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STUDENTS PERCEPTION AND UTILIZATION OF COUNSELING IN GHANA:

A CASE STUDY OF THE ACCRA METROPOLIS

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**A RESEARCH WORK PRESENTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA LEGON,
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Master of Philosophy in Guidance and Counselling and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the rock on which I stand.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMA	:	Accra Metropolitan Assembly
ASCA	:	American School Counsellor Association
CALM	:	Career and Life Management
CMIF	:	The Continuum of Impression Formation
CTS	:	Career and Technology Studies
DEOS	:	District Education Officers
GES	:	Ghana Education Service
MoE	:	Ministry of Education
UNESCO	:	United Nations Education, Scientific and Culture organisation



ABSTRACT

This study determines the effectiveness of counselling in the SHS in Accra Metropolis of Ghana, with focus on the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling in our SHSs. This exploratory study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional design. The researcher purposively sampled 101 students from ten schools within the Accra Metropolitan area. Data collected by means of a questionnaire, survey and chi-square and phi-square were used to analyse the data. The study revealed that students were of the perception that counsellors were effective in their Guidance and Counselling roles as against their coordinating and advocacy roles. Also some perceptions of students could discourage them from seeking counselling and these included the perceptions that counselling was for delinquents.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study: counsellors are advised to maintain mutual respect and trust between themselves and their students-clients during counselling. Also, students are advised to advocate for their concerns including keeping their issues expressed during counselling strictly confidential and independent of disciplinary action through their counsellors. These and other findings have been discussed in the main text, together with recommendations.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

From a historical perspective, Herr (2001a) reports that the rise in secondary education was initiated by the rise of big businesses and technological advancement in factories during the 1910s. Two gaps were created in the labour market: the gap between the demand for labour in the growing industries and the available labour, as well as the gap between the skills required and that which the available labour force possessed. There was therefore the need to institute measures to increase the supply of skilled labour in order to bridge the labour requirement gaps. High schools were created and the curriculum focused on practical skills that would better prepare students for white collar jobs or skilled blue collar jobs (Gybers & Henderson, 2001).

In order to avoid problem behaviours, relate vocational interests to curriculum subjects, and develop character, a model of directive counselling, developed by Williamson in the 1940s and 1950s was adopted and widely implemented to use information from students to solve problems (Erford, 2003). Subsequently, in the 1960s, a non-directive model for students' counselling, developed by Carl Ransom Rogers (1902 - 1987) emphasised the focus of student counselling on discovering the real needs and problems of students and using information collected about the students to adjust instruction to meet individual needs. This laid a basis for most contemporary secondary educational systems that sought to inculcate social and morale dimensions in education.

According to House and Hayes (2002), this approach encourages a student-personnel point of view in utilising available resources and techniques to solve problems relating to the individual student. It also emphasises developing more understanding attitudes on the part of the teachers towards pupil behaviour and informing the applicability of specialised services, such as orientation of teachers. These emphases are laid in the context of student guidance and counselling processes.

The fundamental thought behind guidance and counselling in general lays in the fact that people often need guidance when faced with the need to make significant decisions that affect both themselves and those around them (Martin, 2002). For post-primary or secondary pupils, these choices are often focused on their personal and social lives, educational choices, and career decisions. Batt, Nic Gabhainn and Falvey (2002) therefore describes 'guidance and counselling' or 'guidance counselling' in second level schools, as the full range of interventions which assist pupils to make choices about their lives.

Effective guidance counselling, as recommended by Urombo (2000), should be such as to ensure that each pupil can, to a meaningful degree, avail of several components inherent in guidance counselling. These components involve counselling, information, assessment, advice, career transition programmes, educational development programmes, and personal and social development programmes. House and Hayes (2002) describe counselling as helping pupils on an individual or group basis to explore their own thoughts and feelings about their present life situation, about the choices open to them, and about the consequences

of each choice. It is also emphasised that guidance counselling involves providing pupils with objective and factual data which informs decisions of students. Murdock (2004) adds that effective student guidance counselling would also involve the use of assessments, such as psychological and practical tests to assist pupils to make their own decisions.

Student guidance counselling would also require advisors to make suggestions based on the counsellor's own experience and knowledge (Ntare, 2000). Similarly, the student would have to be provided with knowledge and skills relating to studying, examination performance, and choice of subjects and levels (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). This would be in the effort to provide the necessary concepts, knowledge and skills to enable pupils make the transition to further and higher education, training, and work. It would also be pertinent for student guidance counselling to inculcate the provision of knowledge and skills relating to the pupil's personal and social development, self-awareness, decision-making, and planning (Shoffner & Briggs, 2001). This would be evidenced in personal and social development programmes.

Given the broad range of activities that encompasses student guidance counselling, Murdock (2004) establishes that guidance counselling for students, in addition to being a specialist area in education, should be a function of the entire school enterprise. It would therefore require a comprehensive approach which would involve a paradigm shift from a traditional approach, related to development guidance instruction, individual student planning, responsive services, and school/community support.

According to Ponec and Brock (2000), traditional approaches to counselling conform to counsellor centred techniques, which focus on crisis counselling and one-way directional provision of guidance and career information services. Such approaches are manifested in reactive and ad hoc task-oriented activities aimed at maintain the status quo. Traditional approaches to guidance counselling are posited as ancillary, therapeutic, and position-focused model that delivers services to a specific population.

Spery, Carlson and Kjos (2003) maintain that significant changes have occurred in education and school guidance and counselling services have evolved into a joint responsibility, goal oriented, and developmental and preventive process, which is focused on using proactive measure to evaluate requisite changes, based upon students' needs. In attestation, Murdock (2004) adds that student guidance counselling has become part of a comprehensive developmental program that focuses on the educational, personal, social, and career growth and development of students.

According to Gysbers (2004), different models postulate different approaches to the delivery of guidance counselling services to students. However, a general consensus that exists among the varied models is the participation of some identified stakeholders in effective student counselling programmes. Students, parents, teachers, school counsellors, principals and administrative teams and school councils each have various roles to play in determining, developing and implementing the guidance and counselling program.

Similarly, the delivery of comprehensive school guidance and counselling program involves professional school counselling service, which will require expert assistance, such as psychologists and social workers from outside the school (Utah State Office of Education, 2003). It may also involve the teacher as student advocate and school-interagency collaboration. The agencies identified here can relate to institutions such as youth services, training and development agencies, and specialist psychological and therapy services. The American School Counsellor Association [ASCA] (2005) also recommends that various staff, such as teachers of health, Career and Life Management (CALM), Career and Technology Studies (CTS), and work experience, can be deployed to deliver a comprehensive program.

Shoffner and Williamson (2000) establish that comprehensive school guidance and counselling program assists students answer these questions related to their identity, that is who they are, as well as questions related to the personality they can develop, that is who they can become as a person. The guidance programme can also provide students with insight into how best they can contribute society. A counselling programme therefore has a major role in helping all students develop adequate and realistic concepts of themselves, awareness of educational and career opportunities, and understanding of themselves and the opportunities in order to make informed decisions (ASCA, 2005).

The effectiveness of a student guidance programme, however may be influenced by several factors, most of which are related to the extent of stakeholder participation and support. As an example, McGannon, Carey and Dimmit (2005)

contend that school counselling programmes may be constrained by overburdening school counsellors with other activities, such as clerical duties. This tends to compromise the counsellors' ability to deal with individual and group counselling, consultation, case management, program evaluation, and the development of school wide guidance programmes.

Other constraints may relate to parental and instructional support, but Gysbers and Henderson (2006) identify the participation of the student as the most influential factor in determining the effectiveness of student counselling programmes. It is explained that in most educational systems, student guidance counselling sessions are operated on a need basis, which in most cases is determined by the student's discretion to see a counsellor. Mandatory counselling can also be constrained by the student's decision to provide adequate and/or accurate information during counselling sessions.

According to Mancillas (2004), several factors may contribute to the student's reaction and attitudes towards counselling programmes. Among such factors is the student's perception of the counsellor, the processes involved in the counselling programme, and the possible outcomes of the programme. Gybers and Henderson (2007) comment that if the student's perception is known then it can be influenced to encourage participation. The constraining factor however is that perceptions are internalised phenomena and are not readily measureable or objectively verifiable.

In a general sense, Van de Ban and Hawkins (1988) conceptualise perception as a process of selecting, organising, and subjectively interpreting sensory data in a

way that enables us to make sense of the world. Perception therefore involves the use of the senses to interpret phenomena in the environment. Gamble and Gamble (2002) therefore infers that the perceptions may differ markedly from actual events among different people. It can similarly be expected that perception of guidance counselling for students may differ among pupils. From this perspective, perceptual differences may result from processes involved in individual formation of perception of a phenomenon.

In the short-term, perception may change depending on psychological factors including mood and temperament, as well as other physical factors, such as hunger (Morris, 1991). In the long-term the available information and individual experiences with the phenomenon in question, may influence perceptions of the phenomenon. Students' perception of guidance counselling can therefore be expected to be influenced by their cognitive styles and individual experiences with guidance and counselling processes, as well as the available information which may be gained through peers' experience.

In a review of various empirical studies, it was established that some synergies exist among findings of various studies on the relationship between students and school counselling. A pioneering research by Wells and Ritter (1979) discovered that students are more likely to seek school counselling on vocational advice than on personal problems. Studies conducted by Mwagi (2004) also concluded that most students do not find school counselling as an effective source of help except in the area of education-vocational decision making. Adoto (2008) further establishes that students are willing to see their colleagues subject themselves to

school counselling but are reluctant to place themselves in a similar situation. This may be a as a result of the failure of student counselling to create general acceptance among students.

Urombo (2000) empirically establishes that counsellors are often faced with the difficult decision to breach confidence of students in an effort to help students solve problems. This frequents in issues bordering on criminality, psychological and physical derangement, and other critical issues identified by counsellors. If students or their colleagues experience breach of confidence, they may develop perceptions and attitudes about school counselling that may motivate them to abstain from voluntary counselling.

Kuhn, A. (2004) therefore recommends that the proceeding from school counselling should only be aimed at helping the individual pupil. It should be independent of school's disciplinary committee's activities and should not be used as an investigative unit for disciplinary actions. Moreover, the involvement of other stakeholders, such as parents, school authorities, and youth groups or other community agencies should be an integrated decision of the counsellor and the student. Surprises should be minimised as they may dissuade the pupil from trusting the counsellor and being true about problems.

Essuman (1999) reports that formalised guidance counselling was established in Ghana in the 1960s. Before this era, there existed forms of guiding people through voluntary and non-formal means. Guidance counselling during this era was voluntary and administered in the school system, notably secondary educational

institutions. This was operated widely in boarding schools and administered by the heads of institutions, house-masters and mistresses, teachers, chaplains, and in some cases by school prefects.

Dankwa (1981) maintains that such voluntary services were in the form of providing paces and opportunities for youth to socialise and recreate, consulting and advising the youth on moral issues and assisting and advising the youth with their financial problems and issues. They also focused on organising orientation programmes for new pupils or students, assisting the youth to solve their personal problems, and guiding the youth through Sunday school lessons and discussions to develop morally and spiritually. Outside the school, parents, guardians, family elders, and societal institutions such as churches guided students in line with accepted societal beliefs.

Efforts have however been made to further involve guidance counselling in the educational system. For example, the Ghana Education Service introduced the establishment of counselling units in schools in 1976 to help students to understand and deal with social, behavioural and personal problems. More recently, the 2007 educational reform policy emphasised the widening of educational services to include information sharing and guidance and counselling. Guidance and counselling was also to be offered to students and the JHS and SHS to enable them choose the right programmes to suit their interest and skills. The reform also emphasised that provision of special attention to the training of teachers in special needs guidance and counselling (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2007).

According to the Ghana Education Service (GES) Guidance and Counselling Units in schools were emphasised to reduce the evils of drugs, occultism, indecent dressing, watching and reading of pornographic materials and Internet fraud which have become worrying phenomena for school authorities and parents. It therefore presupposes that the focus of guidance and counselling in Ghanaian schools would be towards social issues.

In spite of these efforts, the Daily Graphic (July 7, 2009 edition) reported that counsellors in the Junior High Schools (JHS) are conspicuously missing, while just a few Senior High Schools (SHS) have counsellors. The few counsellors who are left are mostly found in the District Education Offices, but they are unable to visit the schools because they are not adequately resourced for such purposes. The few counsellors available at the DEOs are supposed to be visiting over 7,000 public first cycle and second cycle institutions. This was explained as a result of financial constraints that had left many counselling co-ordinators in schools teaching other subjects.

There is a general low practice of school counselling in second cycle institutions in Ghana. This is worsened by the general low patronage of students of guidance counselling in schools. The reasons underlying these constraints to effective school counselling in high schools can be traced to either inadequacy in training teachers to approach guidance and counselling with the required professionalism or perceptual influences that deter students from voluntarily seeking guidance from school counsellors. The study therefore seeks to explore these fundamental

assumptions by drawing on empirical evidence from schools within Accra Metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

According to Herr (2001), the fact that secondary education occurs mainly during adolescence makes guidance and counselling a necessary additive to the educational system. It is elaborated that adolescence is characterised by several important decisions, but it is also characterised by high social and emotional confusion, peer pressure, and independent desires which need to be monitored and nurtured.

Secondary level school counselling programmes have therefore been included in most educational systems of the modern world to target adolescents. This is to help them make the right choices about their identities, who they wish to become, and to help them find acceptable ways of developing themselves and their careers in order to contribute meaningfully to society (Gybers & Henderson, 2001).

Gysbers (2004) recommends the involvement and active participation of stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, administrative heads, and social agencies in the process of school counselling. It would also require the training of teachers as counsellors, or the employment of professionals to tend to counselling programmes.

Some constraints have however been identified to have the potential to curtail the effective achievement of counselling goals. The most critical of all, according to

Gysbers and Henderson (2006), relates to students' decision to refrain from counselling programmes. Such decisions are most likely as a result of the available information of counselling within the school and students' experiences with counselling programmes that lead to the formation of negative perceptions of the counsellor and the entire counselling programme.

However, the reactions of students towards counselling across various studies have not been uniform. In another way, some studies confirm assertions that students are more likely to seek counselling on academic and course related problems than for personal problems. This may be as a result of a general distrust for school counsellors to uphold confidentiality of conversations that occur during counselling sessions. Students have a general fear that personal issues may be leaked to undesired third-persons or may become a cause for a disciplinary action. Indeed Urombo (2000) asserts that counsellors are often faced with critical decisions to breach confidentiality in the effort to assist the student. The perceptions that counsellors and school staff form about counselling and the uses of its proceedings may also encourage or deter student participation.

In Ghana guidance and counselling in secondary level institutions may still be in its development phase. The 2007 educational reform lays emphasis on integrating counselling into the educational system through training of teachers as professional counsellors. The challenge associated with guidance counselling within Senior High Schools (SHS) is identified as low patronage by students. A survey by Daily Graphic (July 7, 2009 edition) revealed that no second cycle institution in Accra had a vibrant guidance and counselling unit.

It is therefore pertinent to investigate into the processes involved in student guidance and counselling and the perceptual factors that influence students' participation and the effectiveness of counselling programmes within SHSs. The study therefore seeks to make factual establishments concerning guidance counselling by drawing on empirical data from SHSs within the Accra metropolis.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to examine the perception of student guidance counselling in SHSs within Accra Metropolis.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the processes of guidance counselling in SHSs within Accra Metropolis;
2. Examine the perception of students and school staff on the role of guidance counsellors within the schools;
3. Examine the factors influencing students' utilisation of guidance counselling programmes;
4. Examine the challenges constraining the effectiveness of student counselling within the schools; and
5. Make recommendations on improving the effectiveness and participation rates of students in guidance counselling programmes.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the processes of guidance and counselling in SHSs within Accra Metropolis?

2. How do students perceive guidance and counselling within the schools?
3. What factors influence students' participation in guidance and counselling programmes? and
4. What challenges constrain the effectiveness of student counselling within the schools?

Significance of the study

The study provides further insight into the processes involved in student counselling in SHSs. This can help in the identification of inappropriate approaches to student counselling and their rectification. This can be important for individual schools as well as governmental bodies with interest in education, such as the Ghana Education Service or the Ministry of Education. The findings of the study can serve as important input into educational policies and reforms, especially in the aspects that deal with student counselling.

The study can also provide further insight into the perceptual underpinnings that influence the reaction of students to counselling. This can be important for social psychologists who are specialised in the field of education. Furthermore, the study can reveal the challenges associated with guidance counselling in SHSs as well as factors buttressing these problems. The study can also serve as a relevant source of academic reference and further research into student counselling and guidance.

Scope of the study

The study was conducted in the Accra Metropolitan Area. It included ten Senior High Schools within the Metropolis. Within the schools, 101 students, 10

counselling and guidance co-ordinators, and the headmasters were included the study. These are seen as relevant sources of data for profiling the processes of counselling and guidance and also to identify individual perceptions of these processes, as well as the factors that influence their perceptions. The study also included the Director of the Accra Metro Education Office and one school counsellor stationed at the office. This was to acquire a spectrum of information on the underlying reasons for the existing state of school counselling and how it can be improved.

Organisation of the study

The study was divided into five chapters. Chapter One covered the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope, and organisation of the study. Chapter Two dealt with the review of theories and concepts which are related to the study. It also presented empirical studies on the perception of student counselling in second cycle institutions. Chapter Three focused on the research methodology. This included the study area, study population, sample size, and sampling procedure. It also described the administration of the instruments for data collection as well as the proposed methods of data analysis. Chapter Four discussed the results and findings of the study and Chapter Five gave the summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the theoretical perspectives related to the broad concepts of counselling and perception. It discusses topical issues within the context of the rationale for secondary level school counselling, the formation of perception, and how these two concepts can be related. The subsequent sections introduce the proposed theories which are adopted by the study, the conceptual issues, and the conceptual framework for the study.

Theoretical perspectives of counselling

Within the context of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1962), counselling is proposed to be a learning process. The underlying assumption of the theory stems from the Social Learning Theory (Miller & Dollard, 1941) which posits that if one were motivated to learn a particular behaviour, then that behaviour would be learned through clear observations. This gives the basis for the assumption that counsellors can affect individual behaviours through an overt learning process.

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) postulates that an individual's environment, behaviour, and cognition comprise the key factors for personal development. It stresses that these factors are neither static nor independent, but rather, they are all reciprocal. For example, each behaviour witnessed can change a person's way of

thinking (cognition). Similarly, the environment one is raised in may influence later behaviours. The theory therefore revolves around the process of knowledge acquisition or learning direction which is correlated to the observation of models. The models can be those of interpersonal imitation or media sources.

Counselling within this context conforms to an interpersonal learning process which is informed by input factors such as the individual's environment, behaviour, and cognition. This assessment creates synergies among the input factors and makes meaning out of an individual's cognition and behaviour. Therefore, inherently, counselling provides a better understanding of individuals.

From these perspectives, Mitchell (1981) proposes the Theory of Narrative Inquiry. This refers to an interpersonal relationship where counsellors assist individuals to find their identity in their respective environments by drawing inferences from and creating linkages between individuals' narrations. Narrative inquiry acknowledges the centrality of the counsellor's experiences and the fact that the counsellor becomes part of the process. According to Bird (2000), narratives are relational constructs rather than mere reflections of oneself. The counselling process would therefore be seen as an ongoing self-reflective process of self-awareness creation through relational process of conversations.

This forms the basis for narrative counselling therapy which is commonest in secondary level school counselling. In this context, the student and the counsellor learn from each other's narratives. The student learns from the counsellor's experiences and the counsellor gets to understand the student's behaviour. From

this, the student can be assisted to relate to his/her environment positively through guidance in making the right choices. There are however, three underlying theories of counselling processes, namely the client-centred theory, the rational-emotive theory, and the theory of behavioural counselling.

The client-centred theory

The client-centred theory developed by Rogers (1941) states that humans have an inherent self-actualising tendency to move towards developing capacities in ways which serve to maintain and enhance the individual. By following this innate drive, people can meet their needs, develop a view of themselves, and interact in society in a beneficial way. This may not occur without distress or ‘growing pains’, but theoretically, if humans can be helped to follow their nature, they will move towards a state of relative happiness, contentment, and general psychological adjustment (Patterson, 1980).

According to the theory, problems in the personality development process arise when significant people in our lives, such as parents, teachers, and peers place a condition of worth upon us, rather than accept us unconditionally (UNESCO, 2002). They value us only if we meet certain conditions and expectations. For the reason that humans need the regard of others in order to have self-respect, we strive to meet the expectations of others, although this often requires us to suppress, or ignore, our self-actualising tendency and the opportunity to accept and value ourselves unconditionally.

A false self-image is created, based on meeting the conditions of worth, and we then distort and deny reality, in the quest to confirm our maladjustment. The key to healthy personality development and self-generated rehabilitation of psychological problems therefore lies in the 'necessary and sufficient conditions of personality change' (Rogers, 1957). These conditions consist in the counsellor expressing, and the client perceiving, unconditional positive regard, empathetic understanding, and congruence, or honesty. When clients interact with counsellors who behave in this manner, they begin to share their experience, the self-actualisation tendency is activated, they question and cast off conditions of worth, and move towards unconditional acceptance and respect.

In client-centred counselling, the counsellor genuinely accepts the student being counselled, whatever his thoughts, feelings and behaviour. An unconditional respect is transmitted through the counsellor's words and non-verbal behaviour, and deep empathetic understanding is communicated through reflective responses. Moreover, the counsellor listens and reflects on the intra-personal and experiential domain of the student. On receiving such counselling, the student explores himself and describes experiences, feelings and attitudes which he denied, and of which he became aware. A re-organisation of the self takes place, and a more authentic person emerges, free of previous defences, disturbed emotions and disordered behaviour (UNESCO, 2002).

Rational-emotive theory

Underlying the practice of rational-emotive theory, developed by Ellis (1977), and its applications to counselling is a set of theoretical hypotheses about the

emotional-behavioural functioning of humans and how it can be changed. At the centre of these hypotheses is the concept that events do not force people to have emotional behavioural reactions. It is rather their interpretation or thoughts about events that precipitate emotion and behaviour. Therefore, the target for change in psychotherapy is those thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and meanings that create emotional-behavioural disturbance (House & Hayes, 2002).

Ellis (1979) theorises that humans have the capacity to interpret reality in a clear, logical and objective fashion, and avoid unnecessary emotional-behavioural upsets, but also says that humans are predisposed to irrational interpretations. An irrational interpretation of reality, such as the foregoing, usually has two or three standard characteristics (Ellis, 1979): first, it demands something unrealistic of the world, other people, or yourself; second, it exaggerates the awfulness of something you dislike; third, it concludes that you cannot tolerate the thing you dislike; and it condemns the world, other people, or yourself. For example, an irrational interpretation occurs when (a) a teacher scolds a student for a malfeasance; (b) the student concludes 'I am a bad and inept person' and consequently (c) feels threatened and hurt and withdraws from the scene.

In such a scenario, the student will have to go through four stages of rational-emotive counselling. The first is an exploration of the student's emotive-behavioural difficulties, and an identification/diagnosis of those irrational interpretations that create problems. Next the counsellor helps the student to gain insight into his or her irrational ideas, and the ways in which they upset emotions and behaviour. The irrationalities are then challenged and restructured into more

rational interpretations, and a re-education process is followed, so that the student uses his/her rational thinking to adapt new life patterns of emotion and behaviour.

Behavioural counselling

According to UNESCO (2002), the methods and procedures of behavioural counselling are based on social-learning theories, such as the social cognitive theory. Forms of learning, such as operant conditioning, classical conditioning, modelling, and cognitive processes, are used to help students counselled change unwanted behaviour, and/or develop new, productive behaviour.

Mitchell (1981) maintains that some methods and techniques of behavioural counselling can be grouped into changing and controlling the antecedents of behaviour; changing and controlling the reinforcement of behaviour; and using models to recognise unwanted behaviour and to learn desirable behaviour. The methods may also be classified into using imagery to extinguish and/or practice behaviour and techniques of learning social skills.

The specific stages of behavioural counselling involve four broad approaches. First, the counsellor helps students to explore their concerns, and a behavioural analysis and assessment is conducted through questions. Next, the two parties set mutually-acceptable goals, stated in behavioural terms and then they develop and implement goal-oriented strategies on learning theory principles. This may cover any set of ethical procedures that helps students to engage in behaviour that resolves their concerns. Lastly, the progress of the student is monitored for promoting target behaviour and problem resolution (McGannon et al., 2005).

According to Sperry et al. (2003), however, there are numerous other approaches and methods that influence these three realms of human functioning, and aspiring counsellors have many to choose from. Ultimately, the approach employed in counselling consists of a unique and idiosyncratic manner of helping others, combined with the skill and knowledge acquired from approaches such as the three reviewed.

Theories of perception

Perception has been theorised and conceptualised by many scholars in different ways. The theories of perception have been established as arguments between one or two pairs of philosophies. For example, there has been a debate between theorists of direct perception (Austin, 1962; Gibson, 1979) and proponents of indirect perception (Ayer, 1955; Marr, 1982). There have also been debates on the formation of perception, which pits piecemeal integration of perceptual impressions against holistic formation of perception. This is captured in the Continuum Model for Impression Formation [CMIF] (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990)

Direct and indirect perception theories

The Theory of Direct perception proposes that perception, in a sensory modality, is a form of non-inferential awareness of the sorts of things that we normally take ourselves to be aware of when we perceive, such as everyday objects and events (Barbe, 1981). The theory rejects the idea that in perception we are only aware of mental intermediaries, including sense data, impressions, and appearances. It rather establishes that it is only through our direct awareness of mental intermediaries that we can be said to be aware of the world.

The theory accepts that perception is a form of direct access to the world, and, therefore that the world is very much the way it seems to us in perception. The perception of the quality and value of an object will therefore be the same as the actual value we place on its quality. For this reason, defenders of direct perception are referred to direct realists.

Direct realists would propose that a student would only form perception of school counselling from direct experiences in counselling sessions. This would be as a result of the analysis of sensory data the student would gather as a first hand receiver of the guidance and counselling method. The student would form ideas about the appropriateness and applicability of counselling methods as well as the trustworthiness and personality of the counsellor. If the student's experience informs him/her that school counselling is beneficial to his/her situation, he/she will be encouraged to participate further. On the contrary, the student may terminate further sessions and discontinue the use of school counselling if the direct perception formed is not favourable to the student.

On the other hand, Ayer (1955) proposes that perception goes beyond direct realities of mental intermediaries. Perceptual judgements therefore go beyond what is actually given in direct experience and must be thought of not so much as immediate records of how things are, but as the results of conjecture or speculation. Marr (1982) conceptualises this as "Argument from illusion". It purports to show that individuals' perceptual experience is immediately aware not of what we think they perceive, but of mental intermediaries that in some way

stand for or refer to those things. The perception a value of an object therefore is not the direct omnibus representation of the object, but combination exemplars of other objects, which represent the perceived object.

The concept of objects being used here does not only refer to physical objects, but can also include events, concepts, ideologies, services, and any other phenomena on which perceptual images can be formed. From this perspective, perception of counselling would not only be as a result of the direct experience of students, but also as a result of vicarious experiences which are gained through peers, literature, and other environmental occurrences.

The continuum model of impression formation (CMIF)

Fiske and Neuberg (1990) propose the CMIF making explicit the sequence of stage and core premises for the formation of perception. The model attempts to address the contradiction between impression formation and social cognition, which pits elemental, algebraic approaches to impression formation against gestalt, holistic, configural approaches.

The elemental piecemeal view of impression formation posits that people form evaluative impressions of objects by computing a weighted average of the isolated evaluations of the targets' features (Csibra & Gergely, 2007). From this perspective a student would form impressions about school guidance and counselling programmes and the trustworthiness and confidentiality of the counsellor by synthesising several instances of direct and indirect experiences.

The resultant impression or perception will represent a general view of the counselling programmes.

Gestalt, configural approaches on the other hand posit that a characteristic meaning can change in light of a target's other characteristics (Fletcher, Happe & Frith, 1995). For example, trustworthiness may mean something different and be valued differently, depending on whether it co-exists with confidentiality. This theory proposes a richer role for perceiver's prior knowledge in organising their thinking about new experiences. It also proposes a more practical approach to understanding how elements of this prior knowledge might interact to create a more holistic meaning. Perception may therefore vary based on prior knowledge and levels of understanding of the perceiver (Friedman & Petrashek, 2009).

Combining the social categorisation and elemental approaches, the continuum model proposes that people can use a range of impression formation processes and that the utilised processes depend on two primary factors. These are the available information and the perceiver's motivation. The available information about the school's counselling programme and the student's motivation to engage in counselling, whether on academic or personal grounds, will influence perception and actual participation in counselling programmes. It would therefore be pertinent for an effective counselling programme to ensure the dissemination of accurate information. This will be aimed dissuading students from clinging to unfavourable rumours about the programme and its counsellors and encouraging participation.

Overview of the concepts of guidance and counselling

The concepts of 'guidance' and 'counselling' carry differing but overlapping meanings. UNESCO (2000) describes guidance as a process, developmental in nature, by which an individual is assisted to understand, accept and use his/her abilities, aptitudes and interests and attitudinal patterns in relation to his/her aspirations. Mapfumo (2001) on the other hand views guidance as the provision of information to groups or individuals for the purpose of reaching informed decisions.

Guidance as an educational construct involves those experiences that assist each learner to understand him/herself, accept him/herself, and live effectively in his/her society. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSCRC) of South Africa (in Euvrard, 1992) describes guidance as practice, a process of bringing students into contact with the world of reality in such a way that they acquire life-skills and techniques, which allow them to direct themselves completely in the educational, personal and social spheres and the world of work in order to progress and survive effectively.

Okobiah & Okorodudu (2004) add that guidance can also be looked at as a programme or services to individuals based upon the need of each individual, an understanding of his/her immediate environment, the influence of environmental factors on the individual and the unique features of each school. Guidance is designed to help each individual adjust to his/her environment, develop the ability to set realistic goals for him/herself, and improve his/her education.

Guidance therefore encompasses those services and programmes of the school, which are specifically intended to promote educational, career, and personal-social development of students (Denga, 2001). Ubana (2008) maintains that guidance services include processes of consultation, co-ordination, collaboration, instruction, information-giving, appraisal, referral, and institutional support. As a process, Eyo, Joshua and Esuong (2009) add that guidance involves a series of actions or progressive steps, which move towards a goal. As a service, it involves four major services, namely, those of educational, vocational, personal and social guidance.

Educational guidance, in so far as it can be distinguished from any other form of guidance, is concerned with the provision of assistance to pupils in their choices in, and adjustment to, the curriculum and school life in general. Educational guidance is, therefore, essential in the counselling service (UNESCO, 2000). School guidance, according to Ubana (2008), has two broad goals, first to guide young people to pursue the right type of education is necessary, and second to ensure that the right balance is kept in order to meet the human resource needs of a nation.

Vocational guidance is a process for helping individuals to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter it and develop in it (UNESCO, 2000). Vocational motivation requires that a person's interests, aptitudes and personality, be suitable for his/her work. Vocational guidance plays its part by providing individuals with an understanding of the world of work and essential human needs, and familiarising individuals with such terms as the dignity of labour and work value.

Okobiah & Okorodudu (2004) describes personal and social guidance as the process of helping an individual to know how to behave with consideration towards other people. Primarily, personal and social guidance aims at helping the individual to understand himself, know how to get on with others, learn manners and etiquette pursue leisure time activities, practise social skills, develop family and family relationships, and understand social roles and responsibilities.

Urombo (2000) maintains that the definition of counselling depends on the specific theoretical orientation of any discussion. However, counselling can be described as a process that focuses on enhancing the psychological well-being of the client, such that the client is then able to reach their full potential. Atodo (2008) adds that counselling is largely concerned with giving advice and concentrates on the individuals' self-awareness as well as helping improve problem-solving skills and education of the individual.

Counselling is a relationship between a concerned person and a person with a need (Gora, Sawatzky & Hague, 1992). This relationship is usually person-to-person, although sometimes it may involve more than two people. It is designed to help people to understand and clarify their views, and learn how to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices, and through the resolution of emotional or interpersonal problems. Counselling is therefore a process by means of which the helper expresses care and concern towards the person with a problem, and facilitates that person's personal growth and brings about change through self-knowledge (UNESCO, 2000). It is a learning-oriented

process, which occurs usually in an interactive relationship, with the aim of helping a person learn more about the self, and to use such understanding to enable the person to become an effective member of society. In this regard, school counselling helps students to understand themselves and their opportunities, to make appropriate adjustment and decisions, and to accept personal responsibility for their choices.

The aims of school counselling, although they may in some cases overlap with the goals of guidance are distinct. Lambert and Barley (2001) explain that counselling school counselling aims to help students gain an insight into the origins and development of emotional difficulties, leading to an increased capacity to take rational control over feelings and actions. Counselling also aims to alter maladjusted behaviour among students. It also aims to provide students with the skills, awareness and knowledge, which will enable them to confront social inadequacy, such as negative cultural and gender stereotypes.

Gysbers and Henderson (2006) add that counselling achieves its aims on three different, but interrelated operational levels, namely, educational counselling, personal/social counselling, and vocational counselling. Educational counselling is a term first coined by Truman Kelley in 1914 as a process of rendering services to pupils who need assistance in making decisions about important aspects of their education, such as the choice of courses and studies, decisions regarding interests and ability, and choices of college and high school (Makinde, 1988). Educational counselling aims at increasing students' knowledge of educational opportunities.

Personal counselling deals with emotional distress and behavioural difficulties, which arise when individuals struggle to deal with developmental stages and tasks (McGannon, Carey & Dimmitt, 2005). Personal counselling is important, because any aspect of development can be turned into an adjustment problem, and it is inevitable that everyone encounters, at some time, exceptional difficulty in meeting an ordinary challenge. For example, Gysbers and Henderson (2006) note that developmental challenges, such as anxiety over a career decision, lingering anger over an interpersonal conflict, depressive feelings, guilt about mistakes, or grief over the loss of a loved one may require the services of personal counselling.

Vocational counselling, as described by UNESCO (2000), is concerned with facilitating career development. It generally involves helping students become aware of the many occupations to consider, interpreting an occupational interest inventory to a student, and assisting the student to decide what to do after school. It may also involve helping a student apply a college or university and role-playing a job interview in preparation for an actual interview.

In spite of some distinctions in the specific descriptions of guidance and counselling, Gysbergs (2004) maintains that generally guidance is a broader term that encapsulates counselling. Guidance and counselling therefore complement each other, in the school setting in an ultimate goal of helping students make choices and manage problems resulting from changes in their development.

Overview of guidance and counselling in educational systems

Guidance and counselling in schools, according to Hughes (1971), had its origin in vocational issues during the early 1900s in the United States of America, during the industrial revolution. In Herr's (2001) view, the industrial revolution was a period of rapid industrial growth, social protests, social reform, and utopian idealism. Guidance and counselling was introduced to assist individuals to adapt to the rapidly changing vocational environment while pursuing idealised behaviourism. School guidance and counselling was therefore introduced to address the negative social conditions associated with the industrial revolution. Gysbers and Handerson (2001) emphasise that school guidance and counselling (SGC) was to assist students with their educational development and career aspirations. Thus, SGC was focused on assisting individuals to choose and to prepare for an occupation.

According to Chiresche (2006), SGC was introduced in different countries for different reasons. In USA, account is given of the negative effects of the industrial revolution to have necessitated SGC services. After the 1900s, the world wars were the next major events that had an impact on the development of SGC services. SGC services arose as a response to the social crises brought about by the wars. Students were seen to need counselling to overcome the traumatic war experience they had undergone together with their families, relatives and friends. The increasing divergent population and associated racism in schools also necessitated counselling services in schools (Herr, 2001b).

Hartman (1999) accounts that school counselling was introduced in British schools in reaction to the changes in society in family, and in schools, which

created conditions where greater attention to individual needs was necessary. Herr (2001a) adds that social pressures from urbanisation and decline in family tradition resulted in emotional turbulence among students, thus necessitated SGC. Students began studying under higher anxiety levels as competition levels had become stiffer and students were under pressures to choose careers. Owing to these factors, vocational counselling came in handy to help them in their career plans.

In Hong Kong, Yuk Yee and Brennan (2004) reports that SGC services were introduced in 1950s for reasons that differ from those reported for Western Countries. The reasons included increased variation in children's background, increased developmental, personal and social problems, as well as lack of motivation towards school work, disruptive behaviour in the classroom and rise in juvenile delinquency.

UNESCO (1998) maintains that many African governments have realised the growing number of social problems that affect African adolescents, particularly girls. These governments therefore resolved to introduce SGC services in their countries to solve these problems. Furthermore, SGC services were introduced in African countries to counteract unprecedented economic and social changes in African countries. For example, Adegoke and Culbreth (2000) assert that the gradual breakdown of the extended family network in many parts of Africa has led to social problems and the youth, which necessitate school counselling. However, there are certain variations in the specific reasons for establishing school guidance and counselling in different African countries.

According to Bernard, Pringle and Ahmed (1997), school guidance and counselling was introduced in South African schools in the 1960s as a social control measure, where the services were aimed as nurturing a spirit of submission among black learners. However, the resolve of SGC in South Africa was seen as an instrument for the government imposition of race-biased religious, cultural, and vocational ideologies and value systems.

In Botswana, Navin (1989) accounts that SGC services were introduced in 1963 to provide students with career and higher education information. The case of Malawi is stated by Maluwa-Banda (1998) that SGC was introduced in the early 1990's in reaction to the many social, personal, educational and vocational concerns and problems that had surfaced in the 1990s among secondary school students.

From the historical overview it can be deduced that the instigators and purposes of school counselling varies, but SGC has in all cases been implemented as a problem solving technique related to vocational or social concerns.

Rationale for school counselling

Atodo (2008) assert that students' behaviour to a large extend determiners their performance in academic work. Schools, globally, are increasingly turning from the use of harsh corporal punishment to the use of counselling as a way of controlling behaviour. This grand gesture among schools globally is rooted in

some rationalised arguments that counselling is a more effective way to achieve desired behaviour among students.

Guez and Allen (2000) maintain that recent developments in education, especially the opportunity for free and universal education, have resulted in a new scale of problems in schools and the nations at large. Many children go to school without knowing what they are supposed to do, and leave school without any idea of what type of jobs or careers they should follow. In addition, they have little understanding of themselves and their socio-economic and political environment.

Gysbergs (2004) further assert that in Africa, many school leavers end up on the streets, and quite a sizeable number keep on moving from job to job trying to explore, within the world of work, which job meets their interests and capabilities. A majority of these school leavers are not aware of their potential. There is, therefore, a need to help young people and children to know their abilities, interests, personalities, values and beliefs, and potential. They should also be assisted to acquire the skills they need in order to cope with the different circumstances they may encounter later on in life.

Guidance, therefore, can prepare the youth for adult life, as well as help them acquire appropriate attitudes and values that enable them to become productive and active members of their communities (UNESCO, 1998). Most importantly, the SGC programmes can help young people and children to develop a positive self-image and a sense of identity, as well as establish a set of beliefs and a value system that will guide their behaviour and actions.

Through the engagement of the youth and children in SGC activities and discourses, UNESCO (2000) states that they are empowered to take control of their rights and responsibilities within the family, schools, and other social institutions in society. Their control of their rights and responsibilities can be made a reality through, young people and children power-sharing with adults in decision-making in a variety of forums.

School guidance and counselling is also rationalised by the assertion that it can help young people to pursue the right type of education. In this way, the individual is motivated to maximise his/her contribution to society (Kearney, Draper & Baron, 2003). It also assists individuals to make informed decisions about their education. It makes clearer the choices that have to be made and helps in determining whether the choice is right. SGC also facilitates the smooth transition for children from home to school, from primary to secondary school, from secondary to post-secondary educational institutions, and to the world of work. The final transition from the educational system to the labour force appears to be most important and challenging for students.

Shoffner and Williamson (2000) note that there are specific school activities that make school guidance and counselling appealing. For example, it helps students to cope with examination anxiety. Students are assisted to overcome pressure from fear of failure and the craving for the highest grades through counselling. It also helps students to develop effective study habits. The students are assisted to improve their competence in reading, note-taking, and academic achievement.

School guidance and counselling also provides students with meaningful educational experiences through relating the curriculum to occupational groups.

According to Kearney et al. (2003), stereotyped cultural expectations can have a significant influence on children's perceptions of themselves, their surroundings, and their general social outlook. School guidance and counselling can help address the social, cultural, economic and political structures that reinforce gender inequality, negative stereotyped attitudes towards abilities, and negative sex-role stereotypes.

Adegoke and Culbreth (2000) exemplify that the image of a girl in most African communities is that of a passive, submissive person, who remains in the background. Generally these girls have a negative self-image and a feeling of inferiority. This is increased by the attitudes of parents, teachers and society. In such situations, personal counselling can empower girls and teach them to develop positive attitudes towards themselves, and is marked by an ability to acknowledge areas of expertise and to be free to make positive choices.

UNESCO (2002) analyses the rationale for school counselling from the point that students face many difficulties and problems, which may be expressed in withdrawal, unhappiness, annoyance, anger, inability to meet needs, lack of knowledge, partial or total failure, inability to realise aspirations, anxiety and hyperactivity. School guidance and counselling can help students manage these challenges positively. Moreover, young boys and girls are a large segment of the

population. It, therefore, makes strategic sense to target them through school guidance and counselling.

Counselling is important at the teenage stage, because this is when boys and girls develop positive sexual attitudes and practices (UNESCO, 2000). It is when students begin to understand who they are, and how they can contribute to healthy relationships. They start to develop attitudes of respect toward members of the opposite sex, and see how each community member can contribute to development. Personal and social counselling for example can assist in awakening students to educational and vocational opportunities.

The role of school counsellors in education

Paisley and McMahon (2001) state that school counselling has evolved from an early career and moral development to a comprehensive, developmental and collaborative school counselling services. Erford (2003) reports that, since the 1960s, professional school counsellors have been taught that counselling, coordination, and consultation provide the way to define their role in schools. These were to enable the school counsellor to provide a comprehensive guidance program.

In addition to the 3Cs, Gysbers and Henderson (1994) introduced the roles of guidance, assessment, program management, and professionalism. Erford (2003) however notes that these roles are now too limiting because they no longer provide enough breadth and depth of scope for professional school counsellors to be effective.

Borders and Drury (1992) report that SGC interventions have a substantial impact on students' educational and personal development. The roles of the school counsellor in SGC programmes are therefore central to the specific impact that may be made on the student. These roles, although they can be specifically defined, most often go beyond what is expected to include a wide range of roles aimed at the student's academic and personal development (Martin, 2000). Erford (2003) suggests that this requires counsellors to also work as leaders, advocates, collaborators, co-ordinators, and data utilisers.

As leaders, school counsellors are engaged in system-wide change to ensure student success. They help all students gain access to rigorous academic preparation that will lead to increased academic achievement, and ultimately, greater opportunities. Additionally, school counsellors work as leaders to close the existing achievement gap between poor or underachieving students, students of colour, and their more advantaged peers (Bowers & Hatch, 2002). School counsellors strive to remove the barriers that may be hindering students from succeeding. For instance, school counsellors teach students how to help themselves by providing students with organisational skills, study skills, and test-taking skills.

In their leadership role, counsellors also work as resource brokers to identify all available resources inside and outside of school (House & Martin, 1998). School counsellors also remove barriers to learning by educating parents and guardians about the importance of enrolling their children in demanding classes that will

lead to college. When working in the school system, school counsellors offer staff development training for school personnel and encourage administrators to re-evaluate the existence of low-level and unchallenging courses (Quarto, 1999). In addition to being a leader, school counsellors are also advocates. They advocate for the success of every student by working to ensure that students' needs at every level of education are addressed. They organise community activities to provide support for high standards for all students and advocate for exposing students to experiences that will broaden their career awareness and knowledge (Erford, 2003).

Administrators, teachers, and parents are three of the primary stakeholders vital to supporting the school counsellor. These stakeholders influence the roles that school counsellors fulfil. School counsellors have the duty to collaborate the activities of these stakeholders towards the achievement of academic and personal development of the students (Murdock, 2004). For instance, most often the school counsellor is supervised by the principal. If the counsellor's principal does not have a complete understanding of the school counsellor's role, the school counsellor may be expected to perform non-counselling functions. In this case, it is the school counsellor's responsibility to educate the principal.

Likewise, teachers can be hesitant to invite the school counsellor into their classroom for guidance lessons. Sometimes teachers feel as though guidance lessons reduce academic time. Hence, school counsellors need to work collaboratively with teachers to incorporate guidance lessons that relate to the academic topics that are being covered in class. School counsellors need to

educate teachers about the positive effects guidance lessons have on academic success (ASCA, 2005).

According to Bowers and Hatch (2002), collaboration of stakeholders by school counsellors inside and outside of the school system ensures progress towards equity, access, and academic achievement for every student. By encouraging teaming and collaboration, school counsellors develop a sense of unity among students, staff, parents, and community members. School counsellors consult with teams to solve problem in order to respond to concerns that may be present in the school, such as equity and cultural diversity issues. Furthermore, school counsellors collaborate with staff in developing staff training, parent/guardian workshops, and community activities in response to the academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs of students (Erford, 2003). Overall, effective working relationships with stakeholders enhance the educational opportunities for students and their families.

Working as a counsellor is another important role for the school counsellor. It is imperative that school counsellors conduct counselling sessions with students individually, in groups, and with their families. In addition to being a counsellor, school counsellors are coordinators. They coordinate resources for students, families, and staff in order to enhance student achievement (Kuhn, 2004).

Lastly, school counsellors act as data utilisers. According to Friedman and Petrashek (2009), they assess and interpret student needs in order to identify barriers to learning, recognize differences in culture, and develop goals for the

school's comprehensive counselling and guidance program. School counsellors also use data to implement systemic change. Systemic change occurs when policies and procedures are examined and changed in light of new data (ASCA, 2010). This change occurs as a result of the involvement of all critical players in the school system. School counsellors are in a unique position to lead the school in system change, for they have ability to use local, regional, and national data to demonstrate the need for change, such as the existence of an achievement gap.

School counsellor role as data utilizers is facilitated by their access to data about student placement, student course-taking patterns, and students' academic success or failure (House & Hayes, 2002). They use this data to ensure equity and access for every student. School counsellors support, promote, and believe in every student's ability to achieve in school. By minimising barriers and promoting equity, school counsellors will help more students to complete school prepared to choose from a wide range of post-secondary options, including college (Mancillas, 2004).

Adoto (2008) adds that school counsellors play preventive and educative roles. In their preventive roles, school counsellors spend much of their time developing and implementing plans and programs which could be categorised as preventative services on three levels. The Primary prevention level focuses on preventing a problem from occurring. The emphasis is on enhancing positive school climate.

The Secondary level of prevention focuses on early indicators of problems. The goal is to shorten the duration or lessen the impact of a problem. The Tertiary

level focuses on minimising the immediate consequences of an existing severe problem. The emphasis is on regaining control over a situation so remediation and prevention strategies can be developed, implemented and assessed (Kuhn, 2004).

In McGannon, et al.'s (2005) view, the whole area of prevention and preventative planning responds to a range of complexity or severity. This requires specialised skill sets, which may include effective communication skills, conflict resolution, data collection, collaboration, mediation, helping others to solve their own problems and make informed decisions, and specialised knowledge and skills for a consultation process.

School counsellors may also provide direct instruction to students in areas such as peer helping, conflict resolution, social skills, and life skills. As well, school counsellors provide support to other educators in implementing career and personal planning, promoting positive school climates and enhancing the emotional/social well-being of students (UNESCO, 2000). Their educational role may also include disseminating information to parents and other professionals, monitoring and assessment of the services they provide, acting as a resource for professional and curriculum development, speaking publicly at school and/or to community groups, and participating in professional development of students.

Utilisation of school guidance counselling services

In spite of the optimistic assertion about the positive influences that school guidance counselling services can have on the educational and personal development of students, it is well known that not all students patronise guidance

counselling services. The reasons for this vary by and large. According to Mwangi (2004), variances in the patronage of school counselling by students may stem from internal beliefs and insecurity about counselling to external prior experiences and tell-tales about counselling practices.

In a study by Ntare (2000), it was revealed that students often perceive counselling as a mental health service that is unrelated to their educational needs. This is often the case with counselling methods that conform to intrapsychic aetiology models. This revealed that students generally have a misconception about counselling, its purpose, and benefits. In some cases, some students see recommending counselling and guidance as a form of punishment or detention and those who undergo counselling are stigmatised. For example, Mancillas (2004) found out that psychological problems are sometimes seen as marks of weakness, which reflect negatively upon the character of individuals who seek professional mental health services. Such negative attitudes towards counselling can discourage voluntary patronage of SGC services.

Moreover, effective SGC programme will require information sharing about the student. The student would have to open up and sometimes share sensitive information about him/herself. Insecurity about sharing such information and inadequate knowledge of what the disclosed information might be used for can prevent students from utilising guidance and counselling services. The feeling of protecting oneself, dignity, and sometimes status from the fear that sensitive information about themselves may get public may dissuade students from counselling services (Gora et al., 1992). This fear will only be reaffirmed if prior experiences of peers show that data given at counselling sessions do not remain

confidential with counsellors. A study by Kearney et al. (2003), therefore found out that students are more comfortable with seeking guidance about academic work than on personal issues. It was therefore concluded that counsellors may be incapable of gaining trust and confidentiality of students.

Studies also show that the utilisation of school guidance and counselling may also be influenced by several demographic factors. Sometimes counsellors who are not of the same sex, ethnic background, or of the same race are perceived as lacking sensitivity to their specific problem and may not be of adequate help to the help-seeker. Adebimpe (1994) found out that not only do socio-demographic differences influence counselling utilisation, but also in the types and severity of disorders seen among different populations. Race related differences have been found in rates of alcoholism, phobic disorders, general anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and somatisation disorders. Thus, socio-demographic differences among help-seekers may also explain their level of utilisation of counselling (Kearney et al., 2003).

According to Kuhn (2004), the influence of these aforementioned factors of counselling utilisation may operate on three levels. First, the student may book an initial appointment, in order to affirm or renegade fears, beliefs, and speculations about school counselling. The student particularly looks out for signs that may confirm prior assumptions, which if found may discourage the student from subsequent appointments. The second effect is that, the student may keep postponing seeking counselling services and third, the decision of not seeking SGC services entirely may also be reached.

In other cases, the personality of the counsellor, the approaches and methods employed, as well as the counselling environment may influence utilisation of SGC. Most students prefer environments that offer solitude of the student and the counsellor, as well as privacy (Gysbers, 2004). The forwardness and subtlety of the counsellor, as well as his ability to draw the student out to share his/her problem may also be a contributing factor to gaining the trust of the student. If the resolutions of the sessions are helpful to the student, it is likely that his/her peers will seek counselling when an academic or personal problem arises.

Hartman (1999) revealed in a study that peer influence and prior experience influence students' utilisation of counselling and guidance services. According to the study, violation of ethical issues constitutes one major deterrent of future SCG appointments. Students discuss counselling sessions with their trusted peers mostly to reaffirm decisions reached and advice given during counselling. The violation or otherwise of ethical codes, for example inexplicit sexual advances or relaying information about the student to other stakeholders without the consent of the student, thus breaching confidentiality may come up in these discussions and deter students from seeking SGC.

Ethical processes of effective school counselling

According to Urumbo (2000), ethics are codes of conducts that ensure best practices of any profession. In school counselling, ethics are important to encourage utilisation of counselling and guidance services, especially when the utilisation of these services is based on voluntary participation. Ethics, according to UNESCO (2000), are important aspect of the counselling process that ensures

trust of the counsellor and a major contributor to finding the right solutions for the problem. They must therefore be adhered to in order to gain trust and patronage of the service.

The American School Counsellor Association (ASCA, 2010) provides comprehensive universal codes of conduct and tenets of school counselling. According to the ASCA model, all stakeholders in SGC programmes have certain rights and responsibilities regarding student counselling. These rights and responsibilities may relate to broad areas of operation including responsibility to the student, parents or guardians, other professionals, the school, community, self, the profession, and maintenance of standards.

Josselson (1996) maintains that the counsellor has a primary obligation to the students, who are to be treated with dignity and respect as unique individuals. The counsellor should therefore be genuinely concerned with the educational, academic, career, personal, and social needs of the student. Moreover, the counsellor should respect students' values, beliefs and cultural background and not impose his personal values on students or their families.

Concerning student-counsellor relationship, the counsellor must understand that professional distance with students is appropriate, and any sexual or romantic relationship with students whether illegal in the state of practice is considered a grievous breach of ethics and is prohibited regardless of a student's age (Urumbo, 2000). The counsellor should consider the potential for harm before entering into a relationship with former students or one of their family members. In any case, the counsellor should avoid dual relationships that might impair their objectivity

and increase the risk of harm to students, for example counselling one's family members or the children of close friends or associates. ASCA (2010) adds that if a dual relationship is unavoidable, the school counsellor is responsible for taking action to eliminate or reduce the potential for harm to the student through use of safeguards, which might include informed consent, consultation, supervision and documentation.

One important component of the entire counselling process is the factor of confidentiality. Confidentiality borders on many fronts including informing individual students of the purposes, goals, techniques and rules of procedure under which they may receive counselling (Okuma, A. 2005). Confidentiality also includes issues of disclosure and informed consent of the student. Disclosure includes the limits of confidentiality in a developmentally appropriate manner. Informed consent requires competence on the part of students to understand the limits of confidentiality and therefore, can be difficult to obtain from students of a certain developmental level. However, attempts to obtain informed consent are not always possible and when needed, counsellors will have to make counselling decisions on students' behalf.

ACSA (2010) also advises for counsellors to keep information confidential unless legal requirements demand that confidential information be revealed or a breach is required to prevent serious and foreseeable harm to the student. It must be recognised that the primary obligation for confidentiality is to the students but that obligation must be balanced with an understanding of parents'/guardians' legal and inherent rights to be the guiding voice in their children's lives, especially in

value-laden issues. However, the autonomy and independence of students must be promoted to the extent possible and the most appropriate and least intrusive method of breach must be employed.

Ethical issues also include referral responsibilities. Referrals are to be made when necessary or appropriate to outside resources for student and/or family support. Appropriate referrals may necessitate informing both parents/guardians and students of applicable resources and making proper plans for transitions with minimal interruption of services. Urumbo (2000) suggests that students should retain the right to discontinue the counselling relationship at any time. A reasonable method of termination of counselling when it becomes apparent that counselling assistance is no longer needed or a referral is necessary to better meet the student's needs, must be developed.

Counsellors also have the responsibility to make reasonable efforts to honour the wishes of parents/guardians concerning information regarding the student unless a court order expressly forbids the involvement of a parent(s). In cases of divorce or separation, school counsellors exercise a good-faith effort to keep both parents informed, maintaining focus on the student and avoiding supporting one parent over another in divorce proceedings (Okuma, A. 2005).

The counsellor's responsibility to the school includes assisting in developing curricular and environmental conditions appropriate for the school and community and educational procedures and programs to meet students' developmental needs. Furthermore, the counsellor assists in systematic evaluation process for comprehensive, developmental, standards-based school counselling programs,

services and personnel and also in a data-driven evaluation process guiding the comprehensive, developmental school counselling program and service delivery (ibid).

ASCA (2010) enumerates the stages of SGC process and maintains that ethics are important for every stage. The first stage is to define the problem emotionally and intellectually. This would require the counsellor to respect and understand the student's expressions and beliefs. It would also require the counsellor to maintain a professional relationship with the student so as not to distort his judgement. Narrative counselling will be important at this stage to bring the emotive aspects of the problem to bare. It will be pertinent to consider the student's chronological and developmental level. This will require ethics regarding access to student's academic and counselling records. In so doing, counsellors must recognise the limits of student's records and understand these records are a memory aid for the creator. A reasonable timeline for purging students' records must be established.

The counselling process also involves considering the setting, parental rights, and minor's rights (Zeedyk, Gallacher, Henderson, Hope, Husband & Lindsay, 2003). The right that the student can terminate the counselling at any point in time must be upheld. The student's right to make his own decision and take responsibility for them must also be upheld. Furthermore, the right to consent must be sought be disclosure of any information to parents or guardians or any other professional authority. Moral principles must also be applied. This will relate to the extent of inter-personal relationship between the counsellor and the student, and the maintenance of other relationships that may hinder the progress of the counselling sessions and the integrity of the counsellor.

The next stage is to determine the potential course of action and their consequences. This will require the consent of the student. In some cases the consent of parents/guardians, academic administrators, and other legal entities may be required. An evaluation of the selected action must be conducted to examine expected results and potential benefits and harm, which must be communicated to all stakeholders concerned through consultation. The selected course of action can therefore be implemented if it is agreed upon to be the most appropriate means of solving the problem. Follow ups must then be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the methods and to determine if the action must be allowed, discontinued, or merged with other options (ibid).

Perception of school counselling and guidance programmes

The perceptions that stakeholders have of the school counsellor's role are important to the counselling process. Fitch, Newby, Ballestero and Marshall (2001) examined the perceptions of administrators regarding the role of the school counsellor and found that in most schools, the school counsellor's role is determined by administrators. In Fitch et al.'s study, administrators rated the five non-counselling tasks, namely; registration, testing, record keeping, discipline, and special education assistance, as the five least important duties of the school counsellor. Nevertheless, the administrators viewed these tasks as important aspects of the school counselling program. On the other hand, administrators rated direct crisis response, providing a safe setting for students to talk, communicating empathy, helping teachers respond to crisis, and helping students with transitions,

as the most important tasks of the school counsellor. The study concluded that many misperceptions of the role of the school counsellor still exist.

Wagner (1998) expresses that students' needs are better able to be met as a result of collaboration and support among school personnel. This will require school counsellors to be aware of how their supervisors view the school counsellor's role so that they can work collaboratively with school principals to provide the best services to students. Shoffner and Williamson (2000) however, note that administrators and school counsellors often do not agree on the school counsellor's roles. This stems from the perspective that administrators view the school as an organised whole, whereas counsellors view the school as student-centred.

In a study by Beale (1995), it was identified that non-intellective variables, such as personal interview, character references, recommendations, and personal experience, are valued more highly by principals when selecting school counsellors as compared to intellective variables, such as grade point average and reputation of graduate school attended. However, principals still believed that counsellors should have teaching experience. This may be due to the fact that principals regard counsellors as "upgraded teachers" rather than specialists in counselling.

Ponec and Brock (2000) identified components conducive to building relationships between school counsellors and administrators to include clearly defining the role of the school counsellor, developing mutual trust and clear

communication, and constant maintenance of support strategies for working with teachers and administrators. These interrelated components served to promote guidance and counselling programs deemed beneficial and valuable to students, parents, and school communities.

It is not only important for administrators to have an understanding of the school counsellor's roles, it is necessary for teachers to understand them as well. Davis and Garrett (1998) stated that teachers' perceptions of the school counsellor's role are barriers that prevent school counsellors from successfully providing services. Many teachers view the school counsellor as someone who sits in his or her office all day drinking coffee, interrupts their class with a note to see a student with little or no explanation, or is another administrator. Consequently, teachers are hesitant to send their students to the counsellor for fear of losing valuable instruction time. Zeedyk et al. (2003) emphasise that their reluctance is a legitimate concern for teacher accountability is measured by grades and test scores.

According to Adoto (2008), teachers sometimes displace negative feelings towards counsellors, because they view the counsellor as a safer scapegoat to displace their frustration as compared to a principal. Additionally, some teachers envy counsellors, because they work with individuals and small groups, whereas teachers must manage a large classroom. Lastly, teachers sometimes see the counsellor's role as simple and easy. In this situation, school counsellors need to help teachers understand that problems are often multifaceted and complex.

Findings by Kuhn (2004) suggest that teachers view school counsellors as fulfilling the dual role of a helper and a consultant. As a helper, the school counsellor identifies and resolves problems through individual and group counselling, interprets test results, assesses children's concerns, makes referrals, and conducts classroom guidance activities. In the consultant role, the school counsellor provides professional advice and expertise through classroom assessment, home visits, curriculum planning, and role-playing techniques.

A study by Quarto (1999) revealed that teachers perceived type of prior work experience to be a significant factor in a school counsellor's effectiveness. Teachers generally rated counsellors with prior teaching experience to be the most effective in carrying out counselling functions as compared to a counsellor with prior community health experience. The study speculated that teachers perceive counsellor functions as impacting them as well as students. Therefore, a former teacher would know how to help a student in a way that would also help the teacher.

Overall, the relationships between school counsellors and teachers are just as important as the relationships between school counsellors and administrators. Gysbers and Henderson (2006) found in their study that teachers perceive school counsellors as both helpers and consultants. Effective strategies for bridging the gap between school counsellors and teachers have been emphasised along with areas of conflict and tension that may arise. Understanding these factors will assist in developing collaborative relationships between school counsellors and teachers,

ultimately helping school counsellors and teachers gain a better understanding of each other's roles.

Like administrators and teachers, parents serve as important stakeholders. Zeedyk et al. (2003) found out in a study that some parents want to end school counselling and other student-focused programs because they are non-academic, detract from subject instruction, and invade family privacy. Many parents have negative associations with regards to school counselling due to past contact with educators of their children as well as their own school experience.

In 1994, Orfield and Paul conducted a study and found that only 17 percent of parents meet with their student's high school counsellor. They found that in general, parents give school counsellors low ratings on overall effectiveness. In addition, most parents use school advising services offered by the school counsellor, but they rated the information that they received from the counsellor as moderate. Parents stated that they were somewhat or not at all satisfied with the school counsellor's work with their children. However, they were more positive about the school counsellor's overall contribution to the school's educational program.

In another study, Chiresche (2006) found that parents perceived other areas of counsellor functions to include assisting in course selection, acting as an ombudsman in cases of student-teacher conflict, assisting in selections of institutions of higher education, and providing financial aid and scholarship information. Additionally, the parents considered the counsellor's attitude toward

the student to be crucial. Parents expected the counsellor to be caring, encouraging, and positive to the students. Gysbers and Handerson (2007) added in a study that the business community and parents stated that counsellors should provide career counselling and placement services for non-college bound students. Members in the business community also stated that counsellors should be aware of job market trends and job opportunities, and counsellors should encourage students to develop a realistic perspective toward life and the world of work

Similar to the importance of collaboration between school counsellors, administrators, and teachers, collaboration between school counsellors and parents is imperative. In general, parents do not have a thorough understanding of the school counsellor's roles. Chapman and DeMasi (1991) demonstrate that parents' perception of school counsellor effectiveness may be based on an inaccurate assessment of student and counsellor contact. As a result, it is important for school counsellors to be proactive using tools, such as technology and parent education programs, in order to provide parents with a better understanding of school counsellor roles and functions.

Students' perception of school guidance and counselling programmes

Kuhn (2004) conducted a study that examined high school students' perceptions of the roles of school counsellors and the functions associated with those roles. A 20 item questionnaire was administered to students at two urban high schools. The questionnaire instructed the students to rate the importance of 15 school counsellor functions based on the school counsellors' roles. Furthermore, the students rated the importance of non-counselling functions, such as test

administration, registration that school counsellors often perform. Overall, the students rated the school counsellors' advocacy, collaborative counselling and co-ordinating roles as important. This indicated that students perceived the transformed roles as significant. However, the students also rated a few non-counselling functions as important, demonstrating that misperceptions of the school counsellor's role still exist.

A study to investigate the secondary students' attitude and utilisation of guidance and counselling services was conducted by (Eyo et al. 2007). The study was a descriptive research that covered a total of 400 secondary school students selected from ten (10) schools through stratified random sampling technique. The study revealed that students' attitude towards guidance and counselling services were significantly positive. Gender and school location significantly influenced students' utilisation of guidance services. The results further revealed that there are significant differences between attitude of male and female students in rural and urban schools towards guidance and counselling services.

Atodo (2008) also researched into students' perception of effectiveness of guidance and counselling in secondary schools. The study was a causal comparative research, which was based on client-centred theory by (Rogers 1940). Eight schools from Eldoret Municipality were selected using stratified sampling technique. From the selected secondary schools, 198 students were selected using systematic sampling to respond to the questionnaire. It was found that students' perception of the effectiveness of guidance and counselling did not affect their academic performance. Also, the type of school and gender of the students had no

significant influence on the students' perception of effectiveness of guidance and counselling. However, age of the students had a significant influence on the way students perceive the effectiveness of guidance and counselling. Junior students were found to be more positive to guidance and counselling than senior students.

Conceptual framework

The following section introduces the proposed conceptual framework for the study. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) proposes that for first timers, the decision to participate in voluntary counselling stems from identifying some needs on which the individual student wants to be counselled or guided. These needs would generally result from some social, educational, and interpersonal factors, which work together within the environmental that the student finds him/herself.

The needs of the student will determine the approach which the counsellor must adopt. The options may be between a traditional therapeutic counselling or interactive counselling through narrative inquiry. The counsellor's trait also contributes to the counselling process. The counsellor's knowledge, training, openness, trustworthiness, and his ability to convince the student of sustaining confidentiality will contribute to the success of the counselling process and the perception that students form about the counselling process. The framework further suggests that the counsellor and other stakeholders, including parents teachers, social agencies, and administrative heads of schools are central to the counselling process.

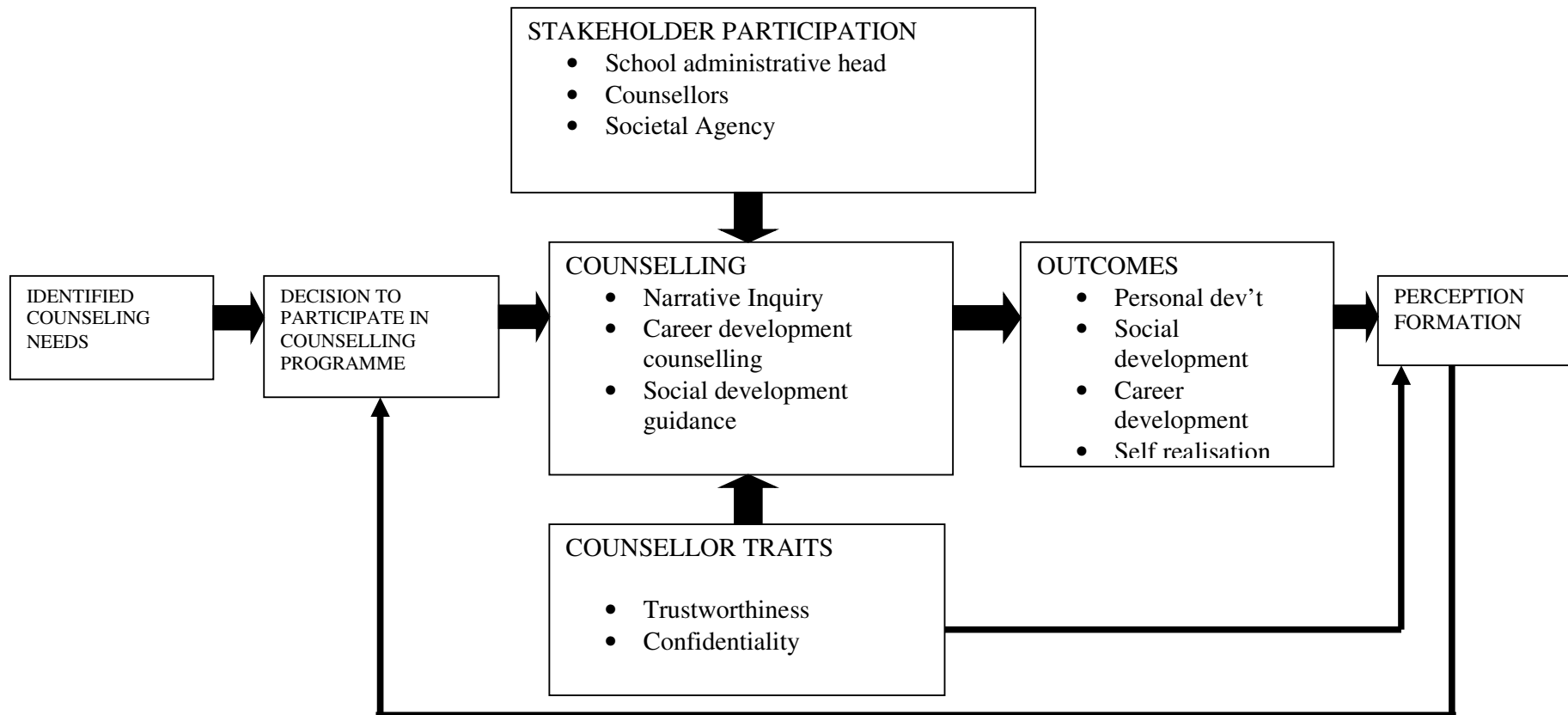


Figure 1: Perception formation on school counselling

Source: Author's construct, 2011

The outcomes and uses of counselling proceedings will also influence perceptions about the counselling process. If the outcomes of the counselling processes are not what the student expects, it may dissuade future participation in the process. This occurs for example, if the student gets called for a disciplinary action as a result of a revelation he/she might have made during the counselling process. However, if the student is able to solve some social, personal, or academic problems through counselling, positive perceptions may be formed about the counselling programme and future participation may be encouraged.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the phenomenal issues in the study, which are relevant to the proposed study area. It also elaborates on the proposed study design, target population, sample size and sampling procedure, as well as the proposed methods of survey instruments and data analysis methods.

Study Area

Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) has a total land size of 200 square kilometres and is made up of six sub metros namely Okaikoi, Ashiedu Keteke, Ayawaso, Kpeshie, Osu Klotey, and Ablekuma (AMA, 2006). The metropolis hosts some of the largest and most populated central business within the country. This has called for the establishment of several public and private educational institutions to cater for the educational needs of the growing urban population. Out of the estimated total of 474 Senior High Schools within the country, 35 are estimated to be habited by Accra Metropolitan Area.

According to Accra Metro Education office, there are an estimated 18,325 pupils enrolled in SHSs within AMA. Females form about 47.8 percent of this number, while males comprise approximately 52.2 percent. In further analysis, it is estimated that the average annual increase in enrolment in SHSs within the metropolis is approximately 979 students. Employing these projections, the SHSs student population for the year 2011 was estimated at 26,157. The approximated number of female SHS students would be 12,500 and 13,657 for males.

Study Design

This exploratory study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional design. According to Grimes (2002), a descriptive study is concerned with and designed only to describe the existing distribution of variables, without regard to causal or other hypotheses. A descriptive research therefore answers five basic questions of who, what, why, when, and where and an implicit sixth question, so what?

Often the data for a descriptive study are readily available and thus inexpensive and efficient to use (Grimes & Shulz, 2002). However, descriptive studies have important limitations. Temporal associations between putative causes and effects might be unclear and investigators might draw causal inferences when none is possible. A descriptive design is therefore adopted because the study seeks to ultimately describe the pertaining situation of school guidance and counselling programmes within SHSs in AMA as well as the pertaining student and staff perception about the programmes.

According to Levin (2006) cross-sectional studies are carried out at one time point or over a short period. They are usually conducted to estimate the prevalence of the outcome of interest for a given population. Data can also be collected on individual characteristics alongside information about the outcome. In this way cross-sectional studies provide a snapshot of the outcome and the characteristics associated with it, at a specific point in time. They are limited, however, by the fact that they are carried out at one time point and give no indication of the sequence of events.

The study therefore adopted a cross-sectional design based on the relatively short period that the survey will cover. The study also aims to provide a one-point-in-time snapshot of the perceptual issues relating to school counselling in the study area. It does not seek to infer into the trends of perceptual change about school counselling.

Target Population

The target population of the study included students, administrative heads of schools and counselling co-ordinators of public and private SHSs in the Accra Metropolitan Area. There are a total of 35 SHSs within Accra Metropolis. From projected estimates of Accra Metro Education Service (2002), there are about 26,157 students enrolled in SHSs within the metropolitan area. The Head teacher of each school was targeted along with the counselling co-ordinator from each school. A total of 35 Headmasters and 35 counselling coordinators were therefore included in the target population.

The study also targeted the Director of the Accra Metro Education Service and the Metro's educational counsellor from the District Counselling Unit. The target population of the study therefore constituted 26,157 students, 35 Headmasters, 35 counselling co-ordinators, the Director of the Accra Metro Education Service and the Metro's educational counsellor from the District Counselling Unit. This brings the target population to a total of 26,229.

Sample size and sampling procedure

The sample size for the students was determined using the Cochran's (1977) formula sample estimation formula given as:

$$n_0 = \frac{t^2 \times (p)(q)}{d^2}$$

Where, n_0 is the required sample size

t is the t-value for the selected margin of error

p is the population proportion

q is $1 - p$

d is the acceptable margin of error for the sample size being estimated

The study adopted a margin of error (d) of 0.05, which indicates the level of risk the study is willing to take that true margin of error may exceed the acceptable margin of error. The chosen (d) corresponds to a t-value (t) 1.96. The proportion of SHS students as a proportion of all secondary cycle institutions is estimated at 15.3 percent (AMES, 2002). The study hence adopted a p of 0.153 and a ' q ' of 0.847. An approximated figure of 102 is calculated for n_0 .

However, the populations for each stratum must be corrected for the 0.05 or 5% margin of error using Cochran's (1977) correction formula, which is given as:

$$n_1 = \frac{n_0}{1 + \left(\frac{n_0}{P}\right)}$$

Where, n_1 is the required corrected return sample size

n_0 is 102

P is the population size

The formula generates a corrected sample size of 101. A total of 101 students will therefore be sampled for the study.

The study purposively sampled 10 schools for the survey. The student sample was therefore proportionately divided among these schools. Students were sampled purposively from the schools. Purposive sampling was used in order to ensure a proportionate mix of students from all forms and sexes in the study. The Headmasters and counselling co-ordinators of these schools, as well as the school counsellor at the counselling unit were also purposively sampled. The total sample size was therefore 124.

Source of Data

The study employed the use of primary and secondary data. Primary data was sought from students on their experiences and perception of the counselling services in their respective schools. Primary data was also solicited from Headmasters and counselling co-ordinators on the specific practices, processes, and challenges of counselling services within their respective schools. Primary data sources also included the Director of the Metropolitan Education Service and the school counsellor at the counselling unit, who were asked to provide data on the processes adopted for ensuring effective counselling in SHSs within the district. Secondary data for the study comprised extract from literature concerning counselling and statistics about the study population.

Instruments for data collection

The study used questionnaire to collect data from students (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire solicited data on the demographic characteristics of students, the motivation for students to participate or refrain from school counselling, students' perception of school counselling programmes, their attitudes towards counselling and the common challenges they face in guidance and counselling programmes.

Interview guides were used to collect data from Headmasters and counselling co-ordinators (see Appendix 2). These instruments covered data on the common practices of guidance counselling with the schools, the uses of guidance proceedings, and the common challenges involved in school guidance and counselling programmes. Interview guides were also used to solicit data from the Director of the Metropolitan Education Service and the school counsellor at the counselling unit. These instruments covered data on guidance and counselling policies and planning, implementation strategies for schools within the metropolitan area. It also sought data on the challenges confronting the Education Service in its effort to inculcate guidance counselling in the educational system.

Ethical issues

Prior to the administration of the questionnaires and interview guides, a letter of introduction from the Department of Social Sciences, Methodist University College, Ghana was sent to all the targeted institutions. This enabled the researcher to acquire permission for the needed support or co-operation from the headmasters and the management body at the Metropolitan Education Service. The purpose of the research was explained to all respondents and respondents

were interviewed or given the questionnaires based on their informed consent and voluntary participation. Respondents were also assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. The study also adhered to other codes of ethics regarding data collection and information retrieval, as well as attributing secondary data to the valid sources.

Pre-test

The instruments for data collection were pre-tested in two purposively selected schools within AMA. The essence of the pre-test helped to test the instrument for data collection for consistency, accuracy, and applicability of questionnaire items. The pre-test also served as the preliminary testing of the research questions to provide insights into ideas not yet considered and problems unanticipated, which could challenge the data analysis. Furthermore, it helped check and try the planned statistical tests of association between variables. Besides these, the pre-test enabled the researcher to revise the contents of the questionnaire and the interview guide, thereby revising the instruments to achieve the reliability and validity standards required in scientific research. Reliability was achieved because the instrument obtained the information it intended to gather

Fieldwork

The fieldwork was conducted from 8th August to 13th September, 2012. The self-administered questionnaires were sent to the all the schools where the sample students and their headmasters could be located. They were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of anonymity and confidentiality and were encouraged to complete the questionnaires within a week. The researcher paid subsequent visits

to the firms after the initial delivery of the questionnaires. During these visits, completed questionnaires were collected while discussions were held to help students with some difficulties to understand issues raised in the questionnaire. This was repeated until all the answered questionnaires were collected from the teachers.

During initial visits, the researchers had to book interview appointments with the headmasters and the District counsellor and the Director of the Metro Education Service. Headmasters and counselling were simultaneously interviewed during the questionnaire administration.

Field Challenges

A major challenge was getting sufficient number of the questionnaires completed and returned within the time scheduled. In addition, some of the received questionnaires had unanswered questions. Such questionnaires were returned to the respondents and the researcher offered some assistance to the respondents to answer those questions. The other challenge pertained was the fact that some of the key informants did not honour their interview appointments and after several rescheduling, they still could not make it. Thus their responses were not captured for the study. This included the District counsellor, the Director of the Metro Education Service, and other counselling co-ordinators.

Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical tools from Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel were used to describe the practices and processes concerning

counselling in the respective schools. Relationships between demographic data and other perception and attitudes towards guidance and counselling programmes were established using appropriate tools, cross-tabs and statistical significance of these associations were tested at 0.01 and 0.05 alpha levels using chi-square and Phi-statistic. The results from analysis of questionnaires were presented in tables, charts and figures.

The responses from interview guides were transcribed and edited. Similarities and disparities between responses were discussed along with quantities analysis of students' responses. The discussions of key informants' responses were used to triangulate the responses of students where applicable. They were presented in quotes and transcriptions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study in relation to the perception of student guidance counselling in SHSs within the Accra Metropolis. The results of statistical significance and practical implications are presented and discussed in relation to the specific objectives. The study made an effort to capture all the 101 students from ten schools within the Accra Metropolitan Area. The headmaster from each of the schools was also involved in the study, as well as three counselling coordinators were included in the study. The first section of the analysis dwelt on the demographic characteristics of respondents, while the subsequent sections focused on the specific objectives of the study.

Demographic characteristics of Respondents

The study sought to provide background information of respondents by examining their gender distribution, age, form, subject of study, and career goals. These variables were also studied in order to provide a basis for differentiating between responses, since aggregated responses may exclude some pertinent isolated concerns.

The study showed that there were more (56.4%) female students in the sample than males (43.6%). Given the uneven gender distribution, the study inferred that the aggregated responses about guidance counselling were more representative of female perspective. In order to determine the averages age for male and female students within the sample, the skewness principle, according to Curran, West and

Finch (1996) and Pallant (2005) was employed. According to them, normality can be assumed when a skewness of +0.5 is calculated for the distribution. Thus, it can be asserted that the age distribution of the sampled students was not normally distributed, given a skewness of 0.142 (Table 1). According to Pallant (2005), the medians are therefore more representative of the distribution and non-parametric analysis must therefore be used to analyse such type of data.

The average age for male students was 17 years and also 17 years for female students, but the spread around the average age was wider for females (std. deviation = 1.236) than males (std. deviation = 0.950). The Mann-Whitney U test was therefore used to analyse the differences between the age distribution for males and females, in order to inform the study on how differences ages can influence the differences in responses regarding guidance counselling in the schools. The results showed a Mann-Whitney statistic of 0.0012 with an associated p-value of 0.588. This indicated that the average ages for the sampled male and female students were not statistically significant at an alpha of 0.05.

The ages of male and female student were generally the same. The implication for the study was that age differentials for male and female students could not be a statistically significant basis for the differences in responses regarding guidance counselling in the schools.

Table 1: Age and gender distribution of students

Gender	f(%)	Mean	Median	Mode	s.d	Skewness	
						Stat.	Std. error
Male	44(43.6)	17.07	17.00	17.00	0.950	-0.823	0.357
Female	57(56.4)	17.28	17.00	18.00	1.236	0.380	0.316
Total	101	17.18	17.00	18.00	1.120	0.142	0.240

Mann-Whitney U = 0.0012; z = -0.588; p-value = 0.557

Source: Field survey, 2012

One important aspect of students' participation in guidance and counselling programmes in their awareness of the programme in their schools (Lambert & Barley, 2001). Thus, publicity for the programme is important to ensure student participation. This study revealed that 87.1 percent of the sampled students were aware of guidance and counselling programmes within their respective schools, while 12.9 percent were not aware of such programmes. This indicated a high awareness rate among students. It was therefore inferred that publicity for the counselling programmes within the schools were reaching the majority of the student population.

The disaggregated results indicated that uneven number of students from the different forms was covered by the study and the rate of awareness in student guidance and counselling programmes was different across the forms. However, students who were not aware of the counselling programmes were concentrated in Form 1 and Form 2. Nevertheless, a greater percentage of students in all Forms were aware of the counselling programmes. The test for statistical significance of the results revealed that students across all the Forms were equally aware of the

counselling programmes. This was derived from a chi-square statistic of 2.381 and an associated p-value of 0.497 (Table 2). According to Gysbers and Henderson (2006), such a situation is an ideal initial step towards a successful counselling programme for students. The study therefore inferred that a student's Form was not a significant factor in determining his/her awareness of counselling programmes within the schools.

Table 2: Students' awareness of counselling programmes

Form	Awareness of counselling programmes		Total
	Aware	Not aware	
One	23(26.1)	4(30.8)	27(26.7)
Two	30(34.1)	6(46.2)	36(35.6)
Three	24(27.3)	1(7.7)	25(24.8)
Four	11(12.5)	2(15.4)	13(12.9)
Total	88(100)	13(100.0)	101(100)

Percentages are in parentheses

Chi-square = 2.382; df = 3; p-value = 0.497

Source: Field survey, 2012

According to Martin (2002), the decision to engage in counselling may be underlain by educational and career choices. Thus, one's career aspirations may be important to a student's participation in guidance counselling. It has also been established that senior level students are more concerned with educational choices leading to career goals, as their anxiety about educational decisions heightens (UNESCO, 2000). Erford (2003) on the other hand, maintains that senior level students may be discouraged from participating in counselling and guidance

programmes if they have had prior bad experience with counsellors or the programmes.

The study also identified several reasons for the participation and non-participation of the students. It was revealed that more (32.3%) students participated in the counselling programmes because they were made compulsory (Table 3). Next to them were those who sought counselling for behavioural management (27.7%) and for educational/career advice (23.1%). The findings confirm assertions that for post-primary or secondary pupils, the choice to seek counselling is often underlain by their personal and social lives, educational choices, and career decisions (Martin, 2002). In this study, behavioural management can be associated with personal issues and educational/career are directly stated by Martin as educational and career choices.

The study also delved into the underlying reasons for non-participation of some students in the guidance and counselling programme. This is because Urumbo (2000) emphasises that such fundamental reasons may hinder the participation of students from guidance and counselling. The most prominent reason for non-participation the uncertainty of the confidentiality of the counsellor (41.7%) and others (36.1%) were not aware of the programmes. The findings that perceived untrustworthiness and the need to protect oneself may lead to non-participation in counselling programme (Csibra & Gergely, 2007; Fletcher et al., 1995). The findings also emphasise other studies that establish that individual interest and perceptions or impressions formed about the counselling process may also

influence their participation. This is established in the impression formation continuum, which is further established by the conceptual framework.

Table 3: Reasons for participation in students counselling

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Participants		
Compulsory	21	32.3
Behavioural management	18	27.7
Career advice	15	23.1
To discover one's potential	7	10.8
Curiosity	4	6.2
Learning difficulties	2	3.1
Non-participants		
Doubtful confidentiality	15	41.7
Unaware	13	36.1
No interest	4	11.1
No perceived benefits	4	11.1

Source: Field survey, 2012

Although earlier findings established that 87.1 percent of the sampled students were aware of counselling programmes within their schools, 66.3 percent indicated that they had ever participated in the programme. This indicated that 20.8 percent of the student populace was aware of the counselling programmes but had never sought counselling services within the schools.

The results in Table 4 showed that 76.5 percent of students who were not participating in the counselling programme were females, and that 45 percent or

26 out of 57 of the females were not participating in the counselling programmes. According to UNESCO (1998), counselling is particularly important for the African female adolescents because of growing social problems, but this study showed low participation among girls. This shows that female students may not be getting the necessary help in dealing with their social problems, as indicated by Adegoke and Culberth (2000) that personal counselling can empower girls and teach them to develop positive attitudes towards themselves, and is marked by an ability to acknowledge areas of expertise and to be free to make positive choices. It is therefore implied in the study that the male students may be benefiting more from counselling than their female counterparts.

The study also showed that non-participants were highly concentrated in second year students (44.1%), and next to them were students in Form 4 (20.6%). The results further indicated that there was no specific pattern to participation with regards to the Forms as suggested by Kuhn (2004) and Adoto (2008). This was confirmed by a chi-square statistic of 6.032 and a p-value of 0.110, which indicated that the observed differences in the participation rate across the Forms were not statistically significant. In other words, the rate of participation in guidance and counselling programmes was statistically the same across the forms. Hence, it was further inferred that a student's level of Form did not have any association with his/her participation in the counselling programmes.

Table 4: Participation in students counselling

Variable	Participation in counselling		X ² (sig)
	Participant	Non-participant	
Gender			
Male	36(53.7%)	8(23.5%)	8.368
Female	31(46.3%)	26(76.5%)	(0.004*)
Form			
One	21(31.3%)	6(17.6%)	
Two	21(31.3%)	15(44.1%)	6.032
Three	19(28.4%)	6(17.6%)	(0.110)
Four	6(9.0%)	7(20.6%)	

*significant at an alpha of 0.05

Source: Field survey, 2012

Processes of guidance and counselling in SHSs

According to Mitchell (1981), different methods and procedures are adopted in the counselling programmes for difference purposes. Sperry et al. (2003) also affirm that there are numerous other approaches and methods that inspire counsellors' choice of methods. The particular methods and counsellors used may also affect the counselling outcomes. The study thus sought to explore these processes and to use them as a basis for differentiation, in accordance with the study variables.

The study revealed that all but one Assistant Headmaster indicated that the school had no formal guidance and counselling programme. It was therefore asserted that the most of the schools surveyed had formal counselling and guidance programme for students. This is in-line with studies that found that most second cycle

institutions have counselling programmes as a requirement for students (Chiresche, 2006; Champman & DeMasi, 1991; Quarto, 1999).

It was also indicated through interviews with the Headmasters that teachers were expected to give students some form of guidance and counselling on a more frequent basis although those duties were not specifically outline in their job descriptions. The response of one Headmaster was captured in the following quote:

“We (the school administration) do not have specific counselling duties for teachers, but we allow students and teachers to engage in informal counselling. It is expected that some students will go to their teachers with their problems, such as learning difficulties, and we see it as helpful so long as an ethical issues are respected”.

Similar responses were confirmed by some of the interviewed Headmasters but other practices were expressed by other key informants. For example, a Headmaster from another school responded as follows:

“The school has appointed a Chaplain who serves as the resident counsellor for students. Other teachers help students with some problems which they can effectively contain, but if they have been made aware to refer serious cases to the school Chaplain, who would be in a better position to help the student”.

In the response of key informants, it was noted that the services of District counsellors were also solicited by the schools. However, their visits were

occasional, thus the schools relied more on their internal counsellors, who were often teachers, chaplains, the headmasters, or counselling coordinators.

Eyo et al. (2007) maintain that one critical stakeholder of the counselling process is the counsellor. Hence it is important to have sound criteria for the selection of counsellors, which must corroborate the counselling needs of students. According to the interviewed counselling co-ordinators, school counsellors, whether teachers or chaplains are selected based on some common criteria. According to one key informant, the counsellor is selected based on their perceived trustworthiness, empathy for students and hard work. Another key informant indicated that a school counsellor was chosen based on more objectively verifiable measures, such as professional qualification to be a counsellor and experience with counselling students. Other responses pointed to personal traits of the counsellor, including his/her discreteness, ability to build rapport with the students and a good relationship with students.

In several studies, it was found that similar counsellors were used for school counselling (Ponec & Brock, 2000; Wagner, 1998). Thus, the study confirms the general practices that are employed in school guidance and counselling programmes, which are established in earlier studies. The responses of headmasters represented the counsellors that are made available to students, but the study also explored the counsellors that are preferred by students, based on their gender differences.

The responses from Headmasters did not acknowledge peer counselling among students, but it was deduced from 20.8 percent of students' responses that they engaged in peer counselling with their colleagues (Table 5). Gysbers (2004) explained that students are comfortable with their peers for the sake of confidentiality and also because they feel their peers can better relate to their concerns since they may be going through similar problems. Atodo (2008) asserts based on the client-centred theory that counselling can actually give a sense of relief and support to students, thus the student seeks the option that makes him/her the centre of support and of intervention.

Table 5: Students' preference for counsellors

Counsellor	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Teacher	29(39.7)	24(30.4)	53(34.9)
Headmaster	17(23.3)	16(20.3)	33(21.7)
District counsellor	17(23.3)	12(15.2)	29(19.1)
Colleagues/Peers	10(13.7)	18(22.8)	28(18.4)
Housemaster	-	9(11.4)	9(5.9)
Total	73(100)	79(100.0)	152*(100)

*multiple responses; n = 101

Percentages are in parentheses

Source: Field survey, 2012

The model for impression formation, according to Fiske and Neuberg (1990) also establishes that these choices are dependent on the perceptions formed about the options for counselling. This may cover perceived integrity or confidentiality of

the counsellor as well as the impressions about the risks and benefits of opening up about one's problems.

The disaggregated data, from the multiple responses revealed that a greater percentage of male (37.9%) and female (30.4%) students were more inclined to seek regular counselling services of their teachers, but more females had preference for peer counselling than their male counterparts. This may be explained by the differences in perception about the available counsellors, as explained by the rational-emotive theory (Ellis, 1977). Other studies have established a significant variance in insecurities about counselling, which stem from gender differences. For example, Kearney et al. (2003) make the differentiation that females are often more insecure about their personal habits and problems and are more likely to seek comfort and support from peers. This is confirmed by the findings of this study.

Further examination showed that 73.1 percent of the students who had ever engaged in the school guidance and counselling programmes found group counselling as the most efficient method of dealing with their problems, while three percent thought that meetings with the District counsellor was effective. It was shown that confidentiality of the counsellor permeated through the reasons for which students thought that their preferred options were effective. The disaggregated results however indicated that the ability to gain shared experience and ideas was the most important reason why students opted for group counselling with their school counsellors. The overriding reason for private sessions was the confidentiality of their problems. Thus, it is seen that the confidentiality and

trustworthiness of the counsellor is important for participation and success of the counselling process as implied by the conceptual framework. Beale (1995) also mentions these qualities as fundamental to a sustainable counselling programme.

Shoffner and Williamson (2000) add that it is important for measures to be taken to assure students of the counsellor's confidentiality and trustworthiness. From the interviews with headmasters, it was deduced that the common measure adopted by the schools was to assign the counsellor to a private office where students could be attended to without unneeded interruptions. Other diverse responses showed that some counsellors were urged to be extremely ethical, which included following a code of conduct.

According to Mitchell (1981) idea of narrative counselling, communication factors as an important aspect of counselling. In this approach, Gysbergs (2004) explains that the modes of communication must have the capability to connect with, and make the student comfortable enough to fully express him/herself. In view of this, the modes of communication at the counselling sessions were examined from students' perspectives, as shown in Table 6. The results indicated that verbal questioning was the most prominent method used for student counselling. Questionnaires and narratives were also indicated as regular methods used to communicate with students during counselling. In other studies by UNESCO (2002), verbal and non-verbal methods were also employed to communicate with clients.

Table 6: Modes of counselling

Methods	Frequency	Percent
Verbal questioning	58	71.6
Questionnaires	16	19.8
Narratives	7	8.6
Total	81	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2012

Further examination also revealed that students have unequal preference for the methods of counselling. The influence of each method on students differed with the perceived benefits of the methods. As shown in Table 7, the majority (53.7%) of the students agreed that verbal questioning was most effective in addressing their concerns. Within this sub-group of respondents, 50 percent maintained that verbal questioning helped them by guiding them to the core of their problems and helping them find solutions to them. This corroborates with Roger's (1941) description of client centred approach where questioning makes the client the centre of the therapy. Patterson (1980) also asserts that narrative inquiry also encapsulates using the counsellor's experience to relate to the client's needs and probes to get to the client's problem.

Table 7: Reasons for preferred counselling service

Reasons	f(%)	Total(%)
Verbal questioning		
Guidance from questions	18(50.0)	
Learn from counsellor's experience	8(22.2)	36(53.7)
Better expression	8(22.2)	
Observe counsellor	2(5.6)	
Questionnaires		
Privacy	21(100.0)	21(31.4)
Narratives		
Learn from counsellor's experience	4(40.0)	
Encourages discussion	6(60.0)	10(14.9)

Source: Field survey, 2012

Narratives were thought of as effective by 14.9 percent of the students, and their main reason was the narrative inquiry encourages discussion. Questions may also be in the form of questionnaires and students were of the view that questionnaire were helpful due to the privacy it offers in answering questions about oneself. These methods are endorsed by the client-centred theory (Rogers, 1941) and the narrative inquiry theory (Mitchell, 1981). The study thus inferred that these methods were first theoretically acceptable, and also appropriate for the counselling needs of students.

According to House and Hayes (2002), the performance of counsellors forms an integral part of the entire counselling process. The performance of the counsellor was therefore examined by the study, according to the perspective of the students. The results showed that 77.7 percent of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that the counsellor understood their concerns. On the other hand, 14.8

percent of the students indicated that the counsellor did not show adequate understanding of their concerns, while 7.5 percent were undecided about the counsellor's ability to understand their concerns. The disaggregated results in Table 8 revealed that all the respondents who were of the view that their concerns were not understood by the counsellor were females.

Table 8: Understanding of the counsellor

Variable	Undecided	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Sex					
Male	-	12(60.0)	24(75.0)	-	-
Female	5(100.0)	8(40.0)	8(25.0)	5(100.0)	5(100.0)
Form					
One	5(100.0)	10(50.0)	4(12.5)	2(40.0)	-
Two	-	2(10.0)	14(43.8)	-	5(100.0)
Three	-	6(30.0)	10(31.2)	3(60.0)	-
Four	-	2(10.0)	4(12.5)	-	-

Percentages are in parentheses

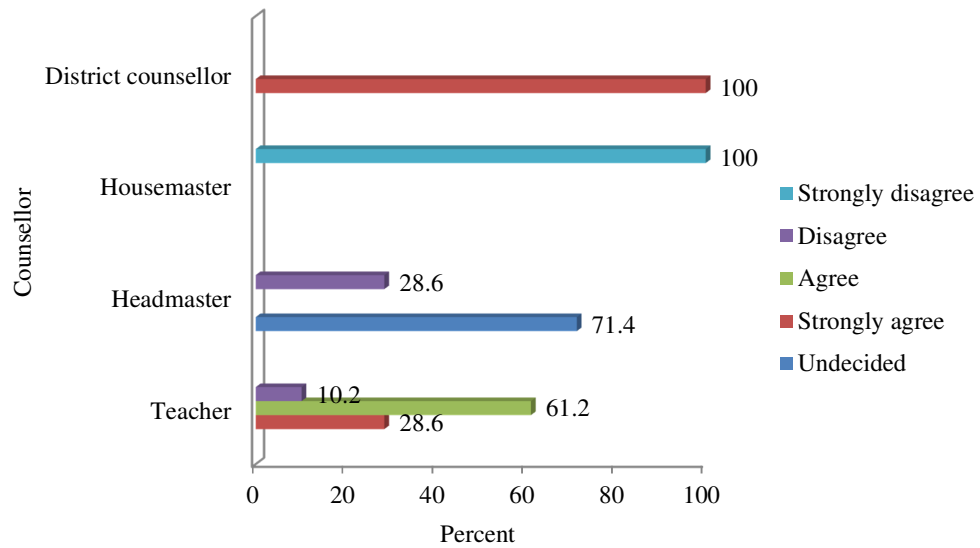
Source: Field survey, 2012

It was also shown that a few students from Form one, two, and three were of the view that the counsellors did not exhibit the understanding of their counselling needs. The study therefore suggests that understanding of the counselling needs of female students may require more critical effort than that of males. This is important, according to Sperry et al. (2003), to build students' comfort and confidence in the counselling process as helpful and also to safeguard repeated solicitation of counselling services. McGannon et al. (2005) emphasise that

understanding the client's concerns is fundamental to effective counselling and this can be attained through narrative inquiry.

The performance of the counsellors in the counselling process was also examined in relation to students' preferred counsellors. This was done to first identify the level of understanding of the different counsellors, from the perspective of students. According to Figure 2, the majority (89.8%) of students either agreed or strongly agreed that teachers were able to understand their counselling needs. Similarly, all the students who were counselled by the district counsellor also strongly agreed that the District Counsellor exhibited adequate understanding of their counselling needs. On the other hand, 71.4 percent of the students who were counselled by their Headmasters were not certain of the counsellors' ability to understand their problems, but all the students who were counselled by their Housemasters/Housemistresses expressed that the counsellor showed inadequate understanding of their problems.

The results therefore suggest that teachers and District Counsellors were more effective in understanding students' counselling concerns than Housemasters and Headmasters. This may explain why initial findings depicted that students mostly preferred to be counselled by their teachers. In line with the conceptual framework, these findings confirm that identifying and understanding the counselling needs of the student is pertinent to participation in counselling. Thus, students' preference for a counsellor and their participation in school counselling programmes may be underlain by their perception that the counsellor is able to understand their problems.

Figure 2: Counsellors' understanding of students' needs

Source: Field survey, 2012

Understanding the student's problems and behaviour is emphasised by the client-centred theory, which establishes the student/client at the focus of the counselling process. House and Hayes (2002) also assert that counselling is underlain by developing more understanding attitude towards pupil behaviour. In the case of SHSs in the Accra Metropolitan Area, this study establishes that teachers and District Counsellors are better able to understand students counselling needs.

One fundamental constituent of the counselling process is the co-ordinated participation of the counsellor and the client (UNESCO, 2002). It is hence, emphasised that giving students adequate opportunity to express themselves and to discover themselves other than imposing ideas of the counsellor contributes to the effectiveness of the entire counselling process. These concerns were therefore explored by the study as shown in Table 9. The study found that most (67.2%) of

the students who had undergone the school counselling programme indicated that their counsellors decided on acceptable goals of counselling with them. This was true for most responses concerning counsellors who were teachers, headmasters, and District Counsellors. However, the study showed that in all cases, it was stated that housemasters/mistresses did not engage students in deciding on counselling goals, during counselling.

The findings therefore suggest that counselling sessions with housemasters/mistresses were not participatory enough as recommended by Mwangi (2004). In such as situation, Onkuma (2005) maintains that the targets of the counselling may be are likely to be misaligned with the needs of the student, thus giving the impression that the counsellor does not understand students' concern. The use of housemasters or housemistresses as counsellors may not be as effective as expected. Further examination of the results revealed that the majority (72.6%) of the students were able to freely express themselves during counselling. This was the case for the students who were counselled by their teachers, headmasters and the District Counsellor.

Table 9: Counselling practices

Responses	Counsellor				Total
	Teacher	Head	H/Master	Dist. C.	
Coordinated decision on goals					
Strongly agree	12(24.5)	5(71.4)	-	-	17(25.4)
Agree	20(40.8)	2(28.6)	-	6(100.0)	28(41.8)
Disagree	17(34.7)	-	-	-	17(25.4)
Strongly agree	-	-	5(100.0)	-	5(7.5)
Free self-expression					
Strongly agree	43(87.8)	-	-	-	43(64.2)
Agree	6(12.2)	7(100.0)	-	6(100.0)	19(28.4)
Disagree	-	-	5(100.0)	-	5(7.5)
Accepts students' personality					
Undecided	3(6.1)	2(28.2)	-	-	5(7.5)
Strongly agree	12(24.5)	-	-	-	12(17.9)
Agree	4(8.2)	5(71.4)	-	-	9(13.4)
Disagree	18(36.7)	-	-	6(100.0)	24(35.8)
Strongly agree	12(24.5)	-	5(100.0)	-	17(25.4)

Percentages are in parentheses

Source: Field survey, 2012

However, in all cases, students who were counselled by their housemasters or housemistresses indicated that the counsellors did not give them the opportunity to freely express themselves. In further examination of the results, most (61.2%) students maintained that their counsellors did not accept their personality but

rather imposed their ideas on students during counselling sessions. This was the case for most counsellors, who were also teachers (71.2%), as well as all the housemasters/mistresses and the District Counsellors.

According to Bird (2000), the clients' inability to express their feeling and thoughts during counselling can be the differentiating factor between effectively solving problems and the dissatisfaction of the client. Moreover, Cisbra and Gergely (2007) establish, as part of the client-centred theory that it is essential for counsellors to collaborate with the client in deciding acceptable targets and also for the counsellor to guide the client to come to a realisation of irrational behaviours and reconstruct irrationalities, but not to impose their personal ideas on the student. In the case of school counselling in SHSs within the Accra Metropolis, the study establishes that inadequate efforts are made by the counsellors, especially housemasters in allowing for free expression, coordinated efforts, and opportunity for self-realisation.

Several other studies have established that transmitting unconditional respect through the counsellors' words and non-verbal behaviour is fundamental to successful counselling sessions (Erford, 2003; Martin, 2002). The perceived benefits and outcomes of counselling, including the ability of students to explore and overcome hidden and disturbing emotions, also influences the sustainability of the entire counselling programmes. Such benefits, if perceived by the client can engender repeat participation and sustainability of the counselling programmes.

Generally, the majority (86.6%) of the students expressed that the counselling process helped them explore their feeling and attitudes (Table 10). Thus, the study can assert that the counselling process was effectively helping the students explore themselves. According to Shoffner and Briggs (2001), such a situation can encourage repeat solicitation of counselling services, thus, ensuring the sustainability of the programme. The disaggregated results however showed that, in all cases, counselling services rendered by housemasters/mistresses could not adequately help students explore their hidden feelings and attitudes. This points to the ineffectiveness of housemasters or housemistresses in rendering effective counselling services to students. These responses may also be explained by earlier findings that housemasters/mistresses did not allow free expression of the students and also imposed ideas on the student.

Furthermore, most of the students were in agreement that the counselling process helped them to overcome disturbing emotions and attitudes. It was however shown in the results that housemasters and housemistresses were never capable of helping students overcome disturbing emotions and attitudes. In other results, it was also revealed that majority of the counsellors, except those who were also housemasters, were able to maintain mutual respect with the students.

Table 10: Counselling outcomes

Responses	Counsellor				Total
	Teacher	Head	H/Master	Dist. C.	
Exploring feelings and attitudes					
Strongly agree	31(63.3)	2(28.6)	-	-	33(49.3)
Agree	14(28.6)	5(71.4)	-	6(100.0)	25(37.3)
Disagree	4(8.2)	-	-	-	4(6.0)
Strongly disagree	-	-	5(100.0)	-	5(7.5)
Overcome disturbing emotions/attitudes					
Strongly agree	5(10.2)	2(28.6)	-	6(100.0)	13(19.4)
Agree	38(77.6)	5(71.4)	-	-	43(64.2)
Disagree	6(12.2)	-	5(100.0)	-	11(16.4)
Mutual respect					
Strongly agree	24(48.9)	-	-	-	24(35.9)
Agree	22(44.9)	7(100.0)	-	6(100.0)	35(52.2)
Disagree	3(6.1)	-	-	-	3(4.5)
Strongly disagree	3(6.1)	-	5(100.0)	-	8(12.0)

Percentages are in parentheses

Source: Field survey, 2012

The study hence, infers from earlier findings that counsellors, especially housemasters, who could neither coordinate with students, allow students to freely express themselves, or maintain mutual respect could not also neither assist students to explore hidden feelings and emotions nor help students overcome disturbing emotions. The association between these were tested for statistical significance using the continuum of ranks from 1 to 5 as indicated in Appendix 1.

The ranks were correlated to identify the relevance of association between the performance approach used by counsellors and the outcomes.

Table 11 showed that there was a strong positive ($R = 0.563$) relationship between accepting the personalities of the student and helping them exploring their feelings and attitudes. This meant that counsellors who used the approach of accepting students' personalities were more able to help the student explore their feelings and attitudes than counsellors who imposed their personal ideals on the students. The results may further explain why housemasters and housemistresses were found not be able to adequately helping students explore their feelings because they also found to impose their personal ideals on the students. Further statistics indicated that the ability to help students explore their feelings was explained by 31.7 percent of the variations in the ability to accept students' personalities. This was found to be statistically significant at 0.01 alpha level. This is confirmed by studies by Ntare (2000) and Murdock (2004), and also corroborates with the client-centred theory and the narrative inquiry theory.

Further results showed that the counsellors' ability to coordinate with students in decision making had a very weak positive correlation with assisting students overcome disturbing emotions ($R = 0.069$), but a strong positive association with helping the students explore their hidden emotions ($R = 0.627$).

Table 11: Relationship between counselling practices and outcomes

Variables	Variables			
	Explores emotions	Overcome emotions	Coordinated decisions	Accepts personalities
Accepts personalities				
N	67	67	67	67
Pearson's R	0.563	0.102	0.602	1
R ²	0.317	0.010	0.362	-
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000*	0.197	0.000*	-
Coordinated decisions				
N	67	67	67	67
Pearson's R	0.627	0.069	1	0.602
R ²	0.393	0.005	-	0.362
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000*	0.578	-	0.000*
Explores emotions				
N	67	67	67	67
Pearson's R	1	0.290	0.627	0.563
R ²	-	0.084	0.393	0.317
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	0.017**	0.000*	0.000*

*significant at an alpha of 0.01; **significant at an alpha of 0.05

Source: Field survey, 2012

The results also revealed that 39.3 percent of the variations in helping students explore their hidden emotions and 0.5 percent of the variation in overcoming disturbing emotions harboured by students was explained by variation in using a coordinated decision-making approach in counselling.

Josselson (1996) maintains that the counsellor has a primary obligation to the students, who are to be treated with dignity and respect as unique individuals.

Thus, the counsellor accepts their individual differences and allows a dual

relationship where students are guided to make decisions (Urumbo, 2000). Okuma (2005) asserts that such conditions allows for effective counselling and heightens benefits for the client. The preceding results therefore confirm these assertions that a dual coordinated effort is positively associated with desired outcomes.

According to Josselson (1996), the overriding significance of guiding students to explore their emotions is to assist them to overcome disturbing emotions. This is particularly important because, disturbing emotions may engender undesirable attitudes. In the case of this study, exploring students' emotions was positively, but weakly ($R = 0.290$) associated with helping students overcome disturbing emotions. Moreover, 8.4 percent of the variations in the counsellors' ability to help students overcome disturbing emotions was explained by the counsellors' ability to guide students' to explore their hidden emotions. Thus, it was inferred that some students may have been helped to explore their emotions but the effort in assisting them to overcome their disturbing emotions may not be adequate. Further statistics indicated that this relationship was statistically significant at an alpha of 0.05.

In line with the conceptual framework, the personal development of the student may include issues of emotional development, which borders on exploring emotions and overcoming disturbing attitudes. In the case of this study, the fact that these variables were weakly correlated indicated that the personal development of students seeking counselling may not be strongly reinforced by the counselling process.

Perception of students on the role of guidance counsellors

According to Mancillas (2004), perceptions are impression formations individuals have of certain objects, events, or concepts. In the case of counselling, student perception can influence participation or utilisation of counselling programmes. In view of this, the perception of students about the roles of the school counselling programmes were assessed based on their expressed impressions of the programme. The perceived roles of the counsellor was first assess by the study and the results, as shown in Table 12, indicated that students had multiple perceptions about the role of the counsellor.

The students' responses showed that students held perceptions that the counsellor played coordinating, counselling, guidance and advocacy roles. These roles of the counsellor are affirmed by (McMahon 2001). A little over 32 percent of the responses showed students' perception that the counsellors' primary role was to coordinate learning and academic achievement of the student. A parallel view held by students was that the counsellor had the role of counselling students on emotional and behavioural adjustment. However, aggregating the responses showed that 36.5 percent of the responses pointed to the coordinating roles of the counsellor, which depicted the counsellors' coordinating roles as most commonly referred role. The differences in perspectives about the counsellor's role is emphasised by several studies (Martin, 2000; Erford, 2003). According to Bowers and Hatch (2002), it may be as a result of differences in individual experience and expectations of counselling.

Table 12: Perceived roles of counsellors

Roles	Frequency	Percent
Coordinating learning and academic achievement	54	32.3
Counselling on emotional and behavioural adjustment	54	32.3
Guidance in academic and social choices	35	21.0
Advocate for students' interests	17	10.2
Coordinating teaching and administrative duties	7	4.2
Total	167	100.0

Multiple response; n = 67

Source: Field survey, 2012

The perception of students about their counsellors' roles was also expressed in their satisfaction with those roles. This was important for ascertaining the counsellors' role that met students' perception of effectiveness. As shown in Table 13, a significant section of students were not certain about their satisfaction with the coordination (49.3%) and advocacy roles of their counsellors (47.5%). This may be explained by the fact that students may not be aware of how the counsellor coordinates their learning with the teachers' teaching approaches or how those factors in the counselling proves. Thus students may not be the direct benefactors of the counsellors' coordination activities. Similarly, advocacies made by the counsellors on behalf of students may not be easily noticed by students. This may also explain their uncertainty and indecisiveness about their satisfaction with the counsellors' advocacy roles.

However, the results indicated that the majority of the students were satisfied with the counselling (85.1%) and the guidance (76.1%) roles of the counsellor. Students may have been able to express their concerns about the counselling and

guidance roles of their counsellors because they are direct observers and recipients of these roles.

Table 13: Students' satisfaction with counsellors' roles

Responses	Roles			
	Coordination n=67	Advocacy n=67	Counselling n=67	Guidance n=67
Undecided	33(49.3)	48(71.6)	-	2(3.0)
Very satisfied	8(11.9)	6(9.0)	8(11.9)	12(17.9)
Satisfied	26(38.8)	8(11.9)	57(85.1)	51(76.1)
Dissatisfied	-	5(7.5)	2(3.0)	2(3.0)
Very dissatisfied	-	-	-	-

Percentages are in parentheses

Source: Field survey, 2012

Students' expressed satisfaction with the counselling and guidance roles of counsellors, according to House and Martin (1998), may be a factor for the sustenance of counselling programme. It is also an indication of the effectiveness of role performance of counsellors. Thus, the study inferred from the results that counsellors were effective in their counselling and guidance roles but the results on the coordinating and advocacy roles were inconclusive.

Mancillas (2004) maintains that students have diverse perceptions about school counselling programmes, some of which may be positive and reinforce the counselling process, while other may discourage participation and threaten the sustainability of the counselling programme. According to the results, the majority (71.3%) of students disagreed with the assertion that only people with mental

problems seek counselling (Table 14). This was true for most females and males, and the association of responses was found to not to be statistically significant at an alpha of 0.05.

The results indicated that there were not statistically significant differences between the perception of male and female students regarding the idea that only people with mental problems seek counselling. This also meant that most students were not negatively stereotyping counselling as a therapy for mentally challenged people. According to Ntare (2000), this stigma to counselling has often been found in many second cycle institutions, however this study suggests that such discouraging stereotypes was not very popular among the students surveyed.

Further examination of the results indicated that 45.6 percent of the student population were of the view that only people with learning difficulties sought counselling services. This may be an indication that some students may absent themselves from counselling based on their belief that they do not have learning difficulties.

Table 14: Students' perception of school counselling

Responses	Gender			Chi-square <i>p-value</i>
	Male	Female	Total	
Only people with mental problems seek counselling				
Agree	11(25.0)	18(25.8)	29(28.7)	8.053
Disagree	33(75.0)	39(74.2)	72(71.3)	0.045*
Only people with learning difficulties seek counselling				
Agree	24(54.6)	26(45.6)	50(45.6)	3.857
Disagree	20(45.4)	31(54.3)	51(47.8)	0.277
Counselling is for delinquents				
Undecided	10(22.7)	5(8.8)	15(14.9)	
Agree	20(45.4)	26(45.6)	46 (45.6)	7.578
Disagree	14(31.8)	26(45.6)	42(39.7)	0.108

Percentages are in parentheses; *significant at an alpha of 0.05

Source: Field survey, 2012

The disaggregated data however, indicated that while majority (54.6%) of males agreed that only people with learning difficulties sought counselling, most (54.3%) females held the opposite view. The distribution was however found not to be statistically significant at an alpha of 0.05, indicating that statistically there was no difference between the percentage of male and females that held the view that counselling was only for students with learning difficulties. According to Batt et al. (2002), such perceptions about counselling can discourage students' participation in counselling programmes. This is because students may not risk being labelled as dumb or inept due to their participation in counselling. Gysbers

and Anderson (2007) add that such negative perceptions are influenced by inadequate understanding of counselling and the benefits that students may derive from their participation.

Herr (2001b) also found that a common perception of counselling held by students is that counselling is recommended for only delinquents. Thus, students may avoid counselling as an effort to avoid being labelled as delinquents. In the case of SHS student in the Accra Metropolis, the study established that 45.6 percent of the sampled students agreed that only delinquent students were referred to counsellors, while almost 40 percent disagreed with the statement. This showed that a greater section of the student populace stigmatised students who sought counselling as delinquents. In Kuhn's (2004) study such perceptions challenge voluntary participation in counselling programmes and also threaten the sustainability of the entire programme.

The conceptual framework emphasises that perceptions held about the counsellors, including their trustworthiness and confidentiality influences decisions to participate in counselling programmes. Thus, it is important for students to have positive perceptions about the counsellors' traits as well as the confidentiality of the programme. This is because private issues may be directly or indirectly expressed during counselling, under the desperation of seeking help from the counsellor. The study therefore explored the perceptions that students hold about their counsellors' traits and the confidentiality of the counselling programme.

Table 15 revealed that a greater percentage of the sampled male (40.9%) and female (42.1%) students agreed that their counsellors were not confidential. Given a Phi of 0.384, and based on Rea and Parker's (1992) classifications, it was asserted that there was a moderately strong association between gender and their perceptions on their counsellors' confidentiality. The Phi-statistic is used because the test variables were measured on a nominal scale. A p-value of 0.005 also indicated that the association was statistically significant at 99 percent confidence level. The perceived un-confidentiality of counsellors, according to Urombo (2000), often impedes voluntary solicitation of counselling services and in compulsory counselling the student does not fully cooperate or disclose salient issues that might help solve the problem at hand.

The study also showed that 33.7 percent of the sampled students agreed that their counsellors were unethical. According to Okuma (2005) these ethical issues concern practices, such as counsellor-student relationship and codes of conduct about disclosing private information about the student. These codes of conduct, according to 41.5 percent of the students were being practiced by their counsellors. A greater section of males and females thus, disagreed that their counsellors were unethical, and a Phi of 0.307 with a p-value of 0.023 testified that the association between the gender perceptions of the ethics of their counsellors were moderately strong. According to Adoto (2008), this may be an impetus for further participation in counselling programmes.

Table 15: Students' perception of counsellors' practices

Responses	Gender			Phi <i>p-value</i>
	Male	Female	Total	
Counsellors are not confidential				
Undecided	10(22.7)	8(14.0)	18(17.8)	0.384 0.005*
Agree	18(40.9)	24(42.1)	42(41.6)	
Disagree	16(36.3)	25(43.9)	41(40.6)	
Counsellors are unethical				
Undecided	15(34.1)	10(17.5)	25(24.8)	0.307 0.023**
Agree	14(31.8)	20(35.1)	34(33.7)	
Disagree	15(34.0)	27(47.4)	42(41.5)	
School counsellors cannot help				
Undecided	10(22.7)	5(8.8)	15(14.9)	0.404 0.005*
Agree	14(31.8)	17(29.8)	31(30.7)	
Disagree	20(45.4)	35(61.4)	55(54.5)	

Percentages are in parentheses;

*significant at an alpha of 0.01; **significant at alpha of 0.05

Source: Field survey, 2012

At an alpha level of 0.01, further examination revealed that statistically significant section of males (45.4%) and females (61.4%) were of the view that counsellors could help them overcome their challenges. Based on Rea and Parker's (1992) classification, the strength of the association between students' gender and their perception about the ability of their counsellors to help them to overcome their problems was relatively strong. This association was found to be statistically significant at an alpha of 0.01. This meant that the perceptions that male and female students form about the counsellors' abilities can strongly determine their

participation in the counselling programmes. This is emphasised by the conceptual framework, which maintains that perceptions formed about the counsellor influences utilisation of the counselling service.

Factors influencing students' utilisation of guidance and counselling programmes

Several factors relating to demography, beliefs, experience and peers may influence the utilisation of counselling services. For example, Adebimpe (1994) found out that not only do socio-demographic differences influence counselling utilisation, but also in the types and severity of disorders seen among different populations. Mwangi (2004) adds that variances in the patronage of school counselling by students may stem from internal beliefs and insecurity about counselling to external prior experiences and tell-tales about counselling practices. This study therefore examined the factors that influence students' utilisation of counselling services for the understanding of the driving forces behind students' participation in school guidance counselling services.

The factors influencing the utilisation of guidance counselling services on a personal level were examined by the study, as shown in Table 16. According to the study, 66.3 percent of the sampled students agreed that personal realisation of the need for counselling would influence them to seek counselling services.

Table 16: Student factors affecting counselling

Preamble: I will go for counselling if	Gender			Phi-statistic <i>p-value</i>
	Male	Female	Total	
I realise that I need it				
Undecided	1(2.3)	3(5.3)	4(4.0)	0.258 <i>0.151</i>
Agree	32(72.7)	35(61.4)	67(66.3)	
Disagree	11(25.0)	19(33.3)	30(29.7)	
I would be stigmatised				
Agree	22(50.0)	22(38.6)	44(33.7)	0.419
Disagree	22(50.0)	35(61.4)	67(66.3)	<i>0.001*</i>
I did not like my first experience				
Undecided	3(6.8)	9(15.8)	12(11.9)	0.349 <i>0.015**</i>
Agree	19(43.2)	19(33.3)	38(37.6)	
Disagree	22(50.0)	29(50.9)	51(50.5)	

Percentages are in parentheses;

***significant at an alpha of 0.01; **significant at alpha of 0.05**

Source: Field survey, 2012

This meant that awareness creation about the need for counselling and making students understand the reasons for counselling could boost participation in counselling programmes, as emphasised by (Kuhn 2004). The response was true for most male (72.7%) and female (61.4%) students. The differences in responses for males and females was found not to be statistically significant at an alpha of 0.05, indicating that the influence of self-realisation on the utilisation of counselling for male and females was statistically the same.

Further examination showed that 50 percent of males and 61.4 percent of females maintained that they would not seek counselling services if they would be stigmatised as a result. Given a p-value of 0.001, the results indicated that the association between counselling utilisation and the possibility of stigma was statistically significant. Moreover, a Phi-statistic of 0.419 showed that the relationship was strong. Thus, based on the responses, it was inferred that the possibility of stigmatisation significantly hindered students from seeking counselling services. This is emphasised by Ponec and Brock (2000), who also found similar results in their studies.

Other studies emphasise that students' impression of their initial experience with counselling services can be a defining factor for subsequent participation (Ntare, 2000). Thus, the importance of the initial impression, as emphasised by the continuum model for impression formation, cannot be overemphasised. Table 17 showed that a little over half of the sampled students (50.5%) indicated that they would not seek further counselling services if they did not like their first experience with the counsellor. Based on Rea and Parker's (1992) classification, a Phi-statistic of 0.349 showed a moderately strong association between students' decision to utilise counselling services and their first experience with counselling. This confirms findings by Friedman and Petrashek (2009), which established that students would often discontinue counselling if their initial experience is undesirable or does not meet their expectations.

Table 17: External influence on counselling utilisation

Preamble: I will go for counselling if	Gender			Phi-statistic <i>p-value</i>
	Male	Female	Total	
My parents insisted				
Undecided	3(6.8)	11(19.3)	14(13.9)	0.287 0.080
Agree	10(22.8)	15(16.3)	25(24.7)	
Disagree	31(60.4)	31(54.1)	62(61.4)	
A teacher recommended it				
Undecided	-	6(10.5)	6(5.9)	0.288 0.079
Agree	24(54.5)	19(33.3)	43(42.5)	
Disagree	20(45.5)	32(56.1)	52(51.5)	
My peers encouraged me				
Undecided	5(11.4)	1(1.8)	6(5.9)	0.432 0.001*
Agree	17(38.6)	10(17.6)	27(26.7)	
Disagree	22(50.0)	46(80.7)	68(67.3)	

Percentages are in parentheses;

***significant at an alpha of 0.01;**

Source: Field survey, 2012

Some studies have also established that students often seek the approval of their peers, teachers or guardians before embarking on counselling services, because students often accord considerable importance to the opinions of guardians, teachers and peers. These opinions are therefore important in students' decisions to participate in counselling. The study there explored the possibility that such opinions influence students' utilisation of counselling services.

According to 61.4 percent of the students, their parents' insistence on counselling would not influence them to go for counselling. This response was common among most males (60.4%) and females (61.4%), and the strength of the association between the responses, given a Phi-statistic of 0.287, was moderately strong (Rea & Parker, 1992). However, the association was found not to be statistically significant, indicating that the influence of parental influence on counselling was not significant for both male and female students. These results contradict earlier finds that students are keener to counselling upon parental recommendation and influence (House & Hayes, 2002).

Further examination of the results also indicated that more than half (51.5%) of the student population noted that their teachers' recommendation for counselling would not influence them to go for counselling. Thus, however the disaggregated data showed that the majority (54.5%) of male students sought counselling based on their teachers' recommendations, while most (56.1%) females were not influenced by their teachers' recommendations for counselling.

The association between the responses for males and females regarding their response to counselling based on their teachers' was found to be moderately strong (Phi-statistic = 0.288). This meant that there was a moderate likelihood that teachers' recommendations would influence males to seek counselling but not girls. However, the association was found not to be statistically significant at an alpha of 0.05. Thus, the general response that students are not influenced by their teachers' recommendations to go for counselling, holds true. These findings also contradict studies that suggested that teachers' recommendations could improve

students' participation in counselling (Denga, 2001). The results could also be a lack of creditworthiness among teachers and insecurities felt by students, as expressed by Edet (2008) that students may feel that counselling may be used as an alternative to inquire of personal issues that may be relayed to a disciplinary committee.

It was also established that 67.3 percent of the sampled students would consider counselling if their peers encouraged them to do so. This confirmed findings that peer influence and prior experience of peers is very practical in the decision to seek counselling (Hartman, 1999). This was emphasised by half of the male population and four-fifths of the female population, indicating that female-students may be more sensitive to peer influence than males. A Phi-statistic of 0.432 indicated that the association between peer influence and students' counselling utilisation was relatively strong, as shown by Rea and Parker's (1992) categorisation of Phi-values. The derived association was also found to be statistically significant at an alpha of 0.01, indicating that significant section male and female students would seek counselling upon their peers' encouragement.

Several traits of the counsellor have also been found to have significant influence on students' participation in counselling programmes (Ubana, 2008). For example it has been asserted that the counsellors' appearance, ethics and appeal to students often play important parts in the utilisation of counselling.

Table 18 showed that 60.4 percent of males and 54.1 percent of females disagreed that an appealing personality of counsellor would not encourage them to seek

counselling. Furthermore, a relatively strong association was found between students' decisions on utilising counselling and the personality of the counsellor. The findings confirm the strong relationship between decisions made on counselling utilisation and the counsellors' personality (Martin, 2002), but contradict findings that an appealing personality of the counsellor would encourage participation in counselling programmes (Murdock, 2004).

Further examination showed that the counsellors' ability to uphold ethics was influential to 64.9 percent of the female students and 55.6 percent of the male students, in their decisions to solicit counselling services. Testing for the strength of the association between the responses showed a relatively strong association between the responses of the sexes. This was also statistically significant at an alpha of 0.01. It was therefore inferred that maintaining high ethical standards would improve participation of students in school guidance counselling programmes as emphasised by Gysbers and Handerson (2007). It is also emphasised by the conceptual framework and the narrative inquiry theory that ethical standards, leading to mutual and reciprocal respect is central to the sustainability of counselling sessions and an effective means of helping the client.

Table 18: Counsellors' traits influencing counselling utilisation

Counsellor traits	Gender			Phi-statistic <i>p-value</i>
	Male	Female	Total	
Appealing personality				
Undecided	3(6.8)	11(19.3)	14(13.9)	0.419 0.001*
Agree	10(22.8)	15(16.3)	25(24.7)	
Disagree	31(60.4)	31(54.1)	62(61.4)	
Ethical				
Undecided	14(31.8)	4(7.0)	18(17.8)	0.431 0.001*
Agree	24(55.6)	37(64.9)	61(60.4)	
Disagree	6(13.6)	16(28.1)	22(20.8)	

Percentages are in parentheses;

***significant at an alpha of 0.01;**

Source: Field survey, 2012

Challenges constraining the effectiveness of student counselling

Adegole and Culbreth (2000) write that several challenges may be encountered in school guidance counselling services particularly due to the sensitivity of the impact of perceptual influences on utilisation of counselling. The challenges encountered by students, that may serve as deterrents to utilisation of guidance counselling services were examined by the study for necessary rectification. Table 19 indicates that students had multiple problems with the counselling services that were provided in their schools. The commonest challenge, identified by 32.9 percent of the responses was poor confidentiality on the part of the counsellor. Other responses (29.2%) pointed to the lack of personal interest on the part of the students. Another hindrance to counselling utilisation was fear of stigma as noted

by 18.3 percent of the responses. These challenges are similar to those confirmed by Gysbergs (2004).

Table 19: Challenges to counselling utilisation

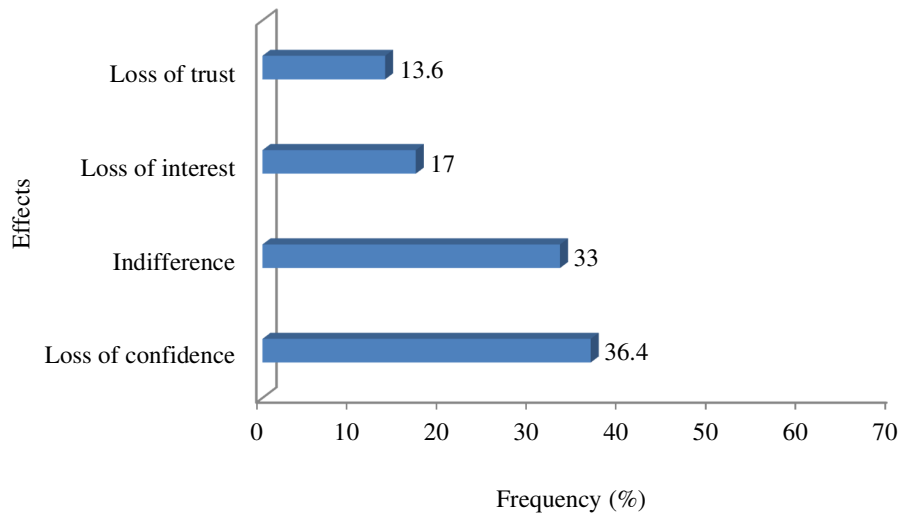
Challenges	Frequency	Percent
Poor confidentiality	72	32.9
Lack of personal interest	64	29.2
Fear of stigma	40	18.3
Disapproval of parents	22	10.0
Unappealing personality of the counsellor	13	5.9
Disapproval of peers	8	3.7
Total	219*	100.0

*Multiple responses; n= 101

Source: Field survey, 2012

The implication of the identified challenges to the study is that they represent the major issues that constrain students from participating in counselling programmes. Moreover, these challenges may also constrain the effectiveness of the counselling programme and efforts to assist the client. In several studies such challenges have specific effects on students' participation in the counselling programme. In this study, the major effect of these challenges was the loss of confidence in the counsellor (36.4%). Other students (33%) indicated that the prevalence of these challenges makes them indifferent to counselling, as shown in Figure 3.

According to the client centred theory, building mutual trust, interest and confidence between the client and the counsellor, without which the effectiveness of programme may impede the success of the programme.

Figure 3: Effects of challenges on counselling utilisation

Source: Field survey, 2012

The key informants added that counsellors are often also teachers or have other responsibilities towards the school. Therefore, they do not have adequate time to attend to students' counselling needs. This to a large extent reduces the effectiveness of counselling and the extent to which students' concerns can be rectified through counselling. It is a fact that teachers are often appointed for operation day-to-day counselling, while the District counsellor occasionally makes routine visits to schools (Accra Metro Education Service, 2002). This affirms the reasons for the inadequacy of time for students.

In several other studies, these challenges are sought in order for rectification (Bulus, 2001). Various suggestions have been made with respect to the stakeholders in the counselling programme, including teachers, headmasters, counsellors and guardians. Table 20 revealed that the 30 percent of the students suggested that teachers should continue to advice students and also make efforts to

understand them better (26.2%). Such efforts could contribute to understanding students' counselling needs and improve attempt to help them.

It was also suggested that headmasters could cease using the proceedings of counselling for disciplinary action. About 25 percent of the students also suggested that more awareness about counselling could be made and supervision for counsellors could be intensified in order to improve ethical compliance by counsellors. In addition, to 52.5 percent of the students suggested that counsellors should improve on maintaining confidentiality as poor confidentiality leads to students' issue being used for disciplinary action. According to Kuhn, L.A (2004), confidentiality is one major element of a successful counselling programme, and making the proceedings of counselling independent of school's disciplinary committee activities hold key to participation of students.

The key informants also suggested that counselling in the schools must be given fewer teaching periods and given the needed support to carry out their counselling duties. They also suggested that the counsellors should be given some autonomy as to how to handle confidential issues.

Table 20: Students' suggestions for improving counselling

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage
Teachers		
Advice students	24	30.0
Understand students	21	26.2
Maintain confidentiality	18	17.8
Recommend counsellors	17	21.2
Headmaster		
Cease punishing students who come forth	21	36.8
Inform students about counselling	14	24.6
Proper supervision of counsellors	12	21.1
Make counselling compulsory	10	17.5
Counsellors		
Maintain confidentiality	53	52.5
Encourage students	35	34.7
Create a more trusting environment	13	12.9

Source: Field survey, 2012

The reason was expressed by one counselling co-ordinator that the headmasters often make follow-up and requests for any knowledge of deviant behaviour from counsellors, which could be used for disciplinary action. This is often a practice found in schools through several studies (Denga, 2001). However, the studies also suggest that such practice underlie low utilisation of counselling and poor sustainability of counselling programmes in schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents summary of objectives and the findings for the study. Conclusions from the results and discussions are drawn and presented. Recommendations to improve the effectiveness of counselling programmes in schools are also made.

Summary

This section provides the summary of the study and its major findings. The study sought to examine students' perception of guidance school counselling within senior high schools in the Accra Metropolis. Descriptive and cross-sectional research designs were adopted for the study. The study covered 101 students, ten headmasters and three counselling coordinators from ten schools in the Accra Metropolis. Questionnaires were used to gather data from students, while interview guides were used to collect data from headmasters and counselling coordinators. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data. Other statistical tools, such as chi-square, Phi-statistic and Pearson's correlation were used to draw inferences and to test for statistical significance of differences and associations between the study variables.

The study examined the processes of guidance counselling in SHSs within Accra Metropolis and the following were revealed:

1. Majority of the schools had formal counselling programmes for students and this involved appointing teachers, chaplains, headmasters and housemasters and mistresses as school counsellors.
2. Students mostly preferred being counselled by their teachers through verbal questioning because it allowed them to learn from the counsellors' experience and also gave them the opportunity to better express themselves. Other methods used for counselling included questionnaires for privacy and narratives for discussions.
3. The counselling process generally encouraged coordinated decision-making between the counsellor and the client, however, headmasters were found not to encourage coordination in decision making. Similarly, the counsellors generally allowed for free expression by students, but this was not encouraged by headmasters.
4. A positive relationship was found between counselling services that accepted the students' personalities on the one hand and helping them overcome disturbing emotions or exploring hidden feelings, on the other hand. Similarly, a positive relationship was found between programmes that allowed for coordination of the client and counsellor and helping students overcome their emotions.

With respect to the perception of students on the role of guidance and counsellors, the following major findings were revealed:

1. Students' perceived roles of the counsellor included coordinating, counselling, guidance and advocating. Students generally expressed satisfaction with the counselling and guidance roles of the counsellor.
2. Majority of the students were of the perception that counselling was not only for students with mental problems or those with learning difficulties. The majority of male students were of the perception that counselling was only for delinquents, but most females did not share the same view.
3. Students were also of the perception that counsellors were not confidential, but others were of the perception that the counsellors were ethical and their efforts were perceived by the majority of the students as helpful.

The major findings, with respect to the factors influencing students' utilisation of guidance counselling programmes were:

1. The majority of students indicated that their self-realisation of the need for counselling would influence them to seek counselling. Most students also expressed that they would not utilise school counselling services if they would be stigmatised as a result or if they did not like their initial experience with the counsellor.
2. According to most students, their parents' or teachers' insistence on counselling would not influence them to utilise counselling. However, the majority of students expressed that they would consider utilising counselling if their peers encouraged them to do so.

3. Most students also expressed that an appealing personality of the counsellor would encourage them to go for counselling. Moreover, the counsellor's ability to uphold ethics would also encourage them to undertake counselling services.

The final objective of the study was to examine the challenges students encounter in counselling and the major findings were:

1. The most common challenge identified was the poor confidentiality of the counsellors. Other challenges identified were the lack of personal interest, fear of stigma, and disapproval of parents.
2. The major effect of these challenges was the loss of confidence in the counselling process. Other effects were the loss of trust in the counsellor, loss of interest in the counselling process, and indifference to counselling services. Other challenges identified were inadequate time for counsellors to attend to students.
3. In order to overcome these challenges, students suggested that teachers should maintain confidentiality, headmasters to cease punishing students who came forth, and counsellors to maintain confidentiality.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the major findings of the study. With respect to the process of guidance and counselling, the study concludes that the use of school teaching and non-teaching staff as counsellors was common to all the schools. The counselling process was mostly a coordinated effort between students and their counsellors to determine a solution to students' problems.

Generally, students were of the perception that counsellors were effective in their counselling and guidance roles as against their coordinating and advocacy roles. Some perceptions of students could discourage them from seeking counselling and these included the perceptions that counselling was for only delinquents. However, other students were open up to the idea of counselling because they were of the perception that counselling was neither for students with learning difficulties nor for students with mental problems.

The factors influencing students' counselling utilisation covered issues about their personal beliefs and other externalities such as the encouragement of their parents, teachers and peers. There were other counsellor factors, such as his/her personality and ethics that were found to also influence the utilisation of counselling services by students.

The major challenging issue for students was the poor confidentiality of counsellors. The challenges identified led to loss of trust in the counsellor, loss of confidence in the counselling process and indifference to the counselling services.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and conclusions of the study. Students are advised to advocate for their concerns including keeping their issues expressed during counselling strictly confidential and independent of disciplinary action through their counsellors. This is aimed to providing security for students who would then be encouraged to seek counselling services for much needed guidance.

Counsellors are advised to maintain mutual respect and trust between themselves and their student-clients during counselling. This can help eliminate any threat of insecurity that may lead to the student closing in on issues and emotions that should be expressed for a proper diagnosis of the students' condition and the application of the suitable help.

The counsellors should also protect students' interest by disallowing the use of counselling proceedings for purposes not intended in the initial counselling objectives that were reached between the counsellor and the student. This could help solidify the trust between the student and the counsellor and thus make the student more comfortable with sharing their experiences.

The counsellors and teachers should make efforts to correct students' negative perceptions about counselling, either during counselling sessions or in classrooms. This could help provide a better understanding of the reasons for counselling and benefits that students stand to gain from participation.

Headmasters should desist from making request about counselling proceedings for disciplinary action. An appropriate term of reference and the conditions under which the counsellor must report disturbing behaviour to a third party should be well established and followed. It should also be made aware to the student during counselling when such reports are to be made to reduce the element of surprise which may lead to students' termination of counselling sessions.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The study suggests further studies into methods of improving the confidentiality and ethical practices of school counsellors. Methods of improving students' participation can also be further researched into. Quantitative studies that link counselling utilisation to moral behaviour and academic performance can also be conducted to bring to light the real effects of counselling on students.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR STUDENTS

The questionnaire examines the perception and utilisation of school guidance and counselling programmes in SHSs in Accra Metro. Your response will contribute greatly towards meeting this objective and shall be used only for the purpose of this study. The confidentiality of your responses is assured.

Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics of students

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Form
4. Subject of study
5. Career goal

Section B: Counselling processes of guidance counselling

6. Does your school have a guidance and counselling programme?
7. If yes how did you get to know of such programmes?
8. Have you ever participated in a school guidance and counselling process?
9. If no what were your reasons for nonparticipation?
10. If yes, how many times have you sought the services of your school counsellor?
11. What was your reason for engaging in the school counselling programme?
12. If you have never sought school guidance and counselling service, what reasons can you provide to explain your non-involvement?
13. What type of counselling do you often engage in?

- a. Formal counselling and guidance programmes by teachers or District counsellors
- b. Informal guidance and counselling by peers and colleagues
- c. Voluntary participation
- d. Compulsory participation

14. Which of the following people have you ever been counselled by?

- a. Teacher
- b. Headmaster
- c. Housemaster
- d. District counsellors
- e. Colleagues
- f. Others specify

15. Indicate the counsellor that you find most beneficial to your needs?

- a. Teacher
- b. Headmaster
- c. Form master
- d. Housemaster
- e. Colleagues
- f. Others specify

16. What type of counselling service is often conducted for students?

- a. Private counselling with school counsellor
- b. Group counselling with school counsellor
- c. Private counselling with peers
- d. Group counselling with peers
- e. Others identify

17. Which of the following are you most comfortable with?

- a. Private counselling with school counsellor
- b. Group counselling with school counsellor
- c. Private counselling with peers
- d. Group counselling with peers
- e. Others specify

18. Explain your choice in question 17 above?

19. Which of the following do you think is most effective in solving your counselling needs?

- a. Private counselling with school counsellor
- b. Group counselling with school counsellor
- c. Private counselling with peers
- d. Group counselling with peers
- e. Others identify

20. Explain your choice in question 19 above

21. What modes of communication are often used during the counselling process?

- a. Verbal questioning
- b. Questionnaires
- c. Video playbacks
- d. Narratives from the counsellor
- e. Other specify

22. Which of the following communication methods are you most comfortable with?

- a. Verbal questioning

- b. Questionnaires
- c. Video playbacks
- d. Narratives from the counsellor
- e. Other specify

23. Explain your choice in question 22 above

24. Which of the following methods is most effective in solving your counselling needs?

- a. Verbal questioning
- b. Questionnaires
- c. Video playbacks
- d. Narratives from the counsellor
- e. Other specify

Indicate the extent to which you agree to the statements below using the following guide: 0 = Undecided; 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Strongly Disagree

Preamble	0	1	2	3	4
25. The counsellor makes a attempt to understand my concerns and needs					
26. The counsellor decides on the acceptable goals with me and helps me achieve them					
27. The counsellor instils a sense of confidentiality in me					
28. The counsellor calls me from time to time and questions me about the progress I have made towards achieving the set goals					
29. The counsellor accepts my personality without imposing his ideals on you					
30. The counsellor's choice of words help maintain mutual respect throughout the counselling process					

31. The counsellor's non-verbal behaviour of words help maintain mutual respect throughout the counselling process					
32. The counsellor listens me					
33. The counselling process allows me to express himself/herself					
34. The counselling process helps the student explore feelings and attitudes					
35. The programme helps students discover hidden emotions, attitudes, and abilities					
36. The programme helps students overcome disturbing emotions and disordered behaviours					
37. I am satisfied with the current performance of school counsellors					
38. I am satisfied with the overall counselling process					
39. Overall, the school guidance and counselling programme is important					

Section C: Perception of students on the role of guidance counsellors

Indicate the extent to which you agree to the statements below using the following guide: 0 = Undecided; 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Strongly

Disagree

Preamble	0	1	2	3	4
40. If you seek for counselling services, it means you have a mental problem					
41. Only people who have difficulties in learning seek guidance and counselling					
42. Counselling is for delinquents					
43. I am a bright student so I don't need counselling					
44. Counselling is a form of punishment for students with bad behaviour					

45. If you go for counselling everyone will know about your problems					
46. I don't think the school counsellor can help me with my problems					
47. You don't need school counselling if you have problems with your family or friends					
48. School counselling and guidance programmes are necessary only for improving academic performance					
49. School counsellors cannot maintain confidentiality					
50. The counselling process and environment is conducive					
51. School counsellors are often unethical					

52. Which of the following can you identify as the role of your counsellor?

- a. Coordinating students' learning and academic achievement
- b. Coordinating teaching and students' understanding
- c. Collaborating teaching and students' learning styles
- d. Collaborating teaching and administrative duties
- e. Advocating for students' interests for high academic performance
- f. Guiding students' in academic and social choices
- g. Counselling students on emotional and behavioural adjustments
- h. Others specify

53. How satisfied are you with the counsellor's:

- a. Coordinating roles
- b. Collaborative roles
- c. Advocacy roles
- d. Guidance roles
- e. Counselling roles
- f. Others specify and indicate you level of satisfaction

Section D: Factors influencing students' participation in guidance counselling programmes

Indicate the extent to which you agree to the statements below using the following guide: 0 = Undecided; 1 = Strongly Agree; 2 = Agree; 3 = Disagree; 4 = Strongly Disagree

Preamble	0	1	2	3	4
54. I will go for counselling if I realise that I need it					
55. I am more likely to go for counselling if my					

parents insisted					
56. I am will go for counselling if a teacher recommended it					
57. I am more likely to go for counselling if my peers also go for it					
58. The opinion of my peers is important in my decision to partake in counselling programmes					
59. If my peers have a negative impression about counselling then I wouldn't go for counselling even if I need it					
60. If my peers discourage me from seeking counselling then I wouldn't seek counselling services?					
61. If I am going to be labelled as a delinquent or mentally ill by my colleagues if I go for counselling, then I wouldn't participate even if I need it					
62. I would only go for counselling if the counsellor has a trusting appearance					
63. I would only go for counselling if the counsellor has an appealing personality					
64. I would only go for counselling if the counselling environment is relaxing and conducive					
65. If I am not pleased with my first counselling experience then I will never go for school					

counselling again					
66. If there is a rumour that the counsellor is unethical then I wouldn't seek counselling					
67. I would only go for counselling if I feel that others won't know about my problems					

68. Have there been instances where a student's concerns expressed during counselling have been passed on by the counsellor to another party, such as the student's parents are a disciplinary committee?

69. If yes, how does it influence your decision to go for counselling?

70. If no, does it encourage you to go for counselling?

71. If no, why?

72. Have there been instances where a student was molested by a counsellor or a counsellor used inexplicit or explicit sexual or offensive language or action during counselling?

73. If yes, how does it influence your decision to go for counselling?

74. If no, does it encourage you to go for counselling?

75. If no, why?

Section E: Challenges constraining the effectiveness of student counseling

76. Which of the following can you identify as posing a problem for you utilization of school counseling programmes? Tick all that apply

- a. Poor confidentiality
- b. The fear of being labeled badly by peers
- c. The fear of other students knowing about my problems

- d. Poor counseling environment
- e. Unappealing personality of the counselor
- f. Unappealing appearance of the counselor
- g. Disapproval of parents
- h. Disapproval of peers
- i. Lack of personal interest

77. Which of identified challenges create the greatest challenge to your participation in school counseling programmes?

78. In what way does the factor identified in question 77 above affect your participation in the programmes?

79. What do you think the following people can do to motivate you to partake in school counseling programmes?

- a. Teachers_____
- b. Headmaster_____
- c. Counselors_____
- d. Parents_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX 2
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADMASTERS/COUNSELING
COORDINATORS

The interview guide examines the perception and utilisation of school guidance and counselling programmes in SHSs in Accra Metro. Your response will contribute greatly towards meeting this objective and shall be used only for the purpose of this study. The confidentiality of your responses is assured.

1. Occupational title
2. Number of years served in your current position
3. Indicate whether the school is a single-sex institution or a mixed-sex institution
4. Indicate whether the school is a private or public institution
5. School population
6. Number of teachers
7. Does the school have a guidance and counseling programme?
8. If yes, how are students made aware of this service?
9. Indicate whether the counseling process for students is voluntary or compulsory?
10. What is the general reaction of students towards the stated option in question 9 above?
11. Does the school employ teachers as counselors?
12. If yes, what are the criteria for choosing a teacher as a counselor?

13. Is a conscious effort made to train selected teachers in guidance and counseling of students?
14. If no, why?
15. If teachers are trained in guidance and counseling, what specific issues are they trained in?
16. Is counseling and guidance an official role of teachers in their job description?
17. If no, what is the general reaction of teachers towards additional counseling roles to their teaching duties?
18. Does the school employ the services of district counselors?
19. If yes how often does the district counselor visit the school?
20. Indicate whether students generally prefer being counseled by their teachers or by external counselors
21. What reasons can you give for student's preference?
22. Does the school have a special office for counseling of students?
23. If no, where does the student counseling take place?
24. What measures are put in place to ensure the confidentiality of counselors?
25. In what ways are ethical standards of counseling enforced?
26. What roles can you identify as the roles of counselors in your school?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
27. Which of the identified roles are you mostly satisfied with?
28. To what extent do you agree that the counseling environment encourages students to relax and provide security and confidentiality?

29. Would you agree that the counselling process is effective in achieving students' counseling needs?
30. If no, what could be accounting for the gaps on performance?
31. How do you think these performance gaps can be closed?