

Guidance and Counseling Program in San Jose Community College in the First District of Albay

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Abstract

This study assessed the Guidance and Counseling Program in San Jose Community College, evaluating its effectiveness in supporting students' academic achievement, personal development, and career development. The research sought to determine challenges encountered by students and faculty, assess strategies employed to enhance the program, and propose improvements. Employing a descriptive research design, the study collected data from faculty and students through surveys. The findings indicated that the program was effective in providing academic support (mean: 3.84), personal development (mean: 3.95), and career development (mean: 3.83) services. The program's strengths included counselors' expertise, orientation programs, and counseling services. Students highly valued the program's components, including student organizations and career assessments. However, challenges included students' lack of study habits, emotional regulation issues, and uncertainty about career goals. The study concluded that the Guidance and Counseling Program was effective in supporting students, but faced challenges that required targeted interventions. The proposed program aimed to address these areas, promoting student success, retention, and overall satisfaction. The findings of this study had implications for enhancing guidance and counseling programs in higher education institutions, emphasizing the need for inclusive, flexible, and responsive services that catered to students' diverse needs.

Keywords: Academic Achievement; Career Development; Challenges Encountered; Guidance and Counseling; Personal Development; Students Engagement

1. Introduction

In the contemporary educational landscape of the time, guidance and counseling programs emerged as a vital component of students' holistic development. These programs were designed to foster students' academic achievement, personal growth, and career development, ultimately equipping them with the skills necessary to navigate the complexities of an increasingly globalized world. According to Fullan (2017), effective guidance and counseling programs could profoundly impact students' academic trajectories and personal well-being. Similarly, Marzano et al. (2011) underscored the significance of supervision in supporting the art and science of teaching, a crucial aspect of guidance counselors' roles. This approach aligned with Sergiovanni's (2009) perspective on the principalship and reflective practice, which highlighted the importance of fostering a culture of growth and development. Guidance and counseling programs played a pivotal role in preparing students for an uncertain future, underscoring their essential place in the educational experience. In the Philippines, the Constitution of 1987, Article XIV, Section 3 highlighted the state's role in promoting the right to quality education, stating that: "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all." This constitutional mandate underscored the significance of guidance and counseling programs in educational institutions. The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) emphasized the importance of guidance counselors in ensuring students' holistic development and addressing their needs, issues, and problems. Registered Guidance Counselors (RGCs) played a vital role in implementing guidance and counseling programs,

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providing essential services such as counseling, career guidance, and mental health support. These services enabled students to have positive educational experiences, contributing to their academic achievement and personal growth (Aguilar-Ramat, 2022; Dhami, 2020). Guidance counselors were essential in supporting students' overall well-being and success.

The guidance and counseling program at San Jose Community College was predicated upon a robust foundation of legal frameworks, underscoring the institution's commitment to fostering a supportive learning environment. DepEd Order No. 41, s. 2016 delineated the parameters of guidance and counseling programs in schools, while CHED Memorandum Order No. 9, s. 2017 provided comprehensive policies and guidelines for student services in higher education institutions. Furthermore, Republic Act 9258, the Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004, served as a regulatory cornerstone, overseeing the practice of guidance and counseling in the Philippines. Notwithstanding these foundational supports, the program faced several challenges that potentially impeded its efficacy. A conspicuous limitation was the counselor-student ratio, which compromised the quality of individualized support. Additionally, the diverse needs of students, encompassing academic, personal, and career domains, necessitated a multifaceted approach that strained existing resources. The scarcity of resources, including funding and facilities, exacerbated these challenges, while the imperative for ongoing counselor training underscored the need for continuous professional development.

In light of these challenges, it was plausible to consider potential enhancements to the program. Augmenting counselor training, bolstering program resources, and devising more efficacious strategies to engage students were measures that could substantively contribute to the program's success. Through these strategic initiatives, SJCC could fortify its guidance and counseling program, thereby optimizing support for students' academic achievement and personal growth. SJCC was committed to providing quality education, recognizing the importance of guidance and counseling services in supporting students' academic and personal development. The guidance and counseling program aimed to equip students with necessary skills and support to achieve academic goals and overcome personal challenges. However, questions persisted about the program's effectiveness in supporting students' academic achievement and personal growth. Students in SJCC faced unique challenges, including academic difficulties, personal problems, and career uncertainty, which impacted their academic performance and well-being. Guidance counselors employed various strategies, such as counseling, career guidance, and academic advising, but the effectiveness of these approaches depended on factors like counselor expertise, student engagement, and program resources. To better support students, potential improvements could include enhanced counselor training, increased program resources, and more effective strategies to engage students and address their diverse needs.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research approach, utilizing a questionnaire to generate data on the Guidance and Counseling Program in San Jose Community College in the First District of Albay. The primary objective was to investigate the significant agreement on the rank orders of the program's extent along academic achievement, personal development, and career development. A descriptive research method was used to gain insight into the guidance and counseling program. Accordingly, Calderon & Gonzales (2016) posited that descriptive research was a fact-finding study that yielded accurate interpretations of findings. This study used a descriptive research design to examine the relationships among variables and determine the extent of these relationships (Ariola, 2006). Consequently, the descriptive method was used to provide insights into the effectiveness of the Guidance and Counseling Program. This approach facilitated the collection of data and description of the program's current state, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

Furthermore, this study adopted a quantitative and qualitative methods in two distinct phases. The first phase focused on gathering numerical data, while the second phase collected qualitative insights to further elucidate and contextualize the initial findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this context, purposive sampling was used to select respondents who could provide rich and meaningful data relevant to the research question (Tongco, 2007; Etikan et al., 2016). Specifically, purposive sampling was employed to target fourth-year education graduating students in the College of Education, enabling the researcher to gather in-depth insights from a specific group with relevant experiences and perspectives.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study were summarized as follows:

3.1. Extent of Guidance and Counseling Program in San Jose Community College

- **Academic Achievement.** The academic achievement aspect of the program had a mean of 3.84, indicating it effectively fulfilled its objectives in providing academic support, inculcating study habits, and offering guidance on academic matters (Aguilar-Ramat, 2022). The counselors' expertise and support were highly regarded, with the highest mean of 3.89 for item 3, "The counselors provided helpful guidance on academic issues and concerns." Students (mean = 3.95) evaluated the program more favorably than faculty members (mean = 3.72), suggesting greater awareness and receptiveness among students (Dhami, 2020). This disparity was attributed to differences in awareness and expectations (Fullan, 2017). The program's strengths included adequate academic support (item 1, mean = 3.85) and assistance in goal-setting (item 4, mean = 3.78) (Marzano et al., 2011). Moderate agreement (mean = 3.81) for item 5, "The program provided resources and referrals to help students overcome academic challenges," indicated this aspect required further development (Sergiovanni, 2009).
- **Personal Development.** The program's impact on personal development was met with a positive assessment, reflected in the overall mean of 3.95. This outcome indicated the program effectively fostered personal growth among students (Abad, 2018). A key strength was the counselors' supportive guidance on personal issues, which was the highest mean (Faculty: 3.97, Students: 4.06, Overall Mean: 4.02) (Del Rosario, 2020). The program promoted self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and resilience, with means of 3.99, 3.96, and 4.00 (Gonzalez, 2019). Fostering community and belonging was an area for improvement, with the lowest mean (Faculty: 3.87, Students: 3.66, Overall Mean: 3.77), needing more attention (Reyes, 2021).
- **Career Development.** The program's efficacy in promoting career development was substantiated by an overall mean of 3.83, indicating a consensus among faculty and students regarding its positive impact (Kumar, 2022). The program's strength was in assisting students in identifying and pursuing their career goals, evidenced by a high mean of 3.93, attributed to the counselors' adeptness at providing personalized guidance and support (Gibson, 2020). This aspect was deemed effective. However, the relatively lower mean of 3.77 for provision of resources and opportunities for career development indicated the program could have benefited from incorporating more experiential learning opportunities, like internships and job shadowing, to furnish students with practical experience in their chosen careers, implying this aspect needed further development (Nadeem & Ali, 2021).

3.2. Challenges Encountered Among the Different Groups of Respondents on Guidance and Counseling Program in San Jose Community College

- **Academic Achievement.** The guidance and counseling program's impact on academic achievement was hindered by several challenges, as perceived by faculty and students. An overall mean of 3.84 indicated that these challenges were prevalent, with the most significant issue being students' lack of effective study habits and learning strategies (mean: 3.89; Faculty: 3.70, Students: 4.08) (Aguilar-Ramat, 2022). This challenge was highlighted by respondents, underscoring the need for targeted interventions. Students also struggled with time management and prioritization of academic responsibilities (mean: 3.85) and academic pressure and stress (mean: 3.85), which were prominent concerns (Dhami, 2020). As a result, these findings suggested that the program faced difficulties in addressing these critical areas, which may have impacted its overall effectiveness in supporting students' academic achievement.
- **Personal Development.** The guidance and counseling program encountered significant challenges in addressing students' personal development, as reflected in the perceptions of both faculty and students. An overall mean of 3.95 indicated the prevalence of these challenges (Abad, 2018). The most substantial issue was students' struggles with emotional regulation and stress management, with a mean of 4.02 (Faculty: 3.97, Students: 4.06) (Del Rosario, 2020). Students experienced anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns (mean: 4.00) and personal issues affecting academic performance (mean: 3.96), underscoring the necessity for comprehensive counseling services (Gonzalez, 2019). Students' personal challenges, like self-confidence and self-esteem issues, exerted a notable impact on their ability to engage fully in academic and campus life (mean: 3.77), suggested these issues required targeted support and intervention (Reyes, 2021).
- **Career Development.** Career development was a significant concern for students, with both faculty and students acknowledging substantial challenges. An overall mean of 3.83 indicated these challenges (Kumar, 2022). Students faced difficulties with career uncertainty (mean: 3.79), lacked experience and skills (mean: 3.90), and had obstacles with resume writing and job search (mean: 3.77) (Gibson, 2020). The scarcity of job opportunities and resources (mean: 3.93) hindered students' career attainment (Nadeem & Ali, 2021). The

difficulties in aligning academics with careers (mean: 3.77) highlighted the need for better career guidance (Savickas, 2011).

3.2.1. *Strategies Employed to Enhance the Guidance and Counseling Program*

- **Students Engagement.** Student engagement was a focal point of counselors' efforts, with both faculty and students acknowledging the effectiveness of various strategies employed to foster a sense of community and involvement. An overall mean score of 3.84 indicated the prevalence of these efforts (Astin, 1999). Counselors were actively involved in supporting student organizations and clubs (mean: 3.85), participating in campus events (mean: 3.89), and offering interactive workshops (mean: 3.81) (Kuh, 2009). The emphasis on providing orientation sessions for new students (mean: 3.85) was a crucial aspect of student engagement, facilitating a smooth transition into university life (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). As a result, these efforts contributed to a positive and engaging campus environment.
- **Individual and Group Counseling.** Counselors demonstrated efficacy in delivering individualized and group counseling services, as acknowledged by both faculty and students. An overall mean of 3.95 reflected the success of these endeavors (Lambert, 2010). Counselors excelled in connecting students with campus resources and community services (mean: 4.02) (Whitt, 2011). They provided workshops on topics such as mindfulness and self-care (mean: 4.00), addressing students' diverse needs and promoting holistic well-being (Regehr et al., 2013). As a result, these efforts contributed to a supportive and inclusive campus environment, fostering student success and academic achievement.
- **Career Development.** The career development component of the guidance and counseling program was enhanced through a range of strategies employed by counselors, as perceived by faculty and students. An overall mean of 3.83 indicated respondents' agreement regarding the efficacy of these strategies, with faculty and students demonstrating concordance on their value (mean: 3.73 and 3.92, respectively) (Kumar, 2022). Individual and group career counseling sessions were a highly rated strategy (mean: 3.93), aligning with extant research underscoring the significance of career counseling in career development initiatives (Gibson, 2020). The provision of job search skills, including resume writing and interview preparation, was deemed a crucial element (mean: 3.90). The establishment of relationships with local employers garnered a relatively high rating (mean: 3.77), highlighting the importance of industry connections in facilitating effective career development pathways (Nadeem & Ali, 2021).
- **Auxiliary Services.** The auxiliary services component of the guidance and counseling program was augmented through a range of strategies, as perceived by faculty and students. An overall mean of 3.83 indicated respondents' agreement regarding the efficacy of these strategies, with faculty and students demonstrating concordance on their value (mean: 3.73 and 3.92, respectively) (Bhatnagar, 2018). The provision of effective follow-up services was a highly rated strategy (mean: 3.93) (Corey, 2020). The provision of helpful consultation on personal and career issues was deemed a crucial component (mean: 3.90) (Egan, 2018). The implementation of a reliable system for referrals received a relatively high rating (mean: 3.77), underscoring the importance of seamless support networks in facilitating student well-being (Glenn, 2019).

Proposed Guidance and Counseling Program for San Jose Community College and Other Local Universities and Colleges

The Guidance and Counseling Program at San Jose Community College and other local universities and colleges effectively addressed the multifaceted needs of its students, fostering a supportive environment conducive to academic success, personal growth, and career readiness. Notably, the program's core components, including student engagement, individual and group counseling, career development, and auxiliary services, provided holistic support tailored to students' diverse needs.

Specifically, the program prioritized student engagement through orientation programs and student organizations, cultivating a sense of belonging and community on campus. Furthermore, counseling services, delivered by trained professionals, addressed students' academic, personal, and mental health concerns, enabling them to manage challenges and achieve academic goals. In addition, career development services, including career assessments and workshops, empowered students to make informed decisions about their academic and professional trajectories. Moreover, auxiliary services provided necessary resources to support students in overcoming obstacles.

The program's strengths included enhanced student engagement, effective counseling services, informed career development services, and supportive auxiliary services. Consequently, the program had a positive impact on students' academic success, personal growth, and career readiness. To build on this success, the following enhancements were proposed: 1) Expand orientation programs to include peer mentorship and academic advising; 2) Increase counseling services to address growing mental health concerns; 3) Develop industry partnerships for internship and job opportunities; and 4) Enhance auxiliary services with additional resources for students. Through these initiatives, the Guidance and Counseling Program aimed to further support students' academic success, personal growth, and career readiness, fostering a culture of inclusivity and student-centered support.

4. Conclusion

The Guidance and Counseling Program at San Jose Community College effectively provided academic support, personal development, and career development services, yielding a positive impact on students. The program's efforts addressed students' diverse needs, albeit with challenges. Counselors played a pivotal role in delivering individualized and group counseling services, connecting students with resources, and promoting holistic well-being. While the career development component assisted students in identifying and pursuing career goals, further development is needed. Overall, the program's emphasis on enhancing student engagement, auxiliary services, and overall student success demonstrates a commitment to student-centered support.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest to disclose.

Statement of ethical approval

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institution and the research committee.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

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