





## Understanding the objectives of the school counselling programme in Namibia: A descriptive study

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**Abstract**— This study's central problem is a lack of clear understanding regarding the specific objectives and functions of the school counselling programme as it is currently implemented in Namibian schools. This descriptive study aims to clarify these objectives from the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in the programme. Employing a quantitative approach rooted in the positivism paradigm, the study utilised a descriptive survey design to achieve the study's broad aim. The authors adopted a stratified random sampling technique, where a sample of 148 principals, 70 teacher-counsellors, and 382 learners from 40 schools in Eenhana, Ohakafiya, Ondobe, and Okongo circuits in the Ohangwena region of Namibia was used. The study used self-structured questionnaires to collect data. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage. The findings indicated that the principal participants viewed the career development objectives as most important, and the teacher-counsellors prioritised academic development. At the same time, the learners considered personal-social development objectives the most important for the school counselling programme. The differing priorities placed on the objectives of the school counselling programme by principals, teacher-counsellors, and learners suggest a potential misalignment in understanding and implementing the programme's goals. This discrepancy highlights the need for better communication and a more holistic approach to ensure the counselling programme effectively addresses all stakeholders' diverse needs and perspectives within the Namibian school system. This study concludes by recommending that the Namibian Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture prioritise comprehensive training for teacher-counsellors to effectively address learners' various personal challenges and needs within the school setting.

**Keywords:** Career development, school counselling programme, Namibia, Learners, Parents, Principal

To cite this article (APA): Hako, A. N., & Bojuwoye, O. (2025). Understanding the objectives of the school counselling programme in Namibia: A descriptive study. *International Journal of Studies in Psychology*, 5(2), 60-70. <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijpsy.v5i2.1990>

### I. INTRODUCTION

**G**UIDANCE and counselling is a professional field with a broad range of activities and services to assist individuals in understanding themselves, their problems, their school environment, and their world (Wankasi & Adekunle, 2023). It is a process of helping an individual become fully aware of himself and how he is responding to the influences of his environment (Saleh et al., 2020). Guidance and counselling further assist individuals in establishing personal meaning for this behaviour and developing and classifying goals and values for future behaviour. According to Ntilisinda (2017), the rationale for school guidance and counseling is based on the belief that prevention is always better than cure in every aspect of life. It is, therefore, noted that counselling no doubt has the key to preventing almost all the problems associated with learning, therefore the need to understand the services provided under the school guidance programme towards the attainment of effective teaching and learning.

It is essential to note that counselling in schools is multifaceted and significantly contributes to the holistic development of learners. For example, school counselling is crucial for learners' fostering academic success, supporting their personal and social well-being, and effectively empowering them to thrive in their educational journey (Kazimoto, 2022; Wango, 2018). Furthermore, Kabamba et al. (2020) affirmed that guidance and counselling services equip learners with skills related to

lifelong learning, provide the basis for making informed decisions about the future, and help learners live fulfilled lives.

Namibia experiences a growing number of social problems that affect the lives of school-going children. These problems include poverty, teenage pregnancy, peer pressure, domestic violence, school dropouts, passion killings, HIV/AIDS, and alcohol and drug abuse (Education Management Information System, 2021). However, these problems are not unique to Namibia, as there is an increase in the divorce rate and the number of single-parent families worldwide, which is also a stress factor for learners (Hako, 2016; Rahman & Azmi, 2023). Not only do the ever-increasing needs of children and the expectations of today's society impose growing demands on the educational system, but they also expect schools to find solutions and respond to these needs by providing counselling to all learners to learn effectively (Mbongo et al., 2016).

The restructuring in education after independence not only addressed the unmet needs created by the apartheid education system but also the socio-economic difficulties faced by the newly independent state. Many Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs), the emotional and social impact of HIV and AIDS on children and young people, and the increasing pressures on children and young people in a developing and more complex society amplify the need for guidance and counselling services in schools (Education Sector Policy for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, 2008). All these problems negatively affect children, and as a result, their academic endeavours are adversely affected. When schools are mainly concerned with delivering an

academic curriculum, other aspects of the schools' role, such as providing personal and social education, tend to be overlooked (as cited in Mbongo et al., 2016, p. 2).

#### **Brief historical background of school counselling in Namibia**

South West Africa (SWA), as Namibia was called before independence, was a German colony and then a mandated territory of South Africa until 1989. During that time, the education system was segregated along ethnic lines. Before independence in 1990, there were no structured guidance and counselling services for black children in the South West Africa, for they were exclusively for the white and coloured schools. The development of guidance and counselling services reflected the same racial segregation in the whole education system of South West Africa. However, when Namibia gained independence in 1990, the school counselling programme was expanded to cover all public schools to ensure that all Namibians have equal educational opportunities. In 1996, the government of Namibia directed that the regional offices of the Ministry of Education appoint Regional School Counsellors and other special education support personnel to coordinate the school counselling activities and other support services to the schools of each region (Ministry of Education, 1996). The school counselling programme in Namibia is under the auspices of the Programme Quality Assurance (PQA) division in the Ministry of Education, Arts, and Culture. The counselling activities are coordinated under the Special Education Programmes sub-division umbrella by School Counsellors from the Head Office and Regional School Counsellors from each of the fourteen regions in the country. According to the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture (1996), the duties of the RSCs include:

- rendering guidance and counselling services to learners.
- executing educational-psychological related research in the counsellor's jurisdiction.
- training Life Skills teachers in basic counselling skills and psychometric test administration.
- assessing learners who show symptoms of behavioural change and loss of ability to cope in the educational setting and assist learners with vocational guidance.

Subsequently, schools with 250 learners must have at least one teacher with training in and/or experience in life skills, guidance, and counselling, and this is the person who ensures that the school counselling programme is implemented at the school level. Where it is not possible, a designated teacher should be given responsibility in the interim and go through professional in-service development in life skills, guidance, and counselling. In addition to Life Skills as a subject, the school must make time and space available for direct one-to-one or small group counselling (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 38).

#### **Objectives of school counselling in Namibia**

The school counselling programme was introduced to meet the needs of all learners in schools. The overall goal of the Namibian School Counselling Programme is the total or overall development of learners. To achieve this goal, the school counselling programme features activities for training in skills and abilities for learners' social, educational, vocational, moral, and psychological development. Due to the nature of the problems confronting school learners for which counselling programme is being implemented, the Namibian Ministry of Education is fully aware that the programme must be long-term since the socio-economic conditions of people are diverse and complex, and the problems created by these conditions cannot be solved overnight. Thus, the conception of a school counselling programme by the Namibian Education Ministry is a programme with a long-term perspective and made up of activities and/or services that help to equip learners with knowledge, skills, attitude, and values for making decisions, critical thinking ability to solve problems and personal independent values and attitudes for promoting positive self-concepts, healthy living and proper adjustment to life (Ministry of Education, 2008).

The approach to school counselling is an educational process meant

for the development of learners to adjust appropriately to life, especially in adulthood and during the working stage. Thus, as Namibia conceived, school counselling is not an impromptu service that needs to occur once. Rather school counselling is designed to be progressive to address the complexity of the human growth process in an ever-changing Namibian society. This conception of school counselling is consistent with that of Hako and Bojuwoye (2019), Sekibo (2022), and Rahman and Azmi (2023), who assert that school counselling is an educational process that is long-term or progresses over a long period rather than one that takes place over a short period. As an educational process, school counselling is designed to promote the psychological maturity or total development of a healthy personality in every learner. By this conception, Hako and Bojuwoye (2019) and Simbolon and Purba (2022) affirm that school counselling is not just therapy or curative service but involves activities and services for the prevention of problems and for building up capacities for preparing learners for future job roles as workers and good citizens. Developing a school environment conducive to teaching and learning is the overall objective of the school counselling programme. Through its Ministry of Education, the government of Namibia provides resources to ensure that all children have access to education and that schools can address all barriers to learning and ensure learners' overall development (Mbongo et al., 2016). This objective of the school counselling programme closely approximates that of the Salamanca Statement, which argues that "Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building inclusive societies and achieving education for all" (UNESCO, 1994, P. 4). In conclusion, the ever-increasing needs of children and the expectations of today's society impose growing demands on the educational system; thus, schools must be equipped to respond appropriately by providing support services for all learners to learn effectively. This, indeed, is the premise underlying School Counselling Programme in Namibia.

Literature on the objectives of school counselling exists from a worldview and regional and Namibian perspectives. However, there are mixed reported findings from different contexts. Ojeme (2019) summarised that the major role of school counsellors is to assist individuals to cope with challenges in their psychological development, education, and vocational needs and facilitate the learning process of learners. Simbolon and Purba (2022) cited developing problem-solving skills, increased self-esteem, and enhanced self-confidence as critical outcomes. Additionally, improved interpersonal relationships and a harmonious school environment were reported, indicating a broader impact on the school community. Furthermore, the fundamental objective of a comprehensive, school-wide strategy for guidance and counselling is to facilitate the personal, social, emotional, vocational, and educational advancement of all learners, including cultivating improved disciplinary practices (Wango, 2017).

Lowery et al. (2018) include advising learners about colleges and universities and their role, processing college applications, keeping records of dropouts, giving support and comfort to abused children, and providing interventions to learners who are going through crisis and conflict. Ojeme (2019) reported that the learners were more positive when professional school counsellors were empowered to use their skills to work directly with them. In their study on the importance of guidance and counselling service in high school, Rahman and Azmi (2023) highlight the aims of guidance and counselling service in schools as to assist the learner in fulfilling his / her basic physiological needs, understanding themselves, and developing associations with peers, balancing between permissiveness and controls in the school setting, realising achievement, and providing opportunities to gain independence. Therefore, the purpose of guidance and counselling emphasises and strengthens educational programmes. Nyirenda (2022) states that the role of school counsellors should include working with individuals on a one-on-one basis, doing group counselling which includes support; sexuality, anger management, self-esteem

development, and psychoeducation which cover life skills, for example, study methods, wellness, HIV/AIDS and health behaviours. Kainda (2023) argues that school counsellors play a pivotal role in schools. Parents often consult school counselors on how to meet the needs of the learners, learners with behavioural problems, and academic barriers. These learners are often referred to them and other schools and community leaders seeking feedback regarding solutions to problems.

Mushota (2022) and Aluede et al. (2017) revealed that counselling and/or psychotherapy of specific nature help learners build self-esteem and inspire them to experience specific learning barriers by providing them space. Nweze and Okolie (2014) study in Nigeria revealed that 77.22% of the population proved that there is little or no form of counselling services to assist learners in career decision-making in their respective schools, while 73.33% of the study population felt that counselling resources for teacher counsellors are unavailable and insufficient in their respective schools. Eze et al. (2017) stated that when anger is managed in healthy ways, it can be a positive thing, a red flag that something is wrong, a catalyst for change, and a good motivator among learners. These authors view counsellors as people with skills that help to influence individuals' engagement in the process leading to behavioural change in the right direction. As such, school counsellors play a vital role in helping learners understand and apply the most appropriate ways of managing their anger, which is the most primal and complex feeling in human emotions (Kalinda, 2023). Nyirenda (2022) and Mushota (2022) highlight some anger management techniques imparted to learners by guidance counsellors as understanding the cause and nature of their anger, speaking and venting out their anger-related feelings constructively, and being cognisant in attempting to stop anger.

Muzumara (2022) emphasised that educational guidance and counselling services enable learners to use their educational opportunities appropriately. It aids in planning effective study habits and enhancing learners' academic competencies. Furthermore, Adeoye (2016) revealed that counselling services are an intervention process that is effective in dealing with students' academic problems and, at the same time, fosters a healthy heterosexual relationship among the learners. The counsellor also keeps a proper record of continuous assessment of the academic activities of the learners. In the United States, the school counselling program began as a guidance movement, and Mulhauser (2016) explained that counselling services had become an integral part of the educational system. This programme has helped many learners adjust to social, emotional, and academic challenges. In Japan, the major aim of the guidance program is to provide services that will assist learners in developing their abilities and facilitate self-understanding (Bolu-Steve & Oredugba, 2017). A study in Nigeria revealed that 77 (32.1%) of the respondents stated that counselling services had low impacts on their academic performance. In comparison, 163 (67.9%) respondents stated that counselling services greatly impacted their academic performance. Amoah et al. (2015) study in Ghana showed that learners strongly agreed that career guidance and counselling, career goal identification, organisation of career days and conferences, and administration of occupational interest inventory on learners were among career intervention roles by the school counsellor influence their career choice.

Further, there was a positive correlation between the role of the counsellor and its influence on learners' career choices. Negesa et al. (2016) study in Kenya highlights teacher counselling and peer counselling as the most effective strategies in guidance and counselling compared to learners' suspension and corporal punishment. More than half of guidance and counselling teachers asserted that schools had an inadequate policy and manual procedures and code of ethics and regulation governing sexual behaviours. Hako (2016) studied the Namibian School Counselling Programme from the perspectives of selected stakeholders. The results revealed that participants endorsed all three sets of objectives of the school counselling programme, presented on the questionnaire, representing those of the Namibian

School Counselling Programme.

## II. METHOS

### Research approach and paradigm

The study used a positivist paradigm and quantitative approach to achieve its objectives (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Positivism seeks to generate objective knowledge by emphasising observable evidence and scientific methodologies, hence minimising bias. In this study investigating stakeholders' opinions on the school counselling programme, a positive and quantitative approach allowed the researchers to objectively measure and compare the perspectives of principals, teacher-counsellors, and learners across a few schools. The statistical analysis of the survey data provided quantifiable evidence of the different priority areas identified by each group, enabling the researchers to conclude the overall understanding of the programme's objectives within the Ohangwena region. In other words, it allows researchers to gain reliable, objective insights from data and clearly understand trends and patterns (Bock, 2018).

### Research design

This study used a survey design to answer the study research questions. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2023) describe research design as a study plan to generate answers to research questions. Bock (2018) also refers to research design as the procedures a researcher selects to study a particular set of questions or hypotheses. Creswell and Clark (2017) believe that descriptive research is designed to get essential and precise data on the phenomena under study to draw general conclusions from the facts discovered. The investigators chose this design over other designs because it allowed them to collect facts to help generalise conclusions. This design was then deemed applicable as it enabled the researchers to gather primary data on the understanding of the objectives of school counselling programme in Namibia. Therefore, investigators employed this design over alternative designs to gather comprehensive information that fosters the generalisations of findings to the larger population.

### Population

Population refers to a group of individuals, objects, or items from which samples are taken for statistical measurement (Bock, 2018). The target population for this study, from which the researchers sought to derive insights regarding Namibia's school counselling programme objectives, comprised stakeholders such as principals, teacher-counsellors, and learners from 40 schools within the Eenhana, Ohakapiya, Ondobe, and Okongo circuits of the Ohangwena region. A stratified random technique was employed to choose the study sample. The sample size was considered adequate based on the information indicated in the published tables. The sample comprised 148 principals (76 male (53.5%), 66 females (46.5%), aged 31-50), 70 teacher-counsellors (31 male (45.6%), 37 females (54.4%), aged 26-45), and 288 learners (126 male (43.8%) 162 female (56.2%), aged 10-40).

### Data collection tools

Three sets of self-administering questionnaires employed for gathering the quantitative data had three versions, with each population group having its questionnaire, for example, Teacher-Counsellors Questionnaire (TCQ), Principals Questionnaire (PQ), and Learners Questionnaire (LQ)]. All the questionnaires contained similar statements or items, except in words to suit the different population groups. The questionnaires were divided into two sections. Section A covers the biographical information of the respondents, whereas section B contains questions on the objectives of the school counselling programme.

Validity was ensured by the expert judgment of research supervisors in one university in Psychology and Educational Psychology. About the instruments used for the current study, internal consistency was used to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. Thus, the internal reliability co-efficient estimate obtained for the principal questionnaire was 0.949, for teacher-counsellors was 0.964, and for learners was 0.962, while the overall coefficient for all three groups' instruments was 0.823,

considered adequate as it is above the minimum value.

### Procedures

The ethical clearance of the study was obtained from the Ministry of Education, Namibia. Permission to conduct the study in the selected schools in the Ohangwena region was sought from the Director of the Ohangwena Directorate of Education. In each school involved in the study, with the assistance of the school principal, participants were informed of the purpose of the study and the conditions for participation both orally and in writing in groups within the school premises. Besides, the researcher obtained signed informed consent forms from each participant who responded to the questionnaires. The cover letter was attached to each copy of a questionnaire that explained the purpose, rationale, and significance of the study, the dates and the duration of the study, and all the aspects of ethical issues. For instance, before participation, respondents were assured of their anonymity, the confidentiality of information they were to give, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the fact that, if they wished, they could withdraw at any time from the study. Information in this regard, and about the study in general, was contained in the informed consent form each participant signed before participating (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Questionnaires were sent to all participating schools in Ohangwena Directorate of Education. Respondents were asked to return the survey within 4 weeks of receipt. A letter reminding participants to return the questionnaire was sent 3 weeks after the initial distribution.

### Data analysis

Data were analysed using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows version 23.0. The quantitative data analysis process yielded results that are presented in descriptive statistics tables. Descriptive statistics examined relationships among population groups' perspectives on the study under investigation. The frequencies and percentages for each response are presented in the table to improve data display and amplify interpretative clarity.

## III. RESULTS

### Biographical results of respondents

Biographical information about respondents entails the characteristics of participants such as age, gender, teaching experience, level of education, grade level, and experience as a principal and trained as a counsellor. For participants in this study, biographical information included age, gender, teaching experience, and level of education for teacher-counsellors and principals (information about the experience as a principal for school principals only and training as a counsellor for teacher-counsellors only). For learners, biographical information included age, gender, and grade level. The information presented in Table 1 presents the biographical information of respondents.

#### Learners

Table 1: Biographical information of learners

Biographical variables		Frequencies	%
Gender	Male	126	43.8%
	Female	162	56.2%
Age	10-15	46	15.6%
	16-20	157	53.4%
	21-25	21	7.1%
	26-30	20	6.8%
	31-35	47	16.0%
	36-40	3	1.0%
Level of Education	Gr 5	21	7.1%
	Gr 6	15	5.1%
	Gr 7	9	3.1%
	Gr 8	66	22.4%
	Gr 9	117	39.8%
	Gr 10	66	22.4%

Table 1 above indicates that more female learners participated in the study than male learners. Most learners fall within the age range of 16-20 years old. Most learners who participated in the study were from grades 9 compared to those from grades 8 and 10.

### Teacher- counsellors

Table 2: Biographical information of teacher- counsellors

Biographical variables	Variable Description	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	31	45.6
	Female	37	54.4
Age	26-30	16	23.9
	31-35	20	29.9
	36-40	15	22.4
	41-45	16	22.9
	46-50	0	0
Teaching Experience	1-5	10	14.7
	6-10	27	39.7
	11-15	18	26.5
	>15 yrs	12	17.6
Experience as a Counsellor	1-5	52	76.5
	6-10	13	19.1
	11-15	3	4.4
	>15 yrs	0	0
Trained as a Counselor	University level	6	8.8
	Short workshops	62	91.2
Level of Education	Gr 12+3 yrs	27	40.3
	Gr 12+4 yrs	28	41.8
	Gr 12+ 5 yrs	6	9.0
	Gr 12+6 yrs	6	9.0

Table 2 above shows that there were slightly more male teacher-counsellors than female teacher-counsellors. Most teacher-counsellors were between 31 to 35 years of age and very few were in the 36 to 40 age range. Most teacher-counsellors fell within the range of 6 to 10 years of teaching experience, while few were within the range of 1 to 5 years of teaching experience. Most teacher-counsellors had 1 to 5 years of experience as teacher-counsellors. Most teacher-counsellors only attended short workshops for counselling, and only 8.8% had University training. The table shows that 41.8% of teacher-counsellors had grade 12+4 years tertiary qualification, while 40.3% had grade 12+3 tertiary training.

### School principals

Table 3: Biographical information of school principals

Biographical variables		Frequencies	%
Gender	Male	76	53.5%
	Female	66	46.5%
Age	31-35	35	24.6%
	36-40	65	45.8%
	41-45	39	27.5%
	46-50	3	2.1 %
Teaching Experience	1-5	13	9.2 %
	6-10	75	52.8 %
	11-15	32	22.5 %
	> 15 yrs	22	15.5 %
Experience as Principal	1-5	104	73.2 %
	6-10	30	21.1%
	11-15	6	4.2 %
	>15 yrs	2	1.4 %
Level of Education	Gr 12+3 yrs	88	63.3%
	Gr 12+4 yrs	36	25.9%
	Gr 12+ 5 yrs	7	5.0 %
	Gr 12+6 yrs	8	5.8 %

The information in Table 3 above indicates that more male school principals participated in the study than female school principals. Most school principals were in the range of 36 to 40 years of age. The majority had 6 to 10 years of teaching experience. The table further shows that most school principals had 1 to 5 years of experience as principals. Most of the principals had grade 12+3 years of education. Only a few principals had grades 12+5 years (5.0%) and 12 + 6 years (5.8 %), respectively.

### Understanding the objectives of the school counselling programme

A section of the questionnaire (Part B) contained a list of suggested

objectives for the school counselling programme. The three main categories of objectives of a school counselling programme presented to participants on the questionnaire included Academic or educational development objectives, personal and social development objectives, and career development objectives. In this section of the questionnaire, participants were to indicate if they considered the suggested objectives presented on the questionnaire to represent those of the Namibian school counselling programme. The participants' scale mean response scores to the items in this section of the questionnaire (Part B) ranged from a minimum of one (1) to a maximum of five (5). Participants' scale mean response scores of 1- 2 indicate that the participants disagreed with the suggested objectives of the questionnaire, representing that of the Namibian school counselling programme.

Scale mean response scores ranging between 2 and 3 indicate that the participants were neutral, not sure or could not make up their minds that the suggested objectives represented that of the Namibian school counselling programme. However, scale mean response scores ranging from 3 to 5 indicate that the participants agreed that the suggested objectives on the questionnaire represented those of the Namibian School Counselling Programme. The results of the analysis of data regarding the objectives of the Namibian school counselling programme are presented in Table 4, which presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' scale mean response scores (and the standard deviations) obtained by the three population groups of participants.

Table 4: Objectives of the School Counselling Programme in Namibia

Variables	Scale Mean Response Scores and standard deviation		
	Learners	Teacher Counsellors	Principals
Objectives of a School Counselling Programme			
Academic/ educational development objective	3.64(0.75)	3.63 (0.78)	4.03(0.74)
Personal/social development objective	3.99(0.65)	3.47 (0.62)	3.94(0.63)
Career development objective	3.49(0.73)	3.56 (0.70)	4.08(0.60)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.70(0.66)</b>	<b>3.55(0.70)</b>	<b>4.01(0.65)</b>

Table 4 above presents information regarding the objectives of the Namibian school counselling programme as represented by the mean response scores of the participants to the suggested objectives of the school counselling programme as presented to them on the questionnaire. These suggested objectives have been clustered into three categories Academic or Educational Development, Personal and Social Development, and Career Development objectives.

Regarding objectives associated with learners' academic or educational development, learner-participants' scale mean response score is 3.64, teacher-counsellors' scale mean response score is 3.63, and principals' scale mean response score is 4.03. Since this scale mean response scores range above the scale mean of 3, the indication is that all three population groups agreed that academic or educational development objectives represent that of the Namibian School Counselling Programme. Principal participants' agreement seems much stronger than the learners' and the teacher-counsellors' agreements.

Regarding the personal and social development objective, learners' scale mean response score is 3.90, teacher-counsellors', 3.47, and principals', 3.94. These results indicate that all three population groups agreed that the suggested personal and social development objective presented on the questionnaire represented the objective of the Namibian School Counselling Programme. The learners and the principals appear to be closer in their agreement. In contrast, the teacher-counsellors' agreement with this suggested objective seems weaker than the other two population groups.

Concerning the career development objective, learners' scale mean response score is 3.49, teacher-counsellors', 3.56, and the principals', 4.08. All three population groups agreed that the career development objective represents the objective of the Namibian School Counselling Programme, with the agreement by the principal participants being much stronger than those of the learners and the teacher-counsellors,

whose agreement is just above the scale average.

Population group comparisons of responses can be made to rank each population-scale mean response score. Thus, learner-participants' scale mean response scores ranked Personal and social development, academic or educational development, and career development objectives in that descending order. This ranking of learners' scale mean response scores indicates that the learner-participants of this study ranked or prioritised as most important the personal and social development objective of the Namibian school counselling programme.

The teacher-counsellors' scale means response scores to the objectives of the school counselling programme can be ranked as academic or educational development, career development, and personal and social development objectives in descending order. Therefore, to the teacher-counsellors who participated in this study, academic or educational development objectives are the most crucial Namibian school counselling programme objective. The principals' scale mean response scores ranked in career development, academic or educational, and personal and social development objectives in descending order. That is, the principals who participated in this study prioritised or ranked career development as the most important objective of the Namibian school counselling programme. Therefore, the three population groups generally placed different priorities or importance on the questionnaire's three categories of suggested objectives. There seems to be a common agreement among the teacher-counsellors and principals' population groups regarding personal and social development objectives as the least important of the three categories of suggested objectives presented on the questionnaire.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Regarding the programme's objectives, the participants endorsed three categories of objectives on the questionnaire representing those of the Namibian school counselling programme. These objectives are academic development, personal-social development, and career development. By academic development, the participants endorsed the suggestions that the Namibian school counselling programme assists learners educationally and/or academically by providing academic support services which help the learners to develop healthy attitudes to school and or education, self-awareness skills, positive self-esteem, culture of study and good study habits, appropriate time management skills, awareness of various barriers to learning, team or group work skills, and skills in anxiety and or worries reduction as well as skills for preparation for the examination. Similarly, Bolu-Steve and Oredugba (2017) agreed that counselling services greatly impacted their academic performance. Amoah et al. (2015) also showed a positive correlation between the role of the counsellor and its influence on student's career choices. On the contrary, Negesa et al. (2016) reiterate that guidance and counselling teachers in Kenya reported that schools had inadequate policies, manual procedures, codes of ethics, and sexual behaviour regulations. This finding implies that teacher counsellors should adopt therapy techniques that enhance academic achievement among learners.

In terms of personal-social development objectives, the participants endorsed the suggestions that the Namibian school counselling programme is geared towards the provision of education or knowledge to learners to support the development of respect for themselves and others, development of skills in self-awareness, social, interpersonal and or friendship relationship and good communication skills, and the development of mature and healthy lifestyles to enable them to live amicably with other people. This finding agreed with Aluede et al. (2017), which revealed that counselling and/or psychotherapy of specific nature help learners build self-esteem and inspire them to experience specific learning barriers by providing them space. Eze et al. (2017) also viewed counsellors as people with skills that help to influence individuals' engagement in the process leading to behavioural change in the right direction. Mushota (2022) agreed that school counsellors play a vital role in helping learners understand and apply



the most appropriate ways of managing their anger, which is the most primal and complex feeling in human emotions. Nyirenda (2022) highlights some anger management techniques imparted to learners by guidance counsellors as understanding the cause and nature of their anger, speaking and venting out their anger-related feelings constructively, and being cognisant to stop anger.

Career development objectives are about school counselling programme helping learners to learn about themselves and their characteristics, the environment, particularly with the world of work, to develop skills for relating education to employment opportunities, make appropriate career choices, plan appropriately towards career future, be capable of searching for, obtaining, maintaining a job and progressing within the job as well as contributing meaningfully to the economy of the country. Muzumara (2022) agreed that educational guidance and counselling services enable learners to use their educational opportunities appropriately. It aids in planning effective study habits and enhancing learners' academic competencies. Adeoye (2016) also revealed that counselling services are an intervention process that is effective in dealing with student academic problems and, at the same time, fostering a healthy heterosexual relationship among the learners. Wango (2017) and Bolu-Steve and Oredugba (2017) summarised that counselling services have become an integral part of the educational system and have helped many learners adjust to social, emotional, and academic challenges. Ojeme (2019) summarised that school counselors' major role is to assist individuals in coping with challenges in their psychological development, education, and vocational needs and facilitate the learning process of learners. Nyirenda (2022) stated that the role of school counsellors should include working with individuals on a one-on-one basis and doing group counselling which provides support, sexuality, anger management, self-esteem development, and psychoeducation, which covers life skills. The implication is that teacher counsellors should be trained in various psychotherapies to handle the learners' challenges.

## V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, participants differ in their priorities on these three categories of objectives of the Namibian school counselling programme. While the principal participants believed that a career development set of objectives should be considered the most important, the teacher-counsellor participants prioritised academic or educational development the most. In contrast, the learner participants considered personal-social development objectives the most important for the Namibian school counselling programme. The study has contributed to a better understanding of the programme, particularly its objectives and characteristic services. Since the objectives are closely aligned with the objectives of a similar programme in many other countries that share similar characteristics (history, culture, educational system, economy) with Namibia, the findings that school counselling services that are context-sensitive or directed to meeting the needs of the people or to addressing their life challenges are found to be effective and satisfactory are very significant. The study recommends that the Namibian Ministry of Education train teacher counsellors on various psychotherapies to enable them to handle the learners' challenges.

## VI. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest in this article.

## VII. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data are available upon request.

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