

# **Teachers and Students' Perspectives on the Hiring of School Counselors in Public Secondary Schools: The Case of Ilala Municipality in Tanzania.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was set to investigate teachers and students' perspectives on the hiring of school counselors in public secondary schools as a strategy for strengthening the counseling services provided in schools. It was guided by three research objectives, namely: To establish the counseling needs services and the way they are managed; To explore the perspectives of teachers on the hiring of school counselors and finally to examine the perspectives of students on the hiring of school counselors. The study employed phenomenological research design of qualitative approach. The study was confined to a sample of 74 participants from five selected secondary schools in Ilala municipality. These included 10 teacher counselors, 10 class teachers, four head of schools, and 50 students. Data were obtained through semi-structured interview and focus group discussions (FGDs). Thematic analysis was used in the analysis of data, in which themes were coded and extracted from interviews and focus group discussions. The findings revealed that students were exposed to variety of issues that demanded effective counseling services in schools, including socio-emotional challenges, lack of self-determination and early sexual behaviours; which were primarily addressed through initiatives of teacher-counselors. Consequently, the majority of teachers and all students who participated in the study recommended for the need of hiring of qualified school counselors to address the issues and challenges in schools professionally. Moreover, the findings revealed that there were few teachers who recommended for less need to hire school counselors due to fears of prospective confusion in managing students and conflicts that are thought to emerge if the services are handled by personnel different from school teachers. The factors raised by teachers who recommended the hiring of school counselors include: professionalism on counseling services, the magnitude of students' problems, proactive intervention need, and accountability. On the side of students, the factors raised include: insufficiency of modern counseling services, lack of trustworthiness and adequate time for problem exploration. It was then concluded that the prevailing state in schools exposed students to variety of challenges since the customary counseling services did not cover fully the needs of students. Furthermore, the recommendations by the majority of teachers and all students signified a high demand of hiring qualified school counselors in secondary schools. The study recommends a correlation study on the comparison between qualified counselors and para-professional counselors to be conducted to provide empirical evidence on the relative differences between the two. That would rationalize the necessity or otherwise, of the need to have qualified counselors in schools.