An Evaluation of the Guidance Services Offered by Counselling Centre of University of Cape Coast: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract
The study was conducted to ascertain the perception held by students about the guidance services offered by the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast. Four hundred students were purposively sample and given a set of questionnaire to solicit their views about the guidance services offered by the counselling centre. One research question was answered while three hypotheses were tested. It came to light that the respondents held a poor perception about the guidance services offered by the counselling centre. It was also revealed that there were statistically significant differencesbetween the sciences and humanities students in terms of the perception held about the guidance services of the counselling centre. It was recommended for counsellors to live by their calling and the ethics of the profession by demonstrating acceptance and empathy so that students can easily approach them.
Keywords: Guidance, counselling, students and University of Cape Coast

1. Introduction

Formal guidance and counselling could be traced to America in the late 1890s and the early 1900s. Frank Parsons who has been called the father of vocational guidance was among the pioneers of the guidance and counselling movement. Through his efforts, guidance and counselling became an organized service and it gained recognition for its important contribution in society. Parsons established the first career institution in the USA, and set the pace for the development of psychological testing. Gradually the guidance and counselling movement developed into an organized service, which has continued to make a significant contribution to the development of society (Makinde, 2004).

Danquah (1987) indicated that the beginning of guidance and counselling in Ghana dates as far back as 1955 when the government of Ghana attempted to organize a national system of vocational guidance by establishing youth employment services for all youth under 20 years who hold the Middle School Leaving Certificate. The system was designed to give vocational guidance to help young people find suitable employment.

Guidance and Counselling plays a significant role in the overall growth and development of a high school student and is therefore an essential part of school curriculum. According to Qhingana (2006), pupils sometimes do not find education meaningful hence they become bored. As a result they become involved in protests, alcohol and drug abuse, lacked discipline, are violent and engaged in other unproductive activities. To Qhingana (2006), guidance and counselling services could reduce these problems.

Guidance and Counselling assists students to resolve and cope with conflicts arising from or are bound to arise ina changing society. Students need to be helped to understand themselves in respect to their abilities and interestsand with these, the selection of future careers or occupations and/or generally the making of appropriatedecisions. Indeed, according to Pecku (1991), Guidance is an important part of a child's development andeducation. It is only by making a survey that an insight into the existence, nature and service delivery ofGuidance and Counselling units could be made known and flaws detected.

Nziramasanga (1999) states that because of many pressures imposed onthe family, parents tend to have little time with their children to give them thenecessary guidance. The parents expect the school to provide solutions to theindiscipline in secondary schools caused by their children. UNESCO (2002)adds that African adults have become more concerned with earning income andare less occupied with many traditional practices that formerly contributed to theupbringing of young people. Rapid sociological changes emanating frommodernization and urbanization could be stressful to students.

School Guidance and counselling service is a process of planned intervention within a school system by which the total development of students are stimulated in areas relating to their personal, social, career, emotional and academic concerns. School guidance and counselling programme have therefore been introduced to assist students overcome the number of challenges they experience at home and at school.

Gumisiriza (2012) indicates that guidance and counselling services are widely known to be beneficial in shaping the thinking and decision making capabilities of both students and even people atwork places. It is further recommended to have such services in tertiary institutions especially in Ghana because of high rates of unemployment and abject indiscipline among students.

The University of Cape Coast has had cases of some students withdrawn for various reasons such as poor academic performance, stealing, and some students captured on sex tapes among other acts of indiscipline. Quite

recently gruesome attacks halls of residence by other students have all characterised the sound academic environment. The question then is what is the role of the counselling centre of the university in all these? The study was conducted to assess the guidance services offered by the counselling centre of the university.

2. Research Question
The following research question was answered to keep the study in focus.
1. What is the perception of the students on the guidance services offered by the counselling centre in the University of Cape Coast?

3. Research Hypotheses
The following hypotheses were tested to guide the study.
H1: There is significant difference between first-year and continuing students with regards to their perception of the guidance services the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast offers.
H2: There is significant difference between resident and non-resident students with regards to their perception of the guidance services the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast offers.
H3: There is significant difference between sciences and humanities students with regards to their perception of the guidance servicesthe counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast offers.

4. Methodology
The study employed a cross sectional survey design through which data was gathered from a cross section of students within a specific period of time. This design is appropriate per this study because it was recommended by Amin (2005) for studies which involve a cross section of respondents or subjects with almost similar characteristics. Descriptive and analytical research approaches are useful when carrying out quantitative research studies. The study therefore, sought information from a sample of students. This was why the survey design was seen as more desirable. The researcher collected information from a cross-section of respondents at once without repetitively visiting them, that is to say, the cross-sectional design was most appropriate on big population as it saved time and finances (Creswell, 2003).

4.1 Sample and Sample Procedure
Four hundred students were purposively sampled for the study. These students were from either in their first year or were continuing students. The students were carefully sampled to reflect those who were in the halls of residence and those who were outside the halls of residence. Again, the students were sampled from the sciences and the humanities. The sciences included students from the college of Health and Allied Sciences and college of Agriculture and Natural Science. The humanities were from the college of Education studies and the college of Humanities and Legal Studies

4.2 Measuring Instrument
A self-administered questionnaire was the data collection instrument that was used. The questionnaire was used to measure the perception of students' guidance services of the counselling centre. This technique was found to be appropriate because the respondents were scattered over a wide geographical area and they were literate. The questionnaire was designed based on the four point Likert scale. This provided options for respondents to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement to the items. The options was; Strongly Agree (SA) represented by code 4, Agree (A) represented by code 3, Disagree (D) represented by code 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) represented by code 1.

The instrument was pilot tested at the Cape Coast technical University to ascertain the reliability and validity of the instrument. It was revealed that the instrument had a high reliability. It realized 0.91 cronbach alpha coefficient.

4.3 Results
The results of the study are presented at this section.

4.4 Demographic characteristics of respondents
Four hundred (400) respondents from University of Cape Coast were involved in the study. Their demographic variables were selected in line with the topic under study. The analysis of demographic characteristics are presented in tables 1 to 3 as follows:

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents by Nature of Residence

Nature of Residence	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Residents	200	50
Non residents	200	50
Total	400	100

Table 1 indicated the distribution of respondents by residence. It showed that 200(50%) were in the in the University's halls of residence while 200(50%) were non-residents in the University's halls of residence.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by College of Study

College of Study	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agriculture and Natural Science (Sciences)	100	25
Health and Allied Science (Sciences)	100	25
Education Studies (Humanities)	100	25
Humanities and Legal Studies (Humanities)	100	25
Total	400	100

Table 2 revealed the analysis of the distribution of respondents by college of study. The table showed that respondents were from four colleges of study which were categorised into sciences and humanities. There 200(50%) each from both the sciences and the humanities.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Nature of Student

Nature of Student	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fresh	200	50
Continuing	200	50
Total	400	100

Table 3 showed the distribution of the respondents by nature of student. It showed that 200(50%) respondents were in the first year and 200(50%) were continuing students.

In analysing the research question as well as testing the hypotheses, a decision rule was arrived at. A summation of the points on the likert scale divided by the number of scales gives us the criteria point for decision making (4+3+2+1 =10, implies 10 ÷ 4 = 2.5). It therefore implies that a mean score above 2.5 shows good perception while below demonstrate poor perception.

Research Question One:What is the perception of the students on the guidance services offered by the counselling centre in the University of Cape Coast?

Table 4: Perception of Students on the Guidance Services offered by the Counselling Centre

Item	Mean	SD
I don't know where the counselling centre is located	1.36	.2547
The counselling centre is too hidden	1.44	.1534
I don't meet a counsellor whenever I visit the centre	1.37	.4396
My hall counsellor is always available	1.44	.1496
I don't meet my hall counsellor anytime I visit	1.55	.2224
The counsellor I visited was not welcoming	1.23	.2588
My counsellor never called or contacted me to know my progress	1.31	.5301
I don't see or hear the counselling centre organising programmes	1.11	.4645
I find it very difficult to access the services of the counselling centre because I don't live in the hall	1.54	.1544
The counselling centre is not near to my lecture theatre because of that, I can't access their services	1.32	.2469
I believe the counsellors are doing their work well	1.28	.3352
I believe the counselling centre is doing very well	1.26	.4142
Aggregate Mean	1.35	.502

The aggregate mean score was above 2.5 (M=1.35, SD= .502). Therefore it implies that students of the University of Cape Coast hold a poor perceptions about the guidance services offered by the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast. It must however be indicated that the mean scores of all the individual items were below 2.5.

Their greatest source of worry was that "I don't meet my hall counsellor anytime I visit" (M= 1.54, SD= .2224). This was followed by "I find it very difficult to access the services of the counselling centre because I don't live in the hall" (M= 1.54, SD= .1544).

H_1: There is a statistically significant difference between fresh and continuing students with regards to their perception of the guidance services offer the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast.

Table 5: T-table comparing first-year and continuing students with regards to their perception of the guidance services offered at the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast

Scale	Fresh Mean	SD	Continuing Mean	SD	t-Value	P Value	SIG.
I don't know where the counselling centre is located	1.39	.314	1.22	.322	.571	.601	NS
The counselling centre is too hidden	1.22	.749	1.18	.476	.371	.552	NS
I don't meet a counsellor whenever I visit the centre	1.96	.347	1.21	.362	.564	.605	NS
My hall counsellor is always available	2.15	.745	1.14	.072	.612	.045	S
I don't meet my hall counsellor anytime I visit	2.27	.552	1. 19	.661	.134	.016	S
The counsellor I visited was not welcoming	1.14	.385	1.12	.387	.325	.156	NS
My counsellor never called or contacted me to know my progress	1.31	.412	1.33	.311	.241	.554	NS
I don't see or hear the counselling centre organising programmes	1.24	.325	1.23	.281	.531	.541	NS
I find it very difficult to access the services of the counselling centre because I don't live in the hall	2.35	.314	1.12	.322	.472	.037	S
The counselling centre is not near to my lecture theatre because of that I can't access their services	2.22	.249	1.19	.476	.425	.002	S
I believe the counsellors are doing their work well	2.26	.413	1.81	.393	.674	.015	S
I believe the counselling centre is doing very well	2.29	.381	1.16	.412	.511	.043	S
Aggregate	2.2569	.12136	1.5070	.11351	3.613	.011	S

df = 398, p < 0.05

Data in Table 5 is used to test Hypothesis 1. It was revealed that fresh students had better perception of (M= 2.26, SD = .121)than continuing students(M= 1.51, SD =. 114). They both however had aggregate means score less than 2.5which is interpreted as poor perception.

The Hypothesis 1 was tested at statistical significance level of 0.05 and the results showed that at df = 398, p = 0.011 which is less than 0.05. Therefore we fail to reject the Hypothesis 1. This implies there isstatistically significant difference between fresh and continuing students with to the perceptions they hold on the guidance services offered by the counselling centre.

H$_2$: There is a statistically significant difference between residents and non-resident students with regards to their perception of the guidance services offered at the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast.

Table 6: T-table comparing resident and non-resident students with regards to their perception of the guidance services offer the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast

Scale	Residents Mean	SD	Non-Residents Mean	SD	t-Value	P Value	SIG.
I don't know where the counselling centre is located	1.56	.411	1.42	. 562	.443	.081	NS
The counselling centre is too hidden	1.25	. 643	1.23	. 356	.461	.076	NS
I don't meet a counsellor whenever I visit the centre	1.73	. 567	1. 54	.411	.568	.511	NS
My hall counsellor is always available	1.64	.461	1.19	. 352	.467	.036	S
I don't meet my hall counsellor anytime I visit	1.98	. 761	1. 23	. 719	.538	.027	S
The counsellor I visited was not welcoming	1.21	. 611	1.20	. 462	.593	.351	NS
My counsellor never called or contacted me to know my progress	1.28	.637	1.25	.643	.394	.217	NS
I don't see or hear the counselling centre organising programmes	1.18	.421	1.27	.372	.581	.184	NS
I find it very difficult to access the services of the counselling centre because I don't live in the hall	2.16	. 391	1.34	. 387	.399	.236	NS
The counselling centre is not near to my lecture theatre because of that I can't access their services	1.87	.693	1.25	. 364	.671	.294	NS
I believe the counsellors are doing their work well	2.18	.311	1.98	.534	.548	.218	NS
I believe the counselling centre is doing very well	2.32	.642	1.34	.619	.617	.311	NS
Aggregate	1.5569	.15636	1.4870	.11855	2.923	.044	S

df = 398, p < 0.05

Data in Table 6 is used to test Hypothesis 2. It was revealed that resident students had better perception (M= 1.56, SD = .156)than continuing students(M= 1.49, SD =. 119). They both however had aggregate means score less than 2.5which is interpreted as poor perception.

The Hypothesis 2 was tested at statistical significance level of 0.05 and the results showed that at df = 398, p = 0.044 which is less than 0.05. Therefore we fail to reject the Hypothesis 1. This implies there is statistically significant difference between residence and non-residence students with regards to the perceptions they hold on the guidance services offered by the counselling centre.

H$_A$3: There is a statistically significant difference between sciences and humanities students with regards to their

perception of the guidance services offeredat the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast.

Table 7: T-table comparing the Sciences and Humanities Students

Scale	Sciences Mean	SD	Humanities Mean	SD	t-Value	P Value	SIG.
I don't know where the counselling centre is located	1.86	.431	1.79	. 453	.629	.257	NS
The counselling centre is too hidden	1.27	. 638	1.29	. 431	.432	.196	NS
I don't meet a counsellor whenever I visit the centre	1.75	. 582	1. 93	.384	.437	.231	NS
My hall counsellor is always available	1.52	.637	1.64	. 172	.532	.361	NS
I don't meet my hall counsellor anytime I visit	1.81	. 581	1. 97	. 473	.637	.421	NS
The counsellor I visited was not welcoming	1.31	. 642	1.45	. 329	.641	.263	NS
My counsellor never called or contacted me to know my progress	1.33	.511	1.47	.415	.342	.461	NS
I don't see or hear the counselling centre organising programmes	1.39	.534	1.51	.522	.483	.324	NS
I find it very difficult to access the services of the counselling centre because I don't live in the hall	1.68	. 432	1.94	. 511	.537	.143	NS
The counselling centre is not near to my lecture theatre because of that I can't access their services	1.54	.385	1.66	. 532	.319	.512	NS
I believe the counsellors are doing their work well	1.99	.516	2.21	.491	.568	.086	NS
I believe the counselling centre is doing very well	2.12	.346	2.23	.512	.631	.117	NS
Aggregate	1.8569	.1236	1.9170	.2135	.4911	.127	NS

df = 398, p < 0.05

Data in Table 7 is used to test Hypothesis 3. It was revealed that science students had worse perception (M= 1.89, SD = .124)than humanities students(M= 1.92, SD =. 214). They both however had aggregate means score less than 2.5which is interpreted as poor perception.

The Hypothesis 3 was tested at statistical significance level of 0.05 and the results showed that at df = 398, p = 0.127 which is greater than 0.05. Therefore we reject the Hypothesis 3. This implies there isno statistically significant difference between sciences and humanities students with respect to the perceptions they hold on the guidance services offered by the counselling centre.

5. Discussion

From the result it was revealed that students had poor perception of the guidance services offered by the counselling centre of the University of Cape Coast. This finding is consistent with the findings of Agyei (2013) which revealed that students of the University of Ghana held a very poor perception of the activities of the counselling and placement centre. Seventy nine percent of 344 students held that perception. Some of the explanations students gave for their perception was that there are few counsellors and you hardly hear or meet them in their offices.

In a similar account, Tuah (2014) found among the Kumasi campus of the University of Education that students held a poor perception about the counselling service rendered by the University. The students espoused that the number of counsellors as well as conducive offices to share their concerns and seek information were problematic. They therefore recommended that more counsellors be employed even in the halls of residents.

In a different paradigm byNyan (2011) on students' and teachers' perception of guidance and counselling servicesin EasternPallisa District especially found that students and teachers generally have a positive perception about the necessity of counselling services in secondary schools. However, the services were not adequately provided and in some schools, they were non-existent.Also in Maryland University,Cole (2014) found that students assessed positively the services offered by the university. The respondents indicated that counsellors were more visible and easy to approach.

It was also revealed that there were no statistical significant difference between fresh and continuing students as well as resident and non- resident students in terms of the perceptions they hold about the guidance services offered by the University of Cape Coast. These findings are inconsistent with the findings of Ofori (2015) who found statistical significant difference among the levels of students and the perceptions they hold about counselling and academic performance. Denga (2012) also found difference between students who stay on campus and those outside campus with regards to their perceive benefits of counselling service in the Jos State University in Nigeria.

This finding was quite surprising to the researcher because there are professional counselling in the halls of residents so it was expected that resident students would hold a good perception about the guidance services of

the counselling centre. Again, as part of the orientation organised by the university, the counselling centre features greatly. It was therefore expected by the researcher that the fresh students who had just gone through orientation should have a good perception of the guidance service offered by the counselling centre.

It was also revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the sciences and the humanities with regards to their perception of the guidance services offered by the counselling centre. This finding is in line with the finding of Hackman (2013) who found differences between the sciences and the humanities with respect to their knowledge and perceptions about guidance services. The researcher agrees with this finding because some of the humanities students read counselling as a course of study and therefore stands to reason that they should have a better appreciation about the work of the counselling centre.

5.1 Conclusion

Guidance services are essential for successful academic as well as the total development of the individual. It is concluded from the study that the University of Cape Coast has a counselling centre that offers guidance services to its students and the University catchment area. It is concluded that student hold a poor perception about the guidance services rendered by the counselling centre.   This seems unfortunate and has the penchant to derail the functions of the counselling centre and the benefits that could accrue to students.

6. Implications for Counselling

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following implications are drawn for counselling:
1. One of the challenges students had about the guidance services of the centre was the issue of accessibility. More counsellors should therefore be employed and made more accessible to students.
2. The counselling centre should begin to consider a shift system for its counsellor so that they can become more accessible to students. In this this case, it would be expedient to detached counsellors from teaching.
3. There should be counselling spots or rooms around the lecture centres to service especially non-resident students of the university.
4. The counselling centre should be more proactive by organizing guidance programme which are heavily advertised to attract students.
5. Counsellors should live by their calling and the ethics of the profession by demonstrating acceptance and empathy so that students can easily approach them.

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