

Students' Awareness and Knowledge of Guidance and Counseling Services at Medina College: Basis for Program Enhancement

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Abstract— Guidance and counseling services play an important role in promoting students' academic success, emotional well-being, and personal development, especially in higher education institutions. Despite their significance, students awareness knowledge, and actual use of these services frequently differ from one another. During the 2025–2026 academic year, this study evaluated Medina College students awareness and knowledge of guidance and counseling services. It specifically looked at students awareness and knowledge of counseling, appraisal, follow-up, and referral services and ascertained whether there were any notable variations when respondents were categorized based on demographics. For this study, a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design was used. A questionnaire created by the researcher was utilized to gather data from 315 college students. The results were verified through pilot testing yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.87. The collected data was examined using frequency percentage weighted mean t-test and ANOVA. The results showed a very high degree of awareness of the guidance and counseling services provided by the institution, especially with regard to counseling, appraisal, follow-up, and referral services. Additionally, the respondents demonstrated superior knowledge of the purposes and importance of these services. The findings further indicated that institutional information dissemination and student support systems contributed positively to students' knowledge of the guidance program. Nonetheless, a concerning subset of students demonstrated limited knowledge and partial understanding of these services. The study concluded that students have a high level of awareness and knowledge of Medina Colleges guidance and counseling services. Based on the findings, a guidance and counseling program enhancement plan was proposed to further improve service accessibility, student participation, and the overall effectiveness of the institution's support services.

Keywords— Guidance and Counseling Services; Student Awareness; Student Knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Every educational institution believes that students general growth and well-being are essential to their success in the classroom and personal growth. Support systems are provided by schools to help students with their mental emotional and social needs outside of the classroom. An essential component of this support system is guidance and counseling services which are designed to help students better understand themselves make informed decisions and handle lifes difficult situations. These programs are essential for assisting students in gaining the self-awareness emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills required for long-term wellbeing as well as academic success. As students face increasing demands regarding their academic performance mental health and future career

choices the importance of guidance and counseling in todays complex educational environment cannot be overstated.

Students have highlighted the increasing need for efficient guidance and counseling programs within schools and universities since these services greatly enhance students emotional stability academic motivation and general well-being. According to Sutirna and Intisari (2022) guidance and counseling services are essential in the demanding academic environment of today because they assist students in becoming self-aware making wise decisions and adjusting to a range of difficult situations in life. Also Fullmer et al. (2021) discovered that although a large number of students are aware that these services are available they frequently hesitate to use them due to a

lack of knowledge misconceptions or the stigma attached to counseling. The disparity between awareness and actual use emphasizes how crucial institutional initiatives are to increasing our knowledge of and access to guidance services. Given this, Memorandum Order No. 8 series of 2021, Guidance and counseling services must be offered and promoted as an essential part of student support systems in order to improve student affairs and services at all higher education institutions according to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED, 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature on guidance and counseling services, a research on students awareness and knowledge concurrently within a particular institutional context is still lacking.

With little focus on evaluating how awareness and knowledge differ across student demographic profiles like age year level and academic program the majority of current studies either concentrate on utilization attitudes toward counseling or general mental health literacy.

Furthermore there aren't many regional studies that look at these factors in private universities like Medina College. Administrators and counselors are unable to create focused evidence-based program improvements due to a lack of empirical data on how students view and comprehend the particular guidance services provided by the institution.

This study intends to fill this knowledge gap by assessing students awareness and knowledge with Medina Colleges guidance and counseling services. It specifically aims to evaluate students awareness and knowledge of counseling appraisal follow-up and referral services and to determine whether there are any notable variations when students are categorized based on their demographics.

The results of this study are meant to be the foundation for creating an improved guidance and counseling program that will increase service visibility enhance student comprehension and encourage efficient use of guidance and counseling services inside the organization.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design with quantitative analysis to determine students' awareness and knowledge of Medina College's guidance and counseling services. The design enabled the researcher to describe and compare students' levels of awareness and knowledge across demographic groups such as age, year level, and academic program without manipulating the study environment. This approach is supported by Dajac (2025), who found variations in college students' mental health literacy across demographic factors, and Shinija (2024), who demonstrated the usefulness of descriptive-comparative methods in evaluating counseling programs. Overall, the design provides a systematic and evidence-based understanding of students' awareness and knowledge of guidance and counseling services.

Research Setting

This study was conducted at Medina College, a private higher education institution located in Maningcol, Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental, Philippines. The institution offers various academic programs, including Public Administration, Education, Medical Technology, Radiologic Technology, Nursing, and other fields. Medina College provides academic and non-academic support services, including guidance and counseling, to promote students' academic success and overall well-being. Its diverse student population across different year levels and academic programs makes it an appropriate setting for assessing students' awareness and knowledge of guidance and counseling services. The findings of the study may serve as a basis for developing a student support enhancement program aligned with the institution's goal of promoting student development, achievement, and well-being.

Research Respondents

The respondents of the study were students enrolled at Medina College during the First Semester of Academic Year 2025–2026, representing various academic programs and year levels. A whole enumeration technique was employed, wherein all 396 students in the target population were invited to

participate. This approach is appropriate when the population is manageable and full coverage is desired to obtain a more comprehensive representation of the target group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). However, due to student absences, scheduling conflicts, and unreturned questionnaires, only 79.5% of the questionnaires were retrieved and included in the analysis. Despite not achieving the intended 100% participation, the retrieval rate was considered adequate for survey research, as response rates of approximately 70% or higher are generally viewed as acceptable for minimizing potential non-response bias (Dillman et al., 2014; Babbie, 2016).

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire to assess students' awareness and knowledge of Medina College's guidance and counseling services. The instrument was developed with consideration of Republic Act No. 9258 (Guidance and Counseling Act of 2004) and the institution's core guidance services, particularly counseling, appraisal, follow-up, and referral, consistent with relevant guidance practices in higher education. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section I gathered the respondents' demographic profile, including age, year level, and academic program, which served as bases for comparing their awareness and knowledge. Section II measured students' level of awareness of the four guidance and counseling services using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Section III assessed students' knowledge and understanding through multiple-choice questions covering counseling, appraisal, follow-up, and referral. Responses in this section were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions to determine the extent of students' knowledge of the services.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured permission from the Medina College Office of the Dean and the research adviser. Upon approval, the researcher coordinated with the program directors or heads for the distribution of the structured survey questionnaire to the respondents. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and their

informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were ensured. The questionnaire was administered both personally and through Google Forms to provide accessible options for participation. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. After retrieval, the accomplished questionnaires were checked, organized, coded, and tabulated for analysis. The collected data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to determine the students' awareness and knowledge of Medina College's guidance and counseling services.

Ethical Considerations

Strict ethical guidelines will be followed in this study. The ten ethical guiding principles will be adhered to by the researchers. First, research participants won't suffer any harm. The respondents' dignity will be prioritized. Respondents will give their informed consent before the study is carried out.

To protect respondents' privacy, participants will remain anonymous and all research data will be kept private. Furthermore, the goals and objectives of the research will not be misrepresented. Every affiliation, funding source, and potential conflict of interest will be fully disclosed. Last but not least, all research-related communications will be truthful and open, devoid of any misinformation or skewed depictions of the findings obtained from the primary data (Bell and Bryman, 2007).

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the respondents were organized, tallied, coded, and statistically analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe the respondents' demographic profile in terms of age, year level, and academic program.

The weighted mean was used to determine the students' level of awareness of the four basic guidance and counseling services: counseling, appraisal, follow-up, and referral.

For the knowledge assessment, the respondents' scores were converted into percentages and interpreted according to the established knowledge-level criteria.

To determine whether significant differences existed in students' awareness and knowledge when grouped according to the appropriate demographic variables,

the independent-samples t-test was employed. All statistical tests were evaluated at the 0.05 level of significance.

III. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Profile	Students	
	f	%
Age		
16 - 18 years old	157	49.84
19 - 21 years old	113	35.87
22 - 24 years old	28	8.89
25 and above	17	5.40
Total	315	100
Year Level		
First Year	75	23.81
Second Year	78	24.76
Third Year	85	26.98
Fourth Year	77	24.44
Total	315	100
Program		
Bachelor of Arts	7	2.22
Bachelor in Elementary and Secondary Education	10	3.17
BS Nursing	59	18.73
BS Pharmacy	91	28.89
BS Radiologic Technology	32	10.16
BS Tourism Management	7	2.22
BS Medical Technology	93	29.52
Public Administration	16	5.08
Bachelor of Arts	7	2.22
Total	315	100

According to the demographic profile of the 315 student respondents, almost half (49.84%) are between the ages of 16 and 18 followed by those between the ages of 19 and 21 (35.87%), 22 and 24 (8.89%) and 25 and older (5.40%). This distribution illustrates the significance of guidance and counseling services during late adolescence and early adulthood a crucial period for academic personal and social development and represents the typical age range of college students (Xie et al., 2023).

Respondents were distributed fairly evenly between first and fourth years in terms of year level with a

minor concentration in the third year (26.98 percent). This balance ensures that the study captures perspectives across different college stages which is consistent with research that emphasizes the need to evaluate guidance service utilization across year levels to account for varying student needs and stressors (Es-Sahib et al., 2025). The majority of respondents were enrolled in academic programs related to health including BS Medical Technology (29.52 percent), BS Pharmacy (28.89 percent), and BS Nursing (18.73 percent). The percentages of programs in public administration education tourism and the arts were lower. This pattern reflects the popularity of

institutional programs and shows that exposure to guidance services may vary depending on program demands.

Research shows that students academic programs can affect how they seek help how aware they are of it and how often they use counseling services (Greco et al., 2025).

Although the concentration in health-related programs should be taken into account when interpreting results as findings may reflect program-specific characteristics rather than the entire student body overall the demographic profile shows that the sample is representative of the college population.

Table 2. *Level of Students' Awareness of the Guidance and Counseling Services offered by the Institution*

Domains	Mean	Interpretation
Counseling	3.70	Very High
Appraisal	3.70	Very High
Follow-Up	3.72	Very High
Referral	3.68	Very High
Grand Mean	3.70	Very High

Scale: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High; 2.51 – 3.25 = High; 1.76 – 2.50 = Low; 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low

The results summary indicates that students have a high level of awareness of all four of the institutions primary areas of guidance and counseling services with domain means ranging from 3.68 to 3.72 and an overall grand mean of 3.70.

This recurring pattern shows that students comprehend the goals instruments and procedures associated with counseling evaluation follow-up and referral services.

The highest rating ($M = 3.72$) for the domain Follow-Up indicates that students are especially aware of the Guidance Offices ongoing surveillance operations. This is encouraging because assessing the success of interventions and sustaining student progress require ongoing monitoring.

Likewise the counseling ($M = 3.70$) and Evaluation ($M = 3.70$) domains both show incredibly high awareness indicating that students understand how important these services are to their academic personal and professional development. In line with Ndwiga (2022) who noted that students are more engaged in educational planning when they are aware of counseling and assessment services. The Referral domain ($M = 3$) shows that students are aware of the schools referral policies and collaborations. 68) which is in the extremely high range but is marginally lower. This is supported by Firmin et al. (2022) found that when referral pathways are effectively communicated students are more aware of how schools collaborate with both internal and external agencies to address a range of needs.

Table 3. *Level of Students' Knowledge of the Guidance and Counseling Services offered by the Institution*

Components	Mean	Interpretation
Counseling	4.38	Superior Knowledge
Appraisal	4.39	Superior Knowledge
Follow-Up	4.43	Superior Knowledge
Referral	4.40	Superior Knowledge
Average Mean	4.40	Superior Knowledge

The results in Table 3 reveal that students demonstrated a superior level of knowledge regarding the guidance and counseling services offered by Medina College, as reflected by the overall average

mean of 4.40. This indicates that students have a comprehensive understanding of the institution's guidance and counseling services, including their purposes, functions, and relevance to students'

academic and personal needs. The finding suggests that the institution's existing information dissemination, orientation, and accessibility of guidance services may have contributed to students' strong knowledge of the services available to them. A high level of knowledge is important because students who understand the nature and purpose of these services are more likely to recognize when and where to seek appropriate assistance.

Among the four components, Follow-Up obtained the highest mean of 4.43, interpreted as Superior Knowledge, followed by Referral (4.40), Appraisal (4.39), and Counseling (4.38). Although counseling received the lowest mean among the four components, its rating still falls within the superior knowledge category, indicating that students have a strong understanding of all major guidance and counseling services. The highest score for follow-up may suggest that students particularly recognize the importance of continued monitoring and assistance after an initial intervention. Meanwhile, the high scores for appraisal and referral indicate that students are also knowledgeable about the processes of assessing their needs and connecting them with appropriate services

or professionals. Overall, the relatively close means across all four components demonstrate that students' knowledge is consistently high rather than concentrated in only one area.

The findings are consistent with Golingay (2025), who reported that college students demonstrated a high level of awareness of guidance and counseling services and emphasized the importance of strengthening student support mechanisms to address students' varying needs.

This supports the present finding that students possess substantial knowledge of the guidance and counseling services available to them.

The results further suggest that maintaining effective orientation and information-dissemination activities can help ensure that students remain familiar with the functions and availability of these services.

However, a strong level of knowledge should also be complemented by opportunities for actual utilization so that students can translate their understanding into appropriate help-seeking and engagement with the institution's guidance and counseling programs.

Table 4. *Test of Significant Difference on the Level of Awareness of the Guidance and Counseling Services when Respondents are grouped according to their Demographic Profile*

Test Variables	P value	Decision
Awareness vs. Age	0.215	Retain H01
Awareness vs. Year Level	0.182	Retain H01
Awareness vs. Program	0.324	Retain H01

Note: If $p \leq 0.05$, with a significant difference

When students are categorized by age ($p = 0.215$), year level ($p = 0.182$), and academic program ($p = 0.324$) the results shown in Table 8 show that there are no statistically significant differences in the degree of awareness of guidance and counseling services. The null hypothesis is maintained for all demographic variables since all calculated p-values are greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This result implies that students are uniformly aware of guidance and counseling services irrespective of their demographics. The findings are not concerning because they suggest that students from various groups

have been equally informed about counseling services by institutional efforts.

The lack of notable variations however might also mean that awareness has plateaued and that students familiarity with available services is no longer distinguished by demographic traits. The literature that is currently available supports these conclusions by highlighting the fact that institutional communication tactics frequently have a greater influence on counseling service awareness than do personal demographics. G. Ngeno. (2022) discovered that students in various grade levels showed similar levels

of awareness of school counseling services indicating that exposure through institutional programs orientations and announcements contributes to a common baseline of knowledge. Similarly recent research in higher education settings has demonstrated that awareness alone does not significantly differ across age or academic standing even though students may differ in their counseling needs or usage patterns (Lagon et al., 2022). This is consistent with Mental Health Literacy Theory which holds that while actual service utilization is influenced by more intricate psychological cultural and contextual factors awareness is a fundamental but widely shared

component of help-seeking behavior (Yan et al., 2022).

Even though uniform awareness has generally positive effects the findings also highlight a critical problem for program improvement. Equal awareness is not always associated with effective use or engagement with guidance and counseling services. Recent research suggests that rather than merely conducting awareness campaigns educational institutions should focus on improving students perceptions of counseling services relevance accessibility and reliability (Chaves et al., 2022).

Table 5. *Test of Significant Difference on the Level of Knowledge of the Guidance and Counseling Services when Respondents are grouped according to their Demographic Profile*

Test Variables	P value	Decision
Knowledge vs. Age	0.173	Retain H02
Knowledge vs. Year Level	0.092	Retain H02
Knowledge vs. Program	0.046	Reject H02

Note: If $p \leq 0.05$, with a significant difference

According to Table 5, there is a significant difference in students knowledge of guidance and counseling services between academic programs ($p = 0.046$) but not by age ($p = 0.173$) or year level ($p = 0.092$). This pattern suggests that program or field of study has a greater influence on awareness or understanding of guidance services than age or academic progress. According to research on student awareness there was a high level of knowledge about guidance services across grade levels suggesting systematic dissemination rather than variations based on academic standing or age. This result is in line with research that indicates general demographic characteristics by themselves might not be accurate indicators of students awareness of or use of counseling resources. (Yosef et al., 2024).

However, research indicates that awareness and satisfaction with counseling services are influenced by academic program or field of study which is consistent with the notable variation by program. For example studies on student satisfaction with academic support services have found significant variations by academic program suggesting that curriculum focus program culture or academic environment may have an impact

on students exposure to and perceptions of guidance services (Alshuaybat et al., 2021).

This finding highlights a significant practical implication: although students knowledge of guidance and counseling may not be differentiated by traditional demographic factors like age and year the academic setting in which they are enrolled seems to have an impact on their knowledge of the resources that are available. Programs that emphasize wellness career planning or student support may naturally raise awareness but less structured exposure may leave students less informed. Research on student awareness and engagement shows that clarity about the purpose accessibility and benefits of counseling services strongly predicts engagement. According to Kusnadi et al. (2025), students who are informed frequently through program-specific orientation or integrated practices are more likely to be knowledgeable and involved.

Ultimately these results suggest that rather than just concentrating on particular groups, institutional strategies should include guidance and counseling information in all academic programs. By guaranteeing that all students have equal access to

information and services this would reduce the current disparity related to program affiliation.

IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the mental The majority of respondents were between the ages of 16 and 18 (49.84%), followed by those between the ages of 19 and 21 (35.87 %), 22 and 24 (8.89%), and 25 and older (5.40 %). This indicates that the majority of Medina Colleges student body consists of younger individuals in the typical college age range. All year levels had a fairly equal distribution of respondents with a minor concentration in the third year (26.98 %). The majority of students were enrolled in BS Pharmacy (28.89%) and BS Medical Technology (29.52%) demonstrating the popularity of the colleges health-related programs. The demographic profile provides context for interpreting awareness and knowledge levels because it shows a diverse mix of students in terms of age academic experience and program affiliation.

Students awareness of all areas of guidance and counseling services was extremely high. In particular, the grand means for counseling, appraisal, follow-up, and referral services ranged from 3. 68 to 3. 72.

This implies that students are aware about the availability, function, and existence of these services. The Guidance Offices frequent information distribution which includes orientations announcements and prominent postings on campus may be the reason for the high awareness levels. The results show that the school successfully informs students about its guidance programs making sure they are aware of the tools available to help them grow academically professionally and socially.

The findings demonstrated that students are more knowledgeable about the institutions guidance and counseling services across all domains. In terms of counseling, appraisal, follow-up, and referral services most respondents showed either superior or adequate knowledge. Even though, general knowledge levels are high a small portion of students still showed only basic minimal or no knowledge suggesting that some

students might not fully comprehend the scope and procedures of guidance services.

When students were categorized by age, academic program, and year level the analysis showed no discernible variations in their awareness of guidance and counseling services. This result suggests that students awareness is evenly distributed irrespective of their demographics. It also implies that students from all groups are equally reached by the institutions awareness campaigns.

When students were categorized by year level and age the results revealed no appreciable variations in their level of knowledge. However when students were categorized by academic program, a notable difference was found. This suggests that although students are equally knowledgeable that guidance and counseling services exist, their level of comprehension varies according to their field of study. This could be because of variations in program culture exposure or integration of activities related to guidance.

Conclusions

The study concludes that Medina College students typically have a very high level of awareness and an adequate to superior level of knowledge regarding the guidance and counseling services offered by the school. While knowledge only significantly varies when grouped according to academic program, students' awareness levels do not significantly differ based on age, year level, or academic program. These results show that the school has been successful in advertising its guidance and counseling services, even though there are still differences in knowledge among academic programs. The findings emphasize the necessity of enhancing program-specific information sharing and educational programs in order to raise students' awareness of the services that are available. All things considered, the results are in favor of putting the suggested Guidance and Counseling Program Enhancement Plan into action in order to further advance students' wellbeing, academic achievement, and personal growth.

Recommendations

The studys findings led to the following suggestions being made.

Students. To get the most out of these support programs, students are urged to actively engage in guidance activities and seek counseling whenever academic personal or emotional issues come up.

Guidance Counselor. In order to improve student engagement and comprehension of counseling, appraisal, follow-up, and referral services, guidance counselors should keep stepping up awareness campaigns, hold frequent orientations, and create creative solutions.

School Administrators. In order to improve the availability and efficacy of guidance and counseling services in all academic programs, school administrators should provide sufficient resources, institutional support, and policies.

Faculty and Staff. In close coordination with the guidance office, faculty and staff should refer students when needed and emphasize the value of getting expert assistance for a range of issues.

Future Researcher. To increase understanding of guidance and counseling services, future researchers are urged to carry out comparable studies in other educational institutions and investigate other factors like service utilization, attitudes toward counseling, and obstacles to help-seeking behavior.

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