Implementation of Behavioural Feedback by Teacher Counsellors in Reducing Student Absenteeism in Public Secondary Schools in Siha District

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Abstract
The study investigated the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District, Tanzania. The study was guided by the Person-Centred Theory. The study used a convergent design within a mixed-methods research approach. Target population included 7,860 individuals drawn from 17 public secondary schools, 17 heads of schools, 17 teacher counsellors, 7,553 students, 272 teachers and one District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO). The study sample comprised 5 public secondary schools, 5 heads of schools, 5 teacher counsellors, 380 students, and one District Secondary Education Officer, using simple random sampling, criterion sampling, expert purposive sampling, stratified random sampling, and total population sampling techniques. Data was collected using a questionnaire for students, interview guides for heads of schools, teacher counsellors, and the District Secondary Education Officer, and a document review guide. The validity of the data collection instruments was ensured through expert review by three experts in Educational Planning and Administration from Mwenge Catholic University. A pilot study was conducted in 1 public secondary school in Siha District, which was not included in the main study. The reliability of the questionnaires containing Likert-type items was ensured through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.922, indicating good reliability. The trustworthiness of the interview guides was ensured through triangulation and peer debriefing. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive (mean scores, percentages and frequencies). Quantitative data was analyzed with aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, whereas qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis. Ethical considerations were ensured through obtaining a research permit, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring voluntary participation, and providing proper citations to uphold academic integrity. The study found that behavioural feedback is an important counselling practice through which teacher counsellors help students understand the consequences of absenteeism, identify factors contributing to their attendance difficulties, develop appropriate strategies for improving attendance, and sustain positive attendance behaviour. The study conclude that teacher counsellors commonly use behavioural feedback practices such as discussing the effects of absenteeism on students' academic progress and future opportunities, discussing the reasons for absenteeism, following up students after counselling, advising students on appropriate ways to improve attendance, and encouraging students to take responsibility for regular school attendance. The study recommends that teacher counsellors should strengthen individualized counselling by identifying the specific personal, family, academic, social, and school-related factors contributing to each student's absenteeism and providing appropriate guidance.

Keywords: Implementation, Behavioural Feedback, Teacher Counsellors, Reducing, Student Absenteeism

1. Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for individual development, social transformation, and sustainable economic growth. It equips learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies necessary for productive participation in society while contributing to poverty reduction, improved health, social cohesion, and national development. This global commitment is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4), which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2015). However, achieving quality education depends not only on increasing school enrolment but also on ensuring that students attend school regularly and participate consistently in teaching and learning activities. Students' attendance refers to the regular, consistent, and timely presence of enrolled students in school throughout the academic calendar to participate in scheduled learning activities (UNESCO, 2023). Conversely, students' absenteeism refers to the failure of enrolled students to attend school regularly, whether excused or unexcused, thereby disrupting continuity in learning and limiting educational attainment (UNESCO, 2023).

Despite substantial progress in expanding access to secondary education worldwide, students' absenteeism remains a persistent educational challenge affecting both developed and developing countries. Recent estimates indicate that over 250 million children and adolescents worldwide are either out of school or experience prolonged interruptions in learning due to irregular attendance and chronic absenteeism (UNESCO Institute for Statistics & UNICEF, 2024). Persistent absenteeism has been associated with poor academic achievement, school dropout, behavioural problems, low self-esteem, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, unemployment, and reduced national productivity (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2024). These consequences have prompted governments, educational institutions, and international organizations to strengthen school-based interventions aimed at promoting regular school attendance and improving students' educational outcomes.

In developed countries, where educational systems are well-resourced and access to secondary education is widespread, student absenteeism remains an educational problem. In the United States, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported considerable levels of chronic absenteeism among public-school students following the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating that regular school attendance continues to be a challenge even in well-established education systems (NCES, 2024). Similar problem has been reported in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, where persistent absence from school has been

linked to difficulties in students' academic progress, behaviour, engagement, and continuation in education (Department for Education, 2024; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023). The experiences suggest that improving access to education does not itself, guarantee regular school attendance. Rather, schools need to understand the factors associated with absenteeism and consider appropriate support mechanisms for students experiencing attendance difficulties. Within support mechanisms, school counselling provides a way through which students' behavioural and personal challenges addressed, including the use of feedback to help students reflect on their school-related behaviour and attendance.

The challenge of student absenteeism is also evident in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, where improvements in school enrolment have occurred alongside continued concerns about irregular attendance. Studies conducted in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana have identified various factors associated with student absenteeism (Okonkwo & Musa, 2023; Muthami et al., 2023; Oduor & Karanja, 2024). UNESCO (2023) similarly highlights the influence of social, emotional, behavioural, and economic circumstances on learners' participation in education. These factors indicate that addressing absenteeism require interventions that go beyond academic support to include mechanisms that enable schools to respond to students' behavioural and psychosocial circumstances. Teacher counsellors have a role in this process through counselling practices that include providing behavioural feedback to students concerning their attendance and conduct. However, how such feedback is implemented and its contribution to addressing student absenteeism remains issues that require empirical examination. This provides a basis for examining the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District.

In implementing their counselling responsibilities, teacher counsellors employ various techniques to communicate with students and address challenges that may affect their participation in school. One of these techniques is behavioural feedback, which involves providing students with information and guidance concerning their behaviour, including attendance-related patterns and actions that may require improvement. Through behavioural feedback, teacher counsellors discuss students' attendance concerns, help them reflect on behaviours associated with irregular school attendance, and provide guidance on appropriate actions. The implementation of behavioral feedback involves continuous communication and follow-up between teacher counsellors and students regarding changes in their attendance

behaviour. However, the manner and extent to which teacher counsellors implement behavioural feedback in addressing student absenteeism differ across schools. Despite the growing importance of school counselling in supporting students' participation in education, there is limited empirical evidence on how behavioural feedback is implemented by teacher counsellors in relation to reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools, particularly in the Tanzanian context. This gap therefore necessitates an investigation into how the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors contributes to reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District.

In Tanzania, the Government has implemented various policy and institutional initiatives to improve students' participation in secondary education and reduce absenteeism through the provision of guidance and counselling services in schools. The Education and Training Policy of 2014, revised in 2023, emphasizes the provision of equitable, inclusive, and quality education while promoting learners' academic achievement, personal development, and well-being through supportive school environments (URT, 2023). Similarly, the National Guidelines for Guidance and Counselling Services in Schools require every public secondary school to establish guidance and counselling programmes coordinated by teacher counsellors to assist students in addressing academic, behavioural, social, emotional, and psychological challenges that may interfere with their learning and school attendance (URT, 2023). These policy initiatives recognize guidance and counselling as an essential educational support service that contributes to students' retention, behavioural adjustment, academic engagement, and successful completion of secondary education.

Despite government policy interventions aimed at improving students' attendance and retention in secondary education, students' absenteeism continues to be a major challenge affecting public secondary schools in Tanzania. National reports indicate that absenteeism remains among the factors contributing to school dropout, poor academic performance, and reduced educational attainment. For instance, the National Audit Office of Tanzania reported 123,489 school dropout cases in 2022, 130,651 cases in 2023, and 144,076 cases in 2024, indicating a continued increase in school dropout despite government efforts to strengthen school management and student support services (National Audit Office of Tanzania, 2024). Although teacher counsellors have been appointed in public secondary schools to provide guidance and counselling services, concerns remain regarding the extent to which they implement behavioural feedback techniques to address students' absenteeism. Behavioural feedback involves identifying the reasons for students' absenteeism, explaining the

consequences of irregular school attendance, providing constructive guidance on appropriate behavioural changes, recognising improvements in attendance, and conducting follow-up to encourage consistent school participation. However, the persistence of absenteeism raises questions about how effectively teacher counsellors implement these techniques to influence students' attendance behaviour.

Siha District has experienced various educational and socio-economic challenges that affect students' regular school attendance, including household economic constraints, family responsibilities, inadequate psychosocial support, and school-related factors. Evidence from a recent study in the district indicated that approximately 30 percent of adolescent students reported missing school due to menstrual health-related challenges, such as inadequate sanitation facilities, menstrual pain, and limited access to sanitary products (Ngowi et al., 2024). In addition, the 2022 Population and Housing Census reported that Siha District had the highest proportion of residents who had never attended school among the councils in Kilimanjaro Region, indicating continuing challenges related to educational participation (National Bureau of Statistics NBS, 2023). These circumstances indicate the need for school-based mechanisms that identify and address factors associated with students' irregular attendance. In this regard, teacher counsellors use behavioural feedback to communicate with students about their attendance and behaviour, encourage reflection on attendance-related challenges, and discuss possible areas for improvement. However, limited empirical evidence exists on how behavioural feedback is implemented by teacher counsellors in addressing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District. Therefore, the study examines how the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors relates to efforts to reduce student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District, Tanzania.

2. Statement of the Problem

Students' absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District has emerged as a persistent educational problem affecting students' participation in teaching and learning activities. Despite government efforts through the establishment of guidance and counselling programmes and implementation of educational policies aimed at improving students' retention and participation, students continue to experience irregular school attendance. This situation affects students' academic progress, school completion, and overall educational outcomes, indicating the need for effective interventions that address the underlying causes of absenteeism.

Although various studies have examined guidance and counselling services and the roles of teacher counsellors in addressing students' academic, behavioural, social, and emotional challenges. Tarimo, and Machumu (2025) examined counselling strategies used by teacher counsellors and included truancy and chronic tardiness among students' behavioural challenges. Ndumbaro and Pembe (2025) examined challenges affecting the provision of guidance and counselling services in Tanzanian secondary schools. However, these studies gave limited attention to the implementation of behavioural feedback in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools. Therefore, limited empirical evidence exists on how behavioural feedback contributes to reducing student absenteeism, particularly in public secondary schools in Siha District. The current study therefore investigated the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District, Tanzania.

3. Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question;

How does the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District?

4. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study provide teacher counsellors, heads of schools, and education stakeholders with insights into how the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors contributes to reducing students' absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District. Specifically, the study highlights how providing timely and constructive feedback, explaining the consequences of absenteeism, identifying students' attendance-related challenges, encouraging positive behavioural changes, and conducting regular follow-ups can promote consistent school attendance. Students will benefit from strengthened guidance and counselling services that help them recognize inappropriate attendance behaviours, understand the importance of regular school attendance, and develop positive attitudes towards education. Furthermore, the findings will inform educational policy and practice by providing evidence for strengthening school guidance and counselling programmes through the effective implementation of behavioural feedback techniques. Academically, the study contributes empirical knowledge to the existing literature on behavioural feedback and students' absenteeism by demonstrating how teacher counsellors implement behavioural feedback to address attendance-related challenges in public secondary schools. The study also provides a foundation for further research on the role of behavioural

feedback in promoting students' regular attendance, engagement, and retention in secondary education.

5. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Person-Centred Theory of Counselling, developed by Carl Rogers in the 1950s. The theory emphasizes that effective counselling occurs when counsellors establish supportive, accepting, and trusting relationships with clients, enabling them to understand their challenges, make informed decisions, and develop positive behavioural changes. The theory is grounded in three core tenets, namely empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence (genuineness). Empathy refers to the counsellor's ability to understand the client's feelings, experiences, and challenges from the client's perspective without making judgments. Unconditional positive regard involves accepting, respecting, and valuing clients regardless of their behaviours, personal circumstances, or difficulties. Congruence or genuineness refers to the counsellor's ability to demonstrate honesty, openness, authenticity, and consistency when interacting with clients. According to Rogers (1957), these conditions contribute to a supportive counselling environment in which individuals can develop self-awareness, recognise their challenges, take responsibility for their decisions, and achieve personal growth. The theory further emphasizes individuals' capacity for self-direction and self-actualization when provided with appropriate psychological support.

In the context of this study, the three tenets of Person-Centred Theory provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing students' absenteeism in public secondary schools. The tenet of empathy enables teacher counsellors to listen attentively to students, understand the personal, family, social, emotional, and school-related factors contributing to absenteeism, and provide behavioural feedback that responds to their individual circumstances. Unconditional positive regard guides teacher counsellors in providing constructive feedback without blaming, humiliating, or discriminating against students who frequently miss school, thereby encouraging openness, trust, and willingness to improve attendance behaviour. Similarly, congruence enables teacher counsellors to communicate honestly and respectfully with students by explaining the consequences of absenteeism, discussing appropriate behavioural changes, and providing consistent guidance and follow-up support. Through the application of these tenets, teacher counsellors can create supportive counselling relationships that encourage students to reflect on their attendance behaviour, identify possible solutions to

their challenges, develop personal responsibility, and make informed decisions regarding regular school attendance. Therefore, Person-Centred Theory provides a relevant framework for examining how teacher counsellors implement behavioural feedback through understanding students' reasons for absenteeism, explaining its consequences, providing constructive guidance, recognising positive behavioural changes, and conducting follow-up to encourage consistent school attendance.

Strength of Person-Centred Theory

Person-Centred Theory is important to this study because it recognizes the importance of the relationship between counsellors and students in facilitating positive behavioural change. The theory provides a strong foundation for examining counselling techniques such as empathy, active listening, and rapport building, which are central components of effective counselling practice. By emphasizing understanding, trust, and respect between teacher counsellors and students, the theory helps explain how supportive counselling environments can encourage students to overcome challenges associated with absenteeism and improve their engagement in school activities (Corey, 2021). Furthermore, the theory considers students as active participants in addressing their personal challenges rather than passive recipients of counselling services.

Weaknesses of Person-Centred Theory

Despite its relevance, Person-Centred Theory has some limitations. The theory places significant emphasis on the counselling relationship and individual experiences, but it may not fully consider external factors that contribute to students' absenteeism, such as poverty, family responsibilities, inadequate school facilities, cultural practices, and broader socio-economic conditions. In the context of public secondary schools in Siha District, absenteeism may result from multiple interacting factors beyond the influence of counselling techniques alone. Therefore, while the theory explains the importance of teacher counsellors' interactions with students, other contextual factors must also be considered when examining students' attendance challenges.

Relevance of the Person-Centred Theory

Person-Centred Theory guides are relevance to this study as it explaining how the implementation of selected revised counselling techniques can support the reduction of students' absenteeism. Teacher counsellors who apply active listening can better understand students' concerns, while empathy and rapport building can create a safe environment where

students feel valued and supported. Constructive feedback enables counsellors to guide students towards positive decisions and improved school attendance behaviours.

6. Review of Empirical Studies

This section focuses on a review of empirical studies, basing on the research theme developed from the research question on the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools.

6.1 Implementation of Timely Academic and Behavioural Feedback by Teacher Counsellors in Reducing Student Absenteeism in Public Secondary Schools

Timely academic and behavioural feedback refers to the process through which teacher counsellors provide students with constructive information regarding their academic progress, attendance behaviour, discipline, and personal challenges affecting school participation. In the school counselling context, feedback enables students to recognize the consequences of absenteeism, reflect on their behaviours, and develop positive attitudes towards regular school attendance. Effective feedback involves timely communication, guidance, encouragement, and follow-up support that help students overcome academic and behavioural barriers contributing to truancy. Therefore, the implementation of timely academic and behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors is considered an important counselling strategy for promoting students' commitment to schooling and reducing absenteeism in public secondary schools.

In Australia, Graham and Tancredi (2021) conducted a study on teacher feedback practices and student engagement in secondary schools. The study employed a mixed-methods research design involving 320 secondary school students and 25 teachers selected through stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and school attendance records, while analysis was conducted through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that timely academic feedback enabled students to identify learning difficulties, improve motivation, and maintain regular school attendance. The study concluded that continuous feedback from teachers strengthens students' responsibility towards their educational participation. This study contributes to the current research by demonstrating the importance of feedback in shaping students' engagement. However, the study was conducted in a developed educational context where counselling resources are more available compared to Tanzanian public secondary schools. Therefore, the present study examines how teacher counsellors implement

feedback techniques in reducing absenteeism within the Tanzanian context, particularly in Siha District.

In Nigeria, Sani (2022) examined the effect of positive reinforcement counselling technique on absenteeism among secondary school students in Bakori Local Government, Katsina State. The study employed a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test design, involving 15 students selected from 425 identified absentees. The students received positive reinforcement counselling through praise and tokens for six weeks. The findings showed that both praise and tokens significantly reduced habitual and terminal absenteeism among secondary school students. The study concluded that positive reinforcement counselling was effective in reducing absenteeism and recommended its use by counsellors, teachers, and school administrators. This study provides relevant Nigerian evidence that counselling techniques can contribute to reducing student absenteeism. However, it focused on positive reinforcement rather than timely academic and behavioural feedback. Therefore, the current study extends this evidence by examining how teacher counsellors implement academic and behavioural feedback in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District, Tanzania.

In South Africa, Mhlanga and Dube (2022) conducted a study on the role of school counselling interventions in addressing student absenteeism in public secondary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design involving teacher counsellors, teachers, and students from selected public secondary schools. A purposive sampling technique was used to select teacher counsellors, while students were selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, interview guides, and attendance records. The findings showed that students who received timely academic and behavioural feedback from counsellors demonstrated improved attendance patterns and greater awareness of the consequences of absenteeism. The study concluded that feedback-based counselling approaches strengthen students' accountability and encourage school participation. This study provides relevant African evidence on the relationship between counselling feedback and attendance improvement. However, it examined counselling interventions generally without specifically assessing the implementation of timely feedback techniques by teacher counsellors. The current study addresses this gap by focusing specifically on how teacher

counsellors apply academic and behavioural feedback in reducing absenteeism in Siha District.

In Kenya, Njoroge and Wambui (2023) conducted a study on guidance and counselling practices in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Kiambu County. The study employed a mixed-methods design involving students, teachers, and teacher counsellors from selected public secondary schools. Stratified random sampling was used to select students, while teacher counsellors were selected purposively. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of attendance records. The findings indicated that timely feedback regarding students' academic challenges, discipline issues, and attendance patterns contributed to improved school participation. The study concluded that counselling feedback encourages students to take responsibility for their educational behaviours. This study contributes important East African evidence regarding the role of feedback in addressing absenteeism. Nevertheless, the study focused broadly on guidance and counselling practices and did not isolate timely academic and behavioural feedback as a specific counselling technique. Hence, the present study examines the specific implementation of feedback techniques by teacher counsellors in public secondary schools in Siha District.

In Tanzania, Mfaume and Bilinga (2022) conducted a study on the contribution of guidance and counselling services in addressing student absenteeism in public secondary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design involving students, teachers, and school counsellors from selected public secondary schools. The researchers used purposive and simple random sampling techniques, while data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and school attendance records. The findings revealed that schools where counsellors provided regular academic guidance, behavioural feedback, and follow-up support experienced improved student attendance compared to schools with limited counselling practices. The study concluded that effective counselling services are important in reducing absenteeism and promoting students' commitment to learning. This study provides contextual evidence from Tanzania on counselling and attendance improvement. However, it examined counselling services broadly without focusing specifically on the implementation process of timely feedback by teacher counsellors. The present study, therefore, extends existing knowledge by examining how timely academic and behavioural feedback is implemented by teacher counsellors in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District, Tanzania.

7. Demonstration of Research Gaps

The reviewed empirical studies provide important evidence on the role of teacher feedback and counselling interventions in addressing student absenteeism, but they also reveal several gaps that justify the current study. Graham and Tancredi (2021) established that timely academic feedback improved students' motivation, identification of learning difficulties, and regular school attendance in Australia; however, the study was conducted in a developed educational context with relatively greater access to counselling resources and support systems. The study leaves a contextual gap concerning how timely academic and behavioural feedback is implemented in resource-constrained public secondary schools in Tanzania. Mhlanga and Dube (2022) demonstrated that counselling interventions and feedback improved students' attendance and awareness of absenteeism in South Africa, but their study examined counselling interventions broadly without isolating the processes through which teacher counsellors provide timely academic and behavioural feedback. This creates a conceptual gap regarding the specific implementation of feedback as an individual counselling technique.

Similarly, Njoroge and Wambui (2023) found that guidance and counselling practices, including feedback on academic difficulties, disciplinary concerns, and attendance, contributed to improved school participation in Kenya. However, the study considered guidance and counselling practices generally rather than examining the specific ways teacher counsellors implement timely academic and behavioural feedback to address absenteeism. Thus, a conceptual and process gap remains concerning the practical application of feedback techniques by teacher counsellors. In Tanzania, Mfaume and Bilinga (2022) provided contextual evidence that counselling services, academic guidance, behavioural feedback, and follow-up support can contribute to improved student attendance. Nevertheless, their study focused on counselling services as a broad intervention and did not specifically examine the implementation of timely feedback, including how academic and behavioural information is communicated, how frequently feedback is provided, and how teacher counsellors follow up students after providing feedback. Thus, an implementation gap remains concerning the practical procedures through which behavioural feedback is delivered and followed up in public secondary schools. Furthermore, a methodological gap remains concerning the need for a focused examination of behavioural feedback practices using evidence from students and teacher counsellors to understand how the technique is implemented in addressing absenteeism. Therefore, the current study examined the implementation of behavioural

feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing students' absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District, Tanzania.

8. Research Methodology

The study employed convergent design under a mixed-methods research approach. The target population comprised 7,860 individuals from Siha District, Tanzania including 17 public secondary schools, 17 Heads of School, 17 teacher counselors, 272 teachers, 7,553 students and one District Secondary Education Officer. A sample of 391 respondents was selected, consisting of 05 public secondary schools, 05 Heads of School, 05 teacher counsellors, 380 students, and 1 District Secondary Education Officer. Questionnaires were administered to students, while interview guides were conducted to teacher counselors, Heads of School, and the District Secondary Education Officer. Instrument validity was established through three expert review from educational planning and administration at Mwenge Catholic University (MWECAU). A pilot study involving 10% of the sample size was conducted to assess the clarity, relevance, and consistency of the instruments. The reliability of the Likert-type questionnaire items was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.922, indicating good internal consistency. Quantitative data were analysed with aid of the SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically through transcription, coding, categorization, and theme development in accordance with Creswell and Creswell (2023). To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, the study considered credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of data collection and analysis procedures. Confirmability was strengthened through maintaining an audit trail, field notes, and audio recordings of interviews. Transferability was supported through providing detailed descriptions of the study context, participants, and research procedures. Research clearance was obtained from Mwenge Catholic University, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before providing informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy were maintained. The information collected was used strictly for academic purposes.

9. Implementation of Timely Academic and Behavioural Feedback by Teacher Counsellors in Reducing Student Absenteeism in Public Secondary Schools

The study sought to examine how the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors contributes to reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools in Siha District, Tanzania. Data for this research question were collected using questionnaires administered to students, while interview guides were used to obtain information from heads of schools, teacher counselor and the District Secondary Education Officer. A five-point Likert scale was used to analyse the questionnaire responses, where 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3 = Undecided (U), 4 = Agree (A), and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). In addition, F represents frequencies and % represents percentages. Similarly, the study adopted a percentage classification scale, where ≤19% represents an extremely minority, 20–39% a minority, 40–59% a moderate proportion, 60–79% a majority, and 80–100% a very high majority of respondents. A mean score greater than 3 indicates that behavioural feedback is implemented by teacher counsellors and contributes to reducing student absenteeism, while a mean score less than 3 indicates that behavioural feedback is not adequately implemented or does not contribute to reducing absenteeism. A mean score of 3 indicates a neutral position, implying that respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that behavioural feedback contributes to reducing student absenteeism (Chyung & Hutchinson, 2023). The responses from teachers and students regarding the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing student absenteeism are presented in Table 1, followed by findings obtained from interviews with heads of schools, teacher counselors and the District Secondary Education Officer.

Table 1:

Students Responses on the implementation of behavioural feedback by teacher counsellors in reducing student absenteeism in public secondary schools (Teachers n=342)

S/N	Statement	SD		D		U		A		SA		Mean
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
i.	Teacher counsellor discusses with the student the reasons for school absenteeism.	31	9.2	35	10.4	34	10.1	106	31.4	132	39.1	3.81
ii.	Teacher counsellor explains to the student how absenteeism affects academic progress and future opportunities.	23	6.8	15	4.4	19	5.6	102	30.1	180	53.1	4.18
iii.	Teacher counsellor advises the student on appropriate ways to improve school attendance.	13	3.8	37	10.9	48	14.2	122	36.1	118	34.9	3.87
iv.	Teacher counsellor follows up with the student after counselling to monitor changes in attendance behaviour.	25	7.4	27	8.0	41	12.1	100	29.6	145	42.9	3.93
v.	The teacher counsellor recognizes and encourages students who demonstrate improved school attendance.	39	11.4	49	14.4	49	14.4	95	27.9	109	32.0	3.55
vi.	Teacher counsellor discusses inappropriate attendance behaviour with the student in a respectful and supportive manner.	75	22.0	44	12.9	86	25.2	62	18.2	74	21.7	3.05
vii.	Teacher counsellor assists the student in developing strategies for maintaining regular school attendance.	35	10.3	38	11.2	64	18.8	79	23.2	124	36.5	3.64
viii.	Teacher counsellor listens to the student's explanation before providing guidance on absenteeism.	99	29.3	40	11.8	48	14.2	52	15.4	99	29.3	3.04
ix.	Teacher counsellor encourages the student to take responsibility for attending school regularly.	31	9.1	40	11.7	49	14.4	91	26.7	130	38.1	3.73
x.	Teacher counsellor provides regular guidance and encouragement that help students improve school attendance.	45	13.2	29	8.5	63	18.5	94	27.6	109	32.1	3.57
	Grand Mean											**3.64**

Source: Field Data, (2026)

Data in Table 1 show that a majority (70.5%) of teachers “Strong agreed and Agreed” that teacher counselors discuss with students the reasons for school absenteeism. In contrast, an extremely minority (19.5%) rated this practice “Strongly disagreed and Disagreed” while an extremely minority (10.1%) of teachers were Undecided, reflecting neutral views on whether teacher counsellors discuss the reasons for absenteeism with students. The mean

score of 3.81 falls within the high extent, suggesting that teacher counsellors frequently engage students in discussions about the reasons underlying their absenteeism. This implies that identifying and discussing the causes of absenteeism help counsellors understand students' individual challenges and provide appropriate behavioural support. However, the presence of low-extent responses suggests that such discussions were not implemented for all students, indicating a need for teacher counsellors to strengthen individual follow-up and ensure that students with attendance problems are given opportunities to explain the factors contributing to their absenteeism. The quantitative finding was supported by the views of a teacher counsellor during the interviews. Teacher counsellor "TC1" explained that:

> Before advising a student who is frequently absent, I normally try to understand why the student is not coming to school. Some students have family problems, others have difficulties with learning, while some may have problems with their fellow students and when we discuss these reasons openly, it becomes easier to know the kind of support the student needs (TC "1", Personal Interview 11th August, 2026).

This view was further supported by a Head of School "2", who stated that:

> Teacher counsellors are encouraged to talk with students who have repeated absenteeism so that they can identify the causes of the problem. It is difficult to solve absenteeism if the school only concentrates on the behaviour without understanding what is behind it. Discussions with students help the school to identify the appropriate way of assisting those (HOS "2", Personal Interview 11th August, 2026).

The view was also supported by the DSEO, who explained that:

> Counselling should begin by identifying the reasons for absenteeism because students do not stay away from school for the same reasons. Schools are expected to use guidance and counselling to understand students' challenges and determine appropriate interventions for improving attendance (DSEO, Personal Interview 20th August, 2026).

The document review show that school attendance registers across the sampled public secondary schools revealed repeated cases of student absenteeism that required follow-up by school authorities and teacher counsellors. The reviewed counselling records and student follow-up records further indicated that some students with persistent absenteeism were identified and followed up to establish the factors contributing to their absence from school. In addition, school meets minutes and attendance monitoring records showed that student absenteeism was discussed as an attendance concern, with emphasis on identifying reasons

for absence and taking appropriate follow-up measures. These documentary findings demonstrate that discussions about the reasons for student absenteeism were not only reported by teachers but were also reflected in school records through attendance monitoring, counselling follow-up, and discussions concerning students with persistent absence.

Qualitative information from teacher counsellors, Heads of Schools, and the DSEO shows discussions with students about the causes of absenteeism as an important counselling practice for understanding individual attendance challenges and providing appropriate support. Teacher Counsellor 1 explained that counsellors first pursue to understand why students are frequently absent, including family problems, learning difficulties, and challenges with fellow students, before determining the appropriate form of support. Similarly, Head of School 4 indicated that discussions with students experiencing repeated absenteeism enable teacher counsellors to identify the underlying causes rather than focusing only on the behaviour of being absent. The DSEO further emphasized that counselling should begin with identifying the reasons for absenteeism because students experience different challenges that require different interventions. The lesson drawn is that discussing the causes of absenteeism strengthens the effectiveness of counselling by enabling schools to identify students' specific challenges and provide more appropriate interventions to improve attendance.

Quantitative data indicates that teacher counsellors discuss with students the reasons for school absenteeism to a high extent, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.81. The high mean suggests that teacher counsellors frequently engage students in discussions aimed at understanding the factors contributing to their absenteeism. This indicates that counselling practices in the participating schools generally emphasize identifying the underlying causes of attendance problems as a basis for providing behavioural and psychosocial support. However, the presence of low- and moderate-extent responses indicates that this practice is not consistently experienced by all students, suggesting variations in the implementation of individual follow-up and counselling support.

The convergence of qualitative and quantitative results demonstrates that discussions between teacher counsellors and students regarding the causes of absenteeism constitute an important mechanism for addressing attendance challenges. The qualitative evidence explains the high quantitative finding by showing that counsellors, school leaders, and education authorities recognize the importance of understanding the circumstances behind students' absence before determining appropriate interventions. At the same time, the quantitative

evidence indicates that the practice is not uniformly implemented across all students. Therefore, both evidences suggest that teacher counsellors should strengthen systematic follow-up of students with repeated absenteeism, create opportunities for students to openly explain the challenges affecting their attendance, and use the information obtained to provide individualized counselling and appropriate school-based interventions.

The finding is supported by Graham and Tancredi, (2022), whose study found that counsellors considered understanding the reasons for students' absenteeism an important basis for developing appropriate solutions. The study identified factors such as poor academic outcomes, parental involvement, school management, health issues, and social activities as important influences on absenteeism and recommended counselling responses that address students' particular circumstances. However, the finding is challenged by the evidence from Tancredi (2021) who found that students' school withdrawal in Tanzania was influenced by multiple interacting factors, including family poverty, early marriage, divorce, negative attitudes towards education, parental circumstances, and peer-group pressure.

Data in Table 1 further show that very high majority (83.2%) of teachers rated to "Strong agreed and Agreed" that teacher counsellors explain to students how absenteeism affects academic progress and future opportunities. In contrast, an extremely minority (11.2%) of teachers rated this practice to "Strongly disagreed and Disagreed" while an extremely minority (5.6%) of teachers indicated undecided, reflecting neutral views on the practice. The mean score of 4.18 falls within the high extent, suggesting that teacher counsellors commonly help students understand the academic and future consequences of absenteeism. This implies that behavioural feedback is being used to increase students' awareness of the negative effects of missing school, including reduced academic progress and limited future opportunities. The explanations encourage students to reconsider absenteeism and develop greater commitment to regular school attendance. Nevertheless, the minority of low-extent responses indicates that some students do not receive sufficient information about the longer-term consequences of absenteeism. During the face-to-face interview with teacher counselor "3" explained that:

> We usually explain to students that missing school means missing lessons, assignments, examinations and important explanations from teachers. We also remind them that continued absenteeism can affect their academic performance and may limit their chances of progressing with their education. This helps some students

> understand that attending school regularly is important for their future (TC "3", Personal Interview 12nd August, 2026).

This view was further supported by a Head of School "4", who stated that:

> Students sometimes think that missing one or two days is not a serious problem, but when the behaviour continues, they miss a lot of learning. Teacher counsellors therefore help them understand the connection between attendance, academic progress and their future educational opportunities (HOS "4", Personal Interview 13th August, 2026).

The DSEO further emphasized that: *"Guidance and counselling should help students understand the consequences of absenteeism. When students are made aware of how attendance affects learning outcomes and progression, they are more likely to recognize the importance of attending school regularly"* (DSEO, Personal Interview 20th August, 2026)

Qualitative information from teacher counsellors, Heads of Schools, and the DSEO portrays explaining the academic and future consequences of absenteeism as an important counselling practice for increasing students' awareness of the value of regular school attendance. Teacher Counsellor 2 explained that students are reminded that absenteeism results in missed lessons, assignments, examinations, and important teacher explanations, which may negatively affect their academic performance and future educational progression. Similarly, Head of School 2 indicated that teacher counsellors help students recognize that repeated absence accumulates learning losses and can therefore affect their academic progress and future educational opportunities. The DSEO further emphasized that guidance and counselling should enable students to understand how attendance influences learning outcomes and educational progression. The lesson drawn is that explaining the consequences of absenteeism helps students connect their attendance behaviour with immediate academic losses and longer-term educational opportunities, thereby encouraging greater commitment to regular school attendance.

Quantitative data indicates that teacher counsellors explain to students how absenteeism affects academic progress and future opportunities to a high extent, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.18. The high mean indicates that teacher counsellors commonly provide students with information about the consequences of missing school. This suggests that behavioural feedback is widely used to increase students' awareness of the relationship between regular attendance, academic performance, and future educational opportunities. However, the presence of low-extent responses indicates that this counselling practice is not

experienced consistently by all students, suggesting a need for continued efforts to ensure that students with attendance difficulties receive adequate information about the longer-term consequences of absenteeism.

The convergence of qualitative and quantitative results demonstrates that explaining the consequences of absenteeism is a prominent counselling strategy for strengthening students' understanding of the importance of regular school attendance. The qualitative evidence explains the high quantitative finding by showing that teacher counsellors and school leaders emphasize the learning losses associated with absenteeism and its potential implications for students' educational progression. Therefore, both strands of evidence indicate that teacher counsellors should continue providing clear and individualized explanations of how absenteeism affects academic progress and future opportunities, particularly for students who repeatedly miss school. Such counselling can help students develop greater awareness of the consequences of absenteeism and strengthen their commitment to regular attendance. The finding is consistent with the principles of Person-Centred Theory developed by Carl Rogers, which emphasize understanding students as individuals with unique experiences, needs, perceptions, and personal circumstances. From a person-centred perspective, counselling is more effective when students are supported in a respectful and non-judgmental environment that enables them to understand their own experiences and make informed decisions about their behaviour. Hence, in explaining how absenteeism affects academic progress and future opportunities help students develop self-awareness and recognize the consequences of their attendance patterns without feeling blamed or judged.

Data in Table 1 also show that a majority (71.0%) of teachers rated to "Strong agreed and agreed" that teacher counsellors advice students on appropriate ways to improve school attendance. In contrast, an extreme minority (14.8%) of teachers rated this practice to "Strongly disagreed and Disagreed" while an extremely minority (14.2%) of teachers indicated undecided, reflecting neutral views on the provision of attendance-related advice. The mean score of 3.87 falls within the high extent, suggesting that teacher counsellors generally provide students with practical guidance on improving their attendance. This implies that behavioural feedback goes beyond identifying absenteeism by helping students develop appropriate approaches for attending school regularly. Such guidance assists students in addressing behavioural, social, or personal factors that interfere with their attendance. However, the relatively neutral and low-extent responses suggest that the provision of

practical attendance advice were not equally consistent across students and schools. The quantitative finding was supported by the views of a teacher counselor "5", who explained that:

> After understanding why, a student is absent, we advise the student on what can be done to improve attendance. We encourage the student to organize personal activities properly, seek assistance when facing difficulties, and communicate with teachers or parents when there is a problem that prevents attendance (TC "5", Personal Interview 14th August, 2026).

This view was further supported by a Head of School "3", who stated that:

> Counselling is not only about telling students that absenteeism is wrong. The counsellor has to help the student identify practical ways of changing the behaviour. Students need advice that is related to their individual circumstances so that they can gradually improve their attendance (HOS "3", Personal Interview 13th August, 2026).

The DSEO also observed that: *"Teacher counsellors have an important role in guiding students on appropriate behaviours that support regular attendance. However, the advice should be practical and responsive to the particular circumstances affecting each student"* (DSEO, Personal Interview 20th August, 2026)

Qualitative information from teacher counsellors, Heads of Schools, and the DSEO portrays practical advice on improving school attendance as an important counselling practice for helping students translate awareness of absenteeism into appropriate behavioural changes. Teacher Counsellor 2 explained that after identifying the reasons for a student's absence, counsellors advise students on practical actions such as organizing personal activities, seeking assistance when facing difficulties, and communicating with teachers or parents when problems interfere with attendance. Similarly, Head of School 5 indicated that effective counselling should move beyond informing students that absenteeism is inappropriate by helping them identify practical and individualized ways of changing the behaviour. The DSEO further emphasized that teacher counsellors should provide practical guidance that responds to the particular circumstances affecting each student's attendance. The lesson drawn is that attendance counselling becomes more effective when students are provided with specific and individualized strategies for addressing the factors that interfere with regular school attendance.

Quantitative data indicates that teacher counsellors advise students on appropriate ways to improve school attendance to a high extent, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.87.

The high mean suggests that teacher counsellors generally provide students with practical guidance aimed at improving their attendance. This indicates that behavioural feedback extends beyond identifying the problem of absenteeism to supporting students in developing appropriate strategies for attending school more regularly. However, the presence of low- and moderate-extent responses indicates that the provision of such practical guidance is not equally consistent across all students and schools.

The convergence of qualitative and quantitative results demonstrates that advising students on appropriate ways to improve attendance is an important component of teacher counselling in addressing absenteeism. The qualitative evidence explains the high quantitative finding by showing that counsellors and school leaders emphasize practical, individualized strategies rather than merely informing students that absenteeism is undesirable. Therefore, both evidences indicate that teacher counsellors should strengthen individualized attendance guidance by linking counselling advice to the specific personal, social, family, and school-related factors affecting each student. This finding is supported by Mfaume et al. (2022), who emphasized that effective school attendance interventions should be tailored to the individual circumstances and needs of students where absenteeism is associated with personal, family, academic, and school-related difficulties.

Data in Table 1 further indicate that a majority (72.5%) of teachers rated to “Strong agreed and agreed” that teacher counsellors follow up with students after counselling to monitor changes in attendance behaviour. In contrast, an extremely minority (15.4%) rated this practice to “Strongly disagreed and Disagreed”, while an extremely minority (12.1%) of teachers indicated undecided reflecting neutral views on post-counselling follow-up. The mean score of 3.93 falls within the high extent, suggesting that teacher counsellors generally continue monitoring students after counselling sessions. This implies that behavioural feedback is implemented as an ongoing process rather than as a one-time intervention. Follow-up enables teacher counsellors to determine whether students have improved their attendance and whether additional support is required. However, the minority of teachers reporting low implementation suggests that post-counselling monitoring not always be systematic, which could limit the effectiveness of counselling interventions in sustaining improvements in attendance. The quantitative finding was supported by the views of a teacher counselor “4”, who explained that:

> After counselling a student, we do not simply leave the matter there. We check whether the student has started attending school regularly and, if the absenteeism

> continues, we call the student again for further discussion. Follow-up helps us to know whether the counselling has made differences (TC "4", Personal Interview 13rd August, 2026).

This view was further supported by a Head of School "3", who stated that: *"Follow-up is important because some students improve immediately after counselling but later return to the same behaviour. Teacher counsellors therefore monitor their attendance and report back to the school when additional intervention is needed"* (HOS "3", Personal Interview 13rd August, 2026).

The DSEO similarly explained that: *"Counselling becomes more effective when schools monitor the progress of students after intervention. Follow-up allows teacher counsellors and school management to determine whether attendance has improved or whether further measures are required"* (DSEO, Personal Interview 20th August, 2026)

The document review indicate that school attendance registers revealed that some students who had experienced absenteeism continued to be monitored through preceding attendance records, making it possible for teacher counsellors and school authorities to identify changes in attendance behaviour. The reviewed counselling and student follow-up records also showed evidence of continued monitoring of students after counselling sessions, particularly for students with persistent attendance problems. In addition, school meeting minutes indicated that attendance concerns were revisited through discussions and follow-up actions for students whose absenteeism continued. These documentary findings demonstrate that post-counselling follow-up was not only reported by teachers but was also reflected in school records through continued attendance monitoring and follow-up of students experiencing persistent absenteeism.

Qualitative information from teacher counsellors, Heads of Schools, and the DSEO portrays post-counselling follow-up as an important mechanism for sustaining improvements in students' attendance behaviour after counselling interventions. Teacher Counsellor 4 explained that counsellors monitor students after counselling to determine whether their attendance has improved and call them for further discussion when absenteeism continues. Similarly, Head of School 3 indicated that some students may initially improve after counselling but later return to the same behaviour, making continued monitoring necessary to identify students who require additional intervention. The DSEO further emphasized that follow-up enables teacher counsellors and school management to assess whether counselling has produced the intended improvement in attendance or whether further measures are

required. The lesson drawn is that counselling is more effective when it is followed by systematic monitoring because continued follow-up enables schools to assess behavioural change, identify persistent attendance problems, and provide additional support where necessary.

Quantitative data indicates that teacher counsellors follow up with students after counselling to monitor changes in attendance behaviour to a high extent, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.93. The high mean suggests that teacher counsellors generally continue monitoring students after counselling sessions rather than treating counselling as a one-time intervention. This indicates that post-counselling follow-up is used to determine whether students have improved their attendance and whether further support is necessary. However, the presence of low- and moderate-extent responses suggests that follow-up practices may not be implemented systematically for all students, which could reduce the consistency and sustainability of counselling interventions.

The convergence of qualitative and quantitative results demonstrates that post-counselling follow-up is an important component of behavioural feedback for addressing students' absenteeism. The qualitative evidence explains the high quantitative finding by showing that teacher counsellors monitor students' attendance after intervention and provide additional counselling when improvement is not sustained. Therefore, both strands of evidence indicate that schools should strengthen systematic post-counselling monitoring by establishing clear follow-up procedures, regularly reviewing attendance records, and providing additional interventions to students whose absenteeism persists. This finding is supported by Graham et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of monitoring students' attendance and providing individualized interventions based on continuing attendance difficulties. This suggests that follow-up allows schools to determine whether an intervention has produced sustained improvement and to modify support when absenteeism persists. However, the finding is challenged by Njoroge (2023), who reveal that school attendance problems were associated with wider socioeconomic and family-related conditions, including poverty, parental circumstances, early marriage, and negative attitudes towards education.

Data in Table 1 show that a moderate proportion (59.8%) of teachers rated to "Strong agreed and agreed" that teacher counsellors recognize and encourage students who demonstrate improved school attendance. In contrast, a minority (25.8%) rated this practice to "Strongly disagreed and disagreed" while a minority (14.4%) of teachers indicated a moderate extent, reflecting neutral views on the recognition and encouragement of improved

attendance. The mean score of 3.55 falls within the moderate extent, suggesting that recognition and encouragement of students with improved attendance are implemented to a moderate level. This implies that positive behavioural feedback is used to reinforce improvements in students' attendance, which may motivate students to maintain regular school participation. However, the relatively substantial proportion of low-extent responses suggests that recognition and encouragement are not consistently applied, indicating a need for teacher counsellors to strengthen positive reinforcement strategies when students demonstrate progress in attendance behaviour. The quantitative finding was supported by the views of a teacher counselor "3", who explained that:

> When a student who was frequently absent begins attending school regularly, we encourage the student and appreciate the improvement. Sometimes simple recognition and positive words make the student feel that the effort is noticed and motivate them to continue attending school (Teacher Counsellor 1, Interview, 2026).

This view was further supported by a Head of School "5", who stated that: *"Positive encouragement is useful because students respond differently to punishment. When a student improves attendance, we encourage the student and sometimes recognize the improvement before other students. This can motivate the student to maintain the new behaviour"* (HOS "5" Personal Interview 14th August, 2026)

The DSEO also noted that: *"Schools should not rely only on corrective measures when addressing absenteeism. Recognizing positive changes in students' behaviour can reinforce regular attendance and encourage students to sustain improvements"* (DSEO, Personal Interview 20th August, 2026).

The document review shows instances of improvement in attendance among students who had previously experienced frequent absenteeism. School counselling and follow-up records further indicated that some students demonstrating improved attendance were monitored and encouraged to sustain the positive behavioural change. In addition, reviewed school meeting minutes and attendance monitoring records reflected efforts by school personnel to acknowledge improvements in students' attendance and encourage continued regular school participation. These documentary findings demonstrate that recognition and encouragement of improved attendance were reflected in school records, although the moderate level reported by teachers suggests that such practices were not consistently documented or implemented across all students.

Qualitative information from teacher counsellors, Heads of Schools, and the DSEO portrays recognition and encouragement of improved attendance as an important form of positive behavioural feedback for reinforcing desirable attendance behaviour. Teacher Counsellor "3" explained that when students who were previously frequently absent begin attending school regularly, counsellors encourage them and acknowledge their improvement, with positive words helping students feel that their efforts are noticed and motivating them to continue. Similarly, Head of School 1 indicated that positive encouragement can be more effective for some students than punishment and that recognizing improved attendance can motivate students to maintain the new behaviour. The DSEO further emphasized that schools should complement corrective measures with recognition of positive behavioural changes because such reinforcement can encourage students to sustain regular attendance. The lesson drawn is that recognizing and encouraging improvements in attendance can strengthen students' motivation to maintain positive behaviour and can complement corrective approaches to absenteeism.

Quantitative data indicates that teacher counsellors recognize and encourage students who demonstrate improved school attendance to a moderate extent, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.55. The moderate mean suggests that positive reinforcement is used to acknowledge improvements in students' attendance, but the practice is not implemented consistently across all students. This indicates that behavioural feedback includes elements of positive reinforcement that may motivate students to maintain regular school participation. However, the relatively substantial proportion of low-extent responses suggests that some students who improve their attendance were not receiving sufficient recognition or encouragement to reinforce the positive change.

The convergence of qualitative and quantitative results demonstrates that recognition and encouragement of improved attendance represent a useful but moderately implemented component of behavioural feedback. The qualitative evidence explains the moderate quantitative finding by showing that teacher counsellors and school leaders recognize the motivational value of acknowledging students' progress, while the quantitative evidence indicates that this practice is not consistently experienced across schools. Therefore, both strands of evidence indicate that teacher counsellors should strengthen positive reinforcement strategies by consistently recognizing students who demonstrate meaningful improvements in attendance. The finding is supported by Maynard et al. (2018), who found that interventions incorporating positive reinforcement and recognition of desirable school attendance

behaviours can contribute to improved attendance among students with persistent absenteeism. However, the finding is challenged by Mfaume et al. (2022), who argued that school absenteeism is associated with multiple and interacting factors, including academic difficulties, family problems, school-related concerns, and students' emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Data in Table 1 further reveal that a minority (39.9%) of teachers rated to "Strong agreed and Agreed" that teacher counsellors discuss inappropriate attendance behaviour with students in a respectful and supportive manner. In contrast, a minority (34.9%) rated this practice to "Strongly disagreed and disagreed", while a minority (25.2%) of teachers indicated a undecided reflecting neutral views on the respectful and supportive handling of inappropriate attendance behaviour. The mean score of 3.05 falls within the moderate extent, suggesting that respectful and supportive discussions of inappropriate attendance behaviour are implemented at a moderate level. This implies that although some teacher counsellors address attendance problems through supportive discussions, the practice is not consistently experienced across schools. The relatively high proportion of low-extent responses indicates a concern that some students may not receive sufficiently respectful or supportive feedback when addressing absenteeism. Strengthening student-centred communication during counselling could therefore help create a more supportive environment in which students feel comfortable discussing the reasons behind their attendance difficulties. The quantitative finding was supported by the views of a teacher counselor "2" who explained that:

> When discussing absenteeism, we try not to embarrass the student or make the student feel rejected. We allow the student to explain what happened and then discuss the behaviour in a way that encourages change. However, sometimes the number of students needing counselling makes it difficult to give every student enough time (TC "2" Personal Interview 11th August, 2026).

This view was further supported by a Head of School "3" who stated that:

> Students respond better when attendance problems are discussed respectfully. However, when there are many cases of absenteeism and limited counselling time, some discussions may become brief. We continue encouraging counsellors to use supportive approaches rather than relying mainly on punishment (HOS "3" Personal Interview 12nd August, 2026)

The DSEO further explained that: *"Guidance and counselling should be supportive and student-centred. Students need to feel that the purpose of counselling is to help them*

overcome attendance challenges rather than simply to punish them for being absent" (DSEO, Interview 20th August, 2026).

Qualitative information from teacher counsellors, Heads of Schools, and the DSEO portrays respectful and supportive communication as an important component of counselling students with inappropriate attendance behaviour. Teacher Counsellor 6 explained that counsellors avoid embarrassing or rejecting students by giving them an opportunity to explain their circumstances before discussing the behaviour and encouraging positive change. However, the teacher counsellor noted that a large number of students requiring counselling can limit the amount of time available for individual discussions. Similarly, Head of School 6 indicated that student's respond more positively when attendance problems are addressed respectfully, although high numbers of absenteeism cases and limited counselling time may result in brief counselling sessions. The DSEO further emphasized that guidance and counselling should be supportive and student-centred, with the purpose of helping students overcome attendance challenges rather than simply punishing them for being absent. The lesson drawn is that respectful and supportive communication strengthens students' willingness to discuss attendance difficulties, but its effective implementation requires adequate counselling time and attention to individual student needs.

Quantitative data indicates that teacher counsellors discuss inappropriate attendance behaviour with students in a respectful and supportive manner to a moderate extent, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.05. A minority of teachers (39.9%) rated this practice to a high extent, whereas 34.9% rated it to a low extent and 25.2% to a moderate extent. The moderate mean suggests that respectful and supportive discussions are implemented to some extent, but the practice is not consistently experienced across schools. The relatively high proportion of low-extent responses indicates that some students were not receive adequate supportive feedback when their attendance problems are addressed. This suggests that counselling practices sometimes be constrained by limited time, workload, or the number of students requiring individual attention.

The convergence of qualitative and quantitative results demonstrates that respectful and supportive communication represents an area requiring greater attention within counselling practices for reducing absenteeism. The qualitative evidence explains the moderate quantitative finding by showing that although counsellors recognize the importance of avoiding embarrassment and punishment, heavy counselling demands and limited time can restrict the quality and depth of student-centred discussions. Therefore, both strands of

evidence indicate that schools should strengthen student-centred counselling approaches by ensuring that students are given sufficient opportunities to explain their attendance difficulties and by emphasizing supportive rather than punitive communication. This finding is consistent with Rogers (1957), the founder of Person-Centred Theory, who emphasized empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness as essential conditions for effective counselling. Rogers' perspective suggests that students are more likely to openly communicate their difficulties when they feel accepted, respected, and understood rather than judged or punished. Similarly, Bilinga, (2022) argues that person-centred counselling requires practitioners to create an accepting and non-judgmental environment that enables individuals to explore their experiences and participate actively in finding solutions.

Data in Table 1 also show that a moderate proportion (59.7%) of teachers rated to "Strong agreed and Agreed" that teacher counsellors assist students in developing strategies for maintaining regular school attendance. In contrast, a minority (21.5%) rated this practice to "Strongly disagreed and Disagreed", while an extremely minority (18.8%) of teachers indicated undecide reflecting neutral views on the development of attendance-maintenance strategies. The mean score of 3.64 falls within the moderate extent, suggesting that teacher counsellors provide students with strategies for maintaining regular attendance at a moderate level. This implies that behavioural feedback involves helping students identify practical approaches that support consistent school attendance rather than merely addressing individual cases of absenteeism. Such strategies enable students to take greater responsibility for their attendance and overcome recurring barriers. However, the relatively substantial proportion of low and neutral responses suggests that this aspect of counselling requires further strengthening to ensure that students receive practical and individualized strategies for sustaining regular attendance. The quantitative finding was supported by the views of a teacher counsellor, who explained that:

> We help students think about what they can do to avoid repeated absenteeism. For example, students were encouraged to plan their time well, seek help when they face difficulties, maintain communication with teachers and involve parents when necessary. The aim is to help the student develop a personal plan for attending school regularly (TC "4" Personal Interview 13rd August, 2026).

This view was further supported by a Head of School "5" who stated that: *"Students need practical strategies because simply telling them to attend school is not always enough.*

Teacher counsellors help students identify the things that interfere with attendance and find ways of dealing with those challenges" (HOS "5" Personal Interview 14th August, 2026).
The DSEO added that: *"Counselling interventions should enable students to develop behaviours that support consistent attendance. Schools should therefore encourage counsellors to move beyond general advice and help students identify practical solutions to the factors contributing to absenteeism"* (DSEO Personal Interview 20th August, 2026).

Qualitative information from teacher counsellors, Heads of Schools, and the DSEO portrays the development of practical strategies for maintaining regular school attendance as an important component of behavioural feedback. Teacher Counsellor 3 explained that counsellors help students identify practical actions such as planning their time effectively, seeking assistance when facing difficulties, maintaining communication with teachers, and involving parents when necessary. Similarly, Head of School 4 indicated that students require practical strategies because simply instructing them to attend school may not be sufficient; counsellors therefore help students identify factors interfering with attendance and determine appropriate ways of addressing them. The DSEO further emphasized that counselling interventions should move beyond general advice by helping students develop behaviours and practical solutions that support consistent attendance. The lesson drawn is that counselling can contribute more effectively to sustained attendance when students are actively involved in developing individualized strategies for overcoming the factors that contribute to repeated absenteeism.

Quantitative data indicates that teacher counsellors assist students in developing strategies for maintaining regular school attendance to a moderate extent, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.64. A majority of teachers (59.7%) rated this practice to a high extent, whereas 21.5% rated it to a low extent and 18.8% to a moderate extent. The mean score indicates that although many teacher counsellors assist students in developing attendance-maintenance strategies, the practice is not implemented at a consistently high level. This suggests that behavioural feedback extends beyond addressing individual incidents of absenteeism to helping students develop practical approaches for sustaining regular attendance. However, the combined proportion of low- and moderate-extent responses indicates that some students may not receive sufficiently practical or individualized strategies for managing recurring attendance challenges.

The convergence of qualitative and quantitative results demonstrates that helping students develop strategies for maintaining regular attendance is an important but moderately

implemented aspect of behavioural feedback. The qualitative evidence explains the moderate quantitative finding by showing that counsellors and school leaders recognize the value of practical, individualized strategies, but the extent to which these strategies are consistently developed with students remains limited. Therefore, both strands of evidence indicate that teacher counsellors should strengthen individualized attendance planning by helping students identify specific barriers to attendance, establish realistic strategies for overcoming those barriers, and involve teachers and parents where necessary. The finding is supported by Sutphen et al. (2020), who found that individualized interventions addressing the specific circumstances of students were more appropriate for responding to persistent school absenteeism than general approaches applied uniformly to all students. However, the finding is challenged by Graham and tancredi (2021), who demonstrated that student absenteeism is influenced by a combination of individual, family, and school-level factors. The findings indicate that attendance difficulties cannot always be adequately addressed through strategies developed with individual students because some barriers are embedded within the students' wider social and educational environments.

Data in Table 1 indicate that a moderate proportion (44.7%) of teachers rated to "Strong agreed and agreed" that teacher counsellors listen to students' explanations before providing guidance on absenteeism. In contrast, a moderate proportion (41.1%) rated this practice to "Strongly disagreed and disagreed", while an extreme minority (14.2%) of teachers indicated undecided, reflecting neutral views on whether counsellors listen to students before providing guidance. The mean score of 3.04 falls within the moderate extent, suggesting that listening to students' explanations before giving guidance is implemented at a moderate level. This implies that behavioural feedback was not always be sufficiently student-centred, since understanding students' explanations is important for identifying the underlying causes of absenteeism and tailoring counselling interventions accordingly. The relatively high proportion of low-extent responses is particularly important because students have personal, family, academic, or social circumstances that influence their attendance. Strengthening active listening during counselling could therefore improve the relevance and effectiveness of behavioural feedback provided to students. The quantitative finding was supported by the views of a teacher Counsellor, who explained that: *"We first allow the student to explain the reasons for being absent before we give advice. However, because some schools have many students and only a few counsellors, it is sometimes difficult to*

spend enough time with every student. This affects the depth of the counselling session" (TC "3" Personal Interview 12th August, 2026)

This view was further supported by a Head of School "4" who stated that:

> Listening to students is very important because the same attendance problem may have different causes. The counsellor needs to understand the student's situation before deciding what advice to give. The challenge is that the number of students can sometimes be higher than the counselling capacity of the school (HOS "4" Personal Interview 13rd August, 2026).

The DSEO similarly observed that: *"Effective guidance and counselling require listening to students because interventions should be based on the circumstances of individual learners. Schools therefore need to strengthen the capacity and availability of teacher counsellors so that students can receive adequate attention"* (DSEO Personal Interview 20th August, 2026).

Qualitative information from teacher counsellors, Heads of Schools, and the DSEO portrays active listening to students' explanations as an important component of student-centred counselling for addressing absenteeism. Teacher Counsellor 5 explained that counsellors normally give students an opportunity to explain the reasons for their absence before providing advice, although the large number of students and limited number of counsellors restrict the time available for individual counselling sessions. Similarly, Head of School 2 indicated that listening to students is essential because similar attendance problems may arise from different causes, requiring counsellors to understand individual circumstances before determining appropriate advice. The DSEO further emphasized that effective guidance and counselling should be based on the circumstances of individual learners and therefore requires adequate counselling capacity and availability. The lesson drawn is that active listening enables teacher counsellors to understand the underlying causes of absenteeism and provide more relevant interventions, but limited counselling capacity may constrain the extent to which students receive adequate individual attention.

Quantitative data indicates that teacher counsellors listen to students' explanations before providing guidance on absenteeism to a moderate extent, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.04. A moderate proportion of teachers (44.7%) rated this practice to a high extent, whereas 41.1% rated it to a low extent and 14.2% to a moderate extent. The moderate mean suggests that active listening is implemented inconsistently, with a considerable proportion of teachers perceiving that counsellors do not adequately listen to students before providing guidance. This indicates that behavioural feedback may not always be sufficiently student-

centred, which can limit the ability of counsellors to identify the specific personal, family, academic, and social factors contributing to absenteeism. The relatively high proportion of low-extent responses therefore points to a need for greater emphasis on active listening during counselling sessions.

The convergence of qualitative and quantitative results demonstrates that listening to students before providing guidance is a necessary but moderately implemented component of behavioural feedback. The qualitative evidence explains the moderate quantitative finding by showing that counsellors recognize the importance of allowing students to explain their circumstances, but high student numbers and limited counselling capacity can reduce the time available for meaningful individual engagement. Therefore, both strands of evidence indicate that schools should strengthen student-centred counselling by improving the availability of teacher counsellors, allocating sufficient time for individual sessions, and emphasizing active listening before providing attendance-related guidance. The finding is supported by Mazerolle et al. (2021), who emphasized that effective counselling and student-support practices depend on attentive listening, understanding students' individual circumstances, and establishing supportive relationships before providing appropriate guidance. However, the finding is diverged by Epstein, (2022), whose study demonstrated that improving school attendance requires coordinated school-wide strategies involving schools, families, and communities rather than relying primarily on individual student-focused approaches. Therefore, addressing absenteeism effectively requires collective responsibility among teachers, school administrators, parents, and community stakeholders. This differs from the finding of the study, which emphasizes the implementation of individual counselling techniques, particularly behavioural feedback, as a means of helping students recognize the consequences of absenteeism, identify personal challenges, and develop positive school attendance behaviours.

10. Conclusion

The study concludes that teacher counsellors implement behavioural feedback through several practices aimed at addressing student absenteeism in public secondary schools. These practices include discussing the effects of absenteeism on students' academic progress and future opportunities, exploring the reasons underlying students' absenteeism, following up students after counselling sessions, advising students on appropriate ways to improve their attendance, and encouraging students to take responsibility for regular school attendance. The findings therefore demonstrate that behavioural feedback is implemented through

communication, guidance, follow-up, and encouragement that help students recognise the consequences of absenteeism and develop greater responsibility for regular school attendance.

11. Recommendations

The study recommends that teacher counsellors should strengthen individualized counselling by identifying the specific personal, family, academic, social, and school-related factors contributing to each student's absenteeism and providing appropriate guidance. Schools should place greater emphasis on active listening and respectful, supportive communication by giving students sufficient opportunities to explain their attendance difficulties before guidance is provided and avoiding counselling approaches that embarrass, threaten, or punish students. Teacher counsellors should also establish systematic post-counselling follow-up through regular reviews of attendance records and additional counselling for students whose attendance does not improve or whose improvement is not sustained.

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