

Teachers' Participation in the Guidance Services in Elementary Multigrade Schools

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Abstract

This study examined teachers' participation in guidance services in elementary multigrade schools, focusing on the implementation of guidance programs, the extent of teacher involvement, and the challenges encountered. Anchored on the Comprehensive School Counseling Model of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed methods design. Qualitative data were collected through unstructured interviews and open-ended questionnaires with multigrade teachers, followed by a quantitative phase using structured survey instruments administered to 30 teachers, 50 learners, and 20 school heads or teachers-in-charge in the District of Bokod, Benguet. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data. Findings revealed that foundational guidance services such as inventory, referral, testing, and information dissemination were widely implemented, while transitional services were moderately practiced and specialized services—particularly counseling, evaluation, and research—were least implemented. Teachers demonstrated a frequent level of participation overall, particularly in tasks aligned with instructional roles such as data gathering and learner support, but showed lower engagement in specialized functions requiring technical expertise. Major challenges included heavy workload, lack of training, insufficient resources, limited time, and weak parental involvement, resulting in fragmented service delivery. Teachers relied on coping mechanisms such as integrating guidance into instruction, collaboration with peers and external agencies, and personal adaptive strategies. The study concludes that while teachers play a critical role in sustaining guidance services, systemic constraints limit the depth and consistency of implementation. It recommends capacity-building, institutional support, structured programs, and strengthened partnerships to enhance service delivery. The study aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education) by highlighting the role of guidance services in promoting learners' mental health and inclusive education. It contributes to sustainability by supporting institutional strengthening, improving psychosocial support systems, and fostering equitable and holistic learner development in resource-constrained educational contexts.

Keywords: Counseling Services; Guidance Services; Multigrade Schools; Teacher Participation; Educational Challenges; Psychosocial Support; School Counseling; Sustainable Education

1. Introduction

This study examines teachers' participation in guidance services in elementary multigrade schools, focusing on the implementation of guidance programs, the level of teacher involvement, and the challenges encountered. Guidance services are essential for holistic learner development, yet their delivery in multigrade contexts is constrained by limited resources and the absence of licensed counselors. This study situates teachers as key facilitators of guidance services and explores how their participation supports learners' academic, social, and emotional well-being.

1.1 Background of Guidance Services and Teachers' Participation in Elementary Multigrade Schools

Guidance services promote learners' academic, personal, social, and vocational development by supporting self-understanding, decision-making, and overall well-being (Nizami, 2020). International frameworks such as UNESCO and the United Nations emphasize their role in inclusive education and mental health, particularly under SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). Regionally, ASEAN frameworks advocate integrating psychosocial support with academic instruction. In the Philippine context, guidance services evolved from vocational placement during the American period to comprehensive programs addressing academic and socio-emotional needs (Iyejave, 2023; Tuason et al., 2012). Contemporary policies, including the Mental Health Act of 2018, highlight the importance of mental health and counseling services. Due to the shortage of licensed guidance counselors, teachers are increasingly involved in guidance functions such as homeroom guidance, learner support, and referral (Llego, 2022). This expanded role positions teachers as both educators and guidance facilitators (Gipalen & Madrigal, 2020). Studies indicate that teachers acting as guidance advocates face role conflict, limited training, and lack of supervision (Decena and Singson, 2022). Despite these challenges, teachers remain essential in sustaining guidance services, particularly in resource-constrained schools.

1.2 Themes on Guidance Services and Teachers' Roles in Multigrade School Contexts

Guidance services encompass multiple functions, including assessment, counseling, information dissemination, referral, placement, and follow-up, which collectively support holistic learner development (Gipalen & Madrigal, 2020). These services promote self-understanding, resilience, and academic engagement (Fatmilia & Daharnis, 2022; Vergara & Magallanes, 2020). Structured interventions improve motivation and social adjustment, although effectiveness depends on trained personnel and institutional support (Lubis et al., 2022; Hendriani & Neviyarni, 2023). The literature identifies nine core services—individual inventory, testing, counseling, information, referral, placement, follow-up, evaluation, and research—which function as an integrated system for student support (Cabrera et al., 2020; Sundaya & Montanesa, 2024). These services enhance decision-making, career readiness, and emotional regulation (Kate & Tanyi, 2023; Sandow & Anovunga, 2024). Teachers play a critical role in implementing these services, acting as facilitators, mentors, and collaborators (Adinda et al., 2023). Their involvement improves student outcomes and strengthens school-based guidance programs (Yusra & Silvianetri, 2022; Bersan et al., 2024). However, effective participation depends on training, collaboration, and professional competence (Nadhirah et al., 2024; Aqra and As, 2024).

1.3 Global, National, and Local Context of Guidance Services in Multigrade Schools

Globally, guidance services have adapted to emerging challenges such as mental health concerns and digital learning environments. During the COVID-19 pandemic, counselors and teachers used online platforms to support students' well-being despite limitations in connectivity and privacy (Arrieta et al., 2021; Mababa and Fabella, 2023; Agoncillo, 2023). Nationally, the Philippine education system recognizes guidance services as essential for holistic development, yet their implementation remains uneven due to resource constraints and personnel shortages. In multigrade schools, these challenges are intensified. Multigrade education, institutionalized through DepEd Order No. 96, s. 1997 and strengthened by DepEd Order No. 81, s. 2009, aims to provide equitable access to education but requires teachers to manage diverse learner needs simultaneously (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2020). In local contexts such as Benguet, multigrade schools operate in geographically isolated areas where guidance services are often delivered informally by teachers. This setting underscores the need to examine how teachers participate in guidance delivery and address learners' psychosocial needs.

1.4 Theoretical Basis on Teachers' Participation in Guidance Services in Multigrade Schools

This study is anchored on the Comprehensive School Counseling Model developed by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The model emphasizes a systematic, developmental, and collaborative approach to guidance services through four components: Foundation, Management, Delivery, and Accountability. The model highlights shared responsibility among school personnel, positioning teachers as key contributors to planning, delivering, and evaluating guidance services. In multigrade schools, where licensed counselors are limited, teachers assume expanded roles in providing classroom-based guidance, identifying learner needs, and coordinating interventions. The framework supports the analysis of guidance service implementation, teacher participation, and challenges within a structured and collaborative system.

1.5 Research Gaps on Teachers' Participation in Guidance Services in Multigrade Schools

Despite extensive literature on guidance services, limited research focuses on their implementation in multigrade schools and the specific role of teachers in such contexts. Existing studies highlight challenges such as inadequate training, lack of resources, weak program evaluation, and misconceptions about guidance services (Hadiarni et al., 2023; Mahaly and Rumahlewang, 2022; Mudrikah and Suherman, 2024). Furthermore, while teachers' involvement in guidance services is recognized, the extent of their participation, the specific services implemented, and the coping mechanisms they employ remain insufficiently documented, particularly in rural multigrade settings. This gap justifies the need to examine teachers' participation and identify context-specific strategies to strengthen guidance service delivery.

1.6 Alignment of the Study on Teachers' Participation in Guidance Services with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns with: SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being, as guidance services support mental health, emotional resilience, and psychosocial well-being (Arrieta et al., 2021). SDG 4 – Quality Education, by promoting inclusive, equitable, and holistic education through guidance programs that address learners' diverse needs. SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, as career guidance enhances learners' preparedness for future employment (Maestrado and Bucar, 2024). Guidance services contribute to these goals by fostering holistic development, improving educational outcomes, and supporting learners' transition to productive roles in society.

1.7 Importance of the Study on Teachers' Participation in Guidance Services to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

This study contributes to educational sustainability by strengthening guidance services that support inclusive and equitable learning environments. It advances socio-economic sustainability by enhancing career readiness and decision-making skills among learners. It also supports public health sustainability through the promotion of mental health and emotional well-being in school settings. Additionally, the study contributes to institutional sustainability by informing policy development,

capacity-building programs, and collaborative practices among educators. By addressing the challenges faced by multigrade teachers, the study promotes sustainable delivery of guidance services in resource-limited contexts and supports the holistic development of learners.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a sequential exploratory mixed methods design, which begins with a qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The qualitative phase explored the guidance services implemented in multigrade schools, as well as the challenges encountered by teachers and their coping mechanisms. Data were gathered through unstructured interviews and open-ended questionnaires with multigrade teachers and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes. These qualitative findings informed the development of a structured survey questionnaire used in the quantitative phase. The quantitative component measured the level of teachers' participation in guidance services as perceived by teachers, learners, and immediate supervisors using descriptive statistics. Integration occurred through instrument development and interpretation, where qualitative findings provided context and quantitative data measured the extent of participation.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the District of Bokod, Benguet, which consists of 32 public elementary schools implementing multigrade classes. The district's geographical terrain and dispersed communities make multigrade instruction a common practice, providing a relevant context for examining the implementation of guidance services in resource-constrained settings.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents included three groups: multigrade teachers, learners, and school heads or teachers-in-charge. Multigrade teachers served as primary respondents, providing data on guidance services, participation, and challenges. Learners contributed perceptions of teachers' participation in guidance services, while school heads or teachers-in-charge provided supervisory perspectives on implementation.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive sampling. Thirty multigrade teachers from 32 schools participated as primary respondents. Fifty learners from various multigrade schools were selected to provide perceptions of teacher participation, and 20 school heads or teachers-in-charge were included to offer supervisory insights. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms and secure data handling.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative instruments. A structured survey questionnaire was developed for teachers, learners, and supervisors to measure the implementation of guidance services and the level of teachers' participation. The teacher questionnaire included dichotomous and Likert-scale items, while the learner questionnaire was simplified and translated when necessary for comprehension. The supervisor questionnaire gathered perceptions of implementation consistency. An unstructured interview guide and open-ended questionnaire were used to collect qualitative data from teachers, allowing them to describe their experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms. All instruments underwent content validation by experts, and revisions were made to ensure clarity and relevance. Reliability testing yielded Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of 0.869 for the participation scale and 0.724 for the challenges scale, indicating good and acceptable reliability levels, respectively, based on George and Mallery (2003).

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed the sequential exploratory design. Permission was secured from relevant authorities, and informed consent was obtained from all participants, including parents or guardians of learners. The qualitative phase was conducted first through interviews and open-ended questionnaires with teachers, allowing in-depth exploration of guidance services, challenges, and coping strategies. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or online, documented through notes and recordings, and supplemented by document analysis of school records. The resulting themes guided the development of the quantitative instrument. The quantitative phase followed, where structured questionnaires were administered to teachers, learners, and supervisors. Instructions were explained clearly, and translations were provided when needed. Responses were collected electronically and stored securely. Ethical standards, including confidentiality and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the process.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview responses were transcribed, coded, and organized into themes representing guidance services, challenges, and coping mechanisms. These themes informed the development of

survey indicators. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mean scores were computed using a 4-point Likert scale to determine the level of teachers' participation. Document analysis was also conducted to validate reported practices. Thematic analysis was further applied to identify challenges and coping mechanisms, while the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of guidance service implementation and informed the development of proposed interventions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Guidance Services Implemented in Multigrade Schools

3.1.1 Foundational Guidance Services (Inventory, Testing, Information, Referral)

The results show that foundational guidance services are the most widely implemented in multigrade schools. Individual inventory was practiced by 93.33% of teachers, followed by referral (86.67%), testing (81.67%), and information services (80%). These services are closely aligned with classroom instruction and immediate learner needs, making them more feasible in multigrade contexts. This pattern indicates that teachers prioritize practical and manageable guidance functions that support daily instruction. The strong implementation of these services reflects teachers' reliance on accessible strategies to address learner needs despite limited resources. This finding supports Yusra & Silvianetri (2022) and Sholeh (2023), who emphasized that learner data and information dissemination enhance instructional responsiveness. It also aligns with Hendriani & Neviyarni (2023) and Aqra and As (2024), who noted that collaboration and referral become essential when professional counselors are unavailable.

3.1.2 Transitional and Monitoring Services (Placement and Follow-Up)

The results indicate that placement services (75%) and follow-up services (71.67%) are moderately implemented. Teachers assist learners in academic transitions and attempt to monitor progress after interventions, although not consistently across all cases. These findings suggest that while teachers recognize the importance of continuity and transition support, implementation is constrained by time and workload. The moderate level of follow-up may lead to fragmented support, limiting long-term learner progress. This is consistent with Noviyani & Maryati (2022), who emphasized the importance of systematic monitoring, and Lubis et al. (2019) and Septiani (2022), who highlighted the role of placement services in improving career readiness.

3.1.3 Specialized Guidance Services (Counseling, Evaluation, Research)

The results reveal that specialized services are the least implemented, with counseling at 63.33%, evaluation at 60%, and research at 36.67%. These services require technical expertise, structured systems, and additional time, which are limited in multigrade settings. This pattern reflects significant gaps in guidance service delivery. Limited counseling reduces learners' access to structured emotional support, while weak evaluation and research practices hinder program improvement. These findings align with Hendriani & Neviyarni (2023), Aqra & As (2024), Lubis et al. (2021), and Neviyarni (2019), who emphasized that lack of training, time, and institutional support constrains the implementation of advanced guidance functions.

3.2 Level of Teachers' Participation in Guidance Services

3.2.1 Overall Level of Participation Across Respondent Groups

The results show an overall mean of 3.17, interpreted as frequent participation, indicating that teachers consistently engage in guidance services. Teachers, learners, and supervisors all reported similar levels of participation, confirming consistency across perspectives. This finding suggests that guidance responsibilities are integrated into teachers' daily roles despite structural constraints. The alignment across respondents strengthens the validity of the results and reflects teachers' adaptive professionalism. However, the absence of a higher level of participation indicates limitations caused by workload, training gaps, and lack of formal systems.

3.2.2 Teachers' Participation by Specific Guidance Activities

The results indicate that teachers show the highest participation in data gathering ($M = 3.25$), information dissemination ($M = 3.08$), and providing initial learner support ($M = 3.03$). Lower participation was observed in counseling ($M = 2.67$), referrals ($M = 2.63$), and research ($M = 2.52$). This pattern shows that teachers are most active in tasks closely related to instruction and classroom management, while participation decreases in specialized functions requiring technical expertise. These findings are supported by Yusra & Silvianetri (2022), Putro (2023), Decena and Singson (2022), and Aqra & As (2024), who highlighted that teachers can provide basic support but require training for advanced guidance roles. Similarly, Lubis et al. (2021), Naparan and Castañeda (2021), and Brecio (2023) emphasized that workload limits engagement in evaluation and research activities.

3.2.3 Learners' Perceptions of Teachers' Participation

The results show that learners perceive teachers' participation as frequent ($M = 3.06$), with higher ratings in communication with parents ($M = 3.16$) and positive attitudes toward guidance ($M = 3.76$). Lower ratings were observed in referral ($M =$

2.48) and collaboration with counselors ($M = 2.38$). These findings indicate that learners primarily recognize visible and daily interactions such as mentoring and classroom support. Lower ratings in referral and collaboration reflect the absence of formal guidance structures. This supports Mahaly et al. (2025), who noted that limited awareness and structural gaps affect learners' perception of guidance services.

3.2.4 Supervisors' Perceptions of Teachers' Participation

Supervisors rated teachers' participation as frequent ($M = 3.45$), with higher ratings in communication with parents ($M = 3.55$) and openness to training ($M = 3.75$). Lower ratings were observed in referral ($M = 2.60$) and collaboration ($M = 2.55$). These results indicate institutional recognition of teachers' efforts, particularly in communication and monitoring roles. However, lower ratings in specialized functions confirm systemic limitations. This aligns with findings of Decena and Singson (2022) and Aqra & As (2024), emphasizing that structural constraints, rather than teacher unwillingness, limit participation.

3.3 Triangulated Findings on Guidance Service Implementation

The results show a strong convergence across teachers, learners, and supervisors. Teachers consistently perform foundational guidance functions such as data management, information dissemination, and learner monitoring. However, specialized services such as counseling, referral, evaluation, and research are less developed. This pattern indicates that guidance service implementation in multigrade schools is broad but not deep. Teachers serve as primary facilitators, but their capacity is limited by systemic constraints. This finding highlights the need for structured frameworks and institutional support to strengthen service delivery.

3.4 Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Guidance Services

The results show that the most significant challenges include heavy workload (95%), lack of training (95%), unfamiliarity with procedures (90%), lack of resources (91.67%), and limited time (85%). Additional challenges include emotional exhaustion (80%), difficulty evaluating services (80%), and limited parental engagement (70%). These findings indicate that teachers face both structural and professional barriers in delivering guidance services. Workload and lack of training significantly limit their ability to provide consistent and effective support. This is supported by Balajadia and Fabella (2023), Hadiarni et al. (2023), Gipalen and Madrigal (2020), Sanchez-Maddela and Cruz-Cada (2024), Arrieta et al. (2021), Hernandez et al. (2024), Mahaly et al. (2025), Rejeki and Supratiwi (2025), and Mudrikah and Suherman (2024), all of whom highlighted similar challenges in guidance implementation.

3.5 Coping Mechanisms Applied by Multigrade Teachers

3.5.1 Instructional Integration and Flexible Practices

The results show that teachers integrate guidance activities into daily instruction to manage time constraints. Guidance is embedded in lessons, storytelling, and classroom interactions. This reflects adaptive strategies that allow teachers to address learners' needs despite workload limitations. However, this approach may reduce the depth of interventions. This aligns with Sabud (2025), who emphasized integration as a coping mechanism in multigrade teaching.

3.5.2 Collaboration and External Support

Teachers rely on collegial collaboration and external agencies such as MSWD and PNP to manage complex cases. Peer support and referrals help reduce decision-making burden. This indicates the importance of collaboration in sustaining guidance services. However, reliance on informal systems highlights the absence of structured support. This supports Medequillo and Gallardo (2024) and Viray (2022), who emphasized collaboration and referral in resource-limited contexts.

3.5.3 Personal and Professional Coping Strategies

Teachers use emotional regulation strategies such as reflection, prayer, and self-directed learning. They also prioritize urgent learner needs and adapt to workload demands. These findings show teachers' resilience but also reveal risks of burnout and reliance on individual coping. This aligns with Rotas and Cahapay (2020), Soria and Naparan (2022), and Naparan and Castañeda (2021), who highlighted adaptive coping in multigrade settings.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that guidance services in multigrade schools are implemented unevenly, with foundational services such as inventory, referral, testing, and information being widely practiced, while specialized services like counseling, evaluation, and research remain underdeveloped. Teachers demonstrate frequent participation, particularly in tasks aligned with instructional roles such as data gathering and information dissemination, but show limited engagement in activities requiring counseling expertise, structured procedures, and research competence. The implementation of guidance services is significantly constrained by systemic challenges, including heavy workload, lack of time, insufficient training, limited resources, and weak parental involvement, resulting in fragmented service delivery. Consequently, teachers rely on individual and informal coping mechanisms such as integration of guidance into teaching, peer support, and prioritization

of urgent learner concerns, which sustain service delivery but also contribute to inconsistency and increased risk of burnout.

It is recommended that multigrade teachers pursue capacity-building opportunities to enhance counseling skills, referral competence, and monitoring practices, while continuing to integrate guidance activities into daily instruction and strengthening communication with parents. Guidance coordinators and counselors should provide clear procedures, standardized tools, and regular coaching to support teachers' confidence and effectiveness in delivering guidance services. School heads are encouraged to institutionalize structured guidance programs, allocate time and resources, and strengthen partnerships with community agencies to expand support systems. At the division level, the adoption of capacity-building programs, standardized protocols, and consistent monitoring systems is recommended, along with the provision of technical assistance and wellness initiatives. The proposed intervention program is recommended for adoption to address identified gaps, while future research is encouraged to further examine guidance service implementation across contexts and develop tools suited for multigrade settings.

The study is limited to the District of Bokod, Benguet, and focuses on selected multigrade schools and respondents, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. It relies on self-reported data from teachers, learners, and supervisors, which may be influenced by perception and contextual factors. Additionally, the study primarily examines the implementation, participation, and challenges in guidance services without extensive longitudinal analysis of outcomes, indicating the need for further research to explore broader contexts and long-term impacts.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to ethical standards by ensuring voluntary participation, securing informed consent from all respondents, including parents or guardians of learners, and maintaining confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms and secure data handling. Permissions were obtained from relevant authorities prior to data collection, and ethical principles were observed throughout the research process.

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