

Perception of Students towards Guidance and Counselling Services in Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana

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Abstract

Most students are confronted with how to prepare to face the challenges as they prepare to go into the world of work. While some of these students are ready to share their concerns for assistance, others might be reluctant to open up to others with their challenges confronting them. This study therefore examined the perception of students towards Guidance and Counselling in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The study employed the descriptive survey design. Simple random and proportional representation sampling techniques were used to select a sample size of 400 from an estimated population of 1200 College of Education students in the Northern Ghana. Self designed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The chi-square, t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and pair-wise comparison were used as statistical tools to test the three hypotheses raised. The results showed that students in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana perceived guidance and counselling services as beneficial. Further, there was no statistically significant difference between the perception of male and female students towards guidance and counselling services in colleges of education in Northern Ghana. The study recommended among others that government and stakeholders in education provide resources for efficient delivery of guidance and counselling services to address the needs and aspirations of students.

Key words: Perception of Students, Guidance and Counselling Services

Introduction

The function of education is to provide opportunities for students to reach their full potentials in the areas of educational, vocational, social, and emotional development (Lunenburg, 2010). In the view of Stephenson (2013) to enable students achieve these, the nations must ensure that guidance and counselling services become integral part of education. Guidance and counselling is a professional field in education that has a broad range of activities and services aimed at assisting individuals to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment and their world (Egbochuku, 2008). Guidance and counselling services are therefore designed to help individuals adjust to their environment, develop the ability to set realistic goals for themselves, and improve their education. Guidance services that benefit of colleges of education in northern Ghana include orientation, information, placement, appraisal, counselling referral, evaluation, follow-up, and consultancy and research services. Students need effective professional

help on appropriate study habits and techniques to perform optimally in national examinations. Also, guidance and counselling services assist students to understand their basic physiological needs accept others and develop positive associations with peers.

This study is situated within the framework of cognitive theory of perception. According to Karangu and Muola (2011) cognitive theory is an approach to psychology that attempts to explain human behaviour by understanding the thought processes. Perception refers to the senses, feelings, ideas, thoughts, and theories that allow people to see differences (Romanov, 2011). Perceptions enable students in colleges of education in northern Ghana to form their opinions and respond differently either positively or negatively to guidance and counselling services. It is an undeniable fact that the success of guidance and counselling services in the college system largely depends on students' perception. The way students perceive and respond to guidance and counselling services in the colleges of education will, to a great extent, affect their patronage, hence the need for the study to ascertain the trend.

Nyaga (2013), Bulus (2008) and Edet (2008) have indicated in different studies that students exhibited negative perceptions towards guidance and counselling services in colleges. However, other studies by Karangu and Muola (2011), Eyo et al. (2010) and Baker (2007) indicated that students showed positive perception towards guidance and counselling services. Although a lot of studies have been done with regard to the topic, most of them are alien to the Ghanaian context. It appears that there is a paucity of studies on the perception of students towards guidance and counselling services in colleges of education in Northern Ghana. Nyarko-Sampson (2010) focused on Teacher Trainees' Appraisal of Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Colleges of Education in Southern Ghana. Sedofia (2011) evaluated Guidance and Counselling Programme in Colleges of Education in Volta Region of Ghana. No study has specifically covered the perception of students towards guidance and counselling services in colleges of education in the Northern Ghana. It is therefore impossible for one to determine the perception students have towards guidance and counselling services and the effects of their perceptions on students' patronage. It is against this background that this study is deemed necessary.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to address the following objectives:

1. examine whether students in Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana perceive guidance counselling services as beneficial or not.
2. determine whether differences exist in the perception of male and female students towards guidance and counselling services.
3. examine whether differences exist in the perception of students towards guidance and counselling services on the basis of colleges

Research Hypotheses

Three hypotheses guided the study.

1. There is no statistically significant difference between students who perceive guidance and counselling services as beneficial and those who do not perceive it as beneficial.
2. There is no statistically significant difference between the perception of male and female students towards guidance counselling services in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana.
3. There is no statistically significant difference in the perception of guidance and counselling among students of colleges of education from Northern Ghana.

Methodology

This study was carried out in Tamale, St John Bosco and Nusrat Jehan Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana. The descriptive survey was the adopted for the study. Avoke (2005) defines descriptive survey as a design that portrays accurately the characteristics of particular individuals, situations or groups. By this, descriptive survey generally involves collection of data from a defined population using variable under survey. The descriptive survey was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to make use of questionnaires to obtain information from students about their perception towards guidance and counselling services in their respective colleges.

Population and Sample Size

Simple random sampling technique was used to select the three out of the six Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana. Proportional representation and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 400 from a population of 1200 college of education students. Distribution of the samples selected from each of the three colleges used for the study is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the Population and Sample Sizes

College of Education	Population			Sample Size		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Tamale College (Tamale)	157	127	284	78	63	141
St John Boscoss (Navrongo)	168	115	283	83	57	140
Nusrat Jehan (Wa)	184	56	240	91	28	119

Total	511	298	805	252	148	400
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Research Instrument

The questionnaire used for this study was adapted from Chireshe (2006) and modified to suit the situation. The modified questionnaire was close ended and rated on a five-point Likert type of scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” (SA) with a score of 5 to Strongly Disagree with a score of 1.

According to Stangor (2004) content validity is the most powerful technique available to the researcher through which questionnaire can be validated. To establish content validity, the questionnaire was given to two experts in the field of counselling from the Department of Psychology and Education, University of Education, Winneba. Their suggestions were incorporated into the questionnaire to ensure their suitability in measuring the attributes being assessed. The Cronbach alpha yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.73 which suggested that the instrument was useful (Landburg & Greener, 2000).

Results

Table 2: Sex of Student Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	253	63.2
Female	147	36.8.
Total	400	100

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (253, 63.2%) were males as against 147 (36.8%) females.

Table 3: Distribution of Students by Ages

Years	Frequency	Percent
20-25	320	80.0
26-30	78	19.5
31-35	2	0.5
Totals	400	100

In Table 3, majority of the respondents, 320 constituting 80% were within the ages of 20-25 years. Seventy-eight (78) respondents representing 19.5% fell within the ages of 26-30. Two (2) respondents representing 0.5 % aged between 31-35 years. It is evident from the above that the majority of the students are youthful and may have varied expectations in life. Some of their needs at their level of education could include preparing adequately for their career as teachers, entering marital life, being anxious about the various regions, districts, towns and villages they will be posted to after their completion, among others and therefore needs guidance and counselling services. Taylor and Buku (2006) acknowledge the importance of guidance and counselling services to students in colleges when they opined that most teacher trainees are in transitional period (between adolescent and adulthood) and require a lot of guidance and counselling to help them make useful decisions.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: *There is no statistically significant difference between students who perceive guidance and counselling services as beneficial and those who do not perceive it as beneficial.*

Table 4: Inferential Statistics of Respondents

Perception	Frequency	Degree of Freedom	Cal value of chi-square
Low	14	1	346
High	386		

Alpha level of 0.05, critical value of chi-square (= 3.84

Table 4 shows the calculated value of the chi-square) is 346. At an alpha level of 0.05 at the degree of freedom (df) of 1, the critical value of the chi-square) is 3.84. Since the calculated value of the chi-square is greater than the critical value of the chi-square, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis which states that: There is significant difference between students who perceive guidance and counselling services as beneficial and those who do not perceive it as beneficial. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of students in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana perceived guidance and counselling services as beneficial

Hypothesis 2: *There is no statistically significant difference between the perception of male and female students towards guidance counselling services in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana.*

Table 5: Group Statistics and Independent Samples t- test of Perception of Male and Female Students towards Guidance and Counselling Services in Colleges of Education

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Gender	Number	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)	Degree of freedom (DF)	Cal. t-value
Male	252	139.19	23.006	398	1.65
Female	148	145.03	22.160		

Alpha level of 0.05, T. critical value is 1.97

From Table 5, the t-test reveals that the calculated value of the t-test (is 1.65 and the critical value of the t-test with a degree of freedom of 398 and at an alpha level () of 0.05 is 1.97. Since the critical value is greater than the calculated value of the t-test, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is no statistically significant difference between the perception of male and that of female students towards Guidance and Counselling services in Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana.

Hypothesis 3: *There is no statistically significant difference in the perception of guidance and counselling among students of colleges of education from Northern Ghana.*

Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Results on the Perception of Guidance and Counselling Services among students from Tamale, St John Boscoss and Nusrat Jehan Colleges of Education

Sources of variance	Sum of Square (SS)	Degree of Freedom (DF)	Mean Squares (MS)	Cal. F-ratio ()
Between Groups	12544.38	2	2672.190	12.72
Within Groups	195664.62	397	492.858	
Total	208209.00	399		

At 0.05 alpha level of significance (P < 0.05), F. critical value () is 3.02.

It is clear from Table 6 that the calculated value of F () is 12.72 while the critical value () of F at $p < 0.05$ is 3.02. Since the calculated value of F is greater than that of its critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis which states that there is statistically significant difference among the perception of students towards guidance and counselling services in the Tamale, St John Boscoss and Nusrat Jehan Colleges of Education.

Since ANOVA results showed a significant difference among students on their perception their perception towards Guidance and Counselling Services, Turkey HSD, follow up test was conducted. The results are in Table 7.

Table 7: Three Pairwise Comparisons on Perception of Guidance and Counselling Services among students in the Tamale, St John Boscos and Nusrat Jehan Colleges of Education.

Comparison	M _i -M _j	Q	Sig
Tamale - St John Bosco	3.71	1.98	NS
Tamale - Nusrat Jehan	13.62	7.28	Sig
St John Bosco - Nusrat Jehan	9.91	5.30	Sig

$\alpha = 0.05$ df = 397 Critical value = 2.72

If the calculated value of the Q obtained exceeds the critical value from the standardized range distribution using the alpha level (α) of 0.05 with 397 degree of freedom (df), then the null hypothesis is rejected. The critical value is 2.72.

It is inferred from Table 7 that between Tamale and St John Bosco, the difference is not statistically significant because the critical value of 2.72 is more than the calculated value of 1.98. In the case of Tamale and Nusrat Jehan, the difference is statistically significant. This is because the critical value of 2.72 is less than the calculated value of 7.28. Similarly, the difference between St John Bosco and Nusrat Jehan is statistically significant because the critical value of 2.72 is less than the calculated value of 5.30.

It is clear from the above analysis that, the omnibus comparison among the three colleges of education (Tamale, St John Bosco and Nusrat Jehan) yielded a statistically significant difference. However, the pairwise comparison showed that statistical significant difference did not exist between Tamale and St John Bosco. Instead, statistical significant differences existed between Tamale and Nusrat Jehan; and St John Bosco and Nusrat Jehan.

Discussion

The result of the hypothesis 1 was significant indicating that most of the students in colleges of education in Tamale, St John Bosco (Navrongo) and Nusrat Jehan (Wa) perceive guidance and counselling services as beneficial. Implications of students with high or positive perceptions towards guidance and counselling services are that they have higher chances of seeking, patronizing and utilizing the services more often than their counterparts with negative or low perception. This finding corroborates the finding of Karangu (2007) which revealed that students showed positive perception towards

guidance and counselling and that those with positive perception are more likely to seek the service. However, the outcome of this finding contradicts that of Agi (2014) whose outcome of the studies showed that students exhibited negative perceptions towards guidance and counselling services.

Results from hypothesis 2 showed that there is no statistically significant difference between male and female on their perception towards guidance and counselling services in colleges of education in Northern Ghana (Tamale, St John Boscos (Navrongo) and Nusrat Jehan (Wa). It is logical to expect that significant difference do not exist between the perception of male and female students towards guidance and counselling services in the Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana. This is because guidance and counselling services are important to both sexes when it comes to assisting them make informed decisions about their education, career and personal-social matters. This could lead to better academic achievement of both male and female students.

Corroborating this finding, Kuhn (2004) found that both male and female students perceived the counsellors roles as significant. Similarly, Maina (2009) confirmed in a study that students' perception did not differ across gender in Kenyan secondary schools. Nevertheless, the outcome of this finding negates the finding of Brulen and Cockiehen (2004). They reported in a study that female students are more positive about guidance and counselling services than their male counterparts. Alemu (2013) disagreed with the finding of this study as he reported in a study that male students' utilization of the guidance and counselling services were significantly higher than their female counterparts. Alemu concluded that fear of asking help was the reason for the under-utilization of the guidance and counselling services by female students.

Results from hypothesis 3 showed that there was statistically significant difference among students of colleges of education in Northern Ghana on perception toward the provision of guidance and counselling services. A possible reason for this finding could be, the individual student has his/her peculiar challenges and problems so the extent to which these problems are addressed by guidance and counselling facility would be different (Stephenson, 2013).

Conclusions

From the findings the following conclusions were drawn:

- 1) First, the study established that students in colleges of education in the Northern part of Ghana have positive perceptions towards guidance and counselling and therefore perceived their services as beneficial.
- 2) Male and female students show similar perception towards guidance and counselling services in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana.
- 3) there was statistical significant difference among the perception of students towards guidance and counselling services in the Tamale, St John Boscos and Nusrat Jehan Colleges of Education.

Recommendations

1. Positive perceptions students hold about guidance and counselling services should inspire the government and education stakeholders to provide the resources and facilities for the effective delivery of guidance and counselling services to address the needs and aspirations of students.
2. School authorities and counsellors in colleges of education should continuously sustain the provision of guidance and counselling services to help students achieve their goals.

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