

1
2 **STUDENTS' PATRONAGE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**
3 **SERVICES IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN GHANA**

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10 **GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES ARE EXTENSIVELY KNOWN TO BE**
11 **ADVANTAGEOUS IN SHAPING THE DECISION MAKING AND THINKING**
12 **CAPABILITIES OF BOTH STUDENTS AND EVEN PEOPLE AT WORK PLACES.**
13 **HOWEVER, THE SERVICES APPEAR TO BE LACKING IN SENOR HIGH SCHOOLS**
14 **(SHSS) IN GHANA. THIS STUDY EXPLORED STUDENTS' PATRONAGE OF GUIDANCE**
15 **AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN SHSS IN GHANA. THE STUDY FURTHER**
16 **IDENTIFIED THE FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' PATRONAGE OF GUIDANCE**
17 **AND COUNSELLING SERVICES. THE STUDY WAS TARGETED TO FORM 2 AND 3**
18 **STUDENTS. USING A CROSS SECTIONAL DESIGN, 24 SHSS WERE SELECTED OUT**
19 **OF 475 THROUGH A MULTI-STAGE SAMPLING TECHNIQUE. THE FINAL SAMPLE**
20 **MADE UP OF 2,969 FORM 2 AND 3 SHS STUDENTS WITH A RETURN RATE OF 98.25**
21 **PERCENT. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE WAS USED AS THE MAIN DATA COLLECTION**
22 **INSTRUMENT. THE DATA WAS ANALYSED USING PERCENTAGES AND FREQUENCY**
23 **COUNTS, AS WELL AS ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST ANALYSIS. IT WAS FOUND THAT**
24 **STUDENTS ARE AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**
25 **SERVICES (EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING ESPECIALLY) IN THEIR SCHOOLS.**
26 **HOWEVER, THE PATRONAGE OF THE SERVICES WAS LOW DUE TO FACTORS LIKE**
27 **ACCESSIBILITY OF THE SERVICES, MISCONCEPTIONS HELD BY THE STUDENTS,**
28 **ISSUES OF CONFIDENTIALITY, AND COUNSELLOR AS TEACHER. THE STUDY**
29 **RECOMMENDED THAT GES TOGETHER WITH HEADTEACHERS OF SHSS TO**
30 **PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FACILITIES AND LOGISTICS WHICH**
31 **ENHANCES THE WORK OF THE COUNSELLOR. AGAIN, THE GES IS ADVISED NOT**
32 **TO ALLOW COUNSELLORS POSTED TO SCHOOLS TO ENGAGE IN ANY TEACHING**
33 **ACTIVITIES.**

34 *Keywords: Guidance and counselling services, patronage, counsellor, Senior High*
35 *Schools*

36 **1. INTRODUCTION**

37 In most communities, there has been, and there still is, a deeply rooted conviction that under
38 appropriate conditions, people can help others with their problems. Some individual's assist
39 others find ways of solving, dealing with, or transcending their problems (Shayo, 2011) (1).

40 In schools, if the cooperation between students and teachers is good, students learn in a
41 practical way. Young people develop degrees of freedom in their lives as they become
42 aware of options and take advantage of them. At its best, helping should enable people to
43 throw off chains and manage life situations effectively (Badu, 2011) (2).

44 Extraordinary social and economic changes have, over the years, changed the ways in
45 which we manage our lives. Consequently, not all the lessons of the past can effectively deal
46 with the challenges of modern times. Effective counselling, especially in institutions of
47 learning has now become important (Appiah, 2013) (3). Boys and girls, and young men and
48 women, need to be guided in the relationships between health and the environment, earning
49 skills, knowledge, and attitudes that lead to success and failure in life. The need for
50 counseling has become paramount in order to promote the well-being of the child. Effective
51 guidance and counseling should help to improve the self-image of young people and
52 facilitate achievement in life tasks. Counselling should empower people to participate fully in,
53 and benefit from, the economic and social development of the nation (Aspen et al., 2015)
54 (4).

55 In everyday life, guidance and counselling goes on at many levels, for instance in a society,
56 doctors counsel patients, lawyers counsel clients, parents counsel their children and
57 teachers counsel students in school at all levels of education (Egbo, 2015) (5). Alude (2006)
58 (6) affirms that one way of achieving educational excellence is through comprehensive
59 guidance and counselling. That means that subject teachers must be involved in offering
60 guidance and reorganizing the academic curriculum to allow time for developmental
61 guidance. Yuen, Chan, Lau, Gysbers and Shea (2007) (7) have indicated that guidance and
62 counselling have a positive impact on student's development.

63 Guidance and counseling services are extensively known to be advantageous in shaping the
64 decision making and thinking capabilities of both students and even people at work places
65 (Gumisiriza, 2012) (8). It is further recommended to have such services in places where
66 youngsters are growing without knowing what is expected of them. There seems to be little
67 or no traces of counseling services in secondary schools in Ghana (UNESCO, 2011) (9).

68 Incidences of children growing without any direction and making regrettable mistakes are
69 quite many. For example, several young people choose to embrace early marriage while
70 others select subjects that do not have appropriate combination in during school enrolment
71 (UNESCO, 2011) (9).

72 **Inception of Guidance and Counselling in Ghana**

73 The need for formalised Guidance and Counselling became very crucial in Ghana with the
74 inception of the educational reforms of 1987. This led to the establishment of Junior and
75 Senior Secondary Schools in 1990. The Junior Secondary School (JSS) system was centred
76 on introducing basic scientific and technical skills and preparing students for academic work
77 and acquisition of technical/vocational skills at the secondary level. This makes guidance
78 and counselling essential since it must see to the educational and social growth of the
79 individual and society at large.

80 The first directive by the government of Ghana on the establishment of Guidance and
81 Counselling services in second cycle institutions was issued in 1976 (Essuman, 2001) (10).
82 This was later followed with another directive in 1982 indicating the introduction of Guidance
83 and Counselling Services in first cycle institutions. To see to the implementation of these
84 directives, the University of Cape Coast was charged with the training of counselling
85 personnel who would offer their services in the schools. In addition to this, as a temporary
86 measure, the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (I.E.P.A.) of the University
87 of Cape Coast was charged to train selected teachers from second cycle institutions to act
88 as Guidance Co-coordinators in these schools so that the needs of students would be
89 catered for.

90 With respect to the first cycle institutions, the directive requested for the institute to provide
91 in-service training courses in guidance and counselling for head teachers. This is to equip
92 them to play the role of guidance co-ordinators in their schools (Ackummey, 2003) (11). Two
93 more directives were issued in 1980: one for the inclusion of guidance and counselling in the
94 1981/82 budget estimates and another one was in 1982 for the introduction of guidance and
95 counselling in first cycle schools (Ackummey, 2003) (11). By 1981, 200 co-ordinators had
96 been trained and were working in the regional and district offices of Ghana Educational
97 Service or in the second cycle institutions (Assuah, 2004) (12). Therefore, in addition to the
98 existing content, vocational, technical and business subjects were added to the school
99 curriculum. This suggests that the Ghana found guidance and counselling in the educational
100 set up a crucial factor. The dynamic nature of our present technological world brings into
101 operation a number of forces that create problems of adjustment. As educational systems
102 reflect and respond to the needs of the societies they serve, the proposed new structure and
103 content of education in Ghana which has the guidance and counselling service as a
104 component part should be handled with all seriousness. This has led to the establishment of
105 guidance and counselling programmes in government and private tertiary institutions such
106 as University of Cape Coast, University of Education, Winneba. These institutions have the
107 mandate to train guidance and counselling experts to provide counselling services to
108 students and other people from all walks of life.

109 Rationale for the Study

110 My personal experience in teaching have revealed that many students of Senior High
111 Schools (SHS) find themselves engulfed in personal adjustment problems: feelings of
112 insecurity, low academic achievement, peer influence, loneliness, and conflict with peers,
113 teachers and parents, as well as stress problems which create tensions and anxieties in
114 them. Parents are more pre-occupied with their own problems for which they are seeking
115 solutions. Most children are therefore left with little or no guidance throughout their schooling
116 life. These children in most cases are left to make decisions ranging from what school to
117 attend; to what courses to offer as well as the occupation to engage in the future. As a result,
118 they go through stress as they try to make these crucial decisions (Taylor & Buku, 2006)
119 (13). Most students made wrong career decisions because they had no informed counsellors
120 to support them in their decision-making process (Ogunlade & Akeredolu, 2012) (14). Over
121 the years, adolescents have had to face identity formation crisis as well as wrestle with
122 conflicts in making decision and problem solving. Indeed, some adolescents do carry these
123 problems into adulthood despite the availability of guidance and counselling services in their
124 schools (Alice, Alice, & Patrick, 2013) (15).

125 Guidance and counselling programmes in educational institutions are designed to provide
126 professional relationships between counsellors and students and intended to guide, direct
127 and assist students to solve their problems as well as develop their potentialities (Appiah,
128 2013). Unfortunately, this programme is not being given the desired patronage by students
129 (Setiawan, 2006) (15). A student throughout his/her schooling may never experience or may
130 fail to seek guidance and counselling service. Even if he/she does seek for the service, it
131 may not be to the degree that is beneficial (Alice, Alice, & Patrick, 2013) (15).

132 Essuman (2001) (17), for instance evaluated guidance and counselling programmes in
133 schools throughout the nation, Ghana. These studies were done within the 1980s and 1990s
134 (i.e. from 1983-1997). The review examined the availability of guidance and counselling
135 programmes in the first and second cycle educational institutions, the guidance services run
136 by guidance coordinators, the ones least run, how effectively these services were
137 implemented and the problems encountered in establishing and running the programmes.
138 Essuman (2001) (17) discovered that most SHSs studied had guidance and counselling
139 programmes. However, the programmes were not effectively run. Teachers and
140 headmasters in first cycle schools were found to play some guidance roles. Students,
141 teachers and heads of schools, all indicated the need for guidance and counselling in
142 schools.

143 Fia (2011) (18) also studied guidance and counselling services in schools in the Ho
144 Municipality, Ghana. He reported that educational, vocational, and person-social counselling

145 were lacking in schools in Ho even where some of them possessed clearly demarcated
146 counselling centers to cater for the needs of clients. The absence of group school
147 counselling of students by any counsellor in the school was noted to have created ignorance
148 among students about counselling. Findings from Fia's (2011) (18) study indicates that
149 students did not make good use of the guidance and counselling services available in the
150 school

151 Essuman (2001) (17) and Fia (2011) (18) have made it clear that guidance and counselling
152 services are available in schools. However, these services are ineffective. A number of
153 debates arise from this finding. First, is it that students are not aware of the availability of
154 these services or they are aware of the availability of the services but are not patronizing the
155 services due to some reasons? In another sense, are the guidance and counselling services
156 available to students unable to meet the needs of the students? The latter would suggest
157 that students are not satisfied with the services or do not have the confidence in the services
158 provided and as a result do not patronise them. Answers to these mind-boggling questions
159 are not readily available in the Ghanaian context. This presupposes that little is known on
160 students' patronage of guidance and counselling services. This study, therefore, seeks to
161 explore students' patronage of guidance and counselling services.

162 Again, international studies have found a number of factors which influence students' level of
163 patronage of guidance and counselling services. Awinsong, Dawson and Gidiglo (2015) (19),
164 for one, concurred that students' knowledge of guidance and counselling services influences
165 their patronage of the services. Chan and Quinn (2012) (20) also discovered that the worry
166 that other people will find out about one's reasons for seeking professional help was an
167 important factor that inhibits access to counselling. Students shied away from counselling
168 due the fear of being teased and stigmatized by peers in the school. In Eliamani, Richard,
169 and Peter's (2014) (21) view non-professional counselling greatly influence students'
170 accessibility of guidance and counselling services. Due to the non-professionalism of
171 counsellors, some students doubt the degree of confidentiality assured by counselors and
172 that serve as a hindrance to their seeking guidance or counseling services (Jenkins &
173 Palmer, 2012 (22); Mushaandja, Haihambo, Vergnani, & Flanks, 2013 (23)). Menon (2010)
174 (24) found that the dual responsibilities of teacher and counsellor adversely affected access
175 to counselling programmes by most students. Due to the discrepancies in the context of the
176 previous studies, there is the need to found out which factors influence students' patronage
177 of guidance and counselling services.

178

179 **Research Questions**

180 The study was guided by two research questions:

181 1. What is the level of students' patronage of guidance and counselling services in
182 SHSs in Ghana?

183 2. What factors influence students' patronage of guidance and counselling services in
184 SHSs in Ghana?

185

186 2. **METHODOLOGY**

187 The study employed a cross-sectional survey using quantitative approach. The descriptive
188 survey was used for this study because the research was interested in exploring the current
189 state of guidance and counselling from the perspective of students. The study covered SHSs
190 in Ghana which were 475 as at the time of conducting this study. The study was, however,
191 targeted to SHSs in Greater Accra, Central and Western Region of Ghana which were
192 randomly selected. Only Form 2 and 3 students were sampled for the study through multi-
193 stage sampling technique. Form 2 and 3 students were used because they have been in the
194 school for some time and would be in a position to provide the relevant information with
195 regards to guidance and counselling.

196 The multi-stage sampling technique first comprised of simple random sampling technique
197 (Table of Random Numbers) which was used to sample the regions. Secondly, purposive
198 sampling technique was used to sample SHSs who had formal guidance and counselling
199 services available. Stratified sampling was then used to sample 24 SHSs within each
200 stratum (based on regions with regards to SHSs with the services). Quota sampling
201 technique was lastly used to sample participants from the selected schools using 40 percent
202 for Form 2 students and 60% for Form 3 students. Finally, 3,022 students were sample but
203 2,969 of them responded to the instrument. This led to a return rate of 98.25 percent. The
204 sample comprised 54.5 percent of male students and 45.5 percent female students. The
205 majority of the students were between 15-18 years of age.

206 A survey questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection. The items on
207 the questionnaire reflected the objectives to be achieved at the end of the study. To validate
208 the instrument, copies were sent to the supervisor to vet for its authenticity. According to
209 Anim (2005) (25) content and construct validity is determined by expert judgement. This
210 ensured content validity. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot testing was
211 done using 60 students in Edinaman SHS in Central Region. The internal consistency of
212 items in the questionnaires was determined by the use of Cronbach coefficient Alpha
213 reliability method as majority of the items were Likert scale. The Cronbach Alpha reliability
214 estimates for the questionnaires was 0.81 which signifies that the instrument had less errors.
215 Issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were considered. The researchers
216 ensured that participation was purely voluntary at all times. Before the participants responds

217 to the instruments the researchers explained the objective of the study together with the
 218 merits associated with the study to the participants. Their co-operation and assistance were
 219 sought before the instrument was administered to them. Informed consent was verbally
 220 sought. In addition to that, the issue of anonymity was also not compromised. Anonymity
 221 protects privacy by not disclosing a participant's identity after the information was gathered.
 222 Respondents were assured of their anonymity since names and other personal details were
 223 not associated with specific responses given. Participants were assured that information
 224 provided will not be disclosed to any third party other than its intended purpose (Creswell,
 225 2012) (26).

226 The data gathered were carefully sorted and processed using SPSS (version 25). Data
 227 regarding research question one was analysed using frequencies and percentages. Data
 228 collected on research question two was analysed using one-sample t-test analysis using an
 229 alpha level of .050. A test value of 2.5 was obtained and was compared with a test variable
 230 obtained from the data. Test variable means which were significantly ($p < .050$) above the test
 231 value suggested that the variable influenced students' patronage of guidance and
 232 counselling services.

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234

235 **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

236

237 This section of the analysis highlighted on two major areas: (a) the patronage of guidance
 238 and counselling, and (b) factors Affecting students' patronage of guidance and counselling
 239 services in SHSs in Ghana.

240 **Students' Patronage of Guidance and Counselling Services**

241 The students were asked whether they were aware of the existence of guidance and
 242 counselling services available in their schools, and the types of services available to them.
 243 Table 1 and 2 highlights on the results.

244

245 **Table 1. Awareness of Guidance and Counselling Services (n=2,969)**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Aware	2,789	93.9
Not aware	180	6.1
Total	2,969	100.0

246

247 The result, as shown in Table 1, revealed that over 90% of the students were aware of the
 248 guidance and counselling services (93.9%). However, 6.1% of the students reported that
 249 they were unaware of the guidance and counselling services. Out of the students who

250 indicated that they are aware of the guidance and counselling services, the majority of them
 251 indicated that they were aware of educational counselling (86.8%) (Table 2). About 32.6% of
 252 the students, however, state that they were aware of person-social counselling. It appeared
 253 the students were unaware of the availability of vocational counselling (17.1%).

254 **Table 2: Students Awareness on the Forms of Guidance and Counselling Services**
 255 **(n=2,789)**

Forms of counselling	Aware		Not Aware	
	f	%	f	%
Educational counselling	2,439	86.8	530	13.2
Person-social counselling	1410	32.6	1559	67.4
Vocational counselling	480	17.1	2489	82.9

256

257 Further analysis was conducted to find out whether students who were aware of the services
 258 have for once patronised the services. The result is shown in Table 3.

259 **Table 3: Patronage of Guidance and Counselling Services**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Patronised before	480	17.2
Not patronised	2309	82.8
Total	2,789	100.0

260 Result, as shown in Table 3, suggests that the majority of the students (82.8%) did not
 261 patronise the guidance and counselling services even though they were aware of it.
 262 However, 480 out of 2,789 students indicated that although they were aware of the services,
 263 they have not patronized before.

264 **Factors Affecting Students' Patronage of Guidance and Counselling Services in SHSs**
 265 **in Ghana**

266 Analysis in Table 4 highlights on the factors which influences students in the patronage of
 267 guidance and counselling services.

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273 **Table 4: Factors Affecting Students' Patronage of Guidance and Counselling Services**
 274 **in SHSs in Ghana (n=2,969)**

Factors	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
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Accessibility of the Services	3.12	.88	2968	38.65	.000*
Counselling is for weak students	3.02	1.08	2968	26.53	.000*
Counsellor cannot help me	2.87	1.07	2968	14.52	.000
Confidentiality	2.86	.89	2968	21.72	.000*
Counsellor as my teacher	2.84	1.03	2968	17.85	.000*
School counsellor do not have time	2.68	1.13	2968	8.66	.000
Stigmatization/Teasing	2.69	1.03	2968	10.20	.000*
Trust for the counsellor	2.61	1.05	2968	5.87	.000*

275 *significant at .05 level; Test value=2.5

276 The results revealed that three major factors which affected the patronage of guidance and
 277 counselling services were accessibility of the services, the believe that counselling is for the
 278 weak students, and the perception that counsellors cannot really help them. Other important
 279 factors which were reported to affect the patronage of guidance and counselling services
 280 included issues of confidentiality, counsellor as teacher, insufficient time of the counsellors,
 281 stigmatization/teasing and trust for the counselors.

282 The result of this study clearly showed that SHS students are aware of the presence of
 283 guidance and counselling services (educational counselling especially) in their schools.
 284 However, they indicated low patronage of the services. Further analysis revealed that the
 285 low patronage was due to a number of factors. This speaks to the fact that just the
 286 awareness of the students regarding the guidance and counselling services was not enough
 287 to increase the patronage of the services. This seems contrarily to the case of Nigeria,
 288 where Adejimoa and Tayo-Olajubu (2009) (27) found counselling services to be lacking and
 289 this affected the patronage of the service. It must be made clear that the schools used had
 290 counselling services of which the students were aware of it. This awareness, however, was
 291 not enough for them to patronise the services. Fia (2011) (18) reported that despite the
 292 clearly demarcated guidance and counselling centers in schools in Ho Municipality,
 293 counselling services were lacking. Fia (2011) (18) further stated that students were ignorant
 294 of the services unlike the case of this study were students were aware of the services.
 295 Although Fia concluded that unawareness of students of counselling services resulted in low
 296 patronage, this study had inconsistent finding. This study provided evidence to the fact that
 297 awareness contributed little to students' patronage of the services.

298 Paramount of the factors which affected the patronage of guidance and counselling services
 299 were accessibility of the services, the believe that counselling is for the weak students, and

300 the perception that counsellors cannot really help them. Other imperative factors which were
301 reported to affect the patronage of guidance and counselling services included issues of
302 confidentiality, counsellor as teacher, insufficient time of the counsellors,
303 stigmatization/teasing and trust for the counselors.

304 It is common to find in SHSs that most counsellors do not have a personal office to meet
305 clients with challenges. In some cases, these counsellors share offices which do not
306 promote their work. This can account for the reason why most of the students had not even
307 tried going for counselling. It appeared the students held some misconceptions which could
308 have been addressed when they have encountered the services or by organising
309 programmes to enlighten them. In recent times, counselling, it seems, is not been given
310 attention needed. Schools now prefer counsellor who can teach other subjects while they go
311 about their counselling duties. This study has underscored that this affect the patronage of
312 the services. This argument has been centered on a number of debates: (a) students see
313 counsellors who teach them as teachers and not counsellors, therefore, there should be that
314 strict and rigid relationship between them, (b) because the counsellor also teaches, it is
315 possible that he/she might not get enough time to attend to clients. In some cases, students
316 might need their services while they have class at the same time, (c) students might have
317 the perception that information about them they provide to this counsellor teacher can be
318 discussed with other teachers or headteachers. Take for example a student who have
319 relationship problem. Since dating in the school might not be accepted by the authorities, the
320 student will never come up to take about it. This will make the students not trust these
321 teacher counsellors

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323

324 **4. CONCLUSION**

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326 The findings from my study clearly indicate that although students are aware of the existence
327 of guidance and counselling services, they did not patronise the services. This low
328 patronage was ascribed to factors like accessibility of the services, misconceptions held by
329 the students, issues of confidentiality, counsellor as teacher, insufficient time of the
330 counsellors, stigmatization/teasing and trust for the counselors. The implication is that the
331 low patronage of guidance and counselling services in SHSs can be attributed to the
332 counsellors and the school management. It must be emphasised that any school who is
333 poised to promote guidance and counselling services would do well to provide all logistics
334 and facilities associated with the work. Counsellors would then be motivated to effectively
335 draw out programmes and attend to the students with problem. It appears that the

336 misconceptions held by students, if addressed would also improve the patronage of the
337 services.

338 The findings of this study is a wake-up call for the Ghana Education Services (GES),
339 Headteachers, counsellors, parents and all stakeholders to collectively find out policies and
340 strategies to address these factors which have been reported by students as affecting the
341 patronage of the services. It is important that GES together with headteachers of SHSs to
342 provide guidance and counselling facilities and logistics which enhances the work of the
343 counsellor. Again, the GES is advised not to allow counsellors posted to schools to engage
344 in any teaching activities. Due to the misconceptions held by most students, counsellors are
345 encouraged to map-out adequate programmes which will enlighten students on the need to
346 seek for help when the need arises. Parents are also recommended to sensitize their wards
347 on the need to go for counselling when they need assistance.

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