

Assessing the Benefits and Challenges of Guidance and Counselling Services in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region

Valerius Azuure Sandow

*Department of Education
St. John Bosco's College of Education
Post Office Box 11, Navrongo*

Alfred Alunga Anovunga

*Department of Counselling Psychology
Faculty of Applied Behavioural Sciences in Education
University of Education, Winneba
Post Office Box 25, Winneba, West Africa, Ghana*

Abstract: Guidance and counselling have been interwoven with efforts aimed at advancing the educational discourse of students in all disciplines and levels. This is because of the wide recognition that students' academic performance is greatly influenced by the guidance provided to them. This study examined the benefits and challenges of guidance and counselling services in some Senior high schools in Upper East Region and it was aimed at achieving three objectives: to find out the roles of guidance and counselling coordinators in Senior High schools, find out the benefits as well as the challenges encountered in providing guidance and counselling services in Senior High schools. Employing the quantitative method and a descriptive research design, 16 counsellors, 14 head teachers, and 325 students were sampled while structured questionnaires were used to collect data from the participants. The study found that organising orientation programmes for fresh students was the predominant role that guidance and counselling coordinators played in the senior high schools. The study also found that students, counsellors and head teachers reported similar benefits of guidance and counselling services. The most predominant benefits reported by all three groups of respondents included improving academic performance, improving students' behaviour and discipline in the schools, as well as improving school attendance and reducing truancy, thus increasing graduation rate. Schools faced challenges, such as a lack of professionally trained counsellors, a lack of offices with resources and materials as well as a lack of cooperation from the students and staff. Among other matters, the study recommends that the Ghana Education Service, which supervises guidance and counselling, should charge all school counsellors with ensuring that all services, especially career and vocation counselling services, are provided in every school.

Keywords: Guidance, Counselling, Benefits, Challenges, Head teachers, Counsellors

Introduction

Guidance services consequently, are utilized in schools to assist students develop to the highest levels of achievement with respect to academic work, career goals, and improving their ability to deal with personal and social challenges. Guidance services have therefore become very importance because of the role it plays in assisting students resolve the numerous challenges that they face in schools. The act of experiences that help students understand themselves is referred to as guidance. (Namale, & Awabil, 2018). This is what is not available to our students because when it comes to students selecting courses for their future careers and the selection of the schools for placement, they get worry as to what to do and the upsurge of strikes and crime and their attendant ill-effects have been a very serious cause for worry among citizens in Ghana. According to Egbo (2015), Guidance and counselling refer to where a qualified counsellor tries to lead distressed students or clients away from a very difficult situation. It is a supportive partnership designed to guarantee long-term client growth and adaptability. By definition, guidance is described as the process of assisting each person in the process of discovering and realizing his or her own potential for pleasure and social contribution. On the other hand, counselling is primarily defined as a procedure where the counsellor helps the counselee analyse information related to a decision, plan, or life changes that he needs to make. Counselling, according to Smith (2017), is a series of one-on-one interactions with a person with the goal of helping him alter his attitude and behaviour.

In Ghana, several efforts have been made during the pre- and post-independence eras to promote quality education in the country. The history dates back from the colonial era where Governor Guggisberg established sixteen principles that promoted character, development, equitable opportunity for boys and girls, and the

establishment of high-quality Senior High and technical institutions for youngsters (MOE, 2002; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005; Adu-Gyamfi, et al., 2016). The requirement that "the staff of teachers must be of the highest possible quality" was the only part of the principle on teacher development (MOE, 2001, p. 137). The Education Act of 1961 which was passed shortly after independence. This came along with reforming initiatives which included the following:

- (a) It required all school-age children to receive a free, compulsory basic education.
- (b) It outlined the terms and conditions of teacher employment.
- (c) It created a teachers' council to uphold the teaching profession's high standards.
- (d) It outlined requirements for instructors' certification and training.

If all these efforts stated above are adhered to, people will not be suffering because of wrong choice course study in schools. The relevance of guidance and counselling services in Senior High schools in Ghana cannot be over emphasised. Students receive thorough guidance on careers, programmes, and employment that help them understand their options after graduation so that they can make wise decisions. It enables students to discuss a variety of difficult experiences with their teachers. The students are sometimes able to openly discuss issues that they are unable to discuss with their parents. Any type of abuse, whether related to drugs, alcohol, or personal matters can be openly shared. It allows students who are going through challenges in their lives to ask questions and get answers through guidance and counselling. By putting emphasis on people's assets, talents, strengths, and potential for further development, we may assist them in making plans for a successful life within their social milieu. Guidance and counselling are crucial components of every educational system because they help people modify their attitudes and behaviour (Salgong, 2015; Salgong et al, 2016).

It is impossible to overstate the significance of getting off to a good start. In a laid-back and welcoming setting, students are more likely to learn well. Every counsellor should be extremely personable and friendly. While some of this is undoubtedly tied to how each counsellor approaches his/her profession, some of it should be deliberately designed to reassure students. The process of counselling is constantly changing. It reveals a universe of information, experience, and learning. Simple counselling techniques alone are insufficient for effective counselling. To the greatest extent possible, one should be able to tailor the counselling techniques to a specific classroom and to individual kids by getting to know the students well. Successful counsellors are those who meet the objectives they set for themselves or that others have set for them. If the goals are to be accomplished, a good counsellor must have the knowledge and abilities necessary to do so, as well as the ability to apply those abilities correctly. A counsellor is like an artist who blends colour and texture into a painting to produce a coherent impression. The effective counsellor blends key attitudes behaviours to different degrees to promote student achievement. This I believe requires orchestration and integration of the key and helping behaviours into meaningful patterns and rhythms that can achieve the goals needed. A good counsellor is kind, listens to his or her students just like listening to a situation with all our senses, observing and listening with our eyes as well as with our ears, can extend our awareness of others beyond their story as told. A good counsellor should encourage his or her client, have faith in them, keep confidences, like counselling, and should take time to explain things to the clients. Above all, Ursula added that the basic element is to remember that my value system is mine, and to be careful not to impose this on my clients.

Arguably, today, a lot of students attend school without knowing what they should do in the future and leave without any sense of the kind of occupation or career they should pursue (Kochhar, 1984). Additionally, students tend to lack self-awareness, especially when it comes to those with learning disabilities, children who are more sensitive, those who are emotionally or behaviourally unstable, and suchlike. According to Taylor and Buku (2006), more often students are at a loss as to which course their Senior High school programmes will help them progress in to the university. This includes where such a course will lead them to in terms of career selection.

It appears the public and school administrators are unaware of the significance of guidance and counselling to students. As Taylor and Buku (2006) put it, many people feel that counselling is the same as advice giving but this is not the case. The upsurge confusion and consequences that students face in selecting and pursuing a particular programme in school, and selecting and pursuing their dream career are major cause for worry to many people. Despite the tremendous efforts advanced by teachers, Ghana Education Service and the government, the problem still persist, most especially in the Upper East Region. Guidance and counselling programmes/services at the Senior High schools therefore, leave much to be desired.

Statement of the Problem

The aim of Ghana Education Service's Guidance and Counselling Unit is to implement a comprehensive, preventative, and developmental guidance and counselling program within Senior High Schools, crucial for students to achieve excellence. The objective is to equip all students with the necessary academic, social,

personal, and career skills to excel in pre-tertiary education, higher education, employment, and to function effectively as productive citizens and lifelong learners through guidance and counselling interventions (Nkrumah, 2020). However, there exists a disparity between the educational mission's expectations and the actual effectiveness of guidance and counselling services, as evidenced by challenges faced by students in Senior High schools regarding program and career choices (Aidoo, 2011).

Observations from teaching experience in the Upper East Region, along with discussions with head teachers and counsellors, reveal that many Senior High School students grapple with personal adjustment issues such as insecurity, academic underperformance, peer pressure, loneliness, conflicts with peers, teachers, and parents, as well as stress-related problems causing tension and anxiety. However, students often refrain from seeking assistance from professionals. Although guidance and counselling programs aim to facilitate students in overcoming challenges and realizing their potential through professional interactions with counsellors, students may not fully engage in this initiative (Appiah, 2013). There appears to be obstacles regarding the efficacy of guidance and counselling services Senior High schools, causing these services to be neglected. One may not hesitate to say the problems seem to be as a result of unavailability of qualified counsellors, inadequate awareness or underestimating the relevance of guidance and counselling services. Aidoo (2011) notes that most schools lack dedicated counsellors, leading some teachers and head teachers to assume counselling roles despite lacking the necessary professional training. Consequently,

Previous studies have addressed the benefits and challenges of guidance and counselling in schools, they often reflect the perspectives of school administrators without considering the views of counsellors/teachers and students. Therefore, this study aims to gather insights from head teachers, counsellors, and students regarding the efficacy and obstacles of guidance and counselling services in Senior High schools in the Upper East Region.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the roles of guidance and counselling coordinators in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region?
2. What are the benefits of guidance and counselling services in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region?
3. What are the challenges encountered in providing guidance and counselling services in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region?

Empirical Review

The Role of Guidance and Counselling Services

Making student accomplishment a priority; the work of school counsellors in turnaround schools was the subject of research by Hines, Moore Mayes, Harris, Vega, Robinson, and Jackson (2020). The study's major goal was to emphasize the crucial part school counsellors play in turnaround schools and provide specific suggestions on how they might work with other stakeholders to raise student achievement in these kinds of learning environments. The study found that school counsellors were crucial in tackling systemic problems through leadership, advocacy, data-based decision making, and collaboration with important educational staff, which had an impact on the efficacy and development of schools. However, it was evident that school counsellors would be most effective in their jobs if they partnered with community and school stakeholders, encouraged cultural awareness, and applied strategic research-based counselling treatments.

Additionally, challenges to systemic engagement in college and job readiness policy in Senior High schools was undertaken by Stone-Johnson (2015). The study was intended to evaluate Senior High School College and career preparedness policies and the systemic engagement of all school employees while defining the precise tasks that teachers and counsellors ought to fill. To describe this issue in one suburban high school, the study included qualitative interviews with counsellors and instructors. The results suggested that although high school counsellors have traditionally been tasked with assisting students in learning more about colleges and careers, as pressure mounts on schools to better prepare more and more students for college, counsellors are becoming both overworked and underprepared for this challenge. Additionally, as teachers place greater emphasis on academic success, counsellors are being expected to fill that function on their own more frequently. Therefore, it was recommended that steps be taken to enhance counsellors' pre-service training and professional growth.

A study on discipline and academic achievement was also carried out by Ehiane (2014) with a few chosen Senior High schools in Lagos, Nigeria. The goal of the study was to determine any links between student academic achievement and school discipline. The study's results unmistakably showed that effective school discipline should be supported in order to control students' behaviour, which in turn influences students' overall

academic achievement. Despite the fact that the goal of guidance and counselling was to keep students from committing crimes, it was found that this goal could not be fully achieved. Counsellors shouldn't therefore be appointed to lead disciplinary committees.

Furthermore, Ogunlade and Akeredolu (2012) conducted research on how career counselling affected Senior High school students' preferences in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The primary goal of the study was to ascertain how career counselling affected Senior High school students' career preferences. The results showed, among other things, that counsellors were vital in providing career assistance and had a big impact on students' career aspirations. Based on the findings, it was suggested that schools hold career programmes and counselling sessions for the students. Additionally, career counsellors should make an effort to arrange trips for pupils to various companies and businesses so they can learn firsthand about potential future occupations.

There is data demonstrating the importance of guidance and counselling services in Senior High schools. According to the literature review, counsellors are essential to students' growth in Senior High schools. Even though studies from many regions were evaluated, it was still clear that guidance and counselling are important in every institution.

Efficacies/Benefits of Guidance and Counselling Programmes

In rural and suburban Nebraska high schools, Carey, Harrington, Martina, and Hoffman (2018) carried out a statewide review of the results of the adoption of ASCA National Model School counselling programmes. The goal of the study was to pinpoint the features of school counselling programmes that are associated with good student outcomes. Findings from the study showed that school guidance and counselling services accounted for statistically significant portions of the variance in a number of significant student outcomes. The results supported earlier studies that linked advantages for pupils to a more thorough application of a developmental guidance programme. The ASCA National Model's implementation was linked to better student results. Both higher achievement and a broader range of students' college interests were linked to the guidance and counselling services. Additionally, school counsellors' emphasis on data utilization and programmatic orientation were linked to higher student accomplishment as measured by standardized test results on state achievement assessments. Thus, it was determined that providing complete developmental assistance services has advantages for students.

A study on the benefits of professional school counsellors in Connecticut, services for college and career counselling, and lower ratios was also carried out by Lapan, Whitcomb, and Aleman (2012). The goal of this study was to promote student success by emphasizing the value of career and college counselling services as well as reduced ratios. The outcomes of the study demonstrated that the advantages of guidance and counselling services included higher rates of graduation and attendance in addition to decreased rates of disciplinary issues and suspensions. Thus, it was advised that schools maintain the highest level of guidance and counselling services.

A further research study on the efficacy of guidance and counselling services on the development of entrepreneurial abilities for sustainable livelihood among students was undertaken by Chinedum, Onwuasoanya, and Eze (2012). The study focused on obtaining comments from three groups of educators; classroom teachers, guidance counsellors, and education administrators about how guidance and counselling services affect Senior High school students' development of entrepreneurship. The research findings revealed that guidance and counselling services had the ability of improving students' entrepreneurship development skills, which in turn increased output, sustainable living standards, and national development. It was suggested that the programme be given priority in Senior High schools in order for government and policy-makers involved in educational concerns to realize the full benefits of school guidance and counselling services.

A study on advice and counselling in Nigerian Senior High schools; including the role of ICT was undertaken by Oye, Obi, Mohd, and Bernice (2012). The study concentrated on the value of guidance and counselling services and the contribution of ICT to guidance and counselling services in Senior High schools. The findings showed that Senior High school guidance and counselling programmes benefit students by increasing their grasp of the educational, occupational, and social information necessary to make informed decisions. Once more, guidance and counselling services contributed to the eradication of widespread youth ignorance regarding job options and personality disorders among schoolchildren. It was suggested that head teachers include time for guidance and counselling on the school schedule due to the clear advantages of these services.

The literature reviewed showed that it is imperative to introduce guidance and counselling services in Senior High schools. Though these studies were conducted with different instruments from different contexts, they still revealed similar results. However, it must be emphasised that different schools benefited differently from the guidance and counselling services.

Obstacles/Challenges of Guidance and Counselling Services in Schools

A study on the effectiveness of counselling and guidance services in Senior High schools was undertaken by Marandu (2018) at the Korogwe Town Council. The purpose of the study was to evaluate how counselling and guidance services are provided in Senior High schools. The study findings demonstrated the necessity of guidance and counselling programmes. However, these programmes ran into issues such as teacher counsellors' commitment to teaching activities, a lack of in-service training for them to carry out the programme, and a lack of offices to facilitate guidance and counselling services. The study also suggested strategies for overcoming the difficulties, such as providing in-service training for school heads and councillor instructors through seminars and workshops, as well as providing the necessary resources for advice and counselling. Therefore, it was advised that more research be done on the provision of advice and counselling in schools in diverse circumstances.

Furthermore, a study of career guidance and counselling services at a South African university: Career advisers' views were also investigated by Chireshe (2012). The goal of the study was to evaluate the career advisers' perceptions of the university's career guidance and counselling services at a South African university. The study findings showed that career counselling and guidance services were not taken seriously, the career advisors were understaffed and under qualified, and there were no career counselling centres in the schools. It was suggested that well-equipped guidance and counselling centres be established within the schools. To again accommodate the large student population in the schools, additional guidance and counselling workers should be hired. However, this study could not be generalized in the sense that the sample size was too small to draw a broad generalization for every circumstance.

Challenges Mitigating Against Guidance and Counselling Services in Nigerian Schools: The Way Forward was the focus of Haastrup (2015) research. The study's goal was to investigate the obstacles facing Nigeria's guidance and counselling services. From the study findings, it became clear that there were several factors working against the provision of guidance and counselling services in Nigerian schools, including a lack of time, poor facilities, teachers' attitudes, and insufficient counsellor training. It was discovered that these difficulties had a detrimental effect on the school guidance and counselling programmes. Thus, it was recommended that the government and school administration provide the necessary infrastructure and that the training of guidance counsellors be given top priority by the institutions of higher learning. Primary schools should also receive attention because they act as stepping-stones for students to progress to Senior High institutions.

Nweze & Okolie's (2014) study on Effective Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Senior High Schools: Issues and Roles in Students' Career Decision Making found that the schools' lack of and insufficiency of counselling resources such as counselling rooms, for teacher counsellors posed a significant obstacle to encouraging students to seek out assistance and counselling in the classrooms. Thus, it was pointed out that resources like counselling rooms were required to provide the individual schools with a compelling guidance and counselling programme.

Another study by Nkoma and Mapfumo (2013), in Zimbabwe revealed that guidance and counselling services are often accommodating services where students can get assistance with their personal and emotional requirements. There are few more services that are a component of a complete programme, such as career planning, exploration, and growth for students and counsellors. Despite the fact that these services were provided, there was seldom any teacher and counsellor consultation in the schools. Other difficulties included the fact that guidance teachers and counsellors frequently lacked training and infrequently maintained records of their work. Although guidance was present in the classroom, it was advised that better planning was needed since even though students had noticed that there was guidance present in the lectures.

Further research was done on the difficulties in implementing comprehensive school counselling programmes in Wisconsin high schools and the required training by Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, and Skytte (2012). The study's main goals were to establish a baseline for the current state of guidance and counselling implementation in Wisconsin high schools and to learn more about issues pertaining to the training requirements of Wisconsin high school counsellors in order to both implement and evaluate their programmes. The findings revealed that individual planning, guidance curriculum, and a lack of training were among the difficulties, according to the examination of the data.

Though these studies might have been conducted in different settings and contexts, all evidence showed that almost every school had one challenge or the other. The challenges range from students to counsellors to administrative issues. However, a more robust longitudinal study might give out more consistent challenges in the Senior High schools.

Methodology

A quantitative descriptive research design was used for this study. The objective of descriptive surveys is to acquire information or learn more about the demographics, behaviours, and attitudes of students, employees, patients, and clients (Andres, 2012). The study was suited for a descriptive survey methodology since it helps in identifying variables linked to specific events, results, situations, or types of behaviours (Labaree, 2009), in order to determine the events, the results, and the situation or state of guidance and counselling services in Senior High schools in the Upper East Region. More specifically, the descriptive survey design was chosen because it helped to collect rich data in large quantities and has the advantage of having a high level of general competence in representing a significant section of the population. When compared to other methods of data collecting, surveys are able to gather data that are almost identical to the precise features of the larger population (Creswell, 2017). Once more, because a descriptive survey is highly representative, it is frequently simpler to uncover statistically significant results and produces results that are more valid and reliable than those from other research designs (Creswell, 2017). The target population was all students, teachers, and counsellors in the Senior High schools in the Upper East region of Ghana. The region had a total of 37 public senior high schools with a total population of 52,378 students, made up of 26,927 boys and 25,451 girls with thirteen (13) trained Guidance and Counselling coordinators. Every school has someone who is responsible as a Guidance and Counselling Coordinator. The study purposively included all thirteen (13) of the professional counsellors who worked in the guidance and counselling units of the schools. Fifteen (15) senior high school heads were also purposively included.

According to Krejcie and Morgan's table, if you have a population of 75,000 you can take a sample of 382 for a study. In this study therefore, the total population of students is 52, 378 and 37 heads and 37 counsellors, making a total population of 52,452, a sample size of 355 was considered for the study since it falls within the range per Krejcie and Morgan's table. Therefore, 16 public Senior High schools were randomly selected out of a total number of 37. The schools were further put into strata and hundred and twenty- five (325) students were proportionately selected from each school as shown in Table 2. In all, sixteen (16) Guidance and Counselling coordinators, fourteen (14) head teachers and three hundred and twenty- five (325) students made up the sample size for the study. A structured 4-point Likert-type questionnaire was used for data collection in each category of the population. The scale rated from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). By assigning each response a point value from 1 to 4 based on the number of responses. In this case 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree and 4= Strongly agree.

Table 1 - Sample Distribution for Counsellors, Head teachers and Students

Respondents' Category	Population	Sample
Headmasters	37	14
Counsellors	37	16
Students	52,378	325
Total	52,452	355

Source; Survey Data (2024)

Table 2 –Students Population and Sample

S/N	NAME OF SCHOOL	NO OF BOYS	NO OF GIRLS	TOTAL	SAMPLE
1	Bawku SHS	1224	1218	2442	28
2	Buawku SHS Technical	900	937	1837	21
3	Zebilla STS/Technical	1123	1014	2137	24
4	Binduri SHS	230	268	498	6
5	Bongo SHS	705	880	1585	18
6	Zamse SHS	1433	936	2369	27
7	Bolga Girls SHS	0	3080	3080	35
8	Fumbisi SHS	892	614	1506	17
9	Garu SHS	505	409	914	10
10	Chiana SHS	767	625	1392	16
11	Bolgatanga SHS	1561	1242	2803	32
12	Notre Dame SHS	481	0	481	5
13	Navrongo SHS	1271	763	2034	23
14	Pusiga SHS	539	184	723	8
15	Samdema SHS	1323	1106	2629	30
16	Zuarungu SHS	954	1224	2178	25
TOTAL		13,908	14,500	28,408	325

Source; Survey Data (2024)

Pilot Testing of Instruments

It was crucial to re-establish validity and reliability once the instrument was adapted. Thus, the questionnaires were modified for this study; therefore, they underwent a pilot test to determine their validity in the context of the research study. This was done to make sure the research tools were valid and reliable. Five Senior High schools that were not part of the study sample participated in the questionnaire testing. The Senior High schools were picked because they shared characteristics with the study's identified schools. This allowed the researchers to identify any obstacles that might arise during the actual activity and how to overcome them. The researchers could assess the instrument's dependability from the pilot test. The questionnaire was examined after pilot testing to determine its reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha coefficient reliability). A Cronbach alpha score of .70 or higher is regarded as dependable, according to Nunnally (1970), who used the Cronbach alpha to gauge internal consistency. After the pilot test, a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .81 was realised. Overall, good internal consistencies of the instrument predicted by the Cronbach alphas coefficient.

Results

Research Question One; What are the roles of guidance and counselling coordinators in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region?

The purpose of this question was to indicate the functions of coordinators of guidance and counselling in senior high schools. The coordinators questionnaire was used to collect data for this research question. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data.

Table 3 - Roles of Guidance and Counselling Coordinators

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Implementation of recommendations from Guidance and Counselling team	15	93.75
Providing the guidance and counselling unit proper accommodation/ resources	13	81.25
Providing the unit, the necessary resource/tools to work (Providing literature material on G&C)	14	87.5
Creating of enabling environment for the teacher counsellor	9	56.25
Recognising the important roles of the unit in education delivery	3	18.75
Organizing seminars for teachers and students	5	31.25
Inviting guest speakers (experts) to give speeches and talks	2	12.5
Organising vocational and career programmes	10	62.5
Organising orientation programmes for fresh students	16	100

Source; Field Survey (2024)

n=16

Results from Table 3 show that all counsellors in the Senior High schools reported organising orientation programmes as one of the major roles they played in the schools. 14 participants representing 87.5% of the counsellors reported providing the unit with the necessary resource/tools to work (Providing literature material on Guidance and Counselling) in their roles. On the other hand, only 2 participants representing 12.5% of the counsellors played the role of inviting guest speakers to give speeches and talks to students. These results indicated that majority of counsellors, structured orientation services and programmes for the students, especially for the fresh and new students, as well as providing the necessary literature and materials for the services. Only few counsellors believed that they had to invite guests (experts) to give speeches and talks to the students most especially during programmes.

Research Question Two; What are the benefits of guidance and counselling services in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region?

This research question aimed at finding out the benefits of guidance and counselling in the Senior High Schools. Data was collected from all three categories of the population sample. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data.

Table 4 - Students' Perceptions of the Benefits of Guidance and Counselling Services

Statement	Yes Freq (%)	No Freq (%)
Guidance and Counselling enable students to be well disciplined	209(64.30)	116(35.69)
Guidance and Counselling enable students to improve academic performance	251(77.23)	74(22.77)
Guidance and Counselling lead to less personal problems among the students in the school	169(52)	156(48)
Guidance and Counselling help in building and improving good relationships with students and teachers	104(32)	221(68)
Guidance and Counselling guide students to select appropriate courses that will suit their interest for future career.	114(35.07)	211(64.92)
Guidance and Counselling help in problem solving	94(28.92)	231(71.07)
Guidance and Counselling help students to feel relaxed and adjusted to their new environment	192(59.07)	133(40.92)

Source; Field Survey (2024)

n=325

Findings in Table 4 indicates that, 251 (77.23%) Senior High school students concurred that counselling and advice help pupils achieve better academically. Also, 209 (64.30%) students said yes to the fact that guidance and counselling enable students to be well disciplined. On the other hand, only 94 participants representing 28.92% of the students agreed that guidance and counselling helps in problem solving. These results indicated that majority of the students knew some benefits of the guidance and counselling services most especially in improving their academics and helping to reduce indiscipline in the schools. Only few students believed that guidance and counselling could help them solve their problems. This could probably be because they would not like to tell their problems to anyone, in case they would have to face the problems all by themselves.

Table 5 - Counsellors' Perception of the Benefits of Guidance and Counselling Services

Statement	Frequency	Percentages
1. Guidance and Counselling make teaching go on smoothly because students are more disciplined and so can relate and cooperate well with teachers.	14	87.5
2. Guidance and Counselling help improve students' academic performance and participation in class	15	93.75
3. Guidance and Counselling reduce student truancy	13	81.25
4. Guidance and Counselling help teachers get to know the students and their individual challenges.	10	62.5
5. Guidance and Counselling help organise orientation for newly posted teachers to help them adjust	15	93.75
6. Guidance and Counselling help teachers to handle all students equally (disability, low learners and fast learners)	6	37.50

Source; Field Survey (2024)

n=16

Findings form Table 5 showed that fifteen (15) counsellors representing 93.75% said that guidance and counselling boost academic achievement as well as aid new teachers in adjusting to their surroundings. Thirteen (13) counsellors representing 81.25% reported that guidance and counselling help improve and reduce truancy among students. However, just 6 of the counsellors, representing 37.5% stated that guidance and counselling assist teachers in treating all kids fairly. This suggests that majority of educators and counsellors were aware of the advantages of guidance and counselling, some of which were similar to those mentioned by the students.

Table 6 - Head Teachers' Perceptions of the Benefits of Guidance and Counselling Services

Statement	Frequency	Percentages
1. Guidance and Counselling help administrative work to go on well due to students' cooperation.	9	64.29
2. Guidance and Counselling reduce social vices and promote the smooth running of the school	14	100

3. Orientation services help the entire school community to get used to the school environment	12	87.71
4. Guidance and Counselling help improve general and over all students' academic performance	14	100
5. Guidance and Counselling suggestions and inputs help with regards to student's indiscipline.	13	92.86
6. Guidance and Counselling help head teachers to adopt appropriate policies in relation to both students and teachers' welfare	9	64.29
7. Guidance and Counselling reduce truancy and absenteeism as well as improving the number of students who complete school	14	100

Source; Field Survey (2024) n=14

Table 6 revealed that all fourteen (14) head teachers claimed that guidance and counselling services enhance academic performance while lowering absenteeism. Thirteen (13) head teachers representing 92.86% reported that guidance and counselling help in disciplinary issues in the schools. On the other hand, 9 head teachers representing 64.29% reported that guidance and counselling help head teachers to adopt appropriate policies in relation to both students' and teachers' welfare. This indicated that majority of the head teachers believed that guidance and counselling had some benefits for the school most especially in the areas of academic performance, reducing truancy as well as improving discipline in the schools.

Research Question Three; What are the challenges faced in providing guidance and counselling services in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region?

The purpose of this research question was to find out the obstacles or difficulties facing senior high school guidance and counselling. Data was collected from all three categories of the population sample. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data.

Table 7 - Students' Challenges of Guidance and Counselling Services

Challenges	Frequency	Percentages
1. Few guidance and counselling sessions	138	42.46
2. Inexperienced teacher counsellors	140	43.08
3. Lack of financial and moral support from the school administration	127	39.08
4. No involvement from peer counsellors	116	35.69

Source; Field Survey (2024). n=325

The results from Table 7 indicated that 140 students representing 43.08% reported that there was the challenge of inexperienced counsellors in the schools. One hundred and sixteen (116) representing 35.69% of the students reported that there was no involvement of peer counsellors. This indicated that prominent of the challenges in the schools had to do with inexperienced counsellors as well as students having few sessions with their counsellors.

Table 8 - Counsellors' Challenges in Guidance and Counselling Services

Item	Frequency	Percentages
1. Difficult to organise frequent counselling sessions	13	81.25
2. The ability to get information about their clients	14	87.50
3. Lack of confidentiality in C & G coordinators by students	10	62.5
4. Lack of conducive/convenient environment for Guidance and Counselling	15	93.75
5. Insufficient materials for counselling programme	12	75.00
6. Unawareness of the benefits of G and C by students	13	81.25
7. Lack of adequately trained counsellors	15	93.75
8. Lack of support in the process of implementing the Guidance and Counselling	11	68.75
9. Lack of training of some head teachers in institution management	6	37.5
10. Unwillingness on the part of students and teachers to submit themselves to the unit for counselling	13	81.25

Source; Field Survey (2024) n=16

On the part of challenges from the counsellors, it is evident from Table 8 that, 15 counsellors representing 93.75% reported that there was the challenge of lack of conducive/convenient environment for Guidance and counselling as well as lack of adequately trained counsellors in the schools. On the other hand, six (6) counsellors representing 37.5% of the teacher/counsellors reported that the lack of training of some head teachers in institution management and are therefore not able to manage the counselling services in the schools. This indicated that counsellors were much more concerned about the lack of convenient places for counselling in addition to the lack of qualified trained counsellors in the schools.

Table 9 - Head teachers' Perceptions of Challenges in Guidance and Counselling Services

Item	Frequency	Percentages
1. Lack of in-service training for teacher counsellors	13	92.86
2. Lack of corporation from fellow staff members and teachers	8	57.14
3. Lack of conducive environment and edifices for guidance and counselling services	14	100
4. Students are unwilling to discuss their problems	10	71.42
5. Lack of reading and reference material resources	13	92.86
6. Teacher/Counsellor inadequately skilled	13	92.86
7. Heavy teaching load for the teacher/counsellor	14	100

Source; Field Survey (2024)

n=14

Table 9 showed that all 14 head teachers reported that there was the challenge of lack of conducive environment and edifices for guidance and counselling services as well as heavy teaching load for the counsellors. On the other hand, eight (8) representing 57.14% of the head teachers reported that there was lack of corporation from fellow staff members and teachers. This implied that there were many problems faced by the head teachers in the schools prominent among them included lack of offices or conducive places for counselling heavy load on the teachers.

Discussion

The study found that organising orientation programmes for fresh students was the predominant role that guidance and counselling coordinators played in the senior high schools. This was followed by implementation of recommendations from guidance and counselling teams and providing the necessary resources and materials for the sessions. On the other hand, few teachers played a role of inviting guest speakers (experts) to give speeches and talks. These findings are somehow in contradiction with the findings of Ogunlade and Akeredolu (2012) who found that organising vocational and career programmes are the predominant role of guidance and counselling coordinators. Again, the results of this study contradict the findings of Ehiane (2014) and Hines, Moore Mayes, Harris, Vega, Robinson and Jackson (2020) who reported that guidance and counselling coordinators played a critical role in effective school discipline and controlling students' behaviour as well as school effectiveness and improvement. It is worth noting that some of these roles were undertaken by counsellors but may not be recognised as very organised, planned and official. Again, the few who had taken it upon themselves to add counselling to their teaching may not have received in-service training to help boost their capacity to organise programmes. According to one of the guiding concepts, counselling must be given in the context of the whole development of the person. In addition to the learner's academic performance, guidance should also focus on other areas, including social and physical development. It is thus very important that students are guided in all aspect of their life including being disciplined. Teachers should be given enough training to help their students choose careers that best suits their personality.

The study also found that students, counsellors and head teachers reported similar benefits of guidance and counselling services. The most predominant benefits reported by all three groups of respondents included improving academic performance, improving students' behaviour and discipline in the schools, as well as improving school attendance and reducing truancy. These findings corroborate the findings of Carey, Harrington, Martina and Hoffman, (2018); Lapan, Whitcomb and Aleman (2012); Chinedum, Onwuasoanya and Eze (2012) and Oye, Obi, Mohd and Bernice, (2012). Carey et al. (2018) who discovered that guidance and counselling were linked to both improved academic performance and a broader range of student interest in attending college. Students were guided as to what they could do at the tertiary level in accordance with their performance and interests. Lower disciplinary occurrences and suspension rates, which were also reported in this study, as well as greater attendance and graduation rates were among the advantages of guidance and counselling services, according to Lapan et al. (2012). Both Chinedum et al. (2012) and Oye et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of guidance and counselling services in eradicating the widespread

misunderstanding of youth on job options and personality disorders among schoolchildren. This demonstrated the significance of career counselling and advice in senior high schools.

However, this study's findings suggest that schools in the Upper East region seem to benefit more from academic performance and discipline than other benefits reported by other findings. It is not very surprising that schools did benefit from guidance and counselling in terms of academic performance, discipline and school attendance because, as already indicated previously, orientation, counselling and information services were predominant in the schools. This could imply that students might have been given enough information and also subjected to counselling when they were failing in academics or breaching disciplinary codes. The schools seem to benefit very much from the services that were available in the schools. The reports from the students seem to suggest that counsellors and head teachers seemed to be more concerned about just the academic aspect of the students which are not in accord with the principles of guidance and counselling. This is because less than half of the students reported that guidance and counselling helped them to select appropriate courses that would suit their interest in future careers. Though students benefit in diverse ways, they could also be given guidance on course selection that served their interests as well as meeting their potential and capabilities. A student might be academically good and much disciplined but might end up messing their future because they ended up doing jobs that they are not interested in, or which does not match their personality characteristics. According to one of the principles of counselling, counselling should be for the holistic development of the individual. This indicates how crucial it is for counsellors/teachers to focus on every aspect of the students and not to focus on academics and discipline alone.

The study's outcomes demonstrated that some difficulties upset instructors, pupils, and head teachers. The findings found that inexperienced counsellors, lack of materials, financial support and conducive environments as well as lack of cooperation from both students and staff are not uncommon in High Schools in the region studied. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Marandu, (2018) who also found that lack of in-service training for counsellors to implement programmes, shortage of offices and materials as well as lack of commitment from teacher counsellors were the predominant challenges faced by schools. Chireshe, (2017) also supported the findings of this study by reporting that schools did not have career counselling centres, the career advisors were short staffed and under qualified and the guidance and counselling services were not taken seriously. Haastrup (2015) and Nweze and Okolie (2014) also reported challenges with infrastructure and resources. On the contrary, Nkoma and Mapfumo (2013) and Burkard et al (2012) found lack of student career and individual planning, exploration and development, curriculum and training as the major challenges in the schools.

The findings of this study implied that schools were faced with some challenges that needed to be addressed. One general issue raised was the lack of qualified counsellors in the schools. This could probably explain the reasons why most of the guidance and counselling services were not provided in the schools. This might also be due to the lack of cooperation and the fact that students and staff were not always willing to open up to the counsellors. Some students fear that the counsellors might disclose what they discuss. Again, there were no offices or designated areas with the necessary materials and resources to conduct the guidance and counselling services. This does not make the services appealing to the students. There is therefore the need for rebranding and proper packaging that could attract the students to the services. One challenge raised by the head teachers was that, because they lacked counsellors in the schools, teachers took the task upon themselves which increased their workload. This was not very surprising because teachers who took extra counselling duties upon themselves were going to have work overload. This could lead to paying less attention to either teaching or counselling.

It could be realized that these challenges were intertwined and linked to each other which means that solving one challenge could solve many other challenges. Firstly, there is the need to employ more counsellors and also give in-service training to the counsellors. Both counsellors and head teachers need to use some tactics to encourage more students to use the guidance and counselling services provided in the schools. Additionally, it would be crucial to use the multi attribute attitude theory to improve the participants' attitudes. This theory operates under the premise that an individual's attitude toward a service, is a function of that person's awareness of and trust in the significant characteristics as well as his evaluation of the important features. Thus, it would be imperative that students are guided to modify their perceptions and beliefs about guidance and counselling services. The theory explains that before an individual would patronise anything, they would assess the benefits of that thing. This could explain why students do not patronise guidance and counselling in the schools because they might perceive and believe that they would not get any benefits from it. Thus, to promote guidance and counselling, counsellors ought to demonstrate the benefits of the services provided in order to convince the students.

Key Findings

1. On the roles of guidance and counselling coordinators, organising orientation programmes for fresh teachers and students, implementing recommendations as well as providing the necessary materials for the services were the major roles that guidance counselling coordinators played.
2. Regarding the benefits of guidance and counselling, improving academic performance, reducing indiscipline and improving school attendance and reduce truancy thus increasing graduation rate were the benefits reported by teachers, counsellors and head teachers.
3. Finally, lack of professionally trained counsellors, lack of offices with resources and materials as well as lack of cooperation from the students and staff were the major challenges reported.

Implication for Counselling

The findings of the study have implication for the practice of counselling. In the first place, academic counselling activities should be made available to all students in the Senior High schools; this will help assist students in selecting the right courses, establishing academic objectives, and honing their study techniques. The services should help students perform better in school and have a better chance of getting into tertiary institution.

Secondly, Senior high school is a critical time for students to explore career options. Guidance services should provide career assessments, information about different professions, and guidance on selecting suitable career paths.

Thirdly, the services should assist students in developing important life skills, such as decision-making, problem-solving, and time management. The service should also offer support for personal issues that may affect a student's well-being and academic performance.

Not all, the implication of counselling regarding to this study is to encourage counsellors to include programmes that will enhance students' social skills, communication abilities, and conflict resolution skills that will help them build healthy relationships.

Finally, counsellors should also engage with parents, keeping them informed about their child's progress, addressing concerns, and collaborating on strategies to support their child's success.

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to find out the benefits and challenges of guidance and counselling services in senior high schools in Upper East Region. On a wider scope, guidance and counselling has many benefits for the schools. However, these benefits are rarely achieved because guidance and counselling in the schools are faced with lot of challenges. These challenges are also not from one source, such as students, counsellors and head teachers reported challenges from their point of view. Chief among these challenges were lack of offices and resources, inexperienced and untrained counsellors as well as lack of cooperation from students and staff. This shows that teachers and the administration are also to blame for the issues with guidance and counselling, in addition to the students. In tackling the problems with and promoting guidance and counselling, all sources should be considered.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, the following suggestions are offered.

1. Counsellors did not seem to have a clear view of what roles they play in the schools. On that note, the counsellors most especially the teacher counsellors, should be given a clear job description with regards to what they are supposed to do. This will give them a clear view of what role they play in the schools and help in any evaluation process.
2. It is recommended that Ghana Education Service and Ministry of Education should provide a clear statement of the benefits of guidance and counselling and ensure that this is made available for students as well as the entire staff. Sharing knowledge of the importance of guidance and counselling with the students will help them support and promote the guidance and counselling services. Students should be made aware that they cannot always solve their own problems and thus need professional help.
3. With the kind of challenges that the guidance and counselling in the schools face, the onus lies on the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service to ensure the smooth running of the programmes. It is recommended that guidance and counselling units are provided in every school and equipped with the necessary resources and materials.
4. The licensed counsellors' association should ensure that every school has a qualified professional. In situations where teachers act as counsellors, intensive professional advancement in guidance and counselling should be organized for all guidance and counsellors to bring them up to date on new ideas

relating to guidance and counselling services. This will increase the confidence of the students and allay any fears they have about accessing the services.

5. Head teachers should ensure that both the staff and students make themselves available and cooperate fully with the unit. Parents also have the duty of recommending guidance and counselling for their wards, most especially when it concerns choosing school programmes, courses and careers.

References

- [1]. Adu-Gyamfi, S., Donkoh, W. J., & Addo, A. A. (2016). Educational reforms in Ghana: Past and present. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 5(3), 158-172.
- [2]. Aidoo, J. (2011). Administration of guidance and counselling in the Colleges of Education in Ghana [Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Coast].
- [3]. Appiah, J. K. (2013). The prospects and challenges of guidance services in senior high schools—Kwabre East District as a case study [Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology].
- [4]. Burkard, A. W., Gillen, M., Martinez, M. J., & Skytte, S. (2012). Implementation challenges and training needs for comprehensive school counselling programs in Wisconsin high schools. *Professional School Counselling*, 16(2), 2156759X0001600201.
- [5]. Carey, J., Harrington, K., Martin, I., & Hoffman, D. (2018). A statewide evaluation of the outcomes of the implementation of ASCA national model school counselling programs in rural and suburban Nebraska high schools. *Professional School Counselling*, 16(2), 2156759X0001600202.
- [6]. Chinedum, U. A., Onwuasoanya, P., & Eze, J. (2012). Perceived Impact of guidance and counselling services on the development of entrepreneurial skills for sustainable livelihood among students. *Online Submission*.
- [7]. Chireshe, R. (2017). Career guidance and counselling provisions at a South African University: Career advisors' reflections. *The Anthropologist*, 14(4), 305-310.
- [8]. Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach*. Sage Publications.
- [9]. Egbo, A. C. (2015). The challenges of guidance and counselling practices as perceived by secondary school counsellors in Enugu state Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 3(5), 375-384.
- [10]. Ehiane, O. S. (2014). Discipline and academic performance (A study of selected secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria). *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 3(1), 181-194.
- [11]. Hastrup, F. A. (2015). Challenges militating against guidance and counselling services in Nigerian primary schools: the way forward. *Journal of Qualitative Education*, 11(1), 1-8.
- [12]. Hines, E. M., Moore III, J. L., Mayes, R. D., Harris, P. C., Vega, D., Robinson, D. V., ... & Jackson, C. E. (2020). Making student achievement a priority: The role of school counsellors in turnaround schools. *Urban Education*, 55(2), 216-237.
- [13]. Kalantzis, M., & Cope, B. (2005). *Learning by design*. Common Ground.
- [14]. Kochhar, S. K. (1984). *Guidance and counselling in colleges and universities*. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- [15]. Labaree, R. V. (2009). Research guides: Organizing your social sciences research paper: 5. The literature review. <http://libguides.usc.edu/c.php?g=235034&p=1561764>.
- [16]. Lapan, R. T., Whitcomb, S. A., & Aleman, N. M. (2012). Connecticut professional school counsellors: College and career counselling services and smaller ratios benefit students. *Professional School Counselling*, 16(2), 2156759X0001600206.
- [17]. Marandu, O. I. (2018). An Appraisal of Counselling and Guidance Services: A Case of Secondary Schools in Korogwe Town Council (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania).
- [18]. Ministry of Education. (2002). *Report of the Education Review Committee*. Accra: Publishers.
- [19]. Namale, M. K., & Awabil, G. (2018). Evaluation of guidance services in senior high schools in Gomaa West District in the Central Region of Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(17), 23-30.
- [20]. Nkoma, E., & Mapfumo, J. (2013). The state of guidance and counselling programmes in high schools in Manicaland, Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 6(2), 100-116.
- [21]. Nkrumah, M. A. (2020). Classroom/Department effectiveness: a way of improving student performance at MET* University. *Ghana Journal of Higher Education*, 1.
- [22]. Nunnally, A. H. (1970). *Wisdom from the old Dude: Learn about life from the guy who's already been there!* Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.

- [23]. Nweze, T., & Okolie, U. C. (2014). Effective guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools: Issues and roles in students' career decision making. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSRJRME)*, 4(4), 63-68.
- [24]. Ogunlade, J. O., & Akeredolu, S. A. (2012). Influence of counselling on career preference among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and anthropology in Practice*, 4(3), 26-30.
- [25]. Ogunlade, J. O., & Akeredolu, S. A. (2012). Influence of counselling on career preference among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and anthropology in Practice*, 4(3), 26-30.
- [26]. Oye, N. D., Obi, M. C., Mohd, T. N., & Bernice, A. (2012). Guidance and counselling for effective teaching and learning. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 1(2), 160-169
- [27]. Salgong, Ngumi and Chege (2015), "The role of guidance and counseling in enhancing student discipline in secondary schools in Koibatek district", *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol. 7 No. 13, pp. 142-151
- [28]. Sandoval and Białowolski (2016), "Factors and conditions promoting academic resilience: a TIMSSbased analysis of five Asian education systems", *Asia Pacific Education Review*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 511-520.
- [29]. Smith, M. K. (2017). Jean Lave, Etienne Wenger and communities of practice. *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*. <http://infed.org/mobi/jean-lave-etienne-wenger-and-communities-of-practice>
- [30]. Taylor, A. I., & Buku, D. K. (2006). *Basics in guidance and counselling* Winneba: Department of Psychology and Education, University of Education.