

# Social Support as a Function of School Counseling

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The objective of this study was to investigate the value of school counseling, particularly in terms of social support. To prepare this report, I conducted a follow-up study on graduates of T high school, on school counseling, based on 185 individuals. I compared the students who received counseling when they were in school (visitants) with students who did not (non-visitants), and examined the correlation between them. As a result, significant statistical differences were detected as follows: 1. The visitants had different concerns from the non-visitants. 2. The visitants had a variety of individual concerns. 3. The visitants differed in the manner of obtaining social support. 4. Both groups had their own characteristic categories of social support.

Consequently, two conclusions have been drawn:

1. Extensive informal relationship with friends exists among high school students. In particular, club and extracurricular activities are of major importance.
2. When informal support is not available, help may be sought from formal relationships (counselor, teachers of handicapped students, or classroom teachers). In other words, school counseling can function as a complementary and effective social support for high school students.

(Key words: school counseling, social support, follow-up study)

## Introduction

School counseling has been receiving attention whenever behavioral problems of students occur. In order to build a nation-wide system, a trial arrangement for school counseling for junior high schools was initiated by the Ministry of Education in 1995.

Among numerous reports referring to school counseling, some are written in an enlightening way; others are based on individual experience. (Berlin, 1974; Kobayashi, 1975; Dale, 1978; Alpert, 1979; Stewart, 1984; The Association for Children's Health, 1985; Koizumi, 1989; Gibson, 1990; Davis, 1993; Welch, 1993; Otsuka, 1996). Many findings show the need for school counseling (Imai, 1982; The Ministry of Welfare, 1983; The Furtherance Association of Private Education in Tokyo, 1985).

However, there is insufficient data to permit a single approach to school counseling.

In this study, I will examine the concerns and worries of high school students, what do

they do about them, and the role of school counselors in resolving these issues. I will also briefly explore the function of school counselors, by identifying the difference in social support between students who receive counseling and those who do not.

## Subjects and Method

The subjects were drawn from the graduates of T high school affiliated to a private university in Tokyo. They were divided into two groups: one including individuals who had visited the school counseling room when they were students, the other including those who had never sought counseling. Since being established in 1981, counseling has been provided to 340 students during the last ten years. The number of students receiving counseling was about seven percent of all the graduates for these ten years.

Data concerning counseling was obtained from the records of students that received counseling. Data from non-visitants were obtained by systematic sampling (Nishida, at

al., 1976), utilizing lists of both graduates and drop-outs of T high school in the past ten years.

As a result, 276 visitants and 309 non-visitants were initially selected and asked to participate in the study. Questionnaires were sent on 12 August 1992 and a deadline for their return was set at the end of August.

The questionnaire included the following questions:

(1) On the counseling room: Why did you visit the counseling room? Why not? Did the counseling help you?

(2) On high school life: Did you have someone you trusted in your family? Did you have someone you trusted in school? Was there anyone else you trusted? Did you have any concerns or worries? Describe what your life-style and family structure were like.

(3) After graduation: What did you do after graduation? What do you presently do? What is your current family structure?

## Results

One hundred and eighty-five graduates completed and returned the questionnaire. Visitants: 26 males, 69 females; non-visitants: 33 males and 57 females. Excluding the mail returned due to unidentified address, 35.9 percent of all the questionnaires sent, were returned.

### 1 Going for counseling

For the visitants, the answers to the question, "Did counseling help you?", indicated that "It helped very much" (31.9%) and "It helped somewhat (56.9%)." This implies that 88% of all visitants evaluated counseling positively. There was no difference in the responses of males and females. The most frequently stated reason for their visit was, notwithstanding minor differences in the way males and females responded (see Table 1), "I wanted to obtain some ideas from an expert" (30%). The second most frequent reason was, "I wanted to obtain some ideas

**Table 1** Why did you seek counseling?

	visitants		
	male n=27	female n=68	total(%) n=95
I did not have anyone else to talk to about my concerns	4(14.8)	8(11.8)	12(12.6)
I wanted to obtain ideas from an adult	4(14.8)	12(17.6)	16(16.8)
I wanted to obtain ideas from an expert	7(25.9)	23(33.8)	30(31.6)
My friends suggested that I should seek	0(0.0)	8(11.8)	8(8.4)
My teachers suggested that I should seek	4(14.8)	7(10.3)	11(11.6)
My parents suggested that I should seek	2(7.4)	1(1.5)	3(3.2)
Other	6(22.2)	18(26.4)	24(25.3)

**Table 2** Why didn't you seek counseling?

	non-visitants		
	male n=33	female n=57	total(%) n=90
I did not have any concerns or worries	10(30.3)	16(28.1)	26(28.9)
I had friends to talk to	9(27.3)	35(61.4)	44(48.9)
I had some older/younger friends at school	0(0.0)	2(3.5)	2(2.2)
Teachers were available	1(3.0)	3(5.3)	4(4.4)
Family members were available	5(15.2)	7(12.3)	12(13.3)
I did not know the counselor	4(12.1)	6(10.5)	10(11.1)
Other	5(15.2)	12(21.2)	17(18.9)

from an adult” (16%). It is notable that the answer, “I did not have anyone else to talk to about my concern” was reported by 13% of the responders.

For non-visitants, the most frequent answer to the question, “Why didn’t you visit the counseling room?” (see Table 2) was, “I had friends to talk to.” In particular, females responded in this fashion (over 60%). Combining answers such as “I had some older/younger friends at school,” “I had some teachers (to talk to),” and “I had fami-

ly members,” the totals reached 82.5% for the females. In contrast, only 45.5% of the males answered similarly. For the males, there was no remarkable correlation between social support and visiting the counseling room. Rather, males apparently did not visit the counseling room simply because they said they did not have any concerns or worries (30.3%).

## 2 On social support in the high school

The question, “Did you have someone you

**Table 3** Did you have someone you could share your concerns or worries within your family?

	visitants			non-visitants		
	male n=27	female n=68	total(%) n=95	male n=33	female =57	total(%) n=90
Yes	17(63.0)	43(63.2)	60(63.2)	23(69.7)	45(78.9)	68(75.6)
No	10(37.0)	25(36.8)	35(36.8)	10(30.3)	12(21.1)	22(24.4)

**Table 4** Did you have someone you could share your concerns or worries in your school?

	visitants			non-visitants		
	male n=27	female n=68	total(%) n=95	male n=33	female n=57	total(%) n=90
Yes	21(77.8)	57(83.8)	78(82.1)	27(81.8)	54(94.7)	81(90.0)
No	6(22.2)	11(16.2)	17(17.9)	6(18.2)	3( 5.3)	9(10.0)

**Table 5** With whom did you share your concerns and worries?

	visitants			non-visitants			
	male n=27	female n=68	total(%) n=95	male n=33	female n=57	total(%) n=90	
Classmates	17(63.0)	55(80.9)	72(75.8)	25(75.8)	49(86.0)	74(82.2)	*
Fellow club members	4(14.8)	10(14.7)	14(14.7)	12(36.4)	25(43.9)	37(41.1)	**
Older fellow club members	3(11.1)	3(4.4)	6(6.3)	3(9.1)	5(8.8)	8(8.9)	
Younger fellow club members	1(3.7)	1(1.5)	2(2.1)	1(3.0)	0(0.0)	1(1.1)	
Advisors to the club	5(18.5)	0(0.0)	5(5.3)	2(6.1)	2(3.5)	4(4.4)	
Classroom teachers	6(22.2)	5(7.4)	11(11.6)	1(3.0)	6(10.5)	7(7.8)	***
Other teachers	3(11.1)	5(7.4)	8(8.4)	2(6.1)	1(1.8)	3(3.3)	
Nurse teachers	1(3.7)	5(7.4)	6(6.3)	0(0.0)	2(3.5)	2(2.2)	
Librarians	0(0.0)	2(2.9)	2(2.1)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	
Counselors	3(11.1)	11(16.2)	14(14.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	
Other	0(0.0)	1(1.5)	1(1.1)	0(0.0)	1(1.8)	1(1.1)	

\*: p<.06: visitant (male) vs. visitant (female)

\*\* : p<.06: visitant (male) vs. non-visitant (male)

\*\*\*: p<.05: visitant (male) vs. visitant (female)

**Table 6** Did you have someone with whom you could share your concerns or worries?

	visitants			non-visitants		
	male n=27	female n=68	total(%) n=95	male n=33	female n=57	total(%) n=90
Yes	18(66.7)	50(73.5)	68(71.6)	24(72.7)	44(77.2)	68(75.6)
No	9(33.3)	18(26.5)	27(28.4)	9(27.3)	13(22.8)	22(24.4)

**Table 7** With whom did you share your concerns and worries?

	visitants			non-visitants		
	male n=27	female n=68	total(%) n=95	male n=33	female n=57	total(%) n=90
uncle	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	2(6.1)	0(0.0)	2(2.2)
aunt	1(3.7)	2(2.9)	3(3.2)	2(6.1)	1(1.8)	3(3.3)
neighbours	5(18.5)	0(0.0)	5(5.4)	0(0.0)	3(5.3)	3(3.3)
friends from childhood	7(25.9)	16(23.5)	23(24.2)	15(45.5)	16(28.1)	31(34.4)
friends from junior high school	12(44.4)	33(48.5)	45(47.4)	13(39.4)	30(52.6)	43(47.8)
cram school teachers and tutors	2(7.4)	1(1.5)	3(3.2)	1(3.0)	3(5.3)	4(4.4)
other	5(18.5)	12(17.7)	17(17.9)	3(9.1)	5(8.8)	8(8.9)

could share your concerns or worries with?" was asked to find out whether or not the students had emotional and helpful social support. From family, school, or elsewhere, 63% of the visitants and 70-80% of the non-visitants said they had someone they trusted in their family (see Table 3). Many specifically referred to their mother or father. Eighty% of the visitants and over 90% of non-visitants expressed their trust in their mother or father. The visitants then listed an older sister, a younger brother, or a younger sister, after their parents. The non-visitants mentioned an older brother or sister or a younger sibling, after their parents.

In terms of social support at school, about 80% of the visitants and about 90% of non-visitants responded they had someone they trusted (see Table 4). For instance, many in both groups said they trusted their classmates. This common answer reinforces the idea that it is highly important for students of this age to have friends their own age (see Table 5).

Next, following classmates, "fellow club members," "advisors in their club," "classroom teachers," or "counselors" were reported. It is significant that there were more non-visited students than visited students who named a club member as a trusted person

( $p < .06$ ). Consequently, it suggests that there exists some correlation between having no club members and visiting the counseling room.

More female visitants indicated that they had some trustworthy "classmates" than did male visitants ( $p < .06$ ). On the other hand, more male visitants indicated that they had some trustworthy "classroom teachers" than did female visitants ( $p < .05$ ).

Seventy% of both groups answered that they had someone they trusted, in terms of social support, in their family or outside of school (see Table 6).

More than half the students in both groups presented "friends from junior high school" as individuals whom they trusted (see Table 7). There was no gender difference in this answer.

### 3 On concerns and worries during high school days

Eighty% of visitants responded that they had some problems when they were in high school while 74.4% of the non-visitants reported having problems (see Table 8). There were more males than females among the visitants with worries. In contrast, among the non-visitants, there were more females than males who reported having had con-

**Table 8** Did you have problems while in high school?

	visitants			non-visitants		
	male n=27	female n=68	total(%) n=95	male n=33	female n=57	total(%) n=90
Yes	23(85.2)	55(80.9)	78(82.1)	24(72.7)	43(75.4)	67(74.4)
No	4(14.8)	13(19.1)	17(17.9)	9(27.3)	14(24.6)	23(25.6)

**Table 9** What were those problems?

	visitants			non-visitants		
	male n=27	female n=68	total(%) n=95	male n=33	female n=57	total(%) n=90
Personality	7(25.9)	15(22.1)	22(23.2)	2(6.1)	9(15.8)	11(12.2) *
Future	15(55.6)	30(44.1)	45(47.4)	15(45.5)	25(43.9)	40(44.4)
Club	6(22.2)	7(10.3)	13(13.7)	10(30.3)	11(19.3)	21(23.3)
Friends	7(25.9)	24(35.3)	31(32.6)	3(9.1)	24(42.1)	27(30.0) **
Family	3(11.1)	14(20.6)	17(17.9)	1(3.0)	12(21.1)	13(14.4) ***
Opposite sex	6(22.2)	15(22.1)	21(22.1)	9(27.3)	24(42.1)	33(36.7) ****
Body	3(11.1)	4(5.9)	7(7.4)	0(0.0)	3(5.3)	3(3.3)
Transfer	3(11.1)	3(4.4)	6(6.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Study	2(7.4)	6(8.8)	8(8.4)	8(24.2)	7(12.3)	15(16.7)
Withdrawal from school	4(14.8)	8(11.8)	12(12.6)	0(0.0)	7(12.3)	7(7.8)
Other	2(7.4)	3(4.4)	5(5.3)	1(3.0)	2(3.5)	3(3.3)

\*:  $p < .05$ : visitant (male) vs. non-visitant (male)

\*\* :  $p < .001$ : non-visitant (male) vs. non-visitant (female)

\*\*\*:  $p < .05$ : non-visitant (male) vs. non-visitant (female)

\*\*\*\*:  $p < .05$ : visitant (female) vs. non-visitant (female)

cerns.

The students were worried primarily about their future, their friends, and the opposite sex. There were peculiar differences between the two groups and the two genders. For instance, male visitants were more concerned regarding their future, friends, and their personality; non-visitant males had the greatest concern regarding their future, followed by their club and the opposite sex. Female visitants were deeply concerned regarding their future, their personality, and the opposite sex; non-visitant females were deeply concerned regarding their future, friends, and the opposite sex, at a similar level (see Table 9).

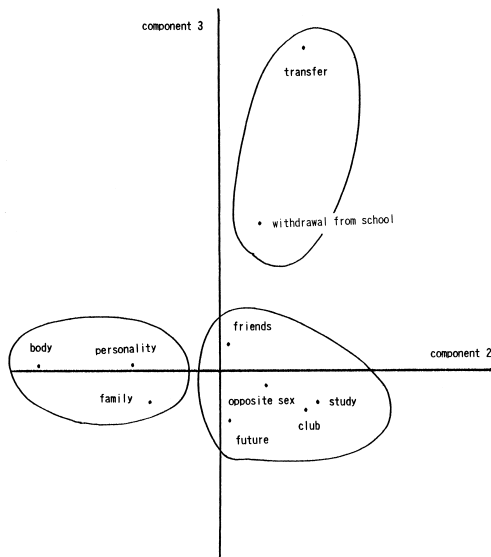
Thus, it can be said that concern for the future is the greatest theme common for all high school students. However, other concerns varied and show certain characteristics. For instance, visitants were deeply concerned with friends and their personality following their concern for the future. This

result implied that problems existed in their relations with friends, and at the same time they had a tendency to criticize their own personality. On the other hand, the non-visitants were mainly concerned with aspects of high school life, such as club activities and study.

The two groups were compared by examining the covariance of the independent variables, male/female and visitants/non-visitants. It is significant that more male visitants were concerned about "their personality" than non-visitant males ( $p < .05$ ); more female non-visitants were concerned about "the opposite sex" than visitant females ( $p < .05$ ). For the non-visitants, it is notable that more females were concerned about "friends" or "family" than males ( $p < .001$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

### Discussion

For a comprehensive and statistical analysis, the answers were examined by



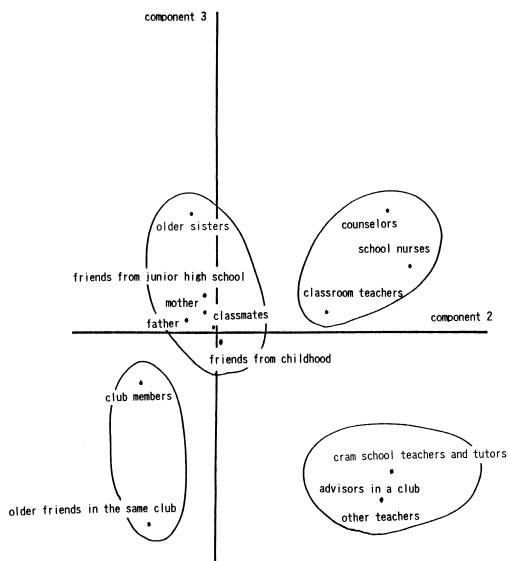
**Fig. 1** Concerns and worries felt in high school

Multivariate Analysis. Quantification Method III was utilized as a methodology for this analysis. This methodology is an appropriate method when there does not exist any expected external validity as in this study, and allows each category to be quantified and divided into groups. As a result of the analysis, the structure of the research subjects as well as the research categories can be clarified. In other words, when there are no standard variables and the data are qualitative (“yes” or “no” in this study), it is thought that Quantification Method III is most appropriate to analyze the data (Takagi et al., 1989). For the analysis, “HALBAU,” (Gendai Sugaku Ltd.) a statistical software for PCs, was utilized.

### 1 On “concerns and worries”

First, an analysis of concerns and worries felt in high school was conducted. Because all categories showed the same signs in component 1, it is difficult to identify certain characteristics with the direction of the axis. Component 2 is defined as an axis of “social, interpersonal: non-social, intrapersonal.” Component 3 is regarded as an axis of “passive, avoidance-like: active.”

Figure 1 shows components 2 and 3. It can be seen that 10 items of concern are divided into three groups. Group 1 consists of “body, personality, and family.” These concerns are the same as those expressed by



**Fig. 2** Social support received in high school

the students who visited the counseling room. Group 2 consists of “transfer or withdrawal from school, or refusal to go to school.” These concerns are typical cases brought by teachers or parents. Group 3 consists of “friends, future, the opposite sex, club, and study.” These concerns are general and probably are common to every high school student, to a greater or lesser degree.

### 2 On social support

Next, social support received in high school was examined. As explained earlier, social support was divided into three domains: family, school, and others; according to the situation in which it was offered. Related questions were based on this categorization. In order to make an analysis of social support, 34 items of concern were integrated and classified by their mean and dispersion. Items whose means were excessively low (the mean of the sum is under 0.5) were eliminated (yes was counted as 1, no as 0).

After this manipulation, only 14 items of concern remained—the domain of family includes “father, mother, and older sisters”; the domain of school includes “classmates, club members, older friends in the same club, club advisors, classroom teachers, subject teachers, school nurses, and counselors”; the domain of others includes “friends from childhood, friends from junior high school,

and cram school teachers and tutors.”

The coefficient of weight for each category was calculated by Quantification Method III. In the first component, because all the categories showed negative signs, it was difficult to relate some characteristics with the direction of the axis. This situation is equivalent to the difficulty in comprehending the relation between “concerns and worries felt in high school” mentioned earlier. If the items were arranged by number, component 2 was in reference to an axis of “formal: informal,” and component 3 was in reference to “internal: external.”

Figure 2 portrays components 2 and 3. It can be seen that the items are arranged into

four clusters. Group 1 consists of “counselors, school nurses, and classroom teachers,” who provide a formal but internal type of support. Group 2 includes “classmates, friends from childhood, mother, father, friends from junior high school, and older sisters,” who may offer both informal and internal support. Group 3 contains “club members and older friends in the same club,” who provide an informal but external support. Group 4 consists of “teachers in cram schools and home teachers, club advisors, and other teachers” who offer both formal and external support.

It can be said that Group 1 plays a meaningful role as a primary function of school

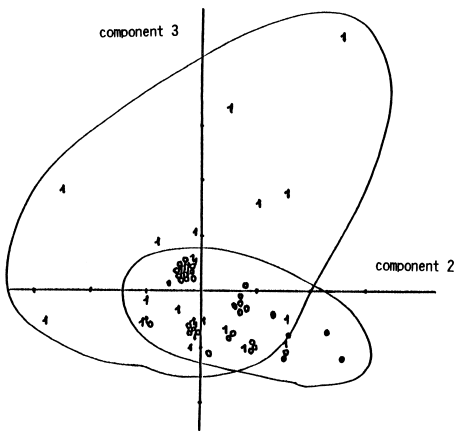


Fig. 3-1 Concerns and worries of male students (1=visitants, 0=non-visitants)

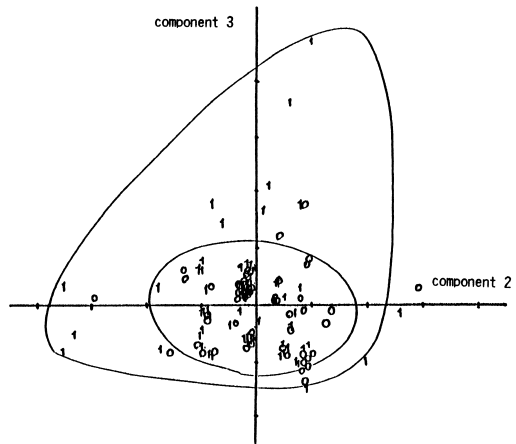


Fig. 3-2 Concerns and worries of female students (1=visitants, 0=non-visitants)

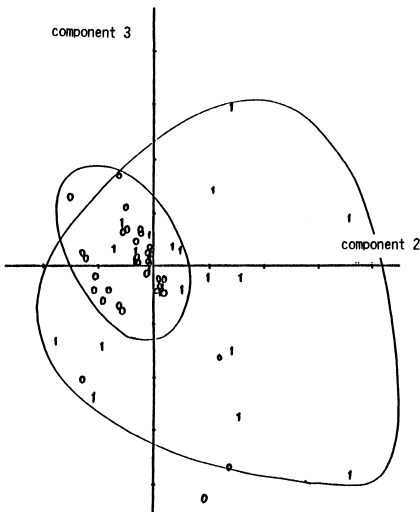


Fig. 3-3 Social support for males (1=visitants, 0=non-visitants)

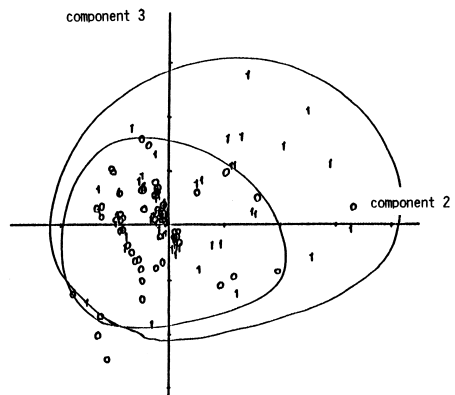


Fig. 3-4 Social support for females (1=visitants, 0=non-visitants)

counseling because systematized and internal support can be expected from it. Obtaining systematized and trustworthy support, based on expert guarantee, is the answer to the first question on the questionnaire, “Why did you visit the counseling room?”

### 3 Differences in characteristics

In comparing Figures 1 and 2, it was discovered that there are differences in the type of concerns the visitants and non-visitants had, and in the type of support they obtained.

From a different perspective, the differences in characteristics between visitants and non-visitants will be considered, by drawing the figure of the individual numbers of 185 cases, using Quantification Method III. The figures were identified by gender to help interpretation (Figure 3-1~3-4).

The tendency commonly found among all the figures is that the non-visitants are concentrated in a narrower area than the visitants. Namely, the visitants were less uniform and had more varied concerns or worries than did the non-visitants. Similarly, the visitants have a greater variety of interpersonal relationships with others than did the non-visitants. In other words the non-visitants had more common concerns, and obtained social support in a similar fashion.

### Conclusions

The objectives of this study were to analyze and examine the function of school counseling, particularly the function of social support. In order to do so, I examined the relation between students who visited the counseling room while in high school and students who did not. Specifically, I conducted a follow-up study of 185 graduates of T high school.

Conducting a statistical comparison between the two groups, the following results were obtained:

1. The visitants had different concerns from the non-visitants. The visitants had personal and psychological concerns such as “worry about body, personality, and family,” while the non-visitants had the more general and common concerns of high school students, such as “relationship with friends, future, the opposite sex, club, and study.”

2. Visitants varied in their individual con-

cerns. It is difficult to identify a common trend among them because their concerns were personal and psychological, as mentioned above.

3. Visitants varied in the manner of obtaining social support. Individuals usually selected the most desirable support regarding their concerns and personal situation.

4. While the visitants varied in the manner of obtaining social support, they had their characteristic category of social support, as did the non-visitants. Therefore, there are various kinds of social support in common for both groups. The visitants had support from “adults” (teacher or counselor), which is interpreted as formal. The non-visitants had support from “fellows” (friends in the same club or older friends), which are interpreted as informal.

### Consequently, our conclusions can be summarized as follows:

1. An informal relationship with their peers takes place extensively among high school students. In particular, club and extracurricular activities are very important.

2. When they cannot obtain this type of informal support, they seek help from more formal relationships (counselors, school nurses or classroom teachers). In other words, school counseling can function as a complementary and effective social support for high school students.

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