlier sections, only those from second year of study and beyond were considered. Therefore, those in 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study were 4 (10%), 3<sup>rd</sup> year respondents were 16 (40%), 4<sup>th</sup> years were 18 (45%) while 5<sup>th</sup> years were 2 (5%).

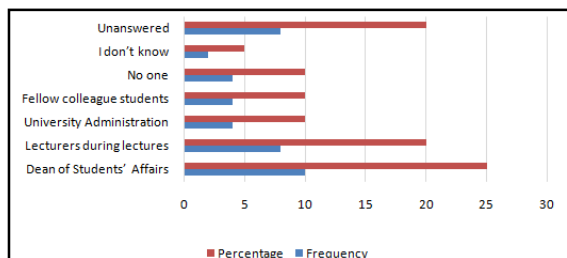
**Section B. Information regarding G&C**

**Is there G&C Programme/service in your university?:** Out of the 40 respondents, 12 (30%) affirmed that in their university, they have G&C services. 26 (65%) said they did not have while 2 (5%) did not know.

**Is there a students' counselor in your university who is in charge of handling students' psychological needs? If no, who does G&C?:** In this item, only 8 (20%) said that they have a student counsellor in their university. 30 (75%) said they did not have one while 2 (5%) did not know. This question required further information of who does counselling in the university in case there is no Students' Counselor. The following responses were collected from across 75% of the respondents -:

**Table 4.2. Responses for who does counselling in the university**

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Dean of Students' Affairs	10	25
Lecturers during lecture sessions	8	20
University Administration	4	10
Fellow colleague students in the university	4	10
No one	4	10
I don't know	2	5
Unanswered	8	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>



**Figure 4.2. Bar chart showing responses for 'who does counselling in the university'**

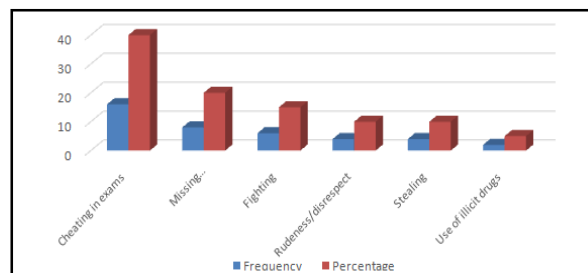
**Common type of indiscipline among students in your university:** Below is a summary of indiscipline types that are found among university students. From the table below, the commonest indiscipline issue is cheating in exam while the least is using illicit drugs.

**Table 4.3. Common type of indiscipline among students**

Indiscipline type	Frequency	Percentage
Cheating in exams	16	40
Missing lectures/absenteeism	8	20
Fighting	6	15
Rudeness/disrespect	4	10
Stealing	4	10
Use of illicit drugs	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Mutinda (2005) uncovered that the common personal and academic problems that student's experience are time management, they experience unexplainable fear of exams, some experience career problems, recurrent problems in

completing assignments, excessive worry, experiencing sexual problems, some were alcoholics, drug addiction others experienced nervous breakdown.



**Figure 4.3. Column graph showing Common type of indiscipline among university students**

**Psychological issues that you would consult a students' counsellor for in your university:** Academic-related issues 20 (50%), Career-related issues 10 (25%), Personal issues 6 (15%), other reasons like health, family problems, relationship issues etc, 2 (5%) and 2 (5%) did not answer the item.

**How is G&C perceived services which are offered to students in your university?:** Various words and statements were used to explain how G&C is perceived by respondents in their different universities. Respondents said that in their university, G&C is a helpful service although unfortunately, it is not available to all students, four respondents said that it is completely unavailable service, it's a needed service, 3 respondents said that it is useful, beneficial and a service with positive impact on students' behavior, important and much needed service. In a study carried out by Ondima, Mokogi, Ombaba&Osoro (2013), majority of students (58.6%) perceived guidance and counselling programme in schools to have effectively enhanced their academic competencies. The findings also show that majority of students (55.0%) felt that guidance and counselling contributed towards enhancing their career competencies as it enabled them connect what they learnt in school and the realities of life and the job market. However, I a study carried out in Nairobi by Mutinda (2005), many students had negative attitude towards G&C.

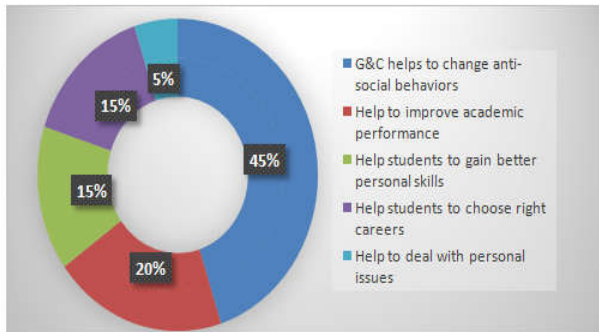
**Do you believe that guidance and counselling services provided by the university are beneficial to students?:** Out of 40 respondents, 38 (95%) said yes, they believed that G&C services are beneficial to university students while 2 (2%) said the service is not in any way beneficial to the students. This implies that if G&C services are well established, students would be willing to consult counsellors I the universities in South Sudan. Salgong, Ngumiamd Kimani (2016) in a study carried out in Koibatek, Kenya listed benefits of G&C as below-;

Improve in discipline and academic performance, know when to seek help and information from peer counselor and teachers counselors, balance leisure time with sports, games, clubs, societies and academics, reduces students disciplinary problems, behave according to the school expectation of school family and society, plays a key role in enhancing student discipline, can handle challenges, hardships and difficulties successfully, methods used has enhances student discipline, understand and respect self and others and avoid self-harming habits and practice



**Table 4.4. Importance of G&C in the university**

Common approaches to deal with indiscipline issues	Frequency	Percentage
G&C helps to change anti-social behaviors	18	45
Help to improve academic performance	8	20
Help students to gain better personal skills	6	15
Help students to choose right careers	6	15
Help to deal with personal issues	2	5
Total	40	100

**Figure 4.4. Pie chart showing responses for 'Importance of G&C in the university'**

**Are there challenges that you perceive as facing G&C service in your university?:** 30 respondents making 75% agreed that there are challenges facing G&C services in their university while 25% did not confirm to having any challenges in their university related to G&C. This item probed further from those that said there are challenges. From the 30 respondents, the following responses came up-;

- Students in the university not being aware about G&C services
- Negative attitude of students towards G&C
- No time scheduled for G&C services in the university master time table
- University Counselors lack training therefore use unethical approach
- Lack of G&C facility like furnished room
- Some said that there is no G&C services established in their university
- G&C lacks financial support from University administration, hence counsellors demotivation
- Overworked lecturers who prefer delivering lectures to counselling students.
- In Upper Nile University, G&C is almost non-existent/dormant

A similar study carried out by Kamunyu, Ndungo and Wango (2016) in Kenya identified several reasons that made students have low uptake of G&C services despite it being free and available. Among the reasons were -;

**Gender of Counsellor** - For instance, male students do not seek help for masculine related issues from female counsellors lest they are seen as 'weak' or 'unable to cope' with issues.

**Social Mistrust** - Some of the students considered seeking help from counsellors as a waste of time since they have their own ways of resolving problems.

**Lack of confidence in counsellors** - Confidentiality is essential since it helps the client to trust the privacy of their

revelations to the counsellor and it enhances the counselling relationship.

**Lack of immediate solutions** - Lack of immediate solutions for some problems such financial issues was cited as a reason why some students could not seek counselling services.

**Location of the Counselling Centre** - Several students voiced concern about friends seeing them entering the counselling center. This also suggests that the counselling room was not appropriately located.

**Perception of the Students** - students seek answers to 'fix' their problems from significant others, fellow students, peers and the internet.

Bishari (2020) in Jigawa State and found out that among the challenges facing G&C are -;

- -Inadequate Time Inadequate time where school timetable does not make provisions for guidance and counselling services.
- -Cooperative Clients Counsellors identified noncooperative clients as another problem that militates against the access to guidance and counselling services.
- . This is consistent that learners were not willing to disclose their problems to be counselled by the counsellors because they did not trust the services providers
- Inadequate Facilities - Availability of facilities both in terms of quality and quantity is necessary for effective and functional education. Anagbogu and Nwokolo (2015) notes that these are materials like computers, printers, projectors, counselling clinics, radios, televisions, slides, films, audiocassettes and videocassette recorders, generators and furniture, etc.
- Lack of Funding for Guidance and counselling. G&C requires a budget yet the sector is still under funded and lacking in essential infrastructure. Bashari, (2020) identified the problems that led to shortage of counsellors which could relate to the current situation in the teaching profession in South Sudan.
- Poor condition of service in the teaching profession;
- Low social status attached to the profession;
- Availability of attractive jobs in the job market;
- Drop in the number of people going into the counselling profession programme.

**Suggestions on how the university can support G&C service to make it effective in handling students issues:** Create a time schedule when students' can visit G&C office for services

- G&C should be periodically be evaluated to ascertain its effectiveness
- Create a G&C facility with comfortable furniture, audio-visual materials etc
- Employ relevant staff for G&C facility and/or train the available staff on G&C.
- The university and the Ministry of Higher Education to avail fund to support G&C department
- Create awareness among students and staff about G&C
- Promote G&C and mental health activities especially during orientation of new students

- Train selected students on G&C to support the Department as Students' Peer Counselors.

**Please provide any other information related to G&C**

- Include lecturers in G&C programming because many have mental health issues
- Popularize G&C and encourage students to uptake the services
- Lobby for funding for G&C not only from the university administration but also from the government
- Formation of PECC for students to handle issues among themselves before getting to the administration level
- Encourage healthy socialization through G&C related activities because there is a lot of polarization among students in the universities which is supposed to have a 'universal outlook'
- Encourage exchange of information between regional universities who have successful G&C programmes.

**Analysis for questionnaire for students' counsellors:** This questionnaire was administered to two Deans of Students Affairs from the two universities and one Students' Counsellor from University of Juba. Just like the instrument for the students, this one was divided into two parts. The first part collected bio-data on respondents under the following headings-;

**University** –out of the three, one was from UNU while two were from UOJ.

On **Gender**, Male were two who also happen to occupy the office of the Deanship of Students Affairs and Female respondent was one who is the Students' Counselor in the UOJ.

**Age** data showed that two respondents were over 51 years while one was in the age between 31-40yrs.

**Highest level of education attained** by all three respondents was Master's Degree. Data on **length of service** showed that one respondent had over 30 years, one had 6 years while the other had 1 year. Further data collected indicated that some respondents had *additional responsibilities* where 2 are Deans of students' Affairs, one is assistance Dean and also in-charge of processing students ID cards.

**Part B: Information regarding G&C programme:** This section contained both structured and unstructured item. In some of them, respondents were supposed to choose from the responses given while in some others, they were supposed to give their objective opinion.

**Is there a formally established guidance and counselling programme/service in your university?**

All respondents said that their university has a formally established G&G programme.

**In which ways is does the university administration support G&C programme/service in your university:** Two of the respondents affirmed that the university administration supports G&C for example through paying salaries, giving

administrative costs to run the Deans' office, pay for costs during orientation of first year students but no support is given directly for G&C activities. One did not answer this item. This compares positively with findings of Nyamwange, Nyakan and Ondimu (2012) Their study revealed that guidance and counselling services providers did not receive sufficient support from school administration to enable them render quality services. Boit (2016) added that Inadequate support from school administration was among the challenges of implementing guidance and counselling in schools. Boit (2016) further cited Mushaandja et al (2013) who reported from findings of his study that school counselors were not given adequate support by the school administrators and teachers.

**Have you undergone training as a student' counsellor? If yes, who was responsible for financing the training:** In this item, one respondent did not attend any kind of training on G&C but the other two attended, where one was funded by USAID while the other by MOHEST. Findings of a study carried out by Warui(2018) found out that inadequately trained staff was a challenge that was positively identified by both the HoDs and the deputy principals. This finding makes it necessary for aid to be got to help in addressing the challenges that the HoD's are encountering in their guidance and counselling duties. Too many challenges are likely to reduce the quality of guidance and counselling services offered by teacher counsellors.

**Are you assigned any other duty besides counselling students in the university? If yes, what other duties do you handle?:** Besides two of the respondents being Dean of Students' Affairs, they are also lecturers in their various colleges handling the usual teaching load of any regular lecturer. One said that he helps students in handling career choice and attends to students' personal issues. The third respondent is not only an Assistant Dean of Students' affairs but also helps in processing students ID cards and above all teaches two lectures per week.

**How would you rate the extent to which students are aware about G&C programme/service in your university?:** Three different responses were collected from this item on rating the extent to which G&C is known to students. From UOJ, one respondent said that students are aware that G&C exists while on a very contradictory note the other from the same university said that students are completely unaware. From UNU, the respondent was undecided on whether students are aware about G&C.

**What are the commonest issues among students which make them require G&C service in your office?:** From UNU, the commonest issues among students that require G&C are aggression, poor academic performance, interpersonal relationship issues, personal problems like lack of resources and health issues. From UOJ, issues ranged from examination fear which leads to cheating in exams, lack of economic support from families, tribalism and discrimination among students, aggressive behaviors and poor academic performance. Warui (2018) lists issues among learners that require G&C. Among them are noise-making, stealing, destruction of property, truancy, drug abuse, bullying and cheating in exam. According to Irungu (2019), students are counseled on how to relate with each other in school, how to reduce conflicts with their, responsible use social media, resisting peer pressure, avoidance of premarital sex, boy/girl relationship, loss of their loved ones, students who live with



chronically sick parents, students whose parent (s) are alcoholic, students who are in substance abuse and students' indiscipline issues

**Which are the commonest approaches that are used in your university to deal with students' issues?:** UNU respondent affirmed that in case of need to handle students' issues, the Dean of Student's Affairs is always involved in sorting out the issue. In other cases of lower magnitude, the leadership of the University Students Union undertakes to settle the issue. The union only forwards such an issue to the administration in case it spirals out of control or if its beyond their mandate. A study conducted by Warui (2018) in Kiambu County found out that the commonest approaches to dealing with students issues are suspension, punishment, counselling, expulsion, embarrassing culprits in public. What the researcher did not indicate was the specific types of punishment meted out to students by the school administration.

**What are the challenges that faced in offering G&C in your university?:** UNU lacks training of personnel to handle G&C. There is no G&C facility established in the university and even if the Dean has to handle any issue, it happens in his office. He further decried lack of support from the university administration which could mean no funding is set aside to establish, run and maintain G&C department.

**From UOJ, there are several challenges as below-;**

- Lack of training, exposure and experience by staff of G&C department.
- G&C has no time scheduled in the main time table leaving students and staff with no time to undertake G&C.
- Lack of G&C office which is expected to be separate from the regular offices.
- Students are largely unaware of existence of G&C services; therefore, the uptake of this service is very low, almost non-existence.
- Lack of financial support to establish G&C facility.

Onyemachi (2017) in a study in Nigeria noted that there was lack of fund and psychological tests, non-supportive action by schools, lack of awareness about counseling programme and lack of data bank to coordinate research activities on G&C.

**Suggest ways in which G&C programme/service can be improved in your university:** Respondent from UNU suggested that the university administration can support G&C department by giving funding which can help set up a strong G&C office with comfortable furniture, privacy required of G&C, materials on mental health and psychosocial support. He further added that there is need for training the personnel in-charge of G&C who can also do further training to selected students to act as Peer counsellors to support the G&C department. He mentioned need for university G&C department to liaise with available psychotherapy service providers like psychiatrists in the local hospitals around Juba city like Giada Military Hospital, Juba Teaching and Referral Hospital etc. in order to have an elaborate referral system for cases that are beyond their ability.

UOJ respondents suggested that the university can invite expert counsellors from the region to come and do induction training to the staff on G&C. this training would benefit both

staff and students and together, they can support the G&C department. The Dean suggested a lot of awareness creation among students on the importance of G&C services and he had in mind using orientation sessions, public address forums, fellow lecturers to popularize the service even during their lecture time and university's monthly news bulletin. The duo said that the university can work closely with National and International humanitarian organizations who are involved in psychosocial activities like trauma healing to give basic counselling skills to the staff at the Deanship of Students Affairs. Finally, the Deanship should develop an all-inclusive Mental Health Programme to help deal with PSS issues among the university community. This is because the need for G&C has been viewed as targeting students only while on the contrary, the university academic staff, unclassified staff and the top administrative staff are in dire need of such a crucial service.

Nyarangi (2011) suggested in a study carried out in Kenya suggested the following as a measure to improve G&C in education institutions that all managers of Institutes of Technology in Nyanza Province need to be sensitized, through seminars and workshops, on the urgent need to give adequate support to guidance and counselling programmes in order to enhance better service delivery. He further added that the government should consider employing full time counsellors in the institutes of technology to allow for constant and fulltime access of the students to the counsellors. Education stakeholders to put special effort to correct negative attitude to guidance and counselling services. Onyemachi (2017) added his voice by suggesting that intensive campaign on the importance of guidance and counseling to schools and society at large should be carried out in both urban and rural areas with the use of media, community leaders, church and the like.

## CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study concludes that G&C is a very essential service in universities and useful in handling student's psychosocial issues for better mental health. From all the data collected, there is general agreement that G&C is a useful service albeit inadequately provided in institutions of higher learning. The staff involved in rendering G&C services is scantily equipped with knowledge, skills and resources, therefore there is need to support them with further training, resources, G&C facility and help them to raise awareness about the service in the university.

Further, the study concludes that with the help of universities in the region who have effectively established G&C programme, public universities in South Sudan can benefit with knowledge on how to establish and manage theirs. Overall, there is need to assign specific location and time when students and members of school community can consult G&C personnel for counseling services. Finally, a concerted effort between the university administration and the Ministry of Higher Education in funding G&C department can go a long way in making the programme work in public universities in the Republic of South Sudan.

## Recommendations

This study realizes that students in the public universities have had low uptake of G&C services owing to several factors like lack of awareness of existence of G&C services in their

various universities. Even those that may be aware about the existence of these services have a lopsided attitude towards the services due to scanty information, quality of the service rendered and the environment in which it is offered. The staff admitted to having limited or no adequate training to effectively manage G&C services in the universities. Moreover, besides having such a huge responsibility, they are full time lecturers with no exemptions from their full time teaching duties. From the afore going discussion and data gathered by this study, G&C should not be viewed as only being necessary for students alone. It is evident that there is great need for improving G&C. It is in the light of the above that this study recommends the following-

- G&C in the university should be established to target lecturers, students, top administrative staff as well as other members of university community.
- The university administration should initiate a cooperation with regional universities to tap on the vast knowledge on establishment, management and administration of G&C programme.
- Public universities should revamp G&C departments by setting aside a fund to support it. This fund will go a long way in helping to establish a well-furnished and well-equipped G&C department with all necessary materials to support mental health. Such a fund can be mobilized not only from the individual university but also from other development partners (INGOs, NNGOs, UN Agencies, etc.), education stakeholders and the line ministry.
- For quick impact, there is need to adopt holistic approach where the work of making G&C effective in the university should not be left to the Deanship of Students Affairs alone. Instead, lecturers can help create awareness among learners that they are constantly in contact with during lectures.

**Suggested areas of further research:** This study was carried out in only two out of five public universities in the Republic of South Sudan. The study did not consider private universities. Therefore this study suggests that further research needs to be carried out especially including other universities that were excluded by this study especially on factors that influence the attitude of university students towards G&C.

**Limitations:** Rintaugu and Ngalamu (2021) citing Best and Kahn (1998) notes that limitations are conditions beyond the control of the researcher that may place restrictions on the conclusions of the study and their application to other situations. For this study, the researcher faced some challenges. This study was conducted during the peak period of Coronavirus pandemic in the country. Major University programmes were suspended and only few students were allowed at a time. Respondents were mostly in their final years of study and were called to come and do their end of Semester examinations. There was also extremely limited interaction, that is why it was not appropriate to conduct a face-to-face interview with the purposively selected respondents, i.e. student counselors. The researcher preferred a semi-structured questionnaire and only did phone conversations to clarify some items and request for any additional information. Additionally, it is widely known that there is limited literature about G&C in the Republic of South Sudan. Therefore, only recently published journals were referred to and most literature was for studies done in other countries. Lastly, the other public universities that would have been used are very far from Juba

and were quite unreachable during the time of this study due to logistical reasons as well as travel restrictions that were imposed during the height of Coronavirus pandemic. It is however believed that the data collected and findings of this research are generalizable to not only the other three public universities but also all other institutions of higher learning.

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