



Learners perceptions of guidance and counseling delivery at senior high schools in Atebubu-Amantin municipal, Ghana

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Abstract

Guidance and counseling is becoming increasingly important in Ghana and around the world. The demands of learners in senior high schools are constantly evolving with changes in society, opening the door to the expansion of counseling services to address academic and other difficulties. This research examines learners' perceptions of guidance and counseling delivery at senior high schools in the Atebubu-Amantin Municipal, Ghana. Gestalt theory of perception was adopted in the study. An ex post facto research design was used to conduct the research investigation. The target group was all three public senior high students and one private senior high student from the municipality, Ghana. Four senior high schools in the municipality were selected purposively and simple random sampling was applied to obtain the sample. Four hundred students were selected. Data were collected using a questionnaire that was evaluated by counseling professionals; Its reliability index is 0.89, which was fair. Descriptive and inferential analysis of the data was conducted. The study indicated a positive relationship between the relevance of guidance and counseling delivery and academic needs. Furthermore, from the findings, gender of the learners showed significant interest in providing guidance and counseling delivery. Finally, the age of the learners proved to be important in ascertaining their interest in guidance and counseling delivery. The study recommends that teacher counselors' workload should be reduced so that they have time to address the academic and other personal needs of learners.

Keywords: Guidance and counseling, interest, academic needs, perception, learners

Introduction

Counseling service at senior high schools in Ghana is an important service that aims to contribute to the overall development of learners while they are in school and even after graduation. An effective counseling program attempts to address the academic, cognitive, social, spiritual, personal, vocational and behavioral needs of learners (Godfrey, 2022) [15]. This helps in changing the changing patterns of society in Ghana and around the world (Adu & Mpuangnan, 2022) [1]. Schools that have adopted and facilitated effective counselling programs can see the benefits of this worthwhile area of educational service. According to Dondo (2004; Gross & Capuzzi 2001) [11, 16], areas that require school counseling include dealing with academics, vocation, traumatic events, grief, orientation issues, illness, and relationships. To meet the demands of the learners, Dondo (2004) [11] defines a competent guidance and counseling teacher as a person who has good relations with the learners, is approachable, is a good listener, judgment is unbiased, trustworthy. He is intelligent, a

competent supervisor, organized, and empowered. Guidance and counseling have also benefited learners' academic performance (Siahi & Maiyo, 2015) [30]. According to Cheruiyot & Simatwa (2016) [7], increased provision of counseling services improves learners' academic performance.

In contrast, Tina & Ugochukwu (2014) [35] argue that guidance and counseling have not been effective in academic achievement due to the heavy workload of teacher counselors implementing the services. Guidance and counseling distribution improve students' academic progress and address their needs (Eremi & Jackson, 2019) [13]. Shehu *et al.* (2021) [29], a study conducted shows that eighty percent of the respondents reported positive changes in their academic performance after receiving counseling support and the performance was good. Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) [22] emphasized some services within the broader field of guidance and counseling aimed at helping learners meet academic demands such as academic motivation, good study skills, academic improvement initiatives, time and stress

management and subject selection. Ebizie *et al.* (2016) ^[22] also included senior high planning, library usage, strategies to pass exams, handling discipline, overcoming academic issues, classroom advising, etc.

Perception of guidance and counseling delivery.

Some studies perceived guidance and counseling delivery in educational institutions as negative. Fia (2018) ^[14] findings found that respondents perceive the University of Cape Coast guidance and counseling delivery negatively. Luck of confidentiality in counselors (Nyingi, 2014) ^[24]. Learners and teachers perceive guidance and counseling negatively on learners' academic needs (Hordofa, 2018) ^[17]. Parents and learners perceive the centres as poor (Alemu, 2013) ^[3]. Not withstand many studies have also revealed a positive perception of guidance and counseling delivery in learners' academic needs. Asamari & Namale (2018) ^[4] results showed that students in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana perceived guidance and counseling delivery as relevant. Principals positively perceive guidance and counseling delivery on learner academic achievement (Yusuf, Famolu & Adekola, 2021) ^[35]. A positive connection between providing guidance and counseling delivery and learners' academic needs (Godfrey, 2022) ^[15]. Students' knowledge about the specific roles of counselors has shown a positive attitude towards counseling (Dontoh, 2020) ^[10]. Selected Kenyan secondary school students, based on age and gender, exhibit a positive interest in educational and vocational needs in guidance and counseling programs (Ng'eno & Magut, 2014) ^[24]. Students have positively evaluated the role of guidance and counseling distribution, acknowledging its importance (Joseph & Bowen, 2020) ^[20]. There is a positive perception among students about the role of guidance and counseling distribution in Kenyan secondary schools (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2014) ^[18].

The relevance of guidance and counseling delivery in education

Providing guidance and counseling delivery in educational institutions has grown relevant in recent years. Many schools make concerted efforts to assist individual male and female learners in choosing their educational and future occupations, as well as other personal issues (SNDT Women's University, n.d.). Guidance and counseling assist learners in meeting their academic needs (Atsuwe & Albert, 2018) ^[6]. Guidance and counseling help young people pursue the appropriate education (Iyejare, 2022). When a learner is undecided between two career options, vocational guidance can assist them in making a decision (Dhami, 2020) ^[9]. In this manner, individuals are motivated (Thakur, n.d.). Learners sometimes become confused about time management (Sahu, 2020) ^[27]. The guidance services help learners plan their free time (Oliver, 2021) ^[25]. It helps learners make informed judgements about their education (Sandipan, 2022) ^[28]. Assist individuals in knowing the options accessible in courses, curricula, schools, and universities to decide what they wish to study (Gross & Capuzzi 2001) ^[16]. It lets them become aware of topic combinations or possibilities, what the subject entails in the classroom, available courses and the chances of pursuing a particular course, institutions and colleges offering the

desired programmes, admission requirements, and educational opportunities (Ahmad & Zadha, N.d.). It assists learners in dealing with examination anxiety (SNDT Women's University, n.d.). Fear of failing and a desire for high grades are vital sources of stress among today's learners (SNDT Women's University, n.d.). Learners have difficulty dealing with this pressure (Sood, 2016) ^[32]. The guidance assists learners in overcoming their fear and achieving good grades Ribadu (2021) ^[26]. It enables learners to form productive study habits (Kyauta (2017) ^[21]. It helps learners enhance their reading, note-taking, and academic needs (Siahi & Maiyo, 2015) ^[30].

The objectives of the study were

1. To determine learners' perception of guidance and counseling delivery relevance to their academic needs.
2. To assess learners' interest in guidance and counseling delivery in sex-wise.
3. To find out learners' interest in guidance and counseling delivery in age-wise.

Materials and Methods

The study employed ex post facto research design. According to Collins (1994) ^[8], this design involves examining the need to revert to the baseline data after connecting the intervention phase with the baseline phase. An ex post facto design was chosen because the researcher conducted the examination of the intervention without any reversals of the condition. Four hundred students were randomly selected, with 169 females and 231 males. 179 (43%) coming from form three, 119 (30%) from form two, and 109 (27%) from form one. 100 learners from Atebubu Senior High School, 100 from Amantin Senior High School, 100 from New Konkrompe Senior High School, and 100 from Vission Obama Senior High School. Selected learners answered questionnaires about their interest in the guidance and counseling delivery ability to meet their academic demands. Instruments were scored to determine students' perceptions, with relevance in guidance and counseling distribution indicated by an average score of 2.5 and above, uncertainty or neutral perceptions ranging from 1.8 to 2.4, and dissatisfaction or negative attitudes inferred by a score below 1.7. Descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted on the data.

Results and Discussion

The collected data were analysed using the t-test to test the hypothesis that there was no significance in student interest in guidance and counseling delivery by sex. Anova tested the hypothesis that the learner's interest in guidance and counseling delivery by age was insignificant. The first section provided an overview of learner's perceptions on the relevance of guidance and counseling delivery on academic needs (Table 1). According to Table 1, thirteen items had a positive perception, while seven had an uncertain perception of the relevance of guidance and counseling delivery on academic needs. A brief examination of these findings reveals that the learner's perception is overwhelmingly positive, implying that the learners know the relevance of guidance and counseling delivery to their academic needs. It was assumed that the services would receive good marks, especially since academics are the heart of any school

programme. Positive perceptions were noted regarding good study skills, orientation on the various subjects, motivation talks on academics, study skills/time management, academic improvement initiatives, setting personal educational goals, techniques of passing exams, choice of subjects, drug abuse prevention, discipline for academic achievement, overcoming learning difficulties, motivating weak learners, and school rules and regulations. Uncertainty replies were recorded stress management skills, use of library, talents recognition, orientation of new learners, needs of physically challenged learners, post-Senior high planning, and counseling for each class. The items' scores on the relevance of guidance and

counseling delivery on academic needs range from 2.41 to 2.78, giving the perception that guidance and counseling delivery influence learners' academic needs. These are the main components of the guidance and counseling delivery aiming at academic needs, implying that the service is evident in these schools. However, there is a growing need for re-engineering and refocusing in senior high schools to meet the increasing requirements of students. The overall average score of 2.50 indicates that students were generally satisfied with the relevance of guidance and counseling distribution for their academic needs.

Table 1: Relevance of counseling and guidance delivery on academic needs (N=400).

Counseling and Guidance on	Mean	Nature of Perception
Good study skills	2.66	Positive.
Orientation on the various subjects	2.59	Positive
Motivation talks on academic	2.78	Positive
Study skills/time management	2.63	Positive
Stress management skills	2.23	Uncertainty
Academic improvement initiatives	2.53	Positive
Setting personal educational goals	2.67	Positive
Use of Library	2.29	Uncertainty
Techniques of passing exams	2.59	Positive
Talents recognition	2.39	Uncertainty
Choice of subjects	2.50	Positive
Orientation of new learners	2.40	Uncertainty
Needs of physically challenged learners	2.23	Uncertainty
Post-Senior High Planning	2.19	Uncertainty
Drug abuse prevention	2.60	Positive
Discipline for academic achievement	2.75	Positive
Overcoming learning difficulties	2.50	Positive
Motivating weak learners	2.50	Positive
Counseling for each class	2.3	Uncertainty
School Rules and Regulations	2.78	Positive
Overall mean	2.5	Positive

Based on the findings, male and female learners had a roughly comparable interest in guidance and counseling delivery; nevertheless, Table 2 indicated no significant difference in the interest in guidance and counseling delivery by sex. As a result, the study findings reveal that sex did not significantly influence the interest in guidance and counseling delivery. Their interest was the same regardless of sex.

Table 2: Sex and interest of guidance and counseling delivery.

Sex	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Male	233	2.50	.38
Female	167	2.51	.34
Independent sample test	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	-151	398	.880
Equal variances not assumed	-154	.377	.878

Table 3: Age and interest in guidance and counseling delivery

Anova	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	.830	2	.415	3.259	.039
Within groups	50.581	397	.127		
Total	51.411	99			
Post Hoc tests Multiple comparisons					
(I) Age (years)	(J) Age (years)	Mean difference	Sig.		
14-15	16-18	0.09	0.025		
	19-20	0.15	0.04		
16-18	14-15	-0.09	0.025		
	19-20	0.06	0.404		
19-20	14-15	-0.15	0.04		

The data revealed that the age of the respondents influenced the interest of students in guidance and counseling distribution. Post hoc tests were conducted using the

Bonferroni examination to determine the significance of differences between means. There is a significant statistical difference in the interest of students between the ages of 14 to 15 years and 19 to 20 years ($F(2,397) = 3.259, p = 0.039$). The findings dismiss the notion that age does not significantly impact the interest of students in guidance and counseling distribution; it was found that students aged 14 to 15 and 19 to 20 exhibited a higher positive interest, indicating greater satisfaction than students of other ages. Based on this age-specific information, it is necessary to organize guidance and counseling tailored to different age groups for enhanced effectiveness (Table 3).

Discussion

According to the study, the attitudes of respondents towards the relevance of guidance and counseling distribution on academic needs were satisfactory, with an overall satisfaction mean of 2.50. On most of the issues examined, the students were content with the implementation of guidance and counseling in meeting their academic needs. Ribadu (2021)^[26] found that 63% of respondents strongly supported the role of guidance and counseling distribution in improving students' academic performance. These findings align with Yusuf, Famolu, and Adekola (2021)^[35] research, which indicated that guidance and counseling distribution encourages good study habits, leading to improvements in academic performance. Godfrey (2022)^[15] established a correlation between counseling services and academic needs, consistent with Atsuwe and Achugbulu (2018)^[6] findings. From the findings, learners' interest in guidance and counseling delivery sex-wise showed that the sex of the learners had no significant interest in guidance and counseling delivery. This was aligned with Asamari & Namale (2018; Ng'eno & Magut 2014)^[4, 23] that there was no statistically significant difference between the interest of sex of learners towards guidance and counseling delivery. For objective three, learners' interest in guidance and counseling delivery age-wise revealed that their ages significantly determined their interest in guidance and counseling delivery. Learners aged 14 to 15 years and 16 to 20 years were more satisfied than learners of other ages. Atodo (2008)^[5] affirmed the same while studying the utilisation of counseling services in schools. But Ng'eno & Magut (2014)^[23] study opposed that learners' age and sex have no statistically significant difference between the interest in guidance and counseling programmes. All these factors can be improved through school-based guidance and counseling delivery.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study reveals a prevailing positive perception among respondents regarding the significance of academic needs guidance and counseling delivery. This underscores the critical importance of enhancing the implementation of these services across all senior high schools in Ghana. The findings strongly suggest that for guidance and counseling delivery to be truly effective and responsive to learners' needs, it must be tailored to the specific age groups of students. Recognizing the diverse needs and developmental stages of learners across different age brackets is crucial for maximizing the impact of guidance and counseling programs. Furthermore, the study

highlights the necessity of adopting a comprehensive approach to guidance and counseling delivery. It emphasizes that addressing learners' interests goes beyond the academic realm and should encompass a broader spectrum of their requirements. The implementation of guidance and counseling services should extend beyond academic concerns to include vocational, health, social, and personal dimensions. This holistic approach ensures that learners receive support that is not only academically beneficial but also contributes significantly to their overall well-being. The implications of the study extend beyond the immediate academic sphere. Effectively implementing guidance and counseling services in all educational institutions holds the potential to bring about transformative changes in learners' lives. It has the power to influence their educational and vocational choices, enhance their health and social interactions, and contribute positively to their personal development. As such, there is a compelling argument for the widespread integration of these services to create a more comprehensive and supportive educational environment for learners across Ghana. The study, therefore, emphasizes the urgency of prioritizing and improving the delivery of guidance and counseling programs to create a positive and lasting impact on learners' holistic development.

Recommendations

The responsibilities of teacher counsellors should be reduced to allow them more time to address the specific needs of students, including those who are academically gifted, face learning and behavioral challenges, and others. The more time dedicated guidance and counseling distribution, the greater the likelihood that students will perform better academically and develop comprehensively. It is recommended that adequate time for guidance and counseling be incorporated into the school schedule to ensure that students pay attention and follow through. Retraining school counselors in the relevance of guidance and counseling programs to fulfil the expectations and needs of students is crucial. In this regard, guidance should be provided on strategies for exam success, fostering good study skills, and maintaining a positive perspective towards each subject. Contributions to the development of guidance and counseling materials in schools, including educational plans, stress and time management techniques, and other content, should be made. The findings suggest that students need to be more aware of the relevance of guidance and counseling in fulfilling their academic needs. School guidance and counseling should be available to all students, not just those with psychological disorders, so they can benefit from rigorous academic preparation and achieve excellence.

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