



Guidance and Career Needs of Senior High School Students in a Philippine Public School: A Needs Assessment

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Abstract

Senior high school students in the Philippines face increasing challenges in making informed decisions during a critical stage of identity formation and self-awareness. This study seeks to determine the needs of the students as the basis of responsive and evidence-based initiatives. A descriptive mixed-methods needs assessment design was used to examine the three domains: academic, career, and personal-social guidance needs of senior high school students. The participants were 121 Grades 11 and 12 students from a selected public senior high school. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey adapted from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (2014), consisting of 15 items across three domains rated on a 4-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency counts, and mean scores to determine areas of greatest need. Qualitative data from open-ended survey questions were analyzed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Quantitative results show low need for support across all domains, indicating students' self-reported academic self-management, career awareness, and emotional regulation. Qualitative data highlighted challenges in time management, performance pressure, career uncertainty, and emotional well-being, often intersecting with family expectations and mental health concerns. Students also identified contextual needs such as improved facilities, financial assistance, and mental health support, underscoring the importance of situating guidance and career initiatives within broader school realities. Students reported generally low levels of need across the three domains, while qualitative responses still identified areas where support may be strengthened.

Keywords: needs assessment, guidance and counseling, ASCA, career development, senior high school



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INTRODUCTION

Senior high school years mark a critical period encompassing academic, career, and personal development. Students are expected to make informed decisions about their career and college plans. Many young individuals struggle with decision-making as they develop self-awareness, including recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, and interests (Hako, 2021). Erikson's psychosocial theory best describes this phase as identity versus role confusion (Munley, 1975). This stage is characterized by adolescents' exploration of

their beliefs, values, and career paths. Abas and Bauyt (2024) found that Filipino SHS graduates commonly experience difficulties adjusting to new environments, meeting expectations, and balancing academic and personal responsibilities. Moreover, Quintos et al. (2020) found a high level of career misalignment among senior high school students, which is attributed to several factors, including family pressure, the availability of programs at nearby universities, peer influence, uncertainty about future career paths, socioeconomic considerations, failure to meet required grade requirements, and limited exposure to career-

oriented activities during high school. In line, McMahon (2020) states that a person's career choices are usually influenced by the social contexts of their family and society. Students' career decision-making is influenced by family and friends (Koçak et al., 2021).

The study by Witko et al. (2005) revealed that students recognize the relevance of career planning, placing greater importance on improved career counseling and work immersion. Career planning is considered a rigorous process in pursuit of career goals, and career counseling plays a crucial part in guiding students to clarify their goals, recognize their abilities, and develop a sense of direction in their career pursuits (ul Islam et al., 2020). Many Filipino students enrolled in public schools lack adequate access to comprehensive career guidance services and often rely heavily on family opinions or limited sources of information when deciding on future careers. Social and emotional concerns may intensify the challenges students encounter in both their studies and career planning. Barrera (2024) examined junior high school students in Calamba and found that economic factors, such as financial stability and expected returns, received strong agreement as influences on students' career choices, whereas social factors received the highest level of disagreement as determinants of their career choices.

However, Garcia et al (2015) revealed that career optimism is influenced by parents and teachers through their role in enhancing self-efficacy. The K-12 Basic Education Curriculum in the Philippines aims to provide holistic support to students, which requires educational institutions to offer guidance services that clearly support learners' personal, social, and career development. However, Macario et al. (2023) assert that delivering structured, preventive guidance programs has never been easy due to limited resources, a shortage of trained mental health professionals, and implementation challenges. Given these concerns, it is necessary to assess the actual guidance and career needs of SHS students to

provide a foundation for designing an effective and comprehensive guidance program.

Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs ought to be preventive, developmental, and responsive (ASCA, 2019). While the development of guidance and counseling services depends heavily on the organization, programs, and available facilities and infrastructure, the role of competent staff is paramount. All school personnel are required to fully support one another to ensure that effective guidance and counseling services are provided in each educational unit (Fitriyanti, 2025). Witkin and Altschuld (1995) assert that the success of guidance programs depends on a data-driven needs analysis. The needs assessment is a primary step in program development, as it addresses students' current needs and concerns. A culturally responsive guidance program can identify gaps between students' current status and targeted outcomes. Super's Life-Span Theory (1980) explains that adolescents are in the exploration stage, during which they begin to solidify their career plans and choices. It is in this stage that comprehensive career guidance would aid the student's well-informed career decision-making (Hartung, 2013). The lack of access to structured career guidance services in the Philippines leads many students to rely on family influence rather than develop a well-informed career plan.

In addition, the growing number of mental health concerns among adolescents highlights the importance of implementing preventive and developmental guidance services within the school setting (World Health Organization, 2024; Richter et al., 2022). The implementation of guidance programs is critical to addressing students' holistic needs (Durlak et al., 2011). As Cardinas (2020) states, career decision-making is a continuous, transformative process that entails experimentation, exploration, and career-informed decision-making. Holistic development should be given emphasis, and a structured development program will help address the relevant needs and concerns of senior high school students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Guidance and Counseling in Senior High School.

Guidance and counseling programs are essential for supporting students' holistic development, particularly in the academic, career, and personal-social domains (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). In the Philippines, DepEd Order No. 26, s. 1998, institutionalized career guidance was introduced across secondary schools; however, implementation remains inconsistent due to resource limitations (Gaspar, 2024). Herr (2001), Dahir (2001), and Schimmel (2008) support the value of guidance programs, emphasizing that their effective implementation leads to desirable outcomes.

Numerous studies further demonstrate that resilience, interpersonal skills, and learning engagement are strengthened when comprehensive guidance and counseling programs are in place (Nelson & Tarabochia, 2020; Pope, 2000). Contemporary models, such as the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019), emphasize preventive and developmental approaches that promote student success and continuous support. Despite these frameworks, the delivery of comprehensive and systematic guidance services in public schools remains uneven.

In the Philippine setting, Dionaldo and Espinosa (2024) and Lagon et al. (2022) substantiate the significance of school guidance programs in facilitating student success. Moreover, guidance services contribute to positive outcomes and well-being, highlighting their relevance in educational settings (Borders & Drury, 1992; Herr, 2001; Schimmel, 2008). As emphasized by Fauzi et al. (2024), school guidance and counseling programs have undergone significant changes, shifting toward a preventive and developmental approach that anticipates and reduces potential student concerns. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019) outlines a comprehensive guidance program that promotes student success, enhances well-being, and provides continuous support. Such programs ensure that students receive

appropriate assistance, develop their capacities, and build resilience.

Guidance and counseling programs ought to be inclusive in nature, offering accessible opportunities that support students' academic, personal, and career development, which school counselors should be able to prioritize (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). This concept is supported by Herr (2001), Borders and Drury (1992), and Schimmel (2008), who found that the efficient delivery of guidance services has a positive impact on students' academic performance and well-being. In addition, Anderson and Graham (2016) underscore that interpersonal skills, resilience, and engagement in learning are enhanced once support services for students are efficiently delivered. In the Philippine context, Dionaldo and Espinosa (2024) affirm the importance of school-based guidance in ensuring student development and success.

Academic Development Needs. Students' academic development is closely linked to the availability of structured support systems within schools. Research indicates that guidance programs contribute to improved academic performance, engagement, and learning outcomes when effectively implemented (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Anderson & Graham, 2016). Teacher support and a strong sense of school belonging also influence students' academic engagement (Martinot et al., 2022). Namoonde (2017) reported that limited access to guidance and counseling services adversely affected learners' social and academic functioning, as evidenced by poorer academic performance, increased incidence of early pregnancy, and heightened levels of indiscipline.

Career Development Needs. Career development is a central concern during the senior high school years, as students begin to explore vocational interests and make decisions that shape their future (Super, 1980). Access to career information and structured guidance is critical in fostering career readiness and confidence (Brown & Lent, 2006).

However, Filipino students often experience career indecision, limited occupational awareness, and misalignment between chosen tracks and future goals (Chery et al., 2023; Maestrado & Bucar, 2024). External influences, such as family expectations and socioeconomic constraints, further complicate decision-making (Penedilla & Rosaldo, 2017). These findings highlight the need for strengthened student-centered career guidance interventions.

Personal-Social and Mental Health Needs.

Beyond academic and career development, guidance and counseling play an essential role in supporting students' social-emotional well-being. Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by emotional fluctuations, evolving social relationships, and increased vulnerability to stress and anxiety. Durlak et al. (2011) assert that promoting social-emotional learning competencies can substantially enhance students' overall well-being.

Mental health concerns among adolescents continue to rise, with many experiencing distress and anxiety that may progress to more serious conditions and negatively affect their development and learning (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025). Filipino adolescents commonly experience emotional difficulties related to family pressures, academic demands, and peer relationships (Arrabaca & Tan, 2025). Given these concerns, school counselors serve as direct service providers and implementers of preventive programs that strengthen and reinforces students' coping mechanisms and social competencies.

Challenges in Public School Guidance Services.

The implementation of effective guidance services in Philippine public schools is hindered by several systemic challenges. One major issue is the high counselor-to-student ratio, which significantly exceeds recommended standards (Lacson et al., 2024). Additionally, counselors are often assigned administrative and non-guidance tasks, limiting their capacity to provide direct services (Harris, 2024). Resource constraints, lack of trained personnel,

and insufficient program monitoring further affect the quality-of-service delivery (Cervantes et al., 2019; Gipalen & Madrigal, 2020). These challenges contribute to gaps between policy expectations and actual practice, resulting in limited access to comprehensive and student-centered guidance programs.

In the Philippine context, guidance counselors in public schools often spend more time on administrative tasks than on developmental guidance services. Although guidance programs are recognized as beneficial, many schools continue to face challenges in effective implementation (Abdulraof, 2025). Despite efforts to support students' academic and career development, studies have reported a persistent misalignment between Senior High School tracks and college degree programs (Moya, 2018, as cited in Maestrado & Bucar, 2024; Ngo & Melguizo, 2020, as cited in Maestrado & Bucar, 2024). This raises concerns regarding the effectiveness of career guidance in supporting informed and strategic educational decisions (Maestrado & Bucar, 2024). In addition, the high counselor-to-student ratio further limits the capacity of counselors to deliver adequate services. This gap between policy and practice highlights the need for a feasible, evidence-based needs assessment to inform guidance program planning.

Needs Assessment as Basis for Program Design.

Needs assessment is a critical foundation for developing effective and responsive guidance programs. It identifies gaps between current conditions and desired outcomes, ensuring that interventions are aligned with students' actual needs (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014). Data-driven approaches enable schools to design targeted, evidence-based programs that address academic, career, and personal-social concerns (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012). Studies emphasize that incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data enhances the relevance and effectiveness of guidance interventions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Schmidt, 2013). In the Philippine context,

contextualized needs assessment is particularly important in addressing the unique challenges faced by public school students (Dionaldo & Espinosa, 2024).

Mixed methods produce rich, multifaceted data that improve comprehension of student experiences and views, and approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative focus group discussions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Using these evaluations, schools can go beyond reactive methods and implement evidence-based, strategic recommendations that directly address identified needs. Overall, the research clearly demonstrates that guidance and counseling are essential components of a senior high school curriculum. In addition to supporting academic achievement and career planning, they also foster social-emotional competence, bolster mental health resilience, and assist students in navigating significant transitional milestones (Kemetse, 2018). Therefore, guidance counselors play a crucial role in helping senior high school students develop holistically, especially in the complicated socio-educational environment of the Philippines.

Conceptual Framework. The Needs Assessment Theory (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995) and the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019) served as the foundational frameworks for this study. Needs Assessment Theory provides the basis for identifying gaps between students' current conditions and desired developmental outcomes. The ASCA National Model, on the other hand, serves as the broad school counseling framework for organizing student needs within the academic, career, and personal-social domains.

In this study, the ASCA National Model (2019) guided the organization of the three domains assessed, while the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (2014) served as the basis for constructing the survey items. This distinction clarifies that the ASCA National Model was used as the broader program framework, whereas the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors were used to identify student

competencies reflected in the instrument. Using these frameworks, the research follows an input-process-output model: inputs include students' profiles, perceptions, and experiences; the process includes survey administration, quantitative analysis, and thematic analysis of open-ended feedback; and outputs include prioritized guidance needs and research-supported recommendations for an inclusive guidance and career development program.

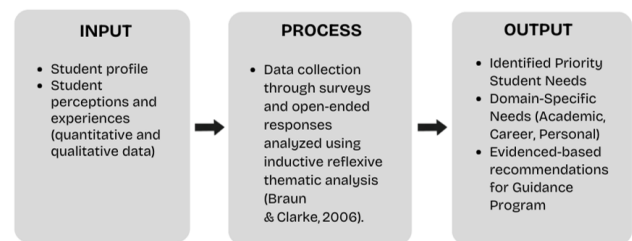


Figure 1
Input-Process-Output Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem. This study aims to assess the guidance and career needs of senior high school students in a selected public senior high school in the Philippines. It seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the personal, academic, and career development needs of senior high school students?
2. What support do senior high school students perceive as lacking in their current school services?
3. What are the most significant challenges currently faced by Senior High School Students?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The study made use of a descriptive mixed methods needs assessment design. The quantitative component used a structured needs assessment survey to identify the academic, career, and personal-social development needs of senior high school students. The qualitative component consisted of open-ended survey questions that captured

students perceived lacking support and current challenges. This design was appropriate because the numerical results described the level of perceived need, while the qualitative responses provided contextual explanations of the specific concerns behind those ratings.

Participants. The participants were senior high school students from a selected public senior high school in CALABARZON, Philippines. The school was selected because it does not have a designated Registered Guidance Counselor; instead, appointed subject teachers serve as Guidance Advocates for the students. The inclusion criteria for selecting the participants were official enrollment as Grade 11 or Grade 12 students from the strands offered by the school, namely Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), during the data collection period, with parental consent and student assent. The total senior high school population of the school was 487 students, consisting of 251 Grade 11 students and 236 Grade 12 students. All eligible students were invited to participate; however, only 121 students, of the eligible population, completed the survey.

The study employed purposive sampling with voluntary response because participants were selected based on the inclusion criteria. Voluntary response participation was also observed because participation depended on students' willingness to take part after providing assent and after obtaining parental consent.

Research Instrument. The survey instrument was adapted from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success: K–12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards (2014), which are research-based and cover academic, career, and social-emotional domains. Prior studies support their use in assessing student competencies and counseling outcomes (Abel et al., 2015). From the 36 ASCA standards, 15 items were selected and contextually adapted while preserving the original constructs. The

final instrument included three domains: Academic Development (5 items), Career Development (5 items), and Personal-Social Development (5 items). A 4-point Likert scale was used (1 = Not true at all to 4 = Very true). Higher scores indicated stronger competencies and lower need for support, while lower scores indicated greater need for intervention. Item and domain means were used for analysis. Domain scores were computed by averaging the five items per domain: Academic (Items 1–5), Career (Items 6–10), and Personal-Social (Items 11–15). Scores were interpreted as follows: 1.00–1.75 = High need, 1.76–2.50 = Moderate need, 2.51–3.25 = Low need, and 3.26–4.00 = Little to no need. Item means identified specific areas of need, while domain means summarized overall needs. Total scores were not used for interpretation. Content validity was established through expert review by registered guidance counselors. A pilot test with 20 participants was conducted, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Domain coefficients ranged from 0.732 to 0.823 (acceptable to good), while the overall alpha was 0.915 (excellent; George & Mallery, 2019). The overall coefficient was reported only for instrument reliability, not for interpreting need levels. The instrument also included open-ended questions to capture perceived gaps in support services and current challenges. These qualitative data supplemented the quantitative findings and provided deeper insights into students' needs across the three domains.

Data Collection Procedures. Prior to data collection, formal approval was secured from the school administration. Parental consent and student assent were obtained to ensure that participation complies with ethical research standards. Students were oriented about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. The Student Needs Assessment Survey was administered during a designated class period with the permission of the school authorities. The researcher or designated personnel supervised the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. Students were given sufficient

time to complete the survey, including the Likert-scale items and open-ended questions. All responses were treated with strict confidentiality, and participation remained voluntary throughout the data collection process.

Data Analysis. The quantitative data from the 15 four-point Likert-scale items were analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly frequency counts, item means, and domain means. Item means were presented to show the specific competencies where students reported relatively greater or lower need for support, while domain means were used to summarize the academic, career, and personal-social areas. This analysis answered the first statement of the problem, which focused on the personal, academic, and career development needs of senior high school students. The scale in Table 1 interprets mean scores from 1.00–4.00 to indicate levels of need, ranging from high support (1.00–1.75) to little or none (3.26–4.00).

Table 1
Scale for Interpreting Mean Scores and Levels of Need

Mean Range	Interpretation	Implication for Need
1.00 - 1.75	Not true at all	High need for support
1.76 - 2.50	Slightly true	Moderate need for improvement
2.51 - 3.25	Moderately true	Low to moderate need
3.26 - 4.00	Very true	Little to no need for support

The qualitative data from the open-ended questions captured the participants' perceptions of lacking support services and the most significant challenges they face. The responses were analyzed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), wherein data-driven themes emerged directly from participants' statements without reliance on pre-existing frameworks. Each response was reviewed line-by-line to identify recurring ideas, followed by coding and theme development. Multiple statements from the same participant could be coded under different themes when relevant. Themes were ranked by frequency to determine their relative prominence, and definitions were refined through iterative review. Frequency counts and percentages represent the total number of

coded statements rather than participants, consistent with procedures (Nowell et al., 2017). This approach highlights the relative emphasis of each theme and situates the findings within the study's research objectives.

The results were presented using tables and summary descriptions to identify priority areas for strengthening guidance services. Thematic analysis of open-ended survey responses identified key themes and insights regarding students' guidance and support needs.

Ethical Considerations. his study adhered to established ethical standards in conducting research involving students. Prior to data collection, school-level approval was obtained from the principal, who authorized the conduct of the study within the institution. This approval permitted the researcher to invite students to participate but did not constitute formal clearance from a higher ethics review body. It is therefore important to note that the study proceeded under institutional permission rather than external ethical certification.

A credible example of a study that operated under school-level rather than formal ethics-board clearance is the Ethical Research Practices in Educational Institutions: A Literature Review (Ederio et al., 2023), which reviewed ethical research practices in the Philippine educational institutions. The authors emphasized that many school-based studies proceed with principal or institutional permission, provided that informed consent and voluntary participation are ensured.

Following this approval, the researchers implemented appropriate consent and assent procedures to ensure voluntary participation. Parental consent forms were distributed to secure permission from parents or guardians, while student assent was obtained to confirm each participant's willingness to take part. Both forms emphasized confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Participants were clearly informed about the

purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to decline or withdraw from participation at any time without any negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity was strictly maintained throughout the research process. Students were not required to disclose their names, and all responses were treated with strict confidentiality. The data collected were used solely for research purposes and were presented in aggregated form to prevent identification of individual participants. Additionally, the researchers ensured that the survey questions do not cause psychological harm or discomfort to the participants. If any concerns arise during the study, appropriate guidance support were made available to the students. These measures aim to protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants involved in the study.

To protect participants' privacy, all responses were treated with strict confidentiality. Survey forms were digital files that were password-protected and kept on a secure Google Drive. The responses gathered using the Google Form will be safely kept in the primary researchers' password-protected Google Drive account with two-factor authentication. All data will be retained for five years after publication and then permanently deleted to prevent unauthorized access. Access to the raw data will be strictly reserved for authorized research team members only.

Given that some items and open-ended responses could involve personal, emotional, or mental health concerns, the researchers took precautions to manage possible distress. Students were informed that they could skip any question that made them uncomfortable. If a participant disclosed serious concerns or exhibited distress during data collection, the researcher who is also a guidance advocate coordinated with the other researchers who are registered guidance counselors who could provide appropriate support or referral to another mental health practitioner. This ensured that the study upheld both ethical and psychological safety standards for all participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Personal, Academic, and Career Development Needs of Senior High School Students. Table 2 shows that students generally have a low need for academic support, with mean scores ranging from 2.70 to 3.21, and little need in recognizing the importance of doing well in school (M = 3.58). Students reported that they can set academic goals (M = 3.21) and access support when needed (M = 2.99), suggesting adequate academic awareness. This is consistent with literature indicating that structured guidance programs and supportive school environments contribute to academic engagement and learning outcomes (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Anderson & Graham, 2016). However, the relatively lower means for time management (M = 2.70) and motivation during school difficulty (M = 2.75) suggest that students may still benefit from reinforcement in study skills, motivation, and academic self-management. This finding supports Martinot et al.'s (2022) assertion that teacher and school support remain important in sustaining students' engagement.

Table 2
Mean Distribution of Academic Development Needs

Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. I know how to set academic goals for myself.	3.21	Low need
2. I know where and how to get academic support when needed.	2.99	Low need
3. I manage my time effectively for school tasks.	2.70	Low need
4. I stay motivated even when school is difficult.	2.75	Low need
5. I understand the importance of doing well in school for my future.	3.58	Little need

Legend: Little = 3.26-4.00; Low = 2.51-3.25; Moderate = 1.76-2.50; High = 1.00-1.75

Table 3 shows that students generally have a low need for career guidance, with mean scores ranging from 2.74 to 3.07, and little need in awareness of career options related to their strand (M = 3.26). Students reported having a general idea of their desired careers (M = 2.98) and the educational paths needed for those careers (M = 3.07), suggesting emerging career awareness. This is consistent with Super's (1980) view that adolescents are in the exploration stage, where they begin clarifying

career choices, and with Brown and Lent's (2006) emphasis on the role of career information in supporting career decision-making. At the same time, confidence in making career decisions received one of the lower means in the domain (M = 2.74), indicating that career talks, mentoring, and exposure to industry-related experiences may still be needed to strengthen students' decision-making confidence.

Table 3
Mean Distribution of Career Development Needs

Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. I have an idea of what career I want in the future.	2.98	Low need
2. I know what educational path I need to take for my desired career.	3.07	Low need
3. I feel confident about making decisions about my career.	2.74	Low need
4. I am aware of different career options related to my strand.	3.26	Little need
5. I know where to get career information and guidance.	2.97	Low need

Legend: Little = 3.26-4.00; Low = 2.51-3.25; Moderate = 1.76-2.50; High = 1.00-1.75

Table 4 shows that students generally have a low need for personal-social support, with mean scores from 2.51 to 3.10, indicating adequate self-reported emotional regulation and social relationships. Students reported that they can manage emotions in a healthy way (M = 2.98), have someone to talk to when overwhelmed (M = 2.99), maintain positive peer relationships (M = 3.10), and feel safe and supported in school (M = 3.05). These results are consistent with research emphasizing the role of guidance and social-emotional learning in strengthening students' coping skills and well-being (Durlak et al., 2011). However, the item on being comfortable seeking help for personal problems received the lowest mean in this domain (M = 2.51), suggesting that help-seeking may still need to be normalized, especially given continuing concerns about adolescent distress and the implementation of school-based mental health support (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025; Richter et al., 2022).

Table 4
Mean Distribution of Personal-Social Development Needs

Items	Mean	Interpretation
1. I know how to manage my emotions in a healthy way.	2.98	Low need
2. I have someone I can talk to when I feel overwhelmed.	2.99	Low need
3. I am comfortable seeking help when I have personal problems.	2.51	Low need
4. I have positive relationships with my peers.	3.10	Low need
5. I feel safe and supported in school.	3.05	Low need

Legend: Little = 3.26-4.00; Low = 2.51-3.25; Moderate = 1.76-2.50; High = 1.00-1.75

Perceived Support Gaps in Current School Services among Senior High School Students.

Although students reported generally adequate competencies in the quantitative results, their open-ended responses identified specific areas of support that they still perceived as lacking. This section presents the forms of support students wished their school would provide and situates these needs within the academic, career, and personal-social domains.

Table 5
Frequency and Percentage of Perceived Gaps in Current School Services

Theme	Domain of Need	Frequency	%	Representative Example
Facilities and Physical Environment - Students feel that inadequate facilities hinder their learning and comfort. A conducive physical environment is seen as essential for academic focus and well-being.	Academic Development	28 responses	30.77	"Availability of gadgets inside the classroom, my classmates do not have." "Better classroom and facilities"
Mental Health and Emotional Support - Students recognize the impact of stress, burnout, and personal struggles on their academic performance. They want schools to normalize mental health support and provide structured services.	Personal-Social Development	18 responses	19.78	"Sana mas may (I hope there's more) accessible mental health support, like regular counseling session and safe spaces where students can openly talk about their problems without judgment"
Financial and Material Assistance - Many students face economic challenges that affect their ability to participate fully in school. Financial support is perceived as a way to reduce inequality and stress.	Academic Development	15 responses	16.48	"Allowance every month for the students" "Financial help"
Academic and Career Guidance - Students want clearer pathways to future careers and stronger academic scaffolding. They value structured guidance to reduce uncertainty and boost confidence.	Academic and Career Development	12 responses	13.19	"Student guidance when it comes to college choices and also college entrance examinations"
Equity, Inclusion, and Student Voice - Students feel that fairness and inclusivity are sometimes lacking, especially in ranking systems, strand treatment, and teacher-student dynamics. They want their voices heard and respected.	Personal-Social Development	10 responses	10.99	"Help maintain equality rather than ranking someone based on their performance" "Provide teacher evaluation for students to hear the opinions and perspectives of the students"
Extracurricular and Community-Building Activities - Students value activities that build community, joy, and holistic development beyond academics	Personal-Social Development and Career Development	8 responses	8.79	"Have different clubs within the school and have a time or day for it"

Total number of coded responses: N=91

Table 5 presents the qualitative themes derived from students' open-ended responses regarding the types of support they perceive as lacking in their current school services.

Using inductive reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a total of 91 coded theme occurrences were identified. The themes were categorized under the three domains of guidance needs: academic, career, and personal-social development.

The most frequently mentioned theme, Facilities and Physical Environment (28 responses, 30.77%), falls under academic development. Students emphasized that inadequate facilities, limited classroom resources, and poor physical conditions hinder their learning and concentration. While this theme is not a direct guidance service, it represents a contextual factor that affects students' ability to meet academic goals. This finding supports literature emphasizing that school support and students' sense of belonging influence academic engagement (Martinot et al., 2022).

The second most prominent theme, Mental Health and Emotional Support (18 responses, 19.78%), aligns with personal-social development. Students expressed a desire for accessible counseling services, safe spaces, and mental health initiatives that normalize emotional support. This finding is consistent with literature showing the importance of preventive school-based mental health services and social-emotional learning in promoting adolescent well-being (Durlak et al., 2011; Richter et al., 2022; WHO, 2025).

Financial and Material Assistance (15 responses, 16.48%) was coded under academic development because financial constraints directly affect students' participation and academic functioning. Although economic assistance is not a traditional guidance function, it contextualizes barriers to academic success and future planning. This aligns with studies

The Most Significant Challenges Currently Faced by Senior High School Students. Beyond the Likert-scale findings, students' open-ended responses revealed significant challenges in both school and personal life. This section identifies the most pressing difficulties students encounter and explains how these

concerns may inform guidance and career support planning.

Table 6
Frequency and Percentage of Challenges Faced by Senior High School Students

Theme	Domain of Need	Frequency	%	Representative Example
Time Management and Academic Workload - students struggle with balancing multiple tasks, deadlines, and responsibilities. This is the most dominant theme, showing that structured time management support is urgently needed.	Academic Development	32 responses	24.62	"Managing my time when there's a lot of school activities to do." "Too much work at the same time." "Pile of activities."
Academic Pressure and Performance Expectations - many students feel pressured by grades, rankings, and expectations from teachers, peers, and family. This contributes to stress, anxiety, and burnout.	Academic Development	24 responses	18.46	"Academic stress" "Keeping the rank 1 spot." "Academic validation and expectations have been a major source of pressure for me." "Maintaining high grades even after academic and family pressure."
Career Path and Future Decisions - Students are uncertain about their future careers and educational paths, often facing family expectations that conflict with personal interests.	Career Development	18 responses	13.85	"Choosing my future career path." "I feel pressured about what I'm gonna take for college or my career." "Career path or planning for the future." "Making decisions for my future job, and course."
Financial Problems - Economic instability is a recurring challenge, affecting students' ability to focus on academics and participate fully in school life.	Academic Development Career Development	15 responses	11.54	"Financial problem" "Daily allowance" "Being financially unstable" "Load of task, financial"
Mental Health and Emotional Well-being - Stress, burnout, and lack of motivation are common. Students want more mental health support and coping strategies.	Personal-Social Development	12 responses	9.23	"Unmotivated" "My biggest challenge right now is balancing school responsibilities and personal stress." "Managing my time and stress even though my mental health is also that was the part of my biggest challenge."
Family Problems and Expectations - Family dynamics and expectations add to academic stress, influencing career choices and personal well-being.	Personal-Social Development	10 responses	7.69	"Family problem" "Academic and Family Problem" "Meeting the expectations of my family, peers, and teachers."
Social Challenges (Bullying, Discrimination, Socializing) - Some students face peer-related challenges, including discrimination and difficulty socializing, which affect their confidence and school experience.	Personal-Social Development	8 responses	6.15	"Bullying" "Discrimination" "Socializing to different kinds of people."
Skills-Related and Communication Challenges - Personal skill gaps, study habits, public speaking, and English proficiency concerns contribute to students' academic and personal-social struggles.	Academic Development Personal-Social Development	6 responses	4.62	"My bad habits like cramming." "Public speaking." "English is my biggest challenge in my life because I'm very bad at English."
Health Issues - Physical and mental concerns hinder academic performance and overall well-being.	Academic Development Personal-Social Development	5 responses	3.85	"My biggest challenge in my life right now is related to my bad health." "Stress and anxiety."

Total number of coded responses: N=130

Table 6 presents the qualitative themes derived from the students' open-ended responses, analyzed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A total of 130 coded theme occurrences were identified, representing specific challenges across the three domains of guidance needs: academic, career, and personal-social development.

The most dominant theme, Time Management and Academic Workload (32 responses, 24.62%), reflects students' difficulty in balancing multiple tasks, deadlines, and responsibilities. This indicates a continuing need for structured academic support, such as study-skills training and time-management counseling. Similarly, Academic Pressure and Performance Expectations (24 responses, 18.46%) highlights

stress related to grades, rankings, and expectations from teachers, peers, and family. These two themes are conceptually linked under academic development and support prior findings that students' academic functioning is shaped by school expectations, support systems, and engagement (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Martinot et al., 2022).

The theme Career Path and Future Decisions (18 responses, 13.85%) falls under career development, emphasizing uncertainty about future careers and educational choices. Many students expressed conflict between personal interests and family expectations, underscoring the need for career guidance and decision-making support. This aligns with studies showing that adolescents often face career indecision, limited occupational awareness, and external influences such as family expectations when making educational and career decisions (Koçak et al., 2021; Maestrado & Bucar, 2024; Penedilla & Rosaldo, 2017).

Financial Problems (15 responses, 11.54%) emerged as a contextual factor influencing both academic and career development. Economic instability affects students' focus, participation, and access to opportunities. While not a direct guidance need, it shapes the conditions under which students pursue academic and career goals. This finding is consistent with Barrera's (2024) finding that economic factors influence students' career choices and with research highlighting socioeconomic considerations in educational and career planning (Quintos et al., 2020).

Under personal-social development, Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being (12 responses, 9.23%) and Family Problems and Expectations (10 responses, 7.69%) reveal overlapping concerns related to stress, motivation, emotional regulation, and family influence. To address potential overlap, responses were coded based on their primary focus: statements emphasizing emotional strain or coping were categorized under mental health and emotional well-being, while those highlighting family influence or expectations were coded under

family problems and expectations. These findings are consistent with literature emphasizing adolescents' vulnerability to emotional distress and the need for preventive, school-based mental health support (Durlak et al., 2011; Richter et al., 2022; WHO, 2025).

Social Challenges (8 responses, 6.15%) and Skills-Related and Communication Challenges (6 responses, 4.62%), including cramming, public speaking, and English proficiency, reflect personal-social and academic skill gaps that affect confidence and performance. Health Issues (5 responses, 3.85%) were coded under both academic and personal-social development because physical and mental concerns can hinder learning and overall well-being.

Overall, the findings reveal that students' challenges are concentrated in academic development, particularly time management and performance pressure, followed by career uncertainty and personal-social concerns related to emotional well-being and family expectations. These qualitative findings should be read alongside the quantitative results: students generally rated themselves as having adequate competencies, but their open-ended responses reveal specific contextual pressures and developmental concerns that remain important for guidance planning. The conceptual overlaps among academic pressure, mental health, family expectations, and career decision-making highlight the interconnected nature of students' experiences, suggesting that guidance and counseling programs should adopt a holistic and integrative approach that addresses these domains simultaneously.

Conclusion. The findings indicate that senior high school students generally reported adequate academic, career, and personal-social competencies, with most item means falling within the low-need range. In the academic domain, students recognized the importance of doing well in school and reported some capacity for goal-setting and accessing support, although time management and motivation remained areas for reinforcement. In

the career domain, students showed emerging awareness of career options and educational pathways, but their confidence in making career decisions still required support. In the personal-social domain, students reported positive relationships, emotional management, and a sense of safety, while help-seeking for personal problems remained comparatively lower. These results should be understood as students' self-reported competencies and perceived needs, rather than as direct evidence that existing guidance services are effective.

The qualitative findings further show that low quantitative need scores do not eliminate the presence of specific challenges. Students continued to identify concerns related to time management, academic pressure, career uncertainty, mental health, family expectations, social difficulties, financial problems, and school facilities. These findings suggest that students may perceive themselves as generally capable while still needing targeted, contextual, and preventive support. Thus, guidance and career initiatives should be holistic and integrative, addressing academic, career, and personal-social development simultaneously while also considering the broader school realities that shape students' experiences.

Limitations of the Study. This study was conducted among selected Grade 11 and 12 students from a public senior high school in the CALABARZON region, Philippines. As such, the findings reflect the perceptions and experiences of this specific group and may not be generalizable to other schools or regions. Data collection relied solely on a survey instrument, which captures self-reported responses and may be influenced by participants' interpretation of the items or willingness to disclose information. The study is limited to identifying students' academic, career, and personal-social guidance needs and does not include program implementation or evaluation. Future research may expand the sample, compare respondent and nonrespondent profiles, when possible, incorporate interviews or focus groups, and

assess the effectiveness of interventions developed from these findings.

Recommendations. Building on the findings and acknowledging the study's limitations, the following recommendations are proposed to guide the enhancement of academic, career, and personal-social support programs for senior high school students.

Academic Development. To strengthen students' academic growth and address the challenges identified in the study, the following recommendations for academic development are proposed:

1. Integrate goal-setting and time-management workshops within guidance lectures to address students' reported difficulties in balancing workloads and deadlines.
2. Embed experiential learning and mentorship programs that connect academic achievement with future opportunities, addressing students' desire for clearer academic-career linkages and reinforcing motivation.
3. Provide structured academic coaching that teaches prioritizing, scheduling, and breaking tasks into manageable steps to reduce stress and academic burnout, as reflected in students' concerns about heavy workloads and performance expectations.
4. Implement growth-mindset and peer-support initiatives to sustain motivation and resilience, responding to findings that students are generally self-regulated but benefit from continued encouragement.
5. Enhance learning environments and resources by advocating for improved facilities and materials, as students identified these as lacking supports that hinder academic focus and success.

Career Development. To guide students toward informed career choices and strengthen the link

between education and employability, the following recommendations for career development are advanced:

1. Conduct career exploration activities such as industry talks to address students' uncertainty about career paths and future decisions.
2. Integrate academic advising sessions that map strand outcomes to career trajectories, ensuring students understand the connection between education and employability.
3. Offer decision-making workshops and self-assessment tools like interest and skills inventories to strengthen confidence in career choices, directly responding to students expressed confusion and family-related pressure over career decisions.
4. Invite alumni and professionals to share real-world experiences, expanding career awareness and bridging the gap between school and industry exposure.
5. Increase visibility of career services through digital platforms and classroom integration, addressing students' call for stronger academic and career guidance support.

Personal-Social Development. To promote students' well-being, resilience, and positive social engagement, the following recommendations for personal-social development are outlined:

1. Expand mental health programs and safe spaces to normalize help-seeking and provide structured psychosocial support, directly addressing students' challenges with stress, burnout, and emotional well-being.
2. Strengthen peer mentoring and cooperative learning activities to foster positive relationships and inclusion, responding to social challenges such as discrimination and difficulty socializing.

3. Train teachers in basic counseling and emotional support to complement academic guidance and ensure early intervention for students experiencing family or personal issues.
4. Integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) modules into curricula, including mindfulness and emotional regulation workshops, to enhance coping skills and resilience.
5. Implement awareness campaigns and confidential referral systems to reduce stigma around mental health and encourage proactive help seeking-behaviors.

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