

**FUNCTIONING OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING CENTRES IN PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES OF GHANA**

A

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1.1. Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping society by fostering the dissemination of knowledge, skills, and values that enable individuals to understand their rights and responsibilities. It is the foundation upon which societal progress is built, fostering economic, social, and cultural development while promoting global collaboration through mutual tolerance and understanding (Karthikeyan, 2015). Many developed nations owe their prosperity to the strength of their education systems, which reduce poverty and inequality and create the foundation for sustainable economic growth (World Bank, 2016). In contrast, less developed countries often face challenges stemming from weaknesses in their educational systems, which impede progress (Abugieye, 2010).

The importance of education cannot be overstated as it serves as the cornerstone for the development of human resources in any nation (Prasad & Gupta, 2020). A robust education system not only contributes to economic development but also leads to the creation of an enlightened society, equipped with the necessary skills to address societal issues such as violence, injustice, and corruption (Asare, 2011; Prasad & Gupta, 2020). Furthermore, education enables individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and provides them with the knowledge to contribute meaningfully to the eradication of poverty (Asare & Nti, 2014). Thus, education plays an essential role in building a strong, progressive society.

However, despite the vital role of education, university students and teachers in Ghana face a range of challenges that hinder their academic success and well-being. These challenges include educational, vocational, and personal/social issues faced by students, and personal/social issues faced by teachers (Atta-Frimpong, 2013). University students in Ghana often encounter difficulties such as choosing the wrong academic programmes, lack of educational information, gender stereotyping in subject selection, poor study habits, difficulties in notetaking, exam-related problems, and a general sense of isolation, with few resources to turn to for guidance ((Salawu, 2008). Moreover, vocational challenges, such as career indecision, lack of career information, and an inability to assess one's abilities, further complicate students' educational experience ((Salawu, 2008).

Additionally, both teachers and students are confronted with personal and social challenges that impact their emotional well-being and academic performance. These issues include

anxiety, stress, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and low self-image ((Salawu, 2008). Some of these issues are minor, while others are more serious, and they can interfere with students' and teachers' ability to function effectively within the university environment (Ocansey, 2018). These challenges not only disrupt the academic process but also raise concerns among parents and educational stakeholders (Egbo, 2015; Ocansey, 2018).

Recognising these challenges, the Ghanaian government has implemented educational policies designed to promote guidance and counselling services at all levels of education, including universities (Essuman, 2015). These policies have led to the establishment of guidance and counselling centres in universities across the country, providing essential services to address the educational, vocational, and personal/social challenges faced by students, as well as the personal/social problems of teachers (Campbell & Nutt, 2008; Ocansey, 2018). Such services are crucial for helping students make informed decisions, providing career guidance, and addressing emotional and psychological issues.

The role of guidance and counselling centres in universities is central to the overall educational framework. These centres offer a variety of services, including preventive, developmental, and curative counselling, to assist students in making informed educational decisions and planning their futures (Eyo, Joshua & Esuong, 2010). Vocational guidance, in particular, helps students match their characteristics and interests with appropriate career opportunities, ensuring that they make realistic career choices (Taylor & Buku, 2006). The role of guidance counsellors in identifying and addressing the factors influencing students' career choices is vital in helping students navigate their educational journey and prepare for the workforce (Lunenburg, 2010; Sultana& Watts, 2004).

In addition to supporting students, guidance and counselling centres also assist teachers by addressing personal and social challenges that may impact their professional performance. Counsellors are trained to identify the signs and causes of these issues and provide appropriate interventions, preventing negative outcomes such as disruptions in academic environments and other forms of social dysfunction (Lunenburg, 2010)). The guidance and counselling centre also serves as a hub for developing social skills among students and teachers, such as effective communication, honesty, patience, and respect, all of which are crucial for fostering a positive educational atmosphere (Ocansey, 2018).

To function effectively, guidance and counselling centres require adequate resources. These include human resources, physical infrastructure, and financial support, all of which are necessary for the smooth operation of counselling services (Adoga, 2018). Without these resources, counselling centres cannot provide the necessary support to address the problems faced by students and teachers (Atta-Frimpong, 2013). Unfortunately, many public universities in Ghana face resource constraints, which hinder the effectiveness of their guidance and counselling services, resulting in dissatisfaction among students and parents (Alale, 2019; Hordofa, 2018). The availability of resources is critical to the functioning of these centres and their ability to address the challenges that students and teachers face in the academic environment.

1.2. Guidance and Counselling in Ghana

Guidance and counselling in Ghana started around the 1960s. Guidance and counselling in Ghana can be viewed from informal (traditional) guidance. Conventional Ghanaian practitioners practised as advisers before our various schools organised and scientific guidance eras. It occurred in pastoral care by significant people in the school, church, home, and community (Atta-Frimpong, 2013). In Ghanaian culture, adults and influential individuals (traditional chiefs, family heads, and religious leaders) are practised as sages (Atta-Frimpong, 2013). They advised on marriage, sharing wisdom, moral and other societal conduct and sanctions, and social life such as work. Others also practise it through dance, poetry, agencies, religious beliefs, music, psychological checks, and traditional medicine (Atta-Frimpong, 2013). Atta-Frimpong (2013), as cited in Essuman (1999), stated that the guidance was voluntary.

It was handled by the heads of institutions in the school system (second-cycle educational institutions), particularly in boarding schools. Teachers, chaplains, school prefects, housemasters, and mistresses practised it. Such voluntary services provided places and opportunities for the students to socialise and recreate, consult and advise them on moral issues, and assist and advise on their financial and other matters. They were organising orientation programmes for new students. Helping students solve their problems is crucial. They guided their students through Sunday school classes and discussions for their moral and spiritual growth. During that time, some prominent individuals and educational institutions began formal educational guidance and counselling in Ghana. Individuals and educational institutions

in Ghana in the 1960s and 1970s contributed significantly to establishing guidance and counselling.

1.3. Policy Perspectives: Higher Education

To improve educational guidance and counselling centres in Ghana, the Ghana government built guidance and counselling centres in higher education institutions and developed educational policies on guidance and counselling. Guidance and counselling have been recognised in educational planning in Ghana. Ghana's educational policy made great strides in establishing guidance and counselling. In 1976, the Ministry of Education policies established guidance and counselling at the nation's higher education to help students deal with social, behavioural, and personal problems (Taylor & Buku, 2006). The policies are as follows:

- Establishment of guidance programmes in higher education.
- Introduction of guidance and counselling into higher education.

In 1981/82, higher education guidance and counselling services were introduced in the national budget estimate to help improve the guidance and counselling services given to teachers and students Atta-Frimpong (2013), as cited in Essuman, (1999).

Additionally, in 2007, the Ghana Education Reform Committee, led by Anamuah-Mensah, emphasised the significance of guidance and counselling in supporting students in making the best choices, plans, and decisions and encouraging discipline in higher education and society. The reform policy emphasised widening educational services to include information-sharing guidance and counselling. The reform also emphasised special attention to training teachers in special needs guidance and counselling (Ministry of Education Republic of Ghana, 2007).

1.4. Meaning and Concepts of Guidance and counselling

1.4.1. Guidance

The term guidance has evolved to encompass a broad range of concepts. This is because guidance is a broad discipline with ramifications in every aspect of human endeavour (Sedofia, 2014). As a result, classifying the term guidance to suit scholarly curiosity would do a disservice to what guidance truly represents.

Despite this challenge, numerous authors and experts have attempted to provide their perspectives on what guidance should involve. At first glance, the term meaning can be traced back to the root word 'Guide', which means to direct, pilot, manage, steer, aid, assist, lead, inform, point out, or show the path (John, 2015). The guidance practitioner's responsibility for schooling would be to direct or steer an individual (by a succession of counsel) toward educational, vocational, and social/personal options. It is viewed by scholars from different perspectives, resulting in various definitions. Bedu-Addo (2016) views guidance as "a process of helping an individual to understand himself (personality, interests, likes, dislikes, potentials, strengths, weaknesses, aspirations, etc.) as well as his human and physical environment; to take meaningful decisions, make intelligent choices, so that such an individual will be able to improve his functionality". This definition implies that guidance is a process of supporting an individual in understanding themselves, as well as their personal and physical surroundings, to make meaningful judgments and intelligent decisions that will allow the person to improve their functionality.

In light of the above definitions from researchers and scholars, guidance can be described as a process designed to help individuals or groups of individuals in their environment. Guidance is preventive and developmental. It does not require only a professional trainer; any mature mind or senior person can give, and confidentiality is not needed as counselling. Guidance is a continuous process of assisting students at all levels of education to rediscover themselves, that is, their weaknesses and strengths, in addition to achieving their life goals within the context of their environmental forces.

Guidance is a;

Process: - A process is an event that is constantly changing throughout time.

Help: - Guidance helps or provides in the sense that its ultimate goal is to avoid, minimise, or solve issues.

It deals with;

Individual: - In this context, the term "individual" refers to students, or persons who are in a general condition of disequilibrium, either academically or otherwise. As a result, such persons require aid in overcoming their disequilibrium and achieving equilibrium.

Assisting them to;

Understanding oneself entails discovering one's own identity. That is, they develop an understanding of their unique personality or orientation. Furthermore, guidance assists individuals in realising their full potential, including their skills, abilities, capabilities, likes, dislikes, shortcomings, goals, etc.

Their world: - Here, guidance is defined as assisting the individual in understanding both his physical as well as human surroundings. The individual is helped to comprehend how to cope with inanimate objects (emotions, books, opinions, etc.) and people, all of whom impact the action the individual eventually takes.

Guidance can be understood as service. In this regard, guidance geared at meeting a need (choice/decision-making, marital, educational, etc.) is distinguished by structured acts that make it meaningful, relevant, operational, and accessible to students and persons.

Principles

These principles of guidance are accepted and have been shortlisted by John (2015) as follows: Guidance is for all: Every student needs guidance at all stages of life, from childhood to adulthood.

Guidance-Developed Capacities: Guidance focuses on the context of the overall development of a particular learner's personality rather than just one aspect.

Continuous Process: Guidance is lifelong; it starts from home to school and continues into society (Parents → Teachers → Community). Parents, teachers, and the community guide individuals to acquire the correct behaviour and values.

Characteristics

Murdock (2016) has shortlisted the characteristics of the guidance as follows:

Associate with all life: Students are social entities, and a social being's life has several facets. The guidance programme should address all of these facets of life.

Cooperation among students: In guidance, there should be cooperation among students and their guides because it is critical to building a sense of collaboration among those participating in counselling work to address students' problems.

Guidance is for all: The primary idea is that it is for all or should be for all because a person requires guidance at every stage of life.

Guidance Services

The primary guidance services include information services, evaluation services, orientation services, follow-up services, placement services, appraisal services, referral services, consultation services, and counselling services.

1.4.2. Counselling

Guidance and counselling have frequently been used interchangeably. However, counselling has different meanings. Efforts to define the concept of counselling have been made in various ways. Diversity arises from scholars' emphasis on philosophies and definitions. Some focus on how such sessions occur, while others emphasise the counsellor-student relationship. Both perspectives were considered general points for explaining counselling terminology. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2019) define counselling as a contractually agreed upon meeting between a student and a counsellor, focusing solely on the student's interests at a specific time and place. European Association of Counselling (2013) described counselling as an integrated student-beneficial relationship for approaching a student's issues. From the above definitions, counselling can be described as a mutual relationship between a counsellor, a professionally trained helper, and a student who is a consumer of counselling services in a confidential environment to assist the student in overcoming his problems. Counselling relationships vary according to need but can include addressing developmental issues, solving specific problems, making decisions, dealing with crises, and providing personal insights and knowledge. The goal is to provide opportunities to work toward a more satisfying and resourceful life.

Mode of Counselling

Counselling is usually conducted in two ways: face-to-face and online (Health Assured, 2018).

Face-to-face counselling: This entails a qualified professional meeting with each teacher or student in a confidential environment to discuss and counsel them on any challenges (Lisa, 2020). This type of counselling is highly effective and the oldest, as it offers personalised service while remaining completely confidential.

Online counselling: This is a more modern approach that occurs over the internet (Murdock, 2016). Online counselling is a technological method for teachers and students who use a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone (Morrow, 2021). It works with apps such as Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, FaceTime, WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, and Webex (Ansah et al., 2019).

Principles

The principles of counselling include the follows:

Empathy: Instead of displaying pity, put yourself in the teacher or student position and reflect accordingly (empathy is the ability to identify with a person).

Acceptance: Accept the teacher or student physical, psychological, social, economic, and cultural circumstances.

Counselling is not mandatory: Teachers and students should not be forced into counselling.

Characteristics

Palmer (2000) listed the characteristics of counselling as follows:

Counselling measures each individual: Each teacher or student is one kind. It is a reality that not all teachers or students look alike. They differ in various ways, including interests, abilities, attitudes, personality traits, aptitudes and values.

Everyone has access to counselling: Any teacher or student, despite their age, caste, gender, occupation, or social class, requires counselling at various stages of their development. It must be provided to everyone who needs it at any moment.

Counselling has no time limit: it is crucial in all phases of life. At various times during life, humans require counselling on various subjects.

Counselling Techniques

The three essential counselling techniques counsellors normally use are: directive, electoral, and non-directive.

1.5. Difference Between Guidance and Counselling

The terms 'guidance' and 'counselling' are comparable in most ways and are two sides of the same coin. Despite the confusion of the terms “guidance” and “counselling”, it is necessary to distinguish between them.

- ✓ Guidance is an umbrella term for a comprehensive educational programme of activities and services aimed at helping students make and carry out satisfactory life adjustments, whereas counselling is a component of guidance services (appraisal, placement, orientation, referral, follow-up, information, etc.). However, counselling is a subset of guidance in that it is one of the services of guidance (Bedu-Addo, 2016).
- ✓ Guidance is provided for a person or group of persons, and confidentiality is not guaranteed; however, counselling sessions always occur individually, and privacy is guaranteed (Andhra, 2023).
- ✓ Guidance can be provided by anyone (principals, teachers, priests, parents, qualified school counsellors, or any school employees) at any venue (school, marketplace, mosque, temple, church, etc.) or through any communication channel. (Television, billboards, radio, and so on). On the other hand, counselling may be provided only by a qualified counsellor in a confidential environment, either face-to-face or online (Bedu-Addo, 2016).

1.6. Tertiary Education (Higher Education)

Tertiary education is education offered after the secondary level. It includes University Education, Polytechnics University Nursing College, the College of Education, Professional Institutions and other institutions providing training leading to awards of diplomas and degrees. Ghana tertiary institution students are admitted based on their performance on the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). A maximum of 24 points (six credit passes) are required to apply for a bachelor's degree. The institutions enrol students in certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in various academic and professional fields. Students spend two or three years on a diploma, which is not equivalent to a bachelor's degree. A bachelor's degree is usually obtained after four years of study in a particular field. There are two types of master's degrees: one-year programmes with a final paper based on a literature review and two-year programmes with a final paper based on a year of independent research. Both can lead to a PhD, generally completed in three years as part of a doctorate programme.

1.7. Objectives of Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

Academic development, vocational growth, and personal or social development are the key objectives of Higher Education guidance and counselling centres (Oluremi, 2014). Iyejare (2022) identifies Higher Education guidance and counselling objectives as follows:

- To provide equipment, marketing and training programmes designed and improved student employment opportunities.
- Students should be taught through entrepreneurial training to become effective and skilled.
- Relevant job information should be provided, and the space between students and the job market should be bridged.
- Training and seminars on career and vocational lecture information, study habits, personal-social characteristics, etc., should be organised.
- Organising students/parents' community forums and engaging in debate with them on how to become model students for other guidance and counselling centres to learn.
- The guidance and counselling centre must develop and coordinate guidance-centred activities. The guidance centre must plan and coordinate guidance-oriented activities according to students' needs.

1.8. Importance of Guidance and Counselling

Students' lives are becoming more complicated every day. Guidance and counselling are needed to help students perform at their best and properly navigate different situations. University students need guidance and counselling services in education, careers, occupations, social issues, health, morals, and personal situations. In line with these, functioning educational guidance and counselling centres promote the growth of students in self-direction on how to solve psychologically related problems that impact their studies (Bhattacharjee, 2021). This process helps students adjust to different types of issues. This increases their difficulty-solving skills, allowing them to deal with their problems. Functioning guidance and counselling centres help students achieve their goals by knowing what, when and how to do it better (Iyejare, 2022). This approach helps students develop self-awareness about living in peace and harmony with their peers at school and teaches them how to appreciate other people in school.

1.9. Types of Guidance and Counselling

The three significant areas of guidance and counselling are educational, vocational, and personal/social (Gordon, Guez, & Allen, 2000). The university institution's guidance and counselling services aim to provide services that facilitate all students' total developmental needs and growth. The university institution's guidance and counselling services should assist students' needs in Educational, vocational, and personal/social.

1.10. Functioning of Guidance and Counselling Centres

Functioning is the act of doing what one is expected to do, serving in a purposive way, or fulfilling the objective of a task. The functioning of guidance and counselling has been conceptualised as a programme to assist individual students in achieving a balanced personality, physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and vocationally, based on individual needs (Corey, 2018). In guidance and counselling, measuring the improvement of the functioning of guidance and counselling centres and their overall success depends mainly on the counsellors and resources in the centre (Corey, 2018).

The ability of the counsellor to apply techniques, methods and skills to use the available resources appropriately to achieve the objectives will exhibit the functioning of the guidance and counselling centre. Therefore, resources have a role in solving various problems in university guidance and counselling centres to ascertain functioning guidance and counselling centres.

Counselling resources such as human, physical, informational and financial are needed in the centre to promote guidance and counselling delivery (Ibrahim, 2021). When resources are well equipped in the guidance and counselling centre, students and other beneficiaries realise that the guidance and counselling programme is theoretical and practical. It also helps guidance and counselling centres realise and engage teaching staff and students as active clients. When guidance and counselling resources are well equipped in the centres, they assist and enhance counsellors' competency and motivate students to patronise the centre.

1.11. Role of the University Counsellor

Like all other university employees, university counsellors have a set of professional and personal duties that define their scope of work (Nkechi, Ewomaoghene & Egenti, 2016).

The counsellor's first professional role is to improve the welfare of the clients (Atta-Frimpong, 2013). The counsellor must develop plans and activities to help improve teachers and students interests. The counsellors also create and implement strategies to assist clients with academic, career, personal, and social needs within the school environment and provide individual and group counselling to clients on educational, vocational and personal/social guidance. Additionally, individuals or groups of clients with personal problems, such as social and emotional problems, are assisted in personal development and good functioning (Mashiapata, 2018).

1.12. Effective University Counsellor: Characteristics

Oluremi (2014) outline the following characteristics of a counsellor.

Ethical: Being ethical improves the counsellor's professional characteristics.

Good Listener: As a counsellor, you should listen more than speak.

Encouraging: The power of encouragement is prudent for counsellors.

Patient: Counsellors must be patient while conversing with their teachers and students.

1.13. Rationale of the Study

Education serves as a vital pathway for students to display and enhance their talents and potential, ultimately fostering their academic growth. However, students in educational institutions, particularly in Ghana, encounter many challenges that hinder their progress. Many students struggle to meet these demands, leading to confusion, disappointment, and frustration, especially when faced with exam failures. External pressures from parents or relatives often compound this struggle during university enrollment and course selection processes.

In Ghana, the challenge of acquiring adequate vocational knowledge is prevalent across all educational levels, particularly for university students aspiring to further their studies and enter the workforce. Without proper guidance, many students find themselves ill-prepared and uncertain about their future career paths (Salawu, 2008). Therefore, providing vocational information and guidance during their university experience is crucial rather than delaying this support until after graduation. This lack of clarity about career options contributes to disappointment and confusion among students regarding their professional futures.

The atmosphere within Ghanaian public universities has been marred by internal unrest, including riots, strikes, and instances of violence, which have resulted in injuries and property damage. Alarmingly, there has been a rise in student suicides within these institutions (Brooklyn, 2023). Such incidents not only disrupt the educational experience but also pose significant threats to students' vocational and social development. The consequences could be dire if these issues persist without adequate professional counselling. Addressing the above challenges of university students requires effective and efficient guidance and counselling centres with adequate resources to support both teaching staff and students within the universities. Therefore, Ghana, as a developing country, the researcher needs to examine its public universities guidance and counselling centres to find out whether it has improved from time to time.

Many of Ghana's guidance and counselling centres are underequipped and lack essential human, financial, and physical resources (Aidoo, 2011). These insufficient resources at the universities guidance and counselling centres undermine the administration of guidance and counselling service delivery in Ghana. The inadequate number of qualified counsellors further exacerbates challenges for guidance and counselling centres. An inadequate number of counsellors can significantly diminish the quality and quantity of support available to both teaching staff and students at the guidance and counselling centres. This inadequate often results in long waiting times for those seeking counselling, which can hinder timely access to essential mental health and academic support. Consequently, students may struggle to find the guidance necessary to navigate various personal, social, vocational, and educational challenges (Kauchak & Eggen, 2011). However, Ghana is a developing country, and its economy is improving daily. The present state of human resources needs to be studied in the guidance and counselling centres.

Financial constraints also play a critical role in the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services. Insufficient funding can lead to inadequate counsellors, increased workloads, and decreased service quality. Additionally, these financial limitations can result in inadequate facilities and resources, restricting the ability to create a supportive environment for counselling sessions. As a result, guidance and counselling centres may find it challenging to reach underserved populations, diminishing the overall impact of their services and leaving vulnerable groups without necessary assistance. Ongoing financial issues threaten the

sustainability of these services, potentially leading to closures or reduced operational hours. Such constraints can severely limit access to mental health support for both instructors and students (Unwada & Godfrey, 2020). Therefore, the funding resources and deficiency of finances need to be investigated in Ghana's guidance and counselling centres.

The physical infrastructure of guidance and counselling centres, such as offices, furniture, computers, and internet connectivity, is crucial for effective service delivery. A lack of these resources can hinder counsellors' ability to conduct workshops, facilitate group discussions, or provide one-on-one support, including online counselling. The physical environment in which counselling services are offered significantly influences their accessibility and effectiveness. By examining the state of physical infrastructure, the researcher wants to gain insights into whether these centres foster a conducive atmosphere for counselling.

Out of the literature reviewed, it was found that there were few studies on the functioning of guidance and counselling centres in public universities in Ghana. The studies focused on the effective and efficient administration of guidance and counselling centres in Ghana. However, the researcher did not come across any study focusing on the availability of human, financial, and physical infrastructure resources, functioning of guidance and counselling centres, problems facing guidance and counselling centres and teaching staff and students perception towards guidance and counselling centres. Therefore, the researcher embarks on this Study, titled "Functioning of Guidance and Counselling Centres in Public Universities of Ghana".

1.14. Research Questions

Based on the above rationale, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. How does the availability of resources meet the objectives of guidance and counselling centres?
2. How do guidance and counselling centres function in public universities of Ghana?
3. What problems are faced by guidance and counselling centres?
4. What are the perceptions of the teaching staff and students towards the functioning of guidance and counselling centres?

1.15. Statement of the Problem

Functioning of guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana

1.16. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the resources of guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana in terms of:
 - (i) Human resources.
 - (ii) Financial resources.
 - (iii) Physical infrastructure resources.
2. To examine the functioning of guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana.
3. To find out the problems facing guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana.
4. To measure the perceptions of the teaching staff and students towards the functioning of guidance and counselling centres.

1.17. Delimitation of the Study

The present study was delimited to five public universities in Ghana, namely, the University of Ghana (UG), the University of Cape Coast (UCC), the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) and the University for Development Studies (UDS).

1.18. Explanation of the Terms Used in the Study

Functioning: Functioning these are the availability of resources and their need to provide services to the teaching staff and students.

Human Resources: Refers to counsellors qualifications, their roles, their time management, their counselling knowledge and techniques, and their record-keeping within the centres.

Physical Infrastructure Resources: These are tangible items used in guidance and counselling centres, such as counsellors' offices and furniture. Communicating online and offline using printed and non-printed documents, such as daily newspapers, employment news, magazines, journals, telephone, and the internet.

Financial Resources: These are the funding such as sources of funding and frequency of funds provided to the centres for the administration of the centres.

Public Universities: These are universities funded by the government of Ghana.

1.19. Operational Definition of the Term

Perception: Perception in this study refers to the score obtained in the perception scales administered to teaching staff and students in the guidance and counselling centres.

2.1. Review of Related Literature

The investigator reviewed 75 related studies. The studies have been reviewed from 1991 to 2023. The reviewed literature provided insight in to key areas like guidance and counselling centres human resources, guidance and counselling centres physical resources, guidance and counselling centres financial resources, time management, problems facing guidance and counselling centres, students perception of guidance and counselling, teachers perception of guidance and counselling and stakeholders perception of guidance and counselling.

The reviews had varied research methods and designs, including descriptive survey, explanatory sequential, descriptive survey and correlation, experimental, and ex-post-facto. The most commonly used research design was the descriptive survey design. It was also learned that these researchers mostly used simple random and purposive sampling to select samples. The majority of these investigators collected their data through questionnaires. Others also applied for questionnaires and interviews. The collected data were analysed quantitatively. Others were analysed qualitatively. Some also used both quantitative and qualitative analysis. It was learned from the related literature that qualitative and quantitative methods could be used in conducting a descriptive survey study.

Out of the related reviewed literature, the researcher found that there are few studies on guidance and counselling conducted in Ghana. The studies conducted in the Ghanaian context did not concentrate more on the guidance and counselling centres. People have a positive perception of guidance and counselling. There are numerous problems facing guidance and counselling centres in Ghana and abroad. However, the researcher did not come across any study focusing on the availability of human, financial, and physical infrastructure resources, functioning of guidance and counselling centres, problems facing guidance and counselling centres and teaching staff and students perception towards guidance and counselling centres. Therefore, the researcher embarks on this study, titled "Functioning of Guidance and

Counselling Centres in Public Universities of Ghana". Perhaps suggestions could be sought to improve guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana.

3.1. Plan and Procedure of the Study

The plan and procedure of the study are presented below.

3.2. population

The population of the current study consisted of all fifteen public universities of Ghana, all the counsellors at guidance and counselling centres in the public universities of Ghana, all teaching staff, and all students who visited guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana.

3.3. Sample

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The stratified random sampling technique was used to group the 15 public universities in Ghana into three strata: North zone, Central zone, and South zone. The researcher employed this sampling strategy to ensure that all groups in the population had the same chance of being represented in the sample.

The lottery method was used to select the universities in each zone. One out of the three public universities in the North zone was selected (30%), thus constituting University for Development Studies. In the Central zone, one out of the four public universities was selected (30%), thus constituting Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Finally, three out of eight public universities in the South zone were selected (30%), thus constituting University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba.

All 42 counsellors of the five sampled public universities formed the part of the sample. In proportion, 106 out of 352 teaching staff members who visited the guidance and counselling centres were selected (30%). 523 out of 1745 students who visited the guidance and counselling centres were selected (30%).

The sample covers five public universities, 42 counsellors from the five sampled public universities, 106 teaching staff and 523 students. The total sample size selected was 671 participants.

3.4. Description of Tools

As per the requirements of the objectives of the study, data for the functioning of guidance and counselling centres related to the objectives of human, financial, and physical infrastructure resources; functioning of the guidance and counselling centres; and problems facing the centres. The aim of the present study was also to measure the perceptions of the teaching staff and students towards the functioning of guidance and counselling centres. The researcher provided the tools below to achieve these objectives and collected the data.

- I.** Questionnaire: To achieve objective no. One, two and three of the study, the researcher constructed a questionnaire for counsellors.
- II.** Observation schedule: The researcher constructed an observation schedule to achieve objective no. one (physical infrastructure resources).
- III.** Perception Scale: To achieve objective no. four, the researcher constructed perception scales for teaching staff and students.

3.4.1. Questionnaires for Counsellors

The Present study included dimensions such as human resources, financial resources, functioning of guidance and counselling centres and problems facing guidance and counselling centres. The questionnaire comprises 82 items. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain data on human and financial resources, the functioning of guidance and counselling centres and problems facing the centres. Open-ended and close-ended questions were constructed for counsellors to collect data.

3.4.2. Observation schedule

The researcher constructed an observation schedule. The observation schedule included dimensions such as rooms, furniture, ICT equipment, and document materials. The observation schedule comprises 30 items. The aim of the observation schedule was to obtain data on physical infrastructure resources.

3.4.3. Perception Scale for Teaching Staff

Based on the objective of the study, a 5-point Likert-type perception scale was constructed by the researcher. The perception scale included dimensions such as qualification of counsellors, functioning of guidance and counselling and social/personal counselling. The perception scale

comprises 22 items. The perception scale aimed to measure the perceptions of the teaching staff. The perception scale had 5 alternatives stated in the scale. The alternatives score ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The 5 alternatives included strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The scores were assigned as follows: strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). For each statement, students were required to tick (√) on one alternative only.

3.4.4. Perception Scale for Students

Based on the objective of the study, the researcher constructed students with a 5-point Likert-type perception scale. The perception scale included dimensions such as qualification of counsellors, functioning of guidance and counselling, social/personal counselling, vocational counselling and educational counselling. The perception scale comprises 30 items. The aim of the perception scale was to measure the perceptions of the students. The perception scale had 5 alternatives stated in the scale. The alternatives score ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The 5 alternatives included strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The scores were assigned as follows: strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). For each statement, students were required to tick (√) on one alternative only.

3.5. Validation of the Tools

The prepared tools were presented to eight experts in Education and Psychology for validation. The experts analysed and scrutinised the tools prepared by the investigator in terms of content appropriateness and relevance to the study. The language employed was also analysed for ambiguity, comprehension and understanding of the questions by indicating relevant (√) or irrelevant (x) to each item in every dimension and providing comments and suggestions. Based on the expert's suggestions, the tools were modified. The experts who validated the tools are listed in the appendix. In addition, the finalised validated tools were included in the appendix.

3.6. Data collection procedure

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from his guide at the Department of Education, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, to seek permission from the sampling universities' authorities and respondents (counsellors, teaching staff, and students).

The questionnaire and the perception Scales were administered personally to the respondents so that they could react objectively. The researcher personally corrected the data with the assistance of a questionnaire, perception scales and observation schedule within a period of three months (June to August 2023).

3.7. Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected from the respondents were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively using descriptive analysis technique, applying frequency, percentage and intensity index to achieve the study objectives.

4.1. Major Findings of Objective 1

Objective 1: To examine the resources of guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana in terms of

- (i) Human resources
- (ii) Financial resources
- (iii) Physical infrastructure resources

Human Resources

- ❖ The majority of the counsellors in guidance and counselling centres in the public universities of Ghana had Ph.D. degrees with 6-10 years of working experience.
- ❖ Most of the counsellors had specialised in school and careers.
- ❖ The majority of the counsellors are lecturer counsellors.
- ❖ Most of the counsellors are from university of Cape Coast.

Financial Resources

- ❖ Most of the guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana received funding from their university administration.
- ❖ All the guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana received 1-5% of their university budgetary provisions.
- ❖ The budgetary allocation given to the centres to organise guidance and counselling services was insufficient.
- ❖ Most of the guidance and counselling centres received funding for physical infrastructure resources once a year.

Physical Infrastructure Resources

- ❖ It was found that guidance and counselling centres in the public universities of Ghana had sufficient stores for storage. However, they had insufficient offices for counsellors. Also, there are no separate rooms for testing and interviews.
- ❖ It was found that the guidance and counselling centres had sufficient tables, chairs, cabinets, cupboards, writing boards and notice boards.
- ❖ It was found that guidance and counselling centres had sufficient films. However, they have insufficient printers, scanners, computers, and telephones. Also, they do not have active internet for online counselling.
- ❖ It was found that guidance and counselling centres had sufficient daily newspapers, employment news, magazines, journals, monographs, career information manuals, records/files, charts and posters.

4.2. Major Findings of Objective 2

Objective 2: To examine the functioning of guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana.

Vocational Guidance and Counselling

- ❖ All the counsellors provided vocational guidance and counselling on developing career skills to their students. Most of them also provided vocational guidance and counselling on career choices, student self-employment and career assessment to their students.
- ❖ All the counsellors assisted their students with the latest and appropriate job information on vocational guidance and counselling. Most of the counsellors also assisted their students in occupational choices and the needed skills for applying for employment during vocational guidance and counselling.
- ❖ All of the counsellors organised vocational orientation for students to get information on how to make career choices. Most of them also organised students with knowledge in a specific career and organised entrepreneurial seminars for students.
- ❖ Less than half of the counsellors organised vocational seminars for students twice a year.

Educational Guidance and Counselling

- ❖ All the counsellors provided educational guidance and counselling on how to get information on the availability of scholarships, stipends, loans, etc. Most of the

counsellors also provided educational guidance and counselling on choices of educational programmes and developing good study habits.

- ❖ All the counsellors assisted their students with the prescribed curriculum on educational guidance and counselling. Most of them also assisted their students in getting information on further education and developing knowledge and skills necessary for further studies on educational guidance and counselling.
- ❖ Most of the counsellors organised educational guidance and educational counselling programmes, respectively, for their students.
- ❖ Less than half of the counsellors organised educational seminars for students twice a year.

Social/Personal Guidance and Counselling

- ❖ The majority of the counsellors provided social/personal guidance and counselling on personality development to their teaching staff and students. Most of the counsellors also provided social/personal guidance and counselling on safety issues, assertiveness and interpersonal skills.
- ❖ All the counsellors assisted their teaching staff and students in recognising their strengths and weaknesses during social/personal guidance and counselling. Most of them also assisted their teaching staff and students in carrying out character-building activities and different types of emotional problems during social/personal guidance and counselling session.
- ❖ All the counsellors provided social/personal orientation on cooperation with friends of the opposite sex effectively to their teaching staff and students. Most of them provided social/personal orientation on effective use of leisure time for teaching staff and students, successful adjustment to the environment and solution to their emotional problems.
- ❖ Most of the counsellors organised social/personal seminars twice a year for teaching staff and students.

Use of Time in Guidance and Counselling Centres

- ❖ Guidance and counselling centres in the public universities of Ghana open at 8:00 a.m. and close at 5:00 p.m.
- ❖ The majority of the counsellors report at 8:00 a.m. and leave at 5:00 p.m.

- ❖ The guidance and counselling centres work 5 days a week, and most of the counsellors spend an average of 45 minutes on teaching staff and students during counselling sessions.

Counselling Tools and Techniques

- ❖ The majority of the counsellors used verbal and non-verbal communication as a medium of communication during the counselling process.
- ❖ Majority of the counsellors used personality tests and interviews techniques to collect data of their teaching staff and students. Most of the counsellors also used achievement tests, aptitude test, diagnostic tests and intelligence tests and observation techniques to collect data of their teaching staff and students.
- ❖ The majority of the counsellors used cognitive and rational emotive behavioural theory. Most of the counsellors also used psychoanalytic, behavioural and humanistic theories as a basis of the counselling techniques and therapies.
- ❖ All the counsellors used direct counselling techniques during the counselling process. Most of the counsellors also used eclectic counselling and Non-direct counselling.

Services Provided by the Counsellor

- ❖ Majority of the counsellors informed their teaching staff and students of the university's guidance and counselling centre during orientation programmes for fresh students. Most of the counsellors also informed their teaching staff and students of the university's guidance and counselling centre during university gatherings.
- ❖ All the counsellors meet their teaching staff and students at guidance and counselling centres for counselling sessions.
- ❖ All the counsellors provided guidance services such as information services, evaluation services, orientation services, and follow-up services to their teaching staff and students.
- ❖ The majority of the counsellors provided online follow-up services and face-to-face interview follow-up services to their teaching staff and students. Most of them also provided discussion follow-up services to their teaching staff and students.
- ❖ All the counsellors act as advocates creating awareness of the guidance and counselling centre, act as a resource person for the community, act as a liaison between the university and the community, and as a counsellor for their teaching staff and students.

Online Counselling

- ❖ Majority of the counsellors in the guidance and counselling centres in Public university of Ghana did not conduct online counselling for their teaching staff and students.
- ❖ Majority of the counsellors in the university guidance and counselling centres preferred face-to-face counselling to online counselling.
- ❖ Public university guidance and counselling centres did not have reliable internet for online counselling facilities.
- ❖ Majority of the counsellors used smartphones for online counselling. Less than half of the counsellors also did not use any of the devices for online counselling.
- ❖ Majority of the counsellors responded that their teaching staff and students benefited from their online counselling.

Keeping Record of Counselling Sessions

- ❖ The majority of the counsellors kept records, sessions, and progress notes of their teaching staff and students in their offices.
- ❖ The university authorities checked most of the counselling records maintained by counsellors.

Recording of Counselling Sessions

- ❖ Most of the counsellors recorded the sessions of their teaching staff and students during counselling.
- ❖ Most of the counsellors used smartphones to record the counselling service of their teaching staff and students. Half of the counsellors also used laptops to record their teaching staff and students.
- ❖ The majority of counsellors used audio recordings to record the sessions of their teaching staff and students during counselling.

4.3. Major Findings of Objective 3

Objective 3: To find out the problems facing guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana.

- ❖ All the counsellors stated that the centres have inadequate number of counsellors. Most of them also stated heavy workload problems as lecturer counsellors.

- ❖ All the counsellors stated that the centres face inadequate funding for the campus and community outreach programmes. Most of the counsellors also stated inadequate funding to organise seminars and programmes.
- ❖ All the counsellors responded that the centres were facing inadequate number of offices for counsellors. Most of them also responded that the centres were facing inadequate tables and chairs.
- ❖ None of the guidance and counselling centres have active internet networks for online counselling.

4.4. Major Findings of Objective 4

Objective 4: To measure the perceptions of the teaching staff and students towards the functioning of guidance and counselling centres.

4.4.1. Perceptions of the Teaching Staff

Details of Counsellors

- ❖ The average intensity index of 3.60 indicated that the teaching staff perception was a favourable towards the details of counsellors, which included qualification of counsellors and experienced counsellors. However, teaching staff had an unfavourable perception of sufficient number of counsellors.

Use of Time in Guidance and Counselling Centres

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.41 indicated that teaching staff perception was a favourable towards the use of time in guidance and counselling centres, which included regularity of counsellors and adequate time given to the teaching staff during guidance and counselling sessions, respectively.

Services Provided by the Counsellor

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.26 indicated that teaching staff perception was a favourable towards the services provided by a counsellor, which included referring of teaching staff to other agencies, use of appropriate counselling techniques, counsellors confidentiality, liaison between the university and the community, use of latest psychological tests, relationship with teaching staff and effective counselling to teaching staff.

Online Counselling

- ❖ The average intensity index of 2.93 indicated that teaching staff perception was neither a favourable nor an unfavourable, it was undecided towards online counselling. However, teaching staff had an unfavourable perception, which included effectiveness of online counselling and adequate resources for online counselling. Teaching staff also had a favourable perception towards the benefits of online counselling.

Keeping Records of Counselling Sessions

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.53 indicated that teaching staff perception was a favourable towards keeping of records, which included having appropriate ethics in keeping of records, and keeping updated records.

Social / Personal Guidance and Counselling

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.34 indicated that teaching staff perception was a favourable towards social/personal guidance and counselling, which included conduct of social/personal counselling, conduct of social/personal guidance, assistance in social/personal problems, and organisation of relevant orientation programmes on social issues.

4.4.2. Perceptions of the Students

Details of Counsellors

- ❖ The average intensity index of 3.53 indicated that the students perception was a favourable towards details of counsellors, which included qualification of counsellors and experienced counsellors. However, students had an unfavourable perception towards sufficient number of counsellors.

Use of Time in Guidance and Counselling Centres

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.26 indicated that students perception was a favourable towards the use of time in guidance and counselling centres, which included regularity of counsellors, and adequate time given to the students during guidance and counselling sessions, respectively.

Services Provided by the Counsellor

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.13 indicated that students perception was a favourable towards the services provided by a counsellor, which included referring of students to other agencies, use of appropriate counselling techniques, counsellors confidentiality, liaison between the university and the community, use of latest psychological tests, relationship with students and effective counselling to students.

Online Counselling

- ❖ The average intensity index of 2.73 indicated that students perception was neither a favourable nor an unfavourable, it was undecided towards online counselling. However, students had an unfavourable perception, which included effectiveness of online counselling and adequate resources for online counselling. Students also had a favourable perception towards the benefits of online counselling.

Keeping Record of Counselling Sessions

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.29 indicated that students perception was a favourable towards keeping of records, which included having appropriate ethics in keeping of records, and keeping updated records.

Social / Personal Guidance and Counselling

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.46 indicated that students perception was a favourable towards social/personal guidance and counselling, which included conduct of social/personal counselling, conduct of social/personal guidance, assistance in social/personal problems, and organisation of relevant orientation programmes on social issues.

Vocational Guidance and Counselling

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.24 indicated that students perception was a favourable towards vocational guidance and counselling, which included conduct of vocational guidance services, conduct of vocational counselling services, assistance given in relevant job information and assistance given in developing career skills.

Educational Guidance and Counselling

- ❖ The average intensity index of 4.34 indicated that students perception was a favourable towards educational guidance and counselling, which included conduct of educational guidance programmes, conduct of educational counselling programmes, assistance given in prescribed curriculum and help given in relevant study skills.

5.1. Implication of the Present Study

The current study studied the functioning of guidance and counselling centres in public universities. The data collected from the study leads to the inferences of the present study. The findings from the current study have aided the researcher in deriving the following implications for further improvement in the present study.

5.1.1. Government of Ghana

- The government of Ghana should increase budgetary allocations to the universities to enhance guidance and counselling centres operational capacity and improve service delivery. This will increase their ability to provide effective services. Adequate budget allocations to the centres can bolster their functionality and bring an environment conducive to delivering comprehensive and accessible counselling services to teaching staff and students.
- The government of Ghana should provide adequate physical infrastructure resources such as counsellors offices, rooms, computers, and printers to the guidance and counselling centres. It will promote a holistic and student-centric approach to guidance and counselling within academic institutions.
- The government should establish more universities offering guidance and counselling courses that will train more trained counsellors to stop the inadequate number of counsellors in the guidance and counselling centres.
- The government of Ghana should implement standardised digital record-keeping systems for counsellors to ensure secure, organised, and easily accessible records of counselling sessions. This will improve the efficiency and accountability of the counselling process while facilitating better follow-up services for students.

5.1.2. University Administrations

- The university administrations should recruit more qualified personnel to reduce the workload on existing counsellors and ensure that teaching staff and students receive adequate guidance and counselling. This will help the counsellors to reduce prolonged waiting times for teaching staff and students seeking counselling, hindering their timely access to crucial mental health and academic support.
- The university administrations should invest in technological infrastructure like better internet connectivity to facilitate online counselling, which is increasingly important in the current educational landscape. Allocate space on the university website for guidance and counselling centres to facilitate session bookings, which could substantially augment the utilisation of online counselling services. This would ensure that students and teaching staff have equal access to counselling support, especially in remote or underserved areas.
- The university administrations should use their internally generated funds to construct office spaces for the counsellors in the guidance and counselling centres.

5.1.3. Guidance and Counselling Units

- The guidance and counselling unit should create awareness of the guidance and counselling services throughout the year, not only during orientation programmes for fresh students.
- The guidance and counselling unit should appropriately use the funds given to them specifically earmarked for the effective functioning of guidance and counselling centres. This will aid them to organise more programmes for teaching staff and students.
- The guidance and counselling unit should organise frequent workshops, seminars and in-service training for the lecturer counsellors in the guidance and counselling centres at least twice a year to ensure students receive up-to-date guidance and counselling. This can be achieved by allocating resources for event planning and involving industry professionals to provide practical insights.

5.1.4. Counsellors

- Counsellors should engage themselves in workshops and in-service training organised by the guidance and counselling unit to enrich their skills in online counselling.

- Counsellors should continue their dedication to using the available resources to maintain and strengthen their efforts to provide essential social/personal, vocational, and educational guidance and counselling services to their teaching staff and students. These will help students get current relevant job information and the prescribed curriculum.

5.3. Conclusion

The present study studies the functioning of guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana. The study focused on resources, i.e. human, financial and physical infrastructure, the functioning of guidance and counselling centres, problems facing guidance and counselling centres, and teaching staff and students perceptions. Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that studying guidance and counselling centres in educational institutions is essential. It was found that the guidance and counselling centres in public universities of Ghana have human, financial and physical infrastructure resources but are insufficient. Inadequate resources such as counsellors, funding, offices for counsellors, and inactive internet network problems. Therefore, the study advocates for supporting and strengthening approaches to address these resource concerns and enhance the efficacy of guidance and counselling centre services in public universities across Ghana. The present study found that the guidance and counselling centres are functioning. The counsellors used the available resources effectively to provide teaching staff and students with educational, vocational and social/personal guidance and counselling services. This indicated that providing more resources to the centres will aid the centres to function well. Therefore, counsellors must continue their dedication to use the available resources to maintain and strengthen their efforts to provide essential social/personal, vocational, and educational guidance and counselling services to their teaching staff and students. These will help students get current relevant job information and the prescribed curriculum. The present study also found that teaching staff and students had favourable perception towards the guidance and counselling centres service delivery. Hence, the government of Ghana, university administrations, guidance and counselling units and counsellors should corroborate to find solutions to the guidance and counselling centres problems. The implications of the findings are essential for improving the services delivery of guidance and counselling services.

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