

## HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION'S (ASCA) ACADEMIC DOMAIN MODEL IN A "SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES" SETTING IN ALBANIA

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### Abstract

This study analyzed students' perceptions of school counseling service in private schools in Albania. Students' perceptions were measured with regard to academic achievement which is one of the three ASCA domains (academic, career, and personal/social). The school counselor does not exist in the Albanian schools. The school counseling is not directly performed. The school counseling is performed by a structure called in this study as "school counseling services". The school counseling services includes class teacher, vice principal/principal, school disciplinary committee, school psychologist and activities done under legislations of Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports. These elements are common in all schools of Albania as well as private schools. An 18 item questionnaire was administered to 300 students (150 male and 150 female) at five private high schools. After analyzing the data, it was revealed that male of female students' perceptions did not differ as far as academic domain was considered. There were no significant correlation in terms of income and parents' education level with items of ASCA academic development questionnaire. 68.3 % of the students were satisfied of school counseling services' monitoring in terms of academic elements and providing this to the teachers and parents. 75.0 % of the students believed that school counseling services were very keen regarding to the attendance recording and reporting this to the parents. 77.4 % of the students believed that school counseling service coordinates different types test to prepare them for central exam like Matura, SAT, TOEFL and IELTS. 76.0% of students believed that the school counseling services were organized parents' meeting regularly. 72.3% of the students believed that school counseling services were deal with problems of learning. The school counseling service in the academic development was very successful. However, the other two domains; career and personal/social development were not analyzed in this study. Therefore, more research needs to be conducted in schools to determine if "school counseling services" can replace 'school counselor' and this model is practical and feasible.

**Keywords:** school counseling service, students' perception, counseling, ASCA.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The school counseling is not directly performed. The school counseling is performed by a structure called in this study as "school counseling services". The school counseling services includes class teacher, vice principal/principal, school disciplinary committee, school psychologist.

#### • The class teacher

The class teacher is at the core of school counseling service. The tasks of the class teacher who is very important in Albanian education system are explained. The class teacher is a messenger between the students, parents as well as the school administration. Any progress or academic, social, personal and disciplinary problems related to the students is reported to the parents by the class teacher. The class

teacher is responsible for attendance of the whole class as well. The class teacher takes care of register in which all the attendance, marks and personal information of students are kept (M. E. A. D. Shkencës, 2013).

- **Vice principal/principal**

Vice principal/principal have the authority in the schools to allow the school counseling services activities or block them. Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, and Jones (2004) in their study mentioned importance principal in the school counseling, even though the duties are clearly mentioned, the school principal can still have authority to block some of the duties.

- **School Discipline Committee**

School discipline committee consists of 5 or 7 school personnel, directed by the school principal or deputy directors. The school psychologist is ordinary and automatic member of school discipline committee. School discipline committee should have intolerant attitude violation of teaching and learning, school safety and health of students and employees of the school in its premises (M. E. A. D. Shkencës, 2013).

- **School Psychologist**

A school psychologist should deal with 2500-3500 students according to the type of school. Psycho-Social Service (SPS) deals psychosocial problems of students with learning or behavioral. Psycho-Social Service collaborates with teachers and heads of educational institutions and parents, to plan and implement services that contribute to the educational, social and personal students. (M. i. A. d. Shkencës, 2013)

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

In the schools, there is no compulsory regulation on hiring a school counselor. School psychologist is the only personnel in the school according to the Albanian regulation, each school should have one for 2500 students;10 times more than ASCA standard for the school counselor. But this does not mean there is no school counseling in the Albanian school. The other main elements of the education system are performing school counseling service for the students in Albania. These elements are:

- Class teacher
- Vice principal
- School disciplinary committee
- School psychologist

The main purpose of school counseling service in a school is to boost the learning process. A comprehensive school counseling service assists student with the development in three domains:

- Career
- Personal/social
- Academic

### 2.1. Aim of the Study

Students are the main beneficiaries of the school counseling services, but their perceptions of the school counseling services have not been studied in Albania. The aim of this study is to evaluate students' perceptions of school counseling service in terms of ASCA academic achievement standards.

### 3.1. Research Question

How much of ASCA academic achievement model is achieved by the school counseling services?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

American School Counselor Association (ASCA), a branch of ACA, was set up in 1952, helps school counselors to support the students focus on academic, social/personal and career development so that they can succeed in the school and graduate then become responsible member of society. ASCA offers professional progress, various resources, academic studies and advocacy to all its members in USA and worldwide. In 2001, The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) started The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs as an outline for scheming, developing, applying and assessing standard based, data-driven school counseling program. School counselors change their attention from service-centered program to program-centered to give the chance to all students. ASCA's objective in developing the model is to institutionalize the framework for and process of developing a school counseling program (Association, 2012).

Researchers are supporting the validity of the comprehensive model in desired academic achievement, career development, parental satisfaction, school climate, and attendance (Brigman & Campbell, 2003). These studies show the students of schools, which have Comprehensive Developmental Guidance (CDG) programs, getting higher grades, showing better relationships with teachers, and getting greater satisfaction

from school. Students also told that education is relevant to later life, school is safe, and high school students expressed that career and college information was accessible (McGannon, Carey, & Dimmitt, 2005). Other studies point that counseling programs decrease anxiety and depression among schoolchildren and are a positive factor having better social skills (Whiston & Sexton, 1998). School counselors have a unique position to evaluate data in schools and explain the gaps, existing in student success (Association, 2012).

The framework of a comprehensive school counseling program consists of four components: foundation, management, delivery, and accountability.

### **Foundation**

School counselors should prepare complete school counseling programs that focus on student results, teach student abilities and are delivered with recognized professional proficiency. The solid ground of school counseling program is the foundation where student knowledge, attitudes and skills are determined. Setting a strong foundation need a mutual effort with school members, parents/guardians, and the community to determine what every student will obtain as a profit of a school counseling program. The idea of this component of the ASCA National Model is to set up the focus of the complete school counseling program based according to the needs of the students on:

- a. the academic development
- b. career development
- c. personal/social development.

#### **a. Career development**

ASCA National Standards for career development give the basics school counseling programs for foundation for the acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge that allow students to make a successful move from school to the world of work, and from job to job across the life span.

#### **b. Personal/social development**

ASCA National Standards for personal/social development guide school counseling programs to provide the foundation for personal and social growth as students' progress through school and into adulthood.

#### **c. Academic development**

ASCA National Standards for academic development guide school counseling programs to implement strategies and activities to support and maximize each student's ability to learn (see Appendix B) (Association, 2012).

### **Management**

The management is very important to have the effective school counseling program that addresses the developmental requests of every student. The management component of the ASCA National Model provides organizational tests and element designed to manage a school counseling program. The tests and tools assist school counselors build up, apply and assess their school counseling program based on clearly defined priority reflecting student needs.

### **Delivery**

The delivery component shows the way of applying the school counseling program to students. The services and strategies that school counselors offer to students and communications they have with others as they work to encourage student achievement, equity and access for all students are explained in this part. The delivery component has two parts such as direct and indirect student services. Direct services are provided to students, and indirect services are provided for students.

**Direct student services** are in-person interactions between school counselors and students.

**Indirect student services** are services provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselor's interactions with others.

### **Accountability**

School counselors should check their program efficiency regularly to determine its success for better results of the students. School counselors use this check to understand the difference between students who are in the school counseling program. School counselor should prove their counseling program efficiency in measurable terms.

School counselors should use data-driven complete school counseling programs using accountability strategies to monitor student achievement, to frequently assess and advance their school counseling program and to determine the impact their program is having on students (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007). Accountability skills support school counselors "garner the political clout necessary to improve school counselor to- student staffing ratios and redefine school counselor roles and activities..." (Hatch & Holland, 2001).

Accountability of the school counseling program can be achieved in three sections:

- Data Analysis: school's achievement, attendance, behavior and safety record
- Program Results:

- Evaluation and Improvement

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire consisting of 17 questions has been applied to 300 students from 5 private schools in Albania. The questionnaire has 2 main parts. The first part has 7 questions about general information of students; the second part has 10 questions about academic development which is one of the three domains (career development, personal/social development, and academic development) of ASCA with Likert type questions. The SPSS 20 was used for data analysis. The reliability of questionnaire was measured and it was 0.876.(Table

**Table 1 Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,876	17

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The age range of the students is from 15 to 18 and up. From students under age of 18, the consent form is taken to take part in the survey.

**Table 2 The age of the participant students**

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid	Cumulative
15	24	8	8	8
16	108	36	36	44
17	80	26.7	26.7	70.7
18	88	29.3	29.3	100
Total	300	100	100	

The results have been evaluated for academic development (Q8-Q17) domain of ASCA model. The correlation test in SPSS was done and no significant correlation was observed of level of income, education of the parent with any questionnaire respond for each question between 8 and 18.

The summary of questionnaire result:

**Table 3 positive respond range percentages**

Positive respond percentage	Number questions and domain
Between 50 and 67%	Q11,13
More than 67%	Q8,9,12,14,15,16,17

**Table 4 questions which have the "strongly agree" response at the highest rate**

Question number
Q8,9,12,14,15,16,17

The academic development (Q8-Q17)

**Table 5 Q8 keeps personal data of the students (both academic and disciplinary)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	19	6,3	6,3
	disagree	18	6,0	12,3
	neither agree nor disagree	59	19,7	32,0
	agree	88	29,3	61,3
	strongly agree	116	38,7	100,0
	Total	300	100,0	100,0

As the Table 5 indicates 68% (38.7+29.3) of the students believed that school counseling services keep their academic and disciplinary data very well. Only 12.3% of students responded negatively, and neutral respond is at 19.7%. School online data system is a key for storing and reporting any academic and

disciplinary progress or problem to students and their parent. From Table 5 data showed that this has been done successfully. As the class increases, the students respond increases too. The Table 5 shows that the elements of the school counseling services are successful on keeping personal data.

**Table 6 Q9 Monitors academic progress, credit total, graduation requirements, and provides this information to students, parents, and teachers.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	24	8,0	8,0	8,0
disagree	17	5,7	5,7	13,7
neither agree nor disagree	54	18,0	18,0	31,7
agree	102	34,0	34,0	65,7
strongly agree	103	34,3	34,3	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

68.3 % (34+34.3) of the students responded positively on this questions, 13.7% of the students responded negatively, and neural respond is at 18.0% (Table 6). Students in any class perceive they are monitored and any progress or problems are shared with class teacher and parent. Strong positive results indicate that the students were satisfied of school counseling services` monitoring in terms academic elements and providing this to the teachers and parents.

**Table 7 Q10 identify and resolve student problems that are related with learning.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	24	8,0	8,0	8,0
disagree	19	6,3	6,3	14,3
neither agree nor disagree	67	22,3	22,3	36,7
agree	107	35,7	35,7	72,3
strongly agree	83	27,7	27,7	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

63.4% (27.7+35.7) of the students responded positively, 14.3% of the students responded negatively, neutral is at 22.3% (Table 7). As we understand from graphs the students believe school counseling services identify problem related with learning trough school online system and register book and resolve those problem by arranging extra lesson with the subject teacher. More can be by school counseling service to identify students` problems related to learning and resolve them by contacting lower achieving students frequently.

**Table 8 Q11 Keeps personal file and records (administrative)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	24	8,0	8,0	8,0
disagree	16	5,3	5,3	13,3
neither agree nor disagree	65	21,7	21,7	35,0
agree	110	36,7	36,7	71,7
strongly agree	85	28,3	28,3	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

As we can observe from Table 8 65 % (28.3+36.7) of the students believe that school counseling services keep personal file and administrative records. 13.3 % responded negatively whereas neural respond is at

21.7%.as the Table 8 data indicate students think their personal file records are kept well and safe by school counseling services.

**Table 9 Q12 keeps attendance and informs the parents about attendance of students**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	20	6,7	6,7	6,7
disagree	8	2,7	2,7	9,3
neither agree nor disagree	47	15,7	15,7	25,0
agree	104	34,7	34,7	59,7
strongly agree	121	40,3	40,3	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

As the Table 9 shows clearly, 75 % of the students believe school counseling services are very keen attendance recording and reporting this to the parents of the students. Only 9.4% of the students responded negatively on the question, neutral one is at 15.7%. In every school in the first lesson attendance is taken and absentee students are reported to their parent at the end of first lesson. As the Table 9 indicates three quarter of students knows about policy.

**Table 10 Q13 record excuses for students who are tardy or absent**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	26	8,7	8,7	8,7
disagree	23	7,7	7,7	16,3
neither agree nor disagree	67	22,3	22,3	38,7
agree	91	30,3	30,3	69,0
strongly agree	93	31,0	31,0	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

As the indicators show 61.3 %( 31+30.3), the students believe that the school counseling services records and reports tardy and absent students to reduce repeat of same disciplinary cases (Table 10). Repeated excuses are recorded and actions are taken by the class teacher and vice principal.

**Table 11 Q14 keeps student records according state regulations (registers, amza and etc..)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	22	7,3	7,3	7,3
disagree	12	4,0	4,0	11,3
neither agree nor disagree	46	15,3	15,3	26,7
agree	81	27,0	27,0	53,7
strongly agree	139	46,3	46,3	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

73.3 %( 46.3+27) of the students believe that the school counseling services keeps students records according to the state regulations, 11.3% of the students responded negatively and neutral indicator is at 15.33% (Table 11).The inner and outer inspections regulate school to keep records according state regulations.

**Table 12 Q15 coordinates and administers cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	16	5,3	5,3	5,3
disagree	15	5,0	5,0	10,3
neither agree nor disagree	37	12,3	12,3	22,7
agree	107	35,7	35,7	58,3
strongly agree	125	41,7	41,7	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

**Table 13 Comparisons Gender and Q15 responses**

	Q15					Total
	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree	
female	5	2	18	54	71	150
male	11	13	19	53	54	150
	16	15	37	107	125	300

As the Table 12 indicates 77.4 % (41.7+35.7) of the students believe that school counseling service coordinates different types test to prepare them for central exam like Matura, SAT, TOEFL and IELTS. Only 10.33% of the students negatively responded the question and neutral respond is at 12.3%. This positive respond is the highest indicator on the questionnaire. Females` positive respond (125) is higher than males` respond (102) and negative respond (7) is less than male (24) negative respond (Table 13).

**Table 14 Q16 arranges extra lessons for the students who have difficulties in learning**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	15	5,0	5,0	5,0
disagree	17	5,7	5,7	10,7
neither agree nor disagree	51	17,0	17,0	27,7
agree	102	34,0	34,0	61,7
strongly agree	115	38,3	38,3	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

As indicators show, 72.3% of the students believe that school counseling services deals with problem of learning. Negative respond to this question is at 10.7% and neutral respond is at 17.0% (Table 14). The negative and neutral respond describe the need of extra lesson for lower achievers. The increase in academic performance can be performed by providing extra lesson with students in need.

**Table 15 Q17 organizes the parents meeting regularly to discuss academic challenges of students**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	18	6,0	6,0	6,0
disagree	13	4,3	4,3	10,3
neither agree nor disagree	41	13,7	13,7	24,0
agree	96	32,0	32,0	56,0
strongly agree	132	44,0	44,0	100,0
Total	300	100,0	100,0	

As the Table 15 indicates, 76 % of students believe the school counseling services organize parent meeting regularly. 10.3% students responded negatively and neutral are at 13.7%. Strong positive indicators imply that generally, the students are happy with parent meeting frequency. The number of meeting for students who have academic problems can be increased to reduce negative and neutral respond.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The students believe academically, they get what they want from school. The school counseling service works in the Albanian schools. But in the area of career and personal/social development how the school counseling service will able to do job of professional school counselor is not investigated in this study therefore this study outcomes limited to academic domain. According to Schmidt (2003), as high school counselors know their precise responsibilities in the school, they can have more opportunities to achieve with students, teachers, parents, and administrators in fulfilling the needs of the students. Participators` respond suggests that most of the students surveyed are aware of school counseling services. According to Quast (2003) the lack of role and function definition of school counselor allowed administrators and parents to assign the school counselor's duties and responsibilities within the school. The school counseling service roles and functions should be clear and direct to get the best out of it.

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## LIST OF APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

		ASCA STANDARDS
Q1	<b>Gender</b>	
Q2	<b>Class</b>	
Q3	<b>Age</b>	
Q4	<b>School</b>	
Q5	<b>Choose your parents monthly income</b>	
Q6	<b>Mother`s Level of education</b>	
Q7	<b>Father`s Level of education</b>	
	<b>ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	



Q8	Keeps personal data of the students(both academic and disciplinary)	A:B1
Q9	Monitors academic progress, credit total, graduation requirements, and provides this information to students, parents, and teachers.	A:B1
Q8	Identify and resolve student problems that are related with learning.	A:B2
Q9	Keeps personal file and records(administrative)	A:A3
Q10	keeps attendance and inform the parents about attendance of students	A:A4
Q11	record excuses for students who are tardy or absent	A:A1
Q12	keeps student records according state regulations(registers, amza and etc..	A:B1
Q13	Coordinates and administers cognitive, aptitude, and achievement tests (career inventories, SAT, GDS, Matura,)	A:C1
Q14	arranges extra lessons for the students who have difficulties in learning	A:B2
Q15	organizes the parents meeting regularly to discuss academic challenges of students	A:B1

## APPENDIX B: ASCA National Standards for Students (COMPETENCIES AND INDICATORS)

Legend: A:A-1.1 = Academic Domain, Standard A,  
Competency 1 and Indicator 1

### Academic Development

ASCA National Standards for academic development guide school counseling programs to implement strategies and activities to support and maximize each student's ability to learn.

**Standard A: Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.**

#### A:A1 Improve Academic Self-concept

A:A1.1 Articulate feelings of competence and confidence as learners

A:A1.2 Display a positive interest in learning

A:A1.3 Take pride in work and achievement

A:A1.4 Accept mistakes as essential to the learning process

A:A1.5 Identify attitudes and behaviors that lead to successful learning

#### A:A2 Acquire Skills for Improving Learning

A:A2.1 Apply time-management and task-management skills

A:A2.2 Demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning

A:A2.3 Use communications skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed

A:A2.4 Apply knowledge and learning styles to positively influence school performance

#### A:A3 Achieve School Success

A:A3.1 Take responsibility for their actions

A:A3.2 Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students

A:A3.3 Develop a broad range of interests and abilities

A:A3.4 Demonstrate dependability, productivity and initiative

A:A3.5 Share knowledge

**Standard B: Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college.**

#### A:B1 Improve Learning

A:B1.1 Demonstrate the motivation to achieve individual potential

A:B1.2 Learn and apply critical-thinking skills

A:B1.3 Apply the study skills necessary for academic success at each level

A:B1.4 Seek information and support from faculty, staff, family and peers

A:B1.5 Organize and apply academic information from a variety of sources

A:B1.6 Use knowledge of learning styles to positively influence school performance

A:B1.7 Become a self-directed and independent learner

**A:B2 Plan to Achieve Goals**

A:B2.1 Establish challenging academic goals in elementary, middle/jr. high and high school

A:B2.2 Use assessment results in educational planning

A:B2.3 Develop and implement annual plan of study to maximize academic ability and achievement

A:B2.4 Apply knowledge of aptitudes and interests to goal setting

A:B2.5 Use problem-solving and decision-making skills to assess progress toward educational goals

A:B2.6 Understand the relationship between classroom performance and success in school

A:B2.7 Identify post-secondary options consistent with interests, achievement, aptitude and abilities

**STANDARD C: Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community.**

**A:C1 Relate School to Life Experiences**

A:C1.1 Demonstrate the ability to balance school, studies, extracurricular activities, leisure time and family life

A:C1.2 Seek co-curricular and community experiences to enhance the school experience

A:C1.3 Understand the relationship between learning and work

A:C1.4 Demonstrate an understanding of the value of lifelong learning as essential to seeking, obtaining and maintaining life goals

A:C1.5 Understand that school success is the preparation to make the transition from student to community member

A:C1.6 Understand how school success and academic achievement enhance future career and vocational opportunities