

UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME
AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING PATRONAGE AMONG
SHSs WITHIN TAMALE METROPOLIS**

EVANS YAW ANNOH

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION

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BY

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(UDS/MGC/0003/22)

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DEGREE IN GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

AUGUST, 2025

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the results of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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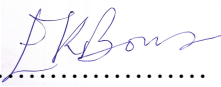
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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines of supervision of thesis laid down by the University for Development Studies.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and its implications for counselling patronage among Senior High Schools within the Tamale Metropolis. Employing a descriptive research design grounded in the positivist philosophical paradigm, the study utilized a proportional stratified sampling technique to select four Senior High Schools within the Tamale Metropolis. The population for the study was 14,453 being form 1, 2 and 3 students from the four selected schools and a sample of 400 respondents were selected for the study. A self-developed structured questionnaire was used to gather the requisite data for the study. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. The study revealed that students have positive attitude towards the school guidance programme and consider it as effective and beneficial in addressing their academic, career, personal and anxiety concerns. The study also indicated that students' perceptions of the school guidance programme in relation to its effectiveness and benefits influence their utilization of counselling service. The study recommended that, school authorities and guidance coordinators should provide regular and on-going information about the school guidance programme for students throughout their academic journey and continue with the provision of high-quality and effective services that address the diverse needs of students.

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DEDICATION

To my dear wife Mrs. Rahajatu Buwah Annoh, and our lovely children Annorah,
Richard and Aviela Annoh.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Guidance and counselling services play a crucial role in the educational system, aiming to aid students in their academic, social, and personal growth. In Ghana, the Education Ministry has highlighted the significance of implementing guidance and counselling programs in schools, with a special focus on Senior High Schools (SHSs). Despite this focus, Amoah and Osei-Tutu (2017) indicated that despite the availability of counselling services, a significant proportion of SHS students in Ghana do not utilize these services due to factors such as stigma, lack of awareness, and perceived irrelevance of the services. The study emphasized that students often avoid seeking help because of cultural perceptions around counselling and mental health. Many students refrain from using counselling services because of fear of confidentiality breaches, societal stigma, and a lack of understanding of the benefits of counselling (Osei-Tutu & Amoah, 2018). Students often cite a lack of trust, social stigma, and insufficient awareness as significant obstacles to seeking assistance (Agyei & Addo-Yobo, 2017; Twum-Danso & Anim-Sackey, 2018). For the overall development of students, comprehensive guidance and counselling services must be provided in educational institutions (Harris, Williams, & Green, 2016). Because senior high schools (SHS) are so important in determining how students will develop in the future, it is very important that these institutions have excellent guidance programmes.

The Tamale Metropolis, one of the rapidly expanding urban regions in Ghana, hosts a substantial number of SHS students. The rising enrolment rates in SHSs within the metropolis have raised concerns regarding the adequacy and accessibility of guidance and counselling services. Due to increased enrolment, there is a broad community of students living in the Tamale Metropolis in Ghana's Northern Region with a range of educational demands and backgrounds. For the purpose of increasing counselling services and, ultimately, students' educational experiences and outcomes, it is crucial to comprehend how students in this setting view and interact with school guidance programme.

The importance of school counselling programmes in promoting students' educational opportunities and all-around wellbeing is being increasingly recognized (Shokeen, 2022). These programmes offer a variety of services, such as career exploration, personal growth, and mental health support, all of which are intended to help students' overall development and smooth transitions to different life phases. However, the effectiveness of these services relies heavily on students' perceptions of their value and relevance and their willingness to actively engage with the available guidance resources.

Past research has shown that students' perceptions of school guidance programmes significantly influence their engagement and utilization of counselling services (Villares, Crespo & Méndez, 2018). Positive perceptions can lead to increased patronage of counselling services, thereby maximizing the potential benefits of these programmes. Conversely, negative perceptions or

misconceptions about counselling services may deter students from seeking support.

Due to its diverse student population, which comprises of individuals from different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic origins, the Tamale Metropolis presents a unique context for studying students' perception and patronage of school guidance programmes. Additionally, the area experiences unique difficulties such restricted access to professional prospects and educational resources, which may impact students' attitudes toward guidance and counselling services.

1.2 Problem Statement

Educational literature generally acknowledges the value of school guidance programmes in promoting students' academic success, personal development, and career development (Sink & Stroh, 2003). A study conducted in South Africa indicted that students who utilized guidance and counselling services experienced greater career satisfaction and enhanced life skills (De Vries, Van der Merwe & Fourie, 2018). According to Oladele and Oloyede (2017), school guidance programmes positively influenced students' academic performance and their ability to adjust. Additionally, research by Twum-Danso and Anim-Sackey (2018) revealed that students who accessed guidance and counselling services exhibited improved academic performance and enhanced mental health. Chen et al., (2018) explored college students' perceptions of their institution's guidance services and found that students perceived guidance services as essential for their academic and personal development, but they were dissatisfied with the quality and

availability of these services. In a comparative study on the perceived effectiveness of school counselling programmes in Croatia and Serbia, Todorović et al., (2019) noted that students in both countries viewed the counselling programmes as vital for their academic and personal development.

According to Kanus (2018), students perceived the impact of guidance and counselling programmes on academic needs to be satisfactory. Students in public secondary schools of South Kinangop division in Nairobi perceive guidance and counselling as significantly beneficial (Wachira, 2004). Around 40% of respondents reported that the counselling services helped them improve in their class work. Additionally, 61% indicated that the services led to improvements in their morality and uprightness. 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. Amponsah, Addo and Asare (2018) revealed that, most senior high school students in Accra, Ghana, perceived guidance services as important for their academic and personal development, but they were dissatisfied with the quality and availability of these services. Asamari and Namale (2018) indicated in their studies that, students in the Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana perceive guidance and counselling as beneficial. However, students' perceptions of the value and relevance of the school guidance programme are important factors that can significantly impact the success of these programmes. The effectiveness of the school guidance programme relies heavily on students' perceptions of their value and relevance and their willingness to actively engage with the available guidance resources.

Hutchinson and Wood (2013) examined how students' perceptions of the usefulness and relevance of school counselling impact their willingness to seek help in the United States. The results revealed that students who viewed counselling as valuable and relevant were significantly more likely to engage with counselling services. Negative perceptions correlated with avoidance behaviours.

Lapan, Gansneder and Bragg (2014) conducted a study on the impact of perceived relevance of school counselling on student engagement and academic success. The purpose of the study was to investigate whether perceived relevance of guidance programs influences student engagement and academic performance. It was found that positive perceptions of guidance relevance were associated with higher engagement levels and better academic outcomes. Qualitative data revealed that relevance increased trust and willingness to participate.

Schmidt and Koss (2017) explored how perceptions of relevance and perceived barriers influence students' willingness to seek guidance. The study emphasized that higher perceived value and relevance predicted greater willingness to engage, while barriers such as stigma and lack of awareness reduced engagement.

A study conducted by Johnson and Lee (2019) in the United States assessed how students' perceptions influence their engagement and identified factors that enhance perceived relevance. The finding showed that students who perceived guidance services as relevant to their personal goals and academic needs were more likely to actively engage. Lack of perceived relevance was a key barrier.

Mugisha and Turyakira (2020) conducted a study on perceptions of guidance and counselling services and their effect on student engagement in Ugandan

secondary schools. They found that students' positive perceptions of guidance services' relevance significantly predicted higher engagement levels. Negative perceptions or doubts about relevance negatively impacted engagement. Omolo and Otieno (2018) investigated how perceptions of the value and relevance of guidance services impact student participation in Kenyan Secondary Schools. The results revealed that perceptions of relevance and perceived usefulness of guidance services were positively associated with students' willingness to engage actively. Ndlovu and Maphosa (2019) carried out a study in Zimbabwean secondary schools on perceptions of guidance and counselling and their effect on student engagement. It was found that students who perceived guidance as relevant and beneficial were more likely to engage actively. Negative perceptions correlated with low participation. A study was conducted in Kenya by Kipkebut and Kiplagat (2021) to examine the relationship between perceptions of guidance services' relevance and student engagement. The findings established that a positive perception of relevance significantly predicted active engagement. Students who saw guidance as relevant were more willing to utilize services.

In the Ghanaian context, Amoako (2015) conducted a study on students' perceptions of guidance and counselling services and their utilization in selected senior high schools in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The purpose of the study was to examine how students' perceptions of the relevance and usefulness of guidance and counselling services influence their willingness to engage. It was found that students who perceived guidance services as valuable and relevant were more likely to actively participate. Negative perceptions reduced engagement. Boateng

and Obeng (2017) investigated the relationship between students' perceptions of guidance services' relevance and their willingness to engage. The results revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between perception of relevance and engagement levels. Abdulai and Mohammed (2018) carried out a study on perception of guidance and counselling services and their influence on student engagement in senior high schools in Northern Ghana. It was found that students who perceived guidance and counselling services as relevant and beneficial were more likely to actively participate. Negative perceptions correlated with low engagement. Yidana and Fuseini (2020) conducted a study on exploring student perceptions of guidance and counselling and their engagement in Northern Ghana senior high schools. The purpose of the study was to investigate the link between perceptions and active participation in guidance activities. The results showed that students' perceptions of guidance relevance directly impacted their willingness to engage; positive perceptions fostered higher participation.

Although a lot of studies have been done with regard to students' perception of school guidance and counselling programmes and its effect on counselling service utilization and engagement, it seems there is limited study in the specific context of senior high schools within the Tamale Metropolis. How students in the senior high schools within the Tamale Metropolis perceive their school guidance programme and how these perceptions subsequently influenced their engagement with counselling services remain relatively unexplored. It is in this context that it becomes important to investigate further on students' perception of school

guidance programme and its implication for counselling patronage among SHSs within Tamale Metropolis.

An exploration of students' attitudes towards school guidance programmes within the context of the Tamale Metropolis becomes imperative because students' perceptions play a crucial role in determining their willingness to seek and utilize counselling services (Villares et al., 2018). For educators, counsellors, and policymakers aiming to maximize the efficacy of school guidance programmes in this particular setting, understanding the factors that shape students' perceptions and how these perceptions impact their patronage of counselling services can provide invaluable insights.

Therefore, this study aims to bridge the knowledge gap by investigating how students' perceptions of the school guidance programme influence their decision-making process and utilization of counselling services within selected Senior High Schools (SHS) in the Tamale Metropolis.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The literature on school guidance programme perused points to the fact that indeed school guidance programmes helps in promoting students' academic success, personal development, and career development. However, the effectiveness of the school guidance programme relies heavily on students' perceptions of their value and relevance and their willingness to actively engage with the available guidance resources. The purpose of this study therefore was to investigate students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and to

explore the implications of these perceptions for counselling patronage among Senior High Schools (SHSs) within the Tamale Metropolis.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives:

The specific objectives guiding this study were to:

1. Assess students' awareness of the school guidance programmes.
2. Explore students' perception of the school guidance programme.
3. Examine students' utilization of the counselling service in their school.
4. Determine the effect of students' perceptions on the utilization of counselling service.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of student awareness of the school guidance programme?
2. What are students' perceptions of the effectiveness and relevance of school guidance programme?
3. To what extent do students utilize school counselling service?
4. How do student perceptions of school counselling service influence their utilization?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance understanding of students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and how these perceptions influence their utilization of counselling services within Senior High Schools in the Tamale Metropolis. By exploring students' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related to the guidance programme, the study will provide valuable

insights that can inform the development and implementation of more effective guidance and counselling strategies tailored to students' needs.

The findings can assist educational policymakers, school authorities, and guidance coordinators in identifying gaps and strengths within the current guidance services, thereby enabling them to design targeted interventions that increase students' awareness, acceptance, and patronage of counselling services. Additionally, understanding students' perceptions can lead to the formulation of policies that foster a supportive school environment conducive to academic, personal, and social development.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on school guidance programmes in the Ghanaian context, particularly within the Tamale Metropolis, where cultural and socio-economic factors may influence students' attitudes toward counselling. The study's outcomes can serve as a basis for future research and best practices, ultimately promoting the holistic development of students and improving the overall effectiveness of school guidance services.

1.6 Delimitation of the Study

This study investigates students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and explores the implications of these perceptions for counselling patronage among Senior High Schools (SHSs) within the Tamale Metropolis. Yet, it is crucial to underscore specific boundaries that delineate the research's focus.

Firstly, the study focused exclusively on selected Senior High Schools within the Tamale Metropolis. It did not extend to other regions or areas, limiting the generalizability of findings to this specific geographical context.

Secondly, the research primarily investigated students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and its implications for counselling patronage and practice. While it acknowledges the broader range of support services within educational institutions, the study primarily focused on the guidance and counselling services provided.

Thirdly, the study focused exclusively on public senior high schools since there are currently no existing private senior high schools within Tamale Metropolis.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Although this study has provided valuable insights into students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and its implications for counselling patronage within selected Senior High Schools (SHSs) in the Tamale Metropolis, certain limitations must be acknowledged.

Firstly, the study was conducted in only four SHSs within the Tamale metropolis, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The perceptions gathered may not fully represent those of students in other SHSs across the region or the country, especially given the diversity in school culture, resources, and guidance programme implementation.

Secondly, the study focused exclusively on Form two (2) and Form three (3) students, as Form one (1) students were not in school during the period of data

collection due to a scheduled break. Their absence prevented their inclusion in the study, and their perspectives which may differ significantly given their recent entry into the school environment were therefore not captured.

Additionally, one of the selected schools was a single-sex (girls') school. This may have introduced a gender imbalance in the findings, as the experiences and attitudes of male students, particularly in mixed or boys' schools, may differ from those of their female counterparts.

The study may also have been affected by response bias. Some students may have provided socially desirable responses or withheld honest opinions due to fear of victimization or lack of confidence in the confidentiality of the process, particularly when discussing sensitive topics related to counselling.

Lastly, differences in the structure and availability of guidance services among the selected schools may have influenced students' perceptions and levels of counselling patronage. Such variability in programme implementation could limit the comparability of responses across the schools involved.

Despite these limitations, the study offers important insights that can inform efforts to improve guidance and counselling services in SHSs within the Tamale Metropolis and beyond.

1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms

1. School Guidance Programme: In the context of this study, school guidance programme refers to the organized, structured, and comprehensive set of activities

and services within the selected Senior High School in the Tamale Metropolis, designed to support students' academic, career, and personal development.

2. Students' Perception of School Guidance Programme: With regards to this study, "students' perception of school guidance programme" refers to the cognitive and emotional understanding that students have regarding the availability, effectiveness, and relevance of the guidance and counselling services provided within their respective Senior High Schools (SHS) in the Tamale Metropolis. This encompasses students' beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and expectations towards the various aspects of the guidance programme, including academic advising, career exploration, personal development, and mental health support.

3. Counselling Patronage: "Counselling patronage" refers to the active engagement and utilization of counselling services by students within the selected SHS in the Tamale Metropolis. It includes seeking and participating in various counselling activities, such as one-on-one counselling sessions, group workshops, career assessments, and other supportive interventions provided by the school's counselling department.

4. Implications: In this study, "implications" refer to the potential consequences, effects, or outcomes arising from students' perceptions of the school guidance programme. These implications include the influence of students' perceptions on their decision-making to seek counselling services, the types of services they

engage in, the frequency of their engagement, and the overall effectiveness of counselling interventions.

5. Senior High Schools (SHS) within Tamale Metropolis: The term "SHS within Tamale Metropolis" refers to a specific group of Senior High Schools situated within the Tamale Metropolis geographical area that have been purposefully chosen for this study. These schools will serve as the primary sites for data collection and analysis.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This thesis is structured into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic, presents the research objectives, and explains the scope and significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature related to school guidance programme, guidance and counselling practice, students' perception and patronage and the factors influencing them. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, including the research design, sample selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques. Chapter 4 presents the findings and discussion of findings of the study, and their implications. Finally, Chapter 5 offers a summary of the research, conclusions drawn from the study, and recommendations for future research and counselling practice.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and to explore the implications of these perceptions for counselling patronage among Senior High Schools (SHSs) within the Tamale Metropolis.

This chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the existing literature concerning students' perception and patronage of school guidance programme with a specific focus on its implications for counselling in Senior High Schools (SHS) within the Tamale Metropolis in the Northern Region of Ghana. The review critically examines relevant studies, theories, and concepts to provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for the current research. The review of related literature is done in three areas; theoretical review, conceptual review and empirical review. The social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980) constitute the theoretical bases for the study. Conceptual review include a review of concepts from the following selected areas; definition and concept of school guidance programme, types of school guidance programme, components of school guidance programme, types of counselling service and importance of guidance programmes in high school. The empirical review included: student's awareness of school guidance programme, sources of information and promotion strategies for guidance services, students' perceptions and attitudes towards school guidance programme,

utilization of school guidance programme, factors influencing students' decision to seek counselling, effectiveness of counselling interventions and relationship between perception and utilization of counselling service.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura developed the Social Cognitive Theory in 1986, and it is now extensively used in psychology and education to explain how people learn and form their behaviours through the interaction of cognitive processes, environmental influences, and observational learning. This theory is especially pertinent within the framework of students' perception and patronage of school guidance programmes, as it offers insights into how students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to counselling services are influenced.

The idea of observational learning, which describes how people learn new skills by observing others in their social surroundings, is fundamental to the Social Cognitive Theory (Rafiola & Ramlil, 2018). The dynamic process of modelling the actions and results of others, such as classmates, teachers, and role models, is known as observational learning. According to Bandura, people can pick up lessons from both good and bad role models. In the context of guidance programmes, this theory suggests that students' perceptions are influenced by the experiences and modelling of their peers, teachers, and role models (Gladstone & Cimpian, 2021).

Research by Ajayi and Ojo (2020) supports this idea by discovering a positive correlation between students' awareness and perceptions of school guidance programs and the use of these services by their peers. Students who observed their peers benefiting from counselling services were more likely to perceive them as valuable and subsequently patronize them.

According to the Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy denotes an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks, solve problems, or achieve specific goals. High self-efficacy is associated with increased motivation, persistence, and the likelihood of taking on challenging tasks. Social Cognitive Theory's concept of self-efficacy is particularly relevant to understanding students' willingness to seek guidance and counselling services. Students with high self-efficacy beliefs regarding their ability to navigate academic, personal, or career challenges through counselling may be more likely to proactively seek assistance. Conversely, those with lower self-efficacy may exhibit hesitancy in engaging with counselling services due to doubts about their efficacy in achieving positive outcomes (Lin, 2020).

Research conducted by Ekwugha (2018) corroborated the significance of self-efficacy in students' help-seeking behaviour. Students who possessed strong self-efficacy beliefs regarding their problem-solving abilities were more likely to engage with counselling services and sought help when encountering academic challenges.

According to social cognitive theory, human behaviour is not solely determined by internal cognitive processes (such as thoughts and beliefs) but is influenced by interactions between these cognitive factors, external environmental stimuli, and individual actions. These relationships are reciprocal and continuously shape one another. According to Guoli (2025), this reciprocal link is known as reciprocal determinism. Individuals are influenced by and also influence their environment.

Social Cognitive Theory's emphasis on reciprocal determinism underscores the dynamic nature of individuals' interactions with their environment. Students' perceptions of guidance programmes and their actual patronage of counselling services are likely to interact dynamically. Positive experiences with counselling services may reinforce positive perceptions, leading to continued engagement. Conversely, negative experiences or perceptions may deter students from seeking further help, creating a reciprocal relationship between attitudes and actions (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2022).

According to Ogunwale (2017), students who had positive experiences with counselling services, such as improvements in their academic performance or personal growth, tended to develop more positive perceptions of the programmes. Conversely, students who already had positive perceptions were more inclined to use counselling services, creating a positive reinforcement feedback loop.

2.2.2 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), established by Deci and Ryan in the 1980s, is a prominent psychological framework that examines human motivation and the

factors influencing individuals' choices, behaviours, and overall well-being. SDT provides a thorough framework for comprehending how students' perceptions and behaviours related to school guidance programmes are shaped by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It offers insightful information about how students perceive, engage with, and benefit from counselling services in their schools. According to SDT, three basic psychological needs—Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness—drive human motivation and behaviour. Understanding how individuals are motivated to engage in a particular behaviour and how these behaviours affect their psychological well-being is fundamentally based on these needs.

Autonomy is the sense of volition and personal choice in one's actions. One must feel as though their choices are their own and reflect their values and interests. According to SDT, individuals who perceive they have autonomy over their decisions and behaviour are more motivated and satisfied. In the context of SDT, students who perceive school guidance programmes as supportive of their autonomy may be more likely to seek help voluntarily. When individuals feel that their actions are self-determined and not imposed by external pressures, they are more motivated and satisfied with their choices (Chambon et al., 2020). Hence, students who perceive that accessing guidance programmes aligns with their values and interests (autonomy support) will be more inclined to seek and utilize these services (Deci & Ryan, 2016).

Competence refers to an individual's perceived ability to effectively carry out tasks and achieve desired outcomes. It is the desire to feel competent and

successful in one's actions and endeavours. Motivation and engagement are increased when one feels competent in a given activity. SDT suggests that students who perceive guidance programmes as contributing to their abilities and skill development may be more motivated to engage with them. According to Nakhli (2021), individuals are more likely to persist in tasks and activities that enhance their sense of competence. Students who believe that guidance programmes contribute positively to their academic competence and personal development will be more likely to patronize these services (Dabula, 2013).

Relatedness is the need to feel connected to and supported by others, fostering a sense of belonging and social connection. It pertains to social interactions and relationships that contribute to one's well-being. SDT suggest that, students who feel a sense of relatedness and support from counsellors and the school community may be more motivated to engage with guidance programmes. According to Clanton Harpine, (2024), social connections and supportive environments play an important role in fostering intrinsic motivation. Therefore, students who perceive that guidance programmes provide opportunities for relatedness, connection with peers, and support from counsellors may be more inclined to utilize these services.

2.3 Conceptual Review

2.3.1 Definition and Concept of School Guidance Programme

According to Odeleye (2017), a school guidance programme can be defined as a comprehensive, developmental program designed to address the academic, career, and personal/social needs of all students. This definition underscores the

inclusivity of guidance programmes, emphasizing that they should benefit every student, rather than being reserved for a select few.

Incorporating academic, personal, and career domains in school guidance programme are essential to students' overall development (Saleh et al., 2020). The concept of school guidance programs has evolved over the years, reflecting changing educational landscapes and a deeper understanding of students' holistic development. School guidance programs encompass a range of services designed to help students in their academic, personal, and career journeys (Gysbers & Henderson, 2015).

Historically, school guidance programs emerged in the early 20th century as a response to societal changes and the need for comprehensive student support. According to Kalchik and Oertle (2010), there is the need to emphasize the importance of helping students make decisions about their education and careers. As educational philosophies shifted towards a more student-centred approach, the definition of school guidance programs expanded. O'Shea et al., (2015) proposed a lifespan approach, viewing guidance as a continuous process that addresses the changing needs of individuals at different developmental stages.

Contemporary definitions emphasize the multifaceted nature of school guidance programs, encapsulating various components (Dahir & Stone, 2019). These components typically include academic counselling, career development, personal/social support, and responsive services to address immediate student needs (American School Counsellor Association [ASCA], 2019).

Academic counselling within school guidance programs involves helping students achieve success in their educational pursuits. This may include course selection, study skills development, and academic goal-setting (Gysbers & Henderson, 2015).

Career development is a central aspect of school guidance programs and it involves supporting students in exploring career options, understanding their interests and strengths, and making informed decisions about their future paths (ASCA, 2019).

Personal/Social Support is where school guidance programs recognize the importance of addressing students' personal and social well-being. Counsellors provide support for issues such as mental health, interpersonal relationships, and resilience building (Dahir & Stone, 2019).

Responsive services involve timely interventions to address immediate student needs. This may include crisis intervention, individual or group counselling, and collaboration with external support services (Gysbers & Henderson, 2015).

The definition of school guidance programs is not universal and must be considered within specific cultural contexts. In diverse societies such as Ghana, cultural factors significantly influence how guidance programs are perceived and implemented (Owusu et al., 2016). In recent years, advancements in technology have influenced the delivery of school guidance programs. Online platforms, virtual counselling, and digital resources have become integral components, extending the reach of guidance services (Stone & Dahir, 2018). The definition of

school guidance programs has evolved from a vocational focus to a comprehensive, developmental approach. Recognizing the diverse needs of students, contemporary guidance programs encompass academic, career, and personal/social domains. The cultural context and technological advancements further shape the landscape of school guidance, emphasizing the importance of adapting these programs to the specific needs and contexts of students.

2.3.2 Types of School Guidance Programme

A school guidance program encompasses a range of activities designed to help students address educational, vocational, personal, or social challenges they encounter at various stages of development (Purnajati et al., 2022). It is a fundamental component of school education and does not involve direct instruction. According to Nyarko (2020), school guidance programme largely consists of major guidance services such as orientation, appraisal, information, counselling, evaluation, consultation, referral, placement and follow-up. Each of these services has unique functions and plays a crucial role in students' development.

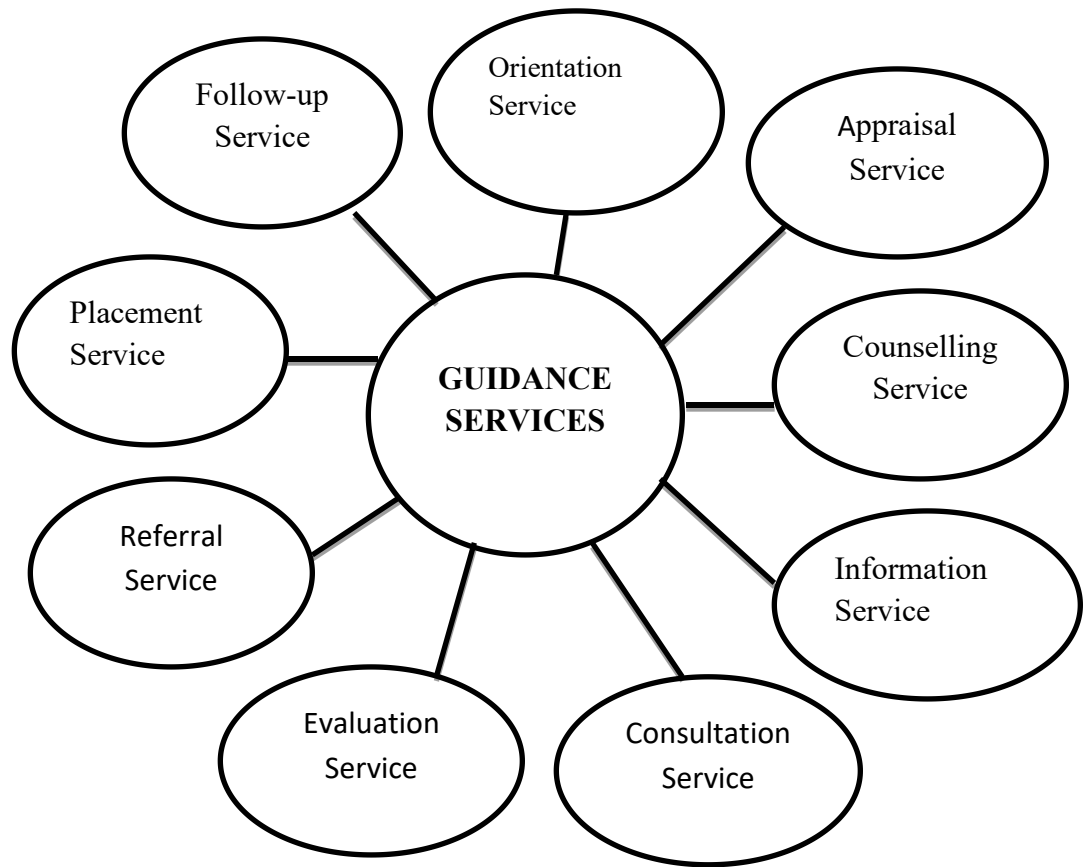


Figure 1: Types of Guidance Services

Source: Author’s own construct

Orientation service consists of activities provided to students in helping them adjust to school environment and experience in a more comprehensive manner (Kokro, 2015). Bartleet et al., (2019) describe orientation services as a reciprocal learning process involving new students, faculty, and the student body, where each group becomes familiar with one another. This continuous engagement helps new students integrate effectively and become active, functional members of the institution. Orientation services play a crucial role in guiding students as they transition into new academic environments. At the beginning of each academic

year, new students join primary, secondary, vocational colleges, and other higher education institutions. Many of these students experience social and psychological disorientation in their new environment. This disorientation arises from the absence of the familiar support of parents, friends, and former teachers. Moreover, the new setting, with its unique rules, regulations, and administrative setup, appears completely unfamiliar to them. The purpose of orientation services is to assist students in acclimating to the academic, social, and cultural dimensions of their educational environments, promoting a favourable and fruitful experience (Pavlik, 2020).

It is commonly observed that students encounter challenges in promptly accepting and adapting to new environments when transitioning between schools or from school to college or work. Such transitions may lead to adjustment difficulties among students entering unfamiliar situations. To address this challenge, orientation services are arranged specifically to familiarize students with their new surroundings, aiding in their adaptation and facilitating necessary adjustments. New students are familiarized with the school's physical facilities, administrative structure, codes of conduct, utilization of school resources, curriculum updates, teaching personnel, and how the school's guidance program can address their requirements. In institutions with guidance coordinators, orientation services facilitate initial interactions between new students and their guidance coordinators (Benavides & Keyes, 2016). Therefore, it is recommended to commence any educational course or programme with an orientation session.

According to Oomen (2021), orientation services are not limited solely to students; they can also encompass parents and the broader community.

Appraisal service is the guidance service that identifies and assesses specific abilities predominant among the students (Aydın, 2019). The appraisal service aims to collect, analyse, and use a variety of objective and subjective psychological and social data about each student. Its goal is to gain a deeper understanding of students to help them enhance their self-awareness (Mensah & Affum, 2016). In addition to understanding the overall traits of students, it is crucial to pinpoint the particular strengths that stand out among them before a counsellor or career advisor can provide assistance. Without identifying students' talents and interests, it's challenging to anticipate their potential and what they can achieve. CahyoAdhi (2023) suggested that, before providing guidance to a student, it's essential to assess multiple factors such as aptitude, academic performance, interests, attitudes, socio-economic status, and family background. The appraisal service assists in documenting and organizing this information. These records are typically compiled through the collaborative efforts of teachers, counsellors, and career advisors using a range of testing and non-testing methods (Kader, 2021). Some commonly used non-testing methods include observation, anecdotes, rating scales, and interviews. On the other hand, testing methods encompass verbal tests, non-verbal tests, performance assessments, projective techniques, and personality evaluations (Cohen et al., 2017). These assessments are conducted by a counsellor or trained personnel. A systematic review of students' data enables teachers, counsellors, parents, and school administrators to provide support to students

effectively. This can only be achieved by employing effective methods for gathering, arranging, analysing, and utilizing pertinent student information (Appiah, 2013). According to Fast and Schnurr (2020), the information typically gathered includes personal details, family background, psychological information, academic achievements, and health records. These details assist counsellors in their counselling sessions and career teachers in developing effective career guidance programmes.

The appraisal service gathers data about the student, whereas the information service furnishes information to the students (Mensah & Affum, 2016). These services are geared towards enhancing students' understanding of educational, vocational, and social prospects. The information service can be delivered through the collaborative work of a teacher, counsellor, and librarians (Hearne & Galvin, 2015). It offers students details about educational opportunities across different levels, relevant training programmes, and available occupations (Coşkunserçe & Becitİşçitürk, 2019). This enables students to understand the possibilities available to them based on the courses or subjects they are studying or planning to pursue. Additionally, students gain insight into the world of work, including work characteristics, patterns, and the necessary skills for various roles. The information service ensures students receive pertinent and valuable information regarding educational, vocational, personal, and social opportunities. Information is important in decision making of an individual. Without information, it is difficult for any individual to make any meaningful decision of his or her life (Kokro, 2015).

The primary goal of the information service is to encourage students to assess themselves and their potential opportunities. It also aims to facilitate informed decision-making based on each student's distinctive attributes and available options. This enables students to take ownership of their decisions and take appropriate action aligned with their choices. The information service can encompass educational, vocational, social, recreational, emotional, or ethical aspects (Hooley & Sultana, 2016). This service is usually emphasized at the secondary school and post-secondary levels of education. Aydın (2019) stated that, students receive diverse information through this service, including details about job roles, responsibilities, educational and professional prerequisites, work conditions, rewards, and promotional opportunities. This information is gathered and shared by the guidance worker through career talks, conferences, and seminars.

The Counselling Service represents a foundational component of the guidance process, with nearly all other services relying on counselling in some way (Kiesler, 2017). Its primary goal is to support students in achieving holistic development. It offers individuals a chance to discuss their plans and challenges with a professional counsellor in a supportive environment (Callender & Haktanir, 2023). According to HuiChing et al., (2023), the counselling process aims to empower individuals to become self-reliant and independent, a practice that can only be conducted by a trained counsellor. According to Gati and Landman-Tal (2019), counselling is a service meant to assist an individual in evaluating their abilities, accomplishments, interests, and decision-making processes concerning

new or upcoming choices. Taylor and Buku (2006) characterize counselling as a service that aids students in resolving various challenges that may impede their academic progress.

In counselling, the counsellor aids the student in comprehending and embracing themselves, thus clarifying their ideas, perceptions, attitudes, and goals. Counsellors also offer students personal and environmental details about their plans, choices, or issues, aiming to enhance students' abilities to cope with and resolve issues while enhancing decision-making skills and future planning competencies (Lunenburg, 2010). However, teachers in schools can also offer some assistance since they spend the most time interacting with students in the classroom. If a teacher notices any student exhibiting deviant behaviours, they can refer the case to a school counsellor. Additionally, observations and records maintained by teachers about certain students can support the counsellor in the counselling process. Counselling services encompass both individual and group sessions and are available to all students (Bani et al., 2023).

Consultation is seeking for information from another person, and to use that information in helping the students. Consultation service within guidance involves the collaboration of the school counsellor with teachers, parents, and external agencies to address students' issues (Taylor & Buku, 2006). This process entails seeking input from a person or a small group to offer valuable information and recommendations that support decision-making. It may also help teachers and parents in understanding students' developmental challenges and how to handle

them. This may also give some hidden information about students unknown to any of the functionaries within the school.

Referral service as the name implies refer students for assistance or help. It is an already established fact that counselling has its limitations, so also do guidance and counselling coordinators. Due to the unique nature of some of the challenges students bring up during counselling, it is the duty of the guidance and counselling coordinator to do referrals. Some of these problems may be psychological, medical, spiritual or mental. After interaction with the students, the counsellor in consultation with students and parent may have to refer student to the appropriate place for help (Brigman et al., 2021).

Placement Service is a form of guidance service aimed at assisting students, whether currently enrolled in school or post-school, in finding employment opportunities (Chireshe, 2011). The purpose of placement service is to support student development by aiding them in selecting and making use of opportunities within both the school environment and the job market (Galassi, 2017). According to Pecku (1991), placement initiates with providing information and continues until students have successfully executed their plans, followed by monitoring their progress. It primarily focuses on assisting students in transitioning from one educational level to another, such as moving from senior high school to a training college, or from a training college to a university. The services create awareness for students with regard to opportunities available for them in and out of school as well as help them to function effectively (Cleak & Smith, 2017). Placements are usually vocational, educational and social and in

most cases recommended by guidance and counselling coordinators with the client or student's interest and abilities taken into consideration (Kokro, 2015). Placement is an endeavour which necessitates collaboration among the school principal, counsellor, teachers, career advisor, state employment agencies, private organizations, and the local community (Suleiman et al., 2019).

According to Bempah (2010), placement unfolds in three stages: the Pre-placement phase, which entails providing information about available opportunities; the Placement phase, focusing on the development and implementation of plans; and the Post-placement phase, which involves aiding the student in adapting and adjusting to their placement. According to Ladkin and Buhalis (2016), the primary objective of placement service is to streamline the process of fulfilling the requirements of both employers and potential employees. A student is considered for placement services only after pertinent and accurate information about them has been acquired from the counsellor or designated guidance personnel. This typically includes personal information such as their biodata, academic performance, attendance records, test scores, health data, and other relevant details. Additionally, teachers may contribute by providing insights into the student's interests, as well as their communication skills and involvement in various school activities.

In addition to placement, this service also educates students about job application techniques. The guidance worker can acquaint them with strategies for applying to jobs, identifying different sources of information, and preparing for interviews. These abilities can be cultivated through either individual or group counselling

sessions. Offering placement services enables a school to utilize all available resources to aid its students in securing suitable and fitting employment opportunities (Syafitri & Nirwana, 2020). The effectiveness of the placement service is gauged by how well it fulfils this objective.

The follow-up service is a structured approach to assessing the progress and experiences of individuals in the locations where they have been positioned (Pecku, 1991). According to Omoniyi and Akinboro (2011), follow-up services in guidance are a proactive and supportive approach to ensuring that individuals receive sustained assistance and that the guidance provided is responsive to their evolving needs. These services contribute to the overall effectiveness and impact of guidance and counselling programs. It encompasses the on-going support and monitoring provided to individuals after an initial counselling or guidance intervention. These services are designed to ensure that the guidance and advice provided continue to be effective and that individuals are progressing toward their goals (Samad & Malik, 2023). According to Lazonder and Harmsen (2016), assessing the outcomes of guidance is crucial as it serves as a tool for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the guidance programme. Follow-up services are crucial in the field of guidance and counselling to maintain a connection with clients and address any emerging issues or challenges.

Follow-up services involve monitoring the progress of individuals who have received guidance or counselling (Astuti, 2021). This could include academic progress, career development, or personal/social growth. Regular check-ins help

counsellors assess whether the individual is achieving the goals set during the initial sessions. Based on the feedback and progress observed during follow-up, counsellors can make adjustments to the guidance plan. This may involve modifying strategies, revising goals, or providing additional resources to address new challenges or changing circumstances. Over time, individuals may experience shifts in their priorities or aspirations. Follow-up services include reassessing goals and ensuring that the guidance provided aligns with the individual's current needs and aspirations.

The evaluation service aims to assess the guidance and counselling services in schools to identify areas for improvement. It involves using scientific methods to determine if the program is functioning effectively and meeting its goals (Pecku, 1991). According to Kokro (2015), it may involve research and data collection on the benefits of the services to students, teachers and administrators. Evaluation services unlike other services are not directly provided to students or clients; instead, they benefit school officials, the community, and the guidance programme itself. Evaluation helps the school determine how well the programme has met its goals and identify areas for necessary changes or improvements. The evaluation must cover all guidance and counselling services offered in the school. The evaluation should be continuous and constant but must be done in a scientific and systematic way which should involve all functionaries in the school with students as the focal point. Asiedu-Yirenkyi et al., (2019) have recommended that the entire school guidance and counselling programme be assessed every two years to address evolving times and the corresponding changing needs of students.

Fatchurahman et al., (2020) believe that successes are not easily quantifiable. However, the researcher holds the perspective that questionnaires and interviews addressing intangible outcomes can be answered by the clients, making it possible to quantify these results for evaluation purposes.

2.3.3 Components of School Guidance Programme

The concept of school guidance programme has evolved over time, reflecting changes in educational philosophies and societal needs. Academic guidance, career guidance, personal/social guidance, individual and group counselling, consultation and collaboration, assessment, and evaluation are all interrelated components of school guidance programmes. Together, these elements form a comprehensive and encouraging framework for fostering students' academic success, personal development, and emotional well-being.

A key component of school guidance programme is academic guidance. It entails helping students create and meet academic goals, selecting appropriate courses, and keeping track of their progress (ASCA, 2019). For students to improve their performance and to be academically ready for future endeavours, academic guidance is crucial (Dahir et al., 2008). According to Lapan et al., (2012), school counsellors are crucial in assisting students in developing effective study habits, time management skills, and academic strategies. In order to help students succeed academically, school counsellors also offer academic support, such as study skills seminars and academic planning (Dahir et al., 2008).

Another crucial component of school guidance programme is career guidance. It aids students in exploring their interests, strengths, and career aspirations (Zafar, 2019). School counsellors assist students in career assessments, provide details about different career options, and guide them in developing career plans. This component is crucial in assisting students in making well-informed choices about their future academic and career trajectories (Theresa, 2015).

Personal and social guidance focuses on students' emotional and social well-being. School counsellors provide counselling services to address personal issues, such as mental health concerns and relationship problems (ASCA, 2019). They also promote the development of essential life skills, including decision-making, communication, and conflict resolution (Lapan et al., 2012). Personal/social guidance is critical for creating a supportive and inclusive school environment that fosters positive mental health and interpersonal relationships among students (Sink et al., 2014).

Individual and group counselling sessions are key elements of school guidance programme. These sessions provide students with a secure setting in which to express their concerns, cope with challenges, and devise strategies for improvement (Sink et al., 2014). Peer pressure and low self-esteem are two typical concerns that can be effectively addressed by group counselling in particular (Dahir et al., 2008). In addition to equipping students with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of adolescence and academic, these counselling sessions also offer them emotional support (ASCA, 2019).

Consultation and collaboration are key components of school guidance programme. It effectively helps students, school counsellors collaborate closely with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. According to Whiston and Rahardja (2019), school counsellors may consult with teachers on academic interventions, collaborate with parents to address behavioural concerns, and coordinate with community resources to provide additional support when needed. The effectiveness of school guidance programme is increased by collaboration, which ensures a holistic approach to student development (Fahrezi, 2022).

Assessment and evaluation are critical components for the continuous improvement of school guidance programme. School counsellors use data to identify students' needs, evaluate programme activities for efficacy, and make data-driven decisions (ASCA, 2019). In order to ensure that guidance programmes remain responsive to evolving student needs, regular assessments are necessary (Lapan et al., 2012). School counsellors can tailor their services and interventions to better serve students by making decisions that are data-driven (Whiston & Rahardja, 2019).

2.3.4 Types of Counselling Service

Counselling services in senior high schools serves a crucial role in helping the academic, career, and personal development of students. Counselling services in senior high schools are diverse, encompassing academic, career, and personal-social dimensions.

Academic counselling in senior high schools is a vital component of comprehensive guidance programmes designed to support students in their educational journey by focusing on assisting students in their academic endeavours. Gysbers and Henderson (2015) stated that, counsellors work with students to set academic goals, develop study skills, and navigate the challenges of coursework. Academic counselling aims to assist students in setting clear educational goals and developing strategic plans to achieve them (Gysbers & Henderson, 2015). Counsellors guide students in making educated choices about course selection, considering their academic strengths, interests, and future career aspirations. Academic counselling provides resources and strategies to enhance students' study skills, time management, and organizational abilities to optimize academic performance. Identifying students who may be struggling academically, counsellors offer interventions and support services to address specific challenges. Academic counselling plays a crucial role in equipping students for post-secondary education and the workforce, offering information on college admissions, standardized testing, and career exploration (Hoyt & Lester, 2015). According to Whiston et al., (2017), effective academic counselling positively correlates with improved student academic performance. Academic counselling contributes to higher rates of college enrolment and persistence among high school graduates (Hoyt & Lester, 2015). Career-oriented academic counselling helps students make well-informed choices about their educational and career paths, promoting long-term success (Dama, 2018).

Career counselling in senior high schools is a pivotal component of the broader guidance and counselling framework. According to Hoyt and Lester (2015), career counselling involves helping students explore potential career paths, understand different professions, and make informed decisions about post-secondary education or vocational options. Career counselling assists students in exploring a variety of career options, helping them understand their interests, skills, and values (Wong et al., 2023). Career counsellors provide information and guidance to support students in making educated decisions about educational pathways and career options (Gysbers & Henderson, 2015). Career counselling also aims to enhance students' career development abilities such as setting goals, crafting resumes, and preparing for interviews (Helens-Hart, 2019). Career counsellors assist students in navigating various career transitions, such as transitioning from high school to college or entering the workforce (Hartung et al., 2019). Career counselling employs several strategies in achieving its aims. Individual sessions in career counselling provide opportunities for personalized career guidance, addressing specific concerns and tailoring advice to meet the specific needs of students. Career counsellors often use assessments and records to help students determine their interests, values, and skills, providing valuable insights for career decision-making (Lent & Brown, 2020). Jacobs et al., (2012) stated that, group sessions during career counselling cover topics such as resume writing, job searching, and interview skills, promoting a sense of community and collaborative learning among students. Career counsellors also facilitate chances for students to acquire practical experience through internships and employment

shadowing, aiding in career exploration (Whiston et al., 2017). Effective career counselling has been linked to better career decision-making processes among students, contributing to increased satisfaction with chosen paths (Gati et al., 2019). Career counselling is associated with higher rates of college enrolment and increased readiness for the workforce (Hartung et al., 2019). Students who receive effective career counselling often exhibit increased self-efficacy and confidence in pursuing their chosen career paths (Whiston et al., 2017).

Personal and social counselling addresses the emotional and social well-being of high school students. Counsellors provide support for issues such as peer relationships, self-esteem, and emotional challenges, contributing to a positive school environment (Ambayo, 2016). Personal and social counselling aims to foster emotional well-being among students, helping them manage stress, anxiety, and emotional challenges effectively (American School Counsellor Association, 2019). Counsellors facilitate the development of healthy interpersonal relationships, addressing issues such as peer conflicts, communication skills, and social integration. Personal and social counselling provides students with conflict resolution skills, enabling them to navigate conflicts in a constructive manner (Whiston et al., 2017). Counsellors play a vital role in providing support during crises, such as grief, trauma, or significant life events, offering a safe space for students to share their emotions and worries. Strategies Employed in Personal and Social Counselling includes, one-on-one sessions which allows counsellors to address personal and social challenges on an individualized basis, tailoring support to the unique needs of each student. Group counselling sessions provide a

platform for students to share experiences, cultivate a sense of community, and receive collective support (Jacobs et al., 2012). Workshops focusing on coping skills equip students with strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and other emotional challenges effectively. Peer mentoring initiatives is also one of the strategies employed in personal and social counselling and it involves older students providing support and guidance to younger peers, fostering a sense of connection and mentorship. Galassi (2017) stated that, collaborating with parents is a key strategy, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing personal and social issues. Effective personal and social counselling is associated with improved emotional well-being and mental health results among students (Whiston et al., 2017). Personal and social counselling helps in the development of interpersonal skills, positively impacting students' relationships with peers, teachers, and family members. According to Whiston et al., (2017), counselling interventions have been linked to a reduction in behavioural issues and disciplinary incidents within the school environment. Students who receive effective personal and social counselling often demonstrate increased academic engagement and a more positive attitude toward learning (American School Counsellor Association, 2019).

2.3.5 Importance of Guidance Programmes in High Schools

High school represents a critical period in a student's educational journey, where academic, personal, and career development converge. Guidance programmes in high schools serve as indispensable tools for supporting students through this pivotal phase.

Guidance programmes in high schools play a pivotal role in shaping students' academic success, personal development, and preparation for future endeavours. They are integral to students' academic success, preparedness for college and careers, and social and emotional growth, and the reduction of achievement gaps. The multifaceted impact of these programmes underscores their importance in creating a supportive and inclusive school environment that fosters student success and well-being.

Guidance programmes in high schools are essential for enhancing students' academic success and achievement. It significantly contributes to encouraging student academic excellence. School counsellors provide academic support by assisting students in course selection, setting educational goals, and addressing learning challenges (Emily et al., 2015). In addition, school counsellors collaborate with students to identify academic challenges and provide tailored interventions (Whiston et al., 2017). The guidance provided ensures that students are on track to graduate and are well-prepared for post-secondary education. According to Lapan et al., (2012), students who engage with guidance programmes are more probable to graduate on time and achieve higher performance academically. School counsellors also help students explore advanced coursework options, such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, further enriching their academic experiences (ASCA, 2019).

High school is a time of personal growth and self-discovery. The development of essential life skills of students, including decision-making, problem-solving, and

time management are supported by guidance programmes (ASCA, 2019). These programs also offer personal counselling to address emotional and social issues, helping students navigate the complexities of adolescence (Dahir et al., 2008). School counsellors provide a safe and confidential space for students to discuss personal concerns, manage stress, and develop coping strategies (KılıçMemur & Sezgin, 2023). They encourage emotional resilience and equip students with valuable life skills. Personal and social guidance programmes contribute to a positive school climate, fostering healthy relationships and emotional well-being among students. As a result, students who take part in guidance programmes frequently experience improved self-esteem, stronger interpersonal relationships, and enhanced emotional well-being (Sink et al., 2014).

Guidance programmes are instrumental in preparing high school students for future career pathways. They provide career assessments, exploration opportunities, and guidance on college and career choices. Counsellors assist students in setting career goals, developing resumes, and applying for college or job opportunities (ASCA, 2019). Career exploration and counselling assist students in making well-informed choices about their future paths, leading to increased post-secondary enrolment rates. Dahir et al., (2008) indicated that, students who engage in career-focused guidance programs are more likely to make informed career decisions and pursue post-secondary education.

Guidance programmes are essential tools for reducing achievement gaps among students. They make sure that all students have access to academic and career resources, regardless of their background or circumstances (Whiston et al., 2017).

By providing targeted support to underserved and at-risk populations, school counsellors advocate for equity and inclusivity (ASCA, 2019). Guidance programmes help to reduce achievement gaps by addressing the unique needs of diverse students (Lapan et al., 2012). Guidance programmes also contribute to equitable educational outcomes by addressing inequities in access to opportunities and resources (Brown et al., 2015).

Early intervention is crucial for preventing behavioural issues in high schools. According to Whiston et al., (2017), guidance programmes identify students who may be at risk for behavioural problems and provide counselling and support. Through proactive strategies and interventions, counsellors help create a positive and safe school environment (ASCA, 2019). This approach has been shown to reduce disciplinary incidents and enhance overall school climate (Sink et al., 2014).

2.3.6 Conceptual Framework

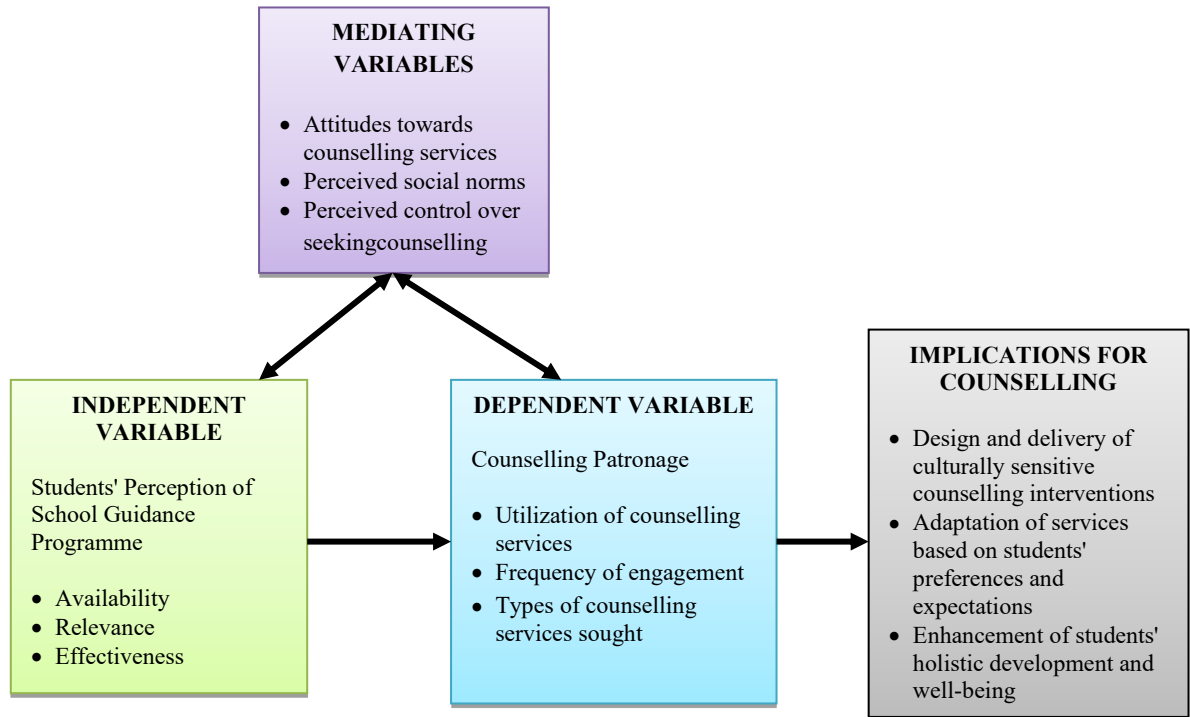


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author's own construct

The purpose of the conceptual framework for this study is to offer an organized knowledge of the key concepts and relationships that will direct the investigation. It offers a graphic representation of the key variables, relationships, and processes that will be examined in the research (Younus & Younis, 2021). The framework outlines primary variables and their interactions while integrating pertinent theoretical viewpoints (Plata Lerma et al., 2022). The conceptual framework provides a structured approach for investigating the complex relationships between students' perception, patronage, and the implications of guidance

programme in Senior High Schools within the Tamale Metropolis by exploring the interplay of these concepts and variables.

The central construct of the conceptual framework is students' perception of school guidance programme, which encompasses whether students are aware of the presence of the programme, its scope, and the extent to which they believe these services can be helpful to them. Students' perception is multidimensional but the study focuses on students' perception based on the availability of counselling service, relevance of counselling service and the effectiveness of counselling service.

The mediating variables of the conceptual framework are the students' attitude towards counselling service, perceived social norms and perceived control over seeking counselling which reflect students' inner drive, beliefs and goals that influences their engagement and persistence in counselling services. It encompasses intrinsic and extrinsic motivation or demotivation that influences students' quest to seek for counselling services.

The patronage of counselling service is the dependent variable in the conceptual framework, representing the utilization of counselling service, frequency of engagements and the type of counselling services sought for. This dependent variable measures whether students actively seek and engage with counselling services within their Senior High Schools. It reflects the real-world utilization of guidance programme by students, including their willingness to approach counsellors or use available guidance resources.

The implication for counselling is the ultimate outcome variable in the conceptual framework representing the designing and delivery of culturally sensitive counselling interventions, adaptation of services based on students' preferences and expectations and the enhancement of students' holistic development and well-being. Counselling practice is influenced by multiple factors including students' perception and patronage of the school guidance programme.

The conceptual framework proposes that students' perception of school guidance programme, as reflected in availability of counselling service, relevance of counselling service and the effectiveness of counselling service, has a direct influence on counselling patronage. Positive perception of the availability, relevance and effectiveness of the school guidance programme can positively impact students' attitude and willingness to engage with school guidance programme leading to increased utilization of counselling service. In contrast, negative perception of school guidance programme will deter students from seeking help therefore leading to lower utilization of counselling services

Additionally, the conceptual framework acknowledges that factors such as students' attitude, perceived social norm and perceived control over seeking counselling may influence both students' perception of school guidance programme and counselling patronage. These factors are considered potential mediators that may interact with the perceived availability, relevance and effectiveness of counselling service, influencing the relationship between students' perception of school guidance programme and counselling patronage.

2.4 Empirical Review

2.4.1 Student's Awareness of School Guidance Programme

In Ghana, Agyemang and Ofori-Dankwa (2021) carried out a research on understanding students' awareness and utilization of guidance programmes in Senior High Schools. The purpose of the study was to assess the level of awareness and utilization of guidance and counselling programmes among students in senior high schools in Ghana. It was a quantitative descriptive study that collected data from 450 senior high school students selected from five SHSs in Ghana using questionnaire with both closed and open-ended items. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and chi-square tests. It was found that majority of students were aware of the existence of guidance and counselling services in their schools. It was suggested that schools should intensify sensitization campaigns on the importance and confidentiality of counselling services. Jones, Smith and Brown (2020) investigated the level of awareness among high school students regarding the availability and purpose of school guidance programmes in the United States. Using a cross-sectional survey design, structured questionnaire with Likert-scale and multiple-choice items was used to assess awareness, knowledge, and perceptions of guidance programmes from 312 high school students from six public high schools across three districts. The data gathered was analysed using SPSS to compute descriptive statistics, t-tests, and correlation analysis. The study revealed that while 82% of students knew that their school had a guidance office, only 48% understood the full scope of services provided. Awareness was higher

among students who had direct interaction with a school counsellor. Johnson and Abrams (2010) conducted a study to critically review and synthesize existing research on school counselling programmes to determine their effectiveness and areas needing improvement. It was a systematic literature review where the researchers conducted a comprehensive search and analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles and program evaluation reports related to school counselling. The qualitative thematic analysis of the published studies revealed that there is a high level of awareness among students regarding the availability of school counselling services. The study recommended that more standardized and evidence-based approaches should be adopted in implementing and assessing counselling programmes.

In their study on students' patronage of guidance and counselling services in Senior High Schools in Ghana, Upoalkpajor, Eggle and Namale (2018) explored SHS students' awareness of guidance and counselling services and identify factors affecting their patronage. It was a cross-sectional descriptive study which used questionnaire to collect data from 2,969 Form-2 and Form-3 students from 24 SHSs through a multi-stage sampling method. The findings of the study revealed that most students were aware of the presence of guidance and counselling services especially educational counselling. It was recommended that GES and SHS headteachers should provide proper guidance facilities and logistics; ensure school counsellors are not assigned teaching duties to maintain trust and impartiality. Boakye and Amoako (2023) carried out a study to assess students' awareness of counselling departments and guidance services in a SHS in Sunyani

West District, and evaluate the quality of provision. It was a mixed-method study which collected data from 120 students and 2 counsellors. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students while a semi structured interview guide was used to collect data from counsellors. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis of interview responses. The study revealed that all students were aware of the counselling department and guidance services. However, facilities like offices and materials were inadequate. It was suggested that school management should provide dedicated counselling offices, informational materials (magazines, audio-visual aids), and appropriate resources to support effective guidance services.

McCarthy and Kroll (2016) conducted a study on college students' perceptions of counselling services: stigma, attitudes, and intentions to seek help. The purpose of the study was to explore how perceived stigma, attitudes, and awareness influence college students' intentions to seek counselling services. It was a quantitative cross-sectional study which collected data from 210 undergraduate students from a large public university in the United States using an online self-administered questionnaire. Data was statistically analysed using SPSS tools including Pearson correlation, multiple regression analysis, and t-tests. The findings of the study revealed that awareness of available counselling services was relatively low, with many students unsure of the types of help available. The authors suggested that universities should launch targeted awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and improve understanding of counselling services. In the Upper East Region of

Ghana, St. John Bosco and Anovunga (2024) conducted a study to determine the level of students' awareness of guidance and counselling services and to examine the nature and scope of those services in selected SHSs in Upper East Region. It was a quantitative descriptive study which collected data from 325 students, 16 counsellors/teachers, and 14 headteachers using structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics was employed in analysing the data collected. It was found that majority of SHS students were unaware of the existence of guidance and counselling services in their schools.

2.4.2 Sources of Information and Promotion Strategies for Guidance Services

Chen and Chen (2017) carried out a study on teachers' perception and involvement in school counselling programmes. The purpose of the study was to examine teachers' perceptions of and involvement in school counselling programmes and how these perceptions influence their participation. It was a quantitative descriptive study where data was collected using a structured questionnaire measuring perceptions, attitudes, and involvement levels from 200 teachers from various primary and secondary schools. Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis using SPSS. The result indicated that teachers generally view counselling programmes positively but reported limited involvement due to lack of training, time constraints, and unclear roles. Positive perceptions correlated with higher involvement. Li (2018) explored how teacher collaboration with school counsellors affects students' use of counselling services. It was a correlational quantitative study which collected data using questionnaires

for both teachers and students. Teachers were assessing collaboration frequency and quality while students were measuring counselling service utilization. Data was collected from 150 teachers and 1,000 students across multiple schools. Statistical analyses including Pearson's correlation and multiple regression using SPSS were employed in analysing the data that was collected. The study found that higher levels of teacher collaboration with counsellors were associated with increased student utilization of counselling services and teachers' active referrals and support were critical factors. The study encouraged fostering collaborative practices through joint training sessions and promoting a school culture supportive of counselling services. Wang and Chang (2019) carried out a study on teacher collaboration with school counsellors in promoting the school counselling programme. The purpose of the study was to investigate how teacher collaboration with school counsellors enhances the promotion and effectiveness of counselling programmes. It was a mixed-method approach combining surveys and interviews where quantitative data were collected through questionnaires and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews. Data was collected from 180 teachers and 15 school counsellors from middle and high schools. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS - descriptive and inferential statistics and qualitative data analyzed through thematic analysis. The results revealed that collaboration improved program visibility and student engagement. Effective communication and shared goals between teachers and counsellors were key factors. The study recommended structured collaboration frameworks, joint planning, and ongoing professional development to strengthen partnership.

An experimental design study with pre-test and post-test measures was conducted by Kim and Kim (2020) to evaluate whether visual aids – posters, flyers, digital media effectively increase awareness and participation in school counselling programmes. Questionnaires were used to measure awareness, attitudes, and participation rates before and after exposure to visual aids from 120 students divided into control and experimental groups. The data gathered was analysed by paired t-tests and ANOVA using SPSS. It was found that visual aids significantly increased students' awareness and willingness to participate in counselling services in the experimental group compared to controls. The study suggested that schools should incorporate visually engaging materials as part of their outreach strategies to promote counselling programs. Gyamfi, Agyemang and Osei-Tutu (2020) explored the roles and effectiveness of school counsellors in promoting mental health among students in Ghana, and to identify challenges faced in this process. The study employed a qualitative descriptive design, utilizing interviews and focus group discussions to gather in-depth insights from 30 school counsellors and 100 students from various senior high schools across Ghana. Data was collected through semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion guides developed specifically for the study. These instruments facilitated open-ended responses to understand perceptions and experiences. Thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative data, identifying key themes related to counsellors' roles, challenges, and students' perceptions. The study found that school counsellors play a crucial role in promoting student mental health through counselling and awareness programmes.

Choi and Kang (2017) explored the challenges faced by students in understanding and engaging with school counselling programmes. It was a qualitative research which used phenomenological methods. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth insights into students' perceptions and experiences from 20 students from various secondary schools who had experienced school counselling services. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes and patterns in interview transcripts. The study revealed that students faced challenges such as limited awareness of counselling services, stigma associated with seeking help, and lack of understanding about the purpose of counselling. Many students perceived counselling as only for severe problems, which hindered engagement. The authors recommended increasing awareness campaigns, destigmatizing counselling, and providing clear information about the benefits and confidentiality of services to improve student understanding and utilization. Owusu-Ansah and Owusu-Ansah (2018) conducted a qualitative study on challenges faced by Ghanaian students in accessing and utilizing educational resources. The study was to investigate the challenges encountered by Ghanaian students when trying to access and effectively utilize educational resources. In a qualitative descriptive study, data was collected from 25 students from senior high schools across different regions in Ghana. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to collect rich, detailed data on students' experiences. Content analysis was employed to identify key themes related to resource accessibility and utilization challenges. The study found that students faced issues such as inadequate learning materials, limited access to libraries and digital

resources, and lack of guidance on resource utilization. Socioeconomic factors and infrastructural deficiencies further hindered access. The study recommended improving infrastructure, increasing resource provision – both physical and digital, and training students on effectively using available resources to enhance learning outcomes. A descriptive research was conducted in Ghana by Adjei-Mafo and Owusu (2017) to examine how access to information influences the academic performance of senior high school students. Data was collected from 200 senior high school students from various schools across Ghana using structured questionnaires measuring access to information sources, frequency of use, and academic performance indicators. Descriptive statistics (means, percentages) and Pearson correlation analysis were employed to examine the relationship between access to information and academic performance. The study found a positive correlation between access to information and academic achievement. Students with better access to information sources such as libraries, the internet, and broadcast media performed better academically.

Mahommed and Olofinbiyi (2019) evaluated the availability and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools. In a case study approach with descriptive elements, data was collected from school counsellors, teachers, and students from 8 secondary schools by interviewing counsellors and teachers whiles students responded to questionnaires. Qualitative content analysis complemented by descriptive statistics was employed to analyse the data collected. The study found that guidance services were available but often limited in scope and effectiveness. There was a gap between policy and practice, with many

students not fully benefiting from counselling services. The study suggested that there should be increased funding, training, and supervision of counsellors, and clear policies should be developed to ensure effective guidance services. In Nigeria, Adeyemo, Adekola and Adebayo (2018) conducted a study on school guidance and counselling services in secondary schools within Oyo State. It was a descriptive study that assessed the scope and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools. Through structured questionnaires assessing students' perceptions and experiences with counselling services, data was collected from 250 students from multiple schools, selected via stratified sampling. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were employed in data analysis to compare perceptions across different groups. It was established that while most students valued counselling services, many reported limited access and inconsistent delivery. There was a general perception that counselling was underfunded and undervalued. Agyei-Mensah and Owusu-Ansah (2018) carried out a descriptive study on school guidance and counselling services in Ghana to evaluate the effectiveness of school guidance and counselling services. A sample size of 300 students and 50 counsellors from selected secondary schools was used and data collected by the use of structured questionnaires for students and counsellors, measuring perceptions of service effectiveness, accessibility, and impact. Descriptive statistics, t-tests, and correlation analyses were employed to analyse the data collected. The study found that guidance and counselling services are moderately effective, but issues such as insufficient resources and lack of trained counsellors hinder optimal service delivery. Increase funding, improve

counsellor training, and enhance the visibility and accessibility of counselling services within schools were the recommendations of the study.

2.4.3 Students' Perceptions and Attitudes towards School Guidance Programme

Kofi, Osei and Amoako (2018) assessed students' perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of guidance services provided in Ghanaian senior high schools. A total of 300 students were randomly selected from various senior high schools nationwide and data collection was done through self-administered questionnaires containing Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to gauge perceptions. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics – means, frequencies and percentages, while qualitative responses were subjected to content analysis. The results indicated that students generally perceived guidance services as moderate in effectiveness, citing issues such as lack of confidentiality, insufficient guidance personnel, and limited awareness of available services as hindrances. The authors suggested improving the visibility and accessibility of guidance services, increasing the number of trained guidance counsellors, and creating awareness among students about available support. Sarfo and Agyemang (2016) explored students' views on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services by conducting a descriptive study with 200 students as respondents and found that there was generally positive perceptions on the effectiveness of the guidance programme. With a sample size of 30 students from diverse schools, they collected data through in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires. It was found that students perceive guidance programmes as helpful but desire more

personalized and consistent support. A descriptive study was conducted by Owusu and Mensah (2018) to explore students' perceptions and attitudes toward counselling services in Ghanaian tertiary institutions. Data was gathered from 250 students through the use of structured questionnaires focusing on perceptions, usage, and satisfaction. The study emphasized that students generally perceived counselling services as helpful but underutilized due to stigma and lack of awareness. It also found that those who utilized services reported positive outcomes. Anderson and Taylor (2020) assessed student satisfaction levels with counselling services in community colleges in the U.S. 400 students from various community colleges were selected to respond to an online surveys measuring satisfaction, perceived quality, and accessibility of counselling services. It was found that overall satisfaction was moderate, students valued counsellor professionalism but noted issues with appointment wait times and limited availability. Amoah, Opoku-Mensah and Anim (2019) carried out a study to explore students' personal experiences and perceptions of counselling services in Ghana. It was a qualitative phenomenological study where data was collected from 20 students selected purposefully from different institutions. The results revealed that students reported mixed experiences; some found counselling helpful and supportive, while others faced barriers like stigma, lack of awareness, or cultural misunderstandings. Adewuya (2018) evaluated the overall effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in Nigerian schools. Collecting data from 250 students and counsellors from selected schools through questionnaires and interviews, it was emphasized that counselling services are

generally effective, but there are gaps in implementation, resource availability, and counsellor training.

To determine how personalized guidance impacts students' engagement and participation in school counselling, Park and Kang (2019) conducted a study on the influence of personalized guidance on students' participation in the school counselling programme. In a quasi-experimental design with treatment and control groups, survey assessing participation frequency, attitudes, and perceived usefulness of guidance was conducted on 240 students, with 120 receiving personalized guidance and 120 in the control group. Data collected was analysed statistically through t-tests and ANCOVA using SPSS. The result revealed that students who received personalized guidance showed higher participation levels and more positive attitudes toward counselling services. It was suggested that schools should implement tailored guidance approaches to boost student engagement and address individual needs effectively. Wyatt, Oswald, Goins, Butler and Webb (2018) explored students' perceptions and experiences with school counsellors. Views on counsellor accessibility, helpfulness, and barriers were gathered from 70 students across several schools and the result revealed that students value counsellors who are approachable and helpful. Boateng and Osei (2019) assessed the level of student satisfaction with counselling services provided in Ghanaian high schools and identify factors influencing satisfaction. 400 students were selected from various high schools in Ghana to respond to structured questionnaires measuring satisfaction levels, perceptions of counselling quality, counsellor professionalism, and accessibility. The results indicated that

students expressed moderate to high satisfaction with counselling services, citing counsellor professionalism and confidentiality as key factors. However, some students reported limited access and lack of awareness as issues.

Donkor, Yeboah and Adu (2018) explored students' perceptions regarding the importance and role of academic counselling in schools. It was a qualitative phenomenological approach where data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews of 40 students from selected senior high schools. Data collected was analysed using thematic analysis. The results indicated that students perceive academic counselling as vital for academic planning and motivation but noted limited access and inconsistent delivery. The authors suggested improvement of counsellor availability, provision of targeted training, and promotion of awareness of academic counselling benefits. A descriptive survey was conducted in Nigeria by Iponmoye (2019) on students' perspectives on the importance of academic counselling in the school guidance programme in selected secondary schools. The purpose of the study was to gather students' perspectives on the significance of academic counselling. Through structured questionnaires assessing perceptions of academic counselling importance, data was collected from 200 students from various Nigerian secondary schools. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests were employed to analyze the data collected. It was established that most students valued academic counselling for improving their academic performance. Harley, Staton, Burrow-Sánchez and Mega (2018) conducted a mixed method study to assess students' perceived need for guidance and counselling services in high schools. 150 students were engaged

for the quantitative phase and 20 students for the interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data through thematic analysis. It was found that students recognize the need for guidance in academic and personal areas. In Ghana, Bofo-Arthur (2019) conducted a study on the impact of school guidance programmes on students' perceptions of academic and personal development in schools. It was a quantitative study that assessed how guidance programmes influence students' perceptions of their academic and personal growth. It was emphasized that students perceive guidance programs as beneficial for academic and personal growth. Tijani and Ibrahim (2017) assessed students' perceptions and satisfaction with academic counselling services at Ghanaian universities. In a descriptive cross-sectional study, data was collected from 250 students from selected universities through the use of structured questionnaires measuring perceptions of counselling quality, accessibility, and usefulness. The results indicated that students generally viewed academic counselling positively but identified gaps such as limited counselling hours and lack of personalized support. Adefisan and Adeleke (2020) carried out a study on academic counselling and student satisfaction in South African Universities. The purpose of the Study was to examine the relationship between academic counselling services and student satisfaction. It was found that there was positive relationship between quality of academic counselling and student satisfaction suggesting that effective counselling contributed to improved academic confidence.

Osei-Tutu, Anum and Mensah (2017) explored students' perceptions of career guidance and its importance. In a qualitative case study, data was collected through focus group discussions and interviews from 30 students from selected schools. Data was analysed using content and thematic analysis. The results indicated that students see career guidance as essential for future planning, but many feel the services are insufficient or poorly delivered. Enhancing career counselling programs, training counsellors in career guidance, and involving parents and communities were the suggestions made by the study. A study conducted by Yilmaz and Kim (2019) to examine students' perceptions of the effectiveness of career guidance services where data was collected from 250 students found that students generally perceive career guidance services as helpful but insufficiently personalized or practical. A quantitative descriptive study was conducted by Akhter, Ali, Siddique and Abbas (2021) to investigate the role of career counselling in increasing awareness and decision-making regarding career choices among graduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study established that career counselling significantly enhanced students' awareness of career options, especially during the uncertainty of the pandemic, suggesting that students valued tailored guidance. Nyirongo and Sakala (2020) evaluated how career counselling services influence student satisfaction with career development support and found that effective career counselling was associated with higher student satisfaction suggesting students valued guidance on job market trends and skills development. Adomako (2019) examined how career guidance influences the career choices of students in Ghanaian secondary schools. A quantitative

correlational research design was adopted to assess the relationship between career guidance services and students' career decisions. The study sampled 250 senior high school students from multiple schools across Ghana and data was collected via structured questionnaires designed to measure students' exposure to career guidance and their career preferences. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and regression analysis were performed using SPSS to analyze the data. The study revealed a significant positive relationship between career guidance and students' clarity in career choices. Students who received more guidance were more confident and decisive about their future careers.

Santos, Marques, Araújo, Meca and Salgado (2019) carried out a quantitative descriptive study on the role of guidance programmes in promoting personal and social development among high school students. They collected data from 400 students across multiple schools by the use questionnaires assessing perceptions of guidance programmes' impact on personal/social skills and established that, guidance programmes positively influence students' social skills, self-awareness, and emotional regulation. Atkinson and Thompson (2020) explored students' perceptions of how guidance programmes affect their personal and social growth. Through interviews and focus groups discussions, data was collected from 25 students from a rural school and analyzed using thematic analysis. The result revealed that students perceived guidance programmes as vital for building resilience, self-esteem, and social skills, but noted limited resources. Williams and Thompson (2020) in a quantitative study investigated students' beliefs about how guidance programmes influence their friends' personal and social development.

Collecting data from 200 students on perceptions of peer influence and personal/social growth, they found that most students believe guidance programmes positively affect their friends' development, though some perceive limited personal impact. Brown and Smothers (2019) carried out a qualitative study on student perceptions of school guidance programmes.

2.4.4 Utilization of School Guidance Programme

In Nigeria, Ogunsanya, Adekoya and Adeyemo (2019) carried out a study on school guidance and counselling services utilization among senior secondary school students in Ogun State. The study was to assess the extent of utilization of school guidance and counselling services among senior secondary school students. It was a descriptive study which collected data from 250 students selected using simple random sampling across several schools. A structured questionnaire measuring awareness, frequency of use, and perceptions of counselling services was used and the data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests to determine the relationship between demographic variables and counselling service utilization. The results indicated that utilization of guidance and counselling services was relatively low; many students were unaware of the full scope of services or reluctant to seek help due to stigma. Ofori and Abena (2015) investigated the level of patronage of guidance and counselling services among senior high school students and identify factors influencing utilization. Data was collected from 400 students from 10 senior high schools in the Ashanti Region and descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and logistic regression analysis was employed for the analysis. It was found that patronage was relatively low and

lack of awareness and stigma were major barriers. Students who perceived guidance as beneficial were more likely to patronize the services. Oluwatayo and Olabisi (2019) carried out a study to investigate students' counselling needs and patterns of utilization among Nigerian university students. Structured questionnaires measuring counselling needs, perceived barriers, and utilization patterns was used to collect data from 400 students from multiple Nigerian universities. It was found that there is a high level of unmet counselling needs and utilization was generally low despite high perceived need.

Lapan, Gysbers and Sun (2012) carried out a study on the impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students. It was a state-wide evaluation study to evaluate how comprehensive guidance programs affect high school students' academic, personal, and social development. The results revealed that schools with fully implemented guidance programmes reported better student engagement, higher academic achievement, and improved school climate.

Amoako and Mensah (2018) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study to examine the factors that influence students' patronage of guidance and counselling programs in junior high schools. 350 students across 15 junior high schools in the Greater Accra Region were selected to respond to self-administered questionnaires assessing awareness, attitudes, perceived usefulness, and barriers. It was found that patronage was positively associated with positive attitudes and perceived usefulness. It was also emphasized that barriers included stigma and lack of confidentiality. Bediako and Agyemang (2019) conducted a study on the

role of parental and teacher support in patronage of guidance and counselling services in Ghanaian Senior High Schools. Data was collected from 300 students from 8 senior high schools in the Central Region to explore how parental and teacher support influence students' patronage of guidance and counselling services. The result found that support from parents and teachers significantly predicted higher patronage while lack of support was linked to lower utilization. A study was conducted by Kitzrow (2003) to review the mental health challenges faced by college students and provide recommendations for support services. The study established that mental health issues are prevalent, with increasing demands on counselling services. Gallagher (2012) assessed the scope, services, and resources of college counselling centers across the U.S. It was a descriptive study that collected data from 300 college counselling centres. The study emphasized that most centres reported increased demand and the common services included crisis intervention, individual counselling, and group therapy. Rickwood, Deane and Wilson (2007) carried out a quantitative study to understand the timing and methods young people use to seek professional help for mental health issues. 1,000 adolescents and young adults were selected to respond to structured questionnaires measuring help-seeking behaviours, attitudes, and perceived barriers. It was found that help-seeking was often delayed and the methods preferred included face-to-face and online support.

2.4.5 Factors Influencing Students' Decision to seek Counselling

Obeng, Adams and Asamoah (2019) examined the extent and factors influencing the utilization of guidance and counselling services among students in senior high schools in Cape Coast. It was a descriptive case study with a mixed-method approach that collected data from 200 students and 10 counsellors from selected senior high schools. It was found that utilization of counselling services was moderate and barriers included stigma, lack of awareness, and perceived relevance. The finding suggested that counselling services positively influenced student well-being and academic performance. A study was conducted by Nkosim and Mthimunye (2020) on school counselling services and student engagement in South African schools. 300 students from various secondary schools were selected to respond to self-administered questionnaires measuring perceptions of counselling services and levels of engagement. The study established that there was a significant positive correlation between effective counselling services and higher levels of student engagement suggesting that counselling contributed to increased motivation and participation. Ola and Olaleye (2019) carried out a qualitative phenomenological study on student utilization of counselling services in Nigerian secondary schools to understand students' perceptions, experiences, and barriers related to utilizing counselling. They found that students recognized the importance of counselling but faced barriers such as stigma, lack of privacy, and limited counsellor availability. In a mixed method study conducted by Adams and Brown (2020) on factors influencing students' reluctance to seek help from the school guidance programme where data was collected from 180 students

during the quantitative phase and 20 students during interviews, it was found that key barriers include stigma, lack of awareness, and perceived confidentiality issues, leading to low utilization rates. The study suggested the development of stigma-reduction campaigns, improvement of confidentiality assurances, and increasing student awareness about available services.

A quantitative descriptive survey was conducted by Adom, Osei-Bonsu and Asumeng (2018) to explore the primary motivations that drive university students in Ghana to seek counselling services. The study collected data from 300 university students across several Ghanaian universities. The results indicated that the most common motivations included academic stress, personal problems, and emotional issues. Students also sought counselling for career guidance and relationship problems. Hegna and Smette (2017) explored how parental influence affects young people's educational decisions from their own perspectives. Data was collected from 30 young people aged 16-24 from diverse backgrounds and thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in participants' narratives. It was found that young people perceive parents as influential, sometimes supportive but also controlling. Dixon, Noonan and Holder (2010) examined how self-regulation influences help-seeking behaviours among university students. It was a quantitative correlational study which collected data from 250 students through the use of self-report questionnaires measuring self-regulation, help-seeking intentions, and behaviours. The result revealed that students with higher self-regulation were more likely to seek help proactively suggesting that perceived self-efficacy influenced help-seeking intentions. Lopez

and Andrews (2017) conducted a study on exploring college students' motivations for seeking counselling and perceptions of barriers. The study was to identify motivations for seeking counselling and perceived barriers among college students. It was found that motivations included mental health concerns, academic stress, and relationship issues. Barriers included stigma, confidentiality concerns, and lack of awareness.

A study was carried out by Hunt and Eisenberg (2010) on mental health problems and help-seeking behaviour among college students. Descriptive statistics, chi-square, and logistic regression was employed to analyse the data collected from 1,500 students from various colleges. It was established that many students experienced mental health problems but only a minority sought help citing stigma and lack of resources were key barriers. Gulliver, Griffiths, and Christensen (2010) conducted a study on perceived barriers and facilitators to mental health help-seeking in young people. It was a systematic review and the purpose was to synthesize existing research on barriers and facilitators influencing help-seeking among young people. It was found that barriers included stigma, confidentiality concerns, and lack of knowledge. Facilitators included social support, mental health literacy, and accessible services. Passel, Coalson, Williams, Coker and Chilman (2019) carried out a qualitative phenomenological study to explore the nature of mental health stigma among college students and identify effective strategies to reduce it. It was found that stigma was perceived as a major barrier to seeking help. Students noted that misconceptions, fear of social judgment, and

lack of awareness perpetuated stigma. Strategies like peer education and awareness campaigns were suggested to reduce stigma.

A study was conducted by Amankwaa and Mensah (2019) to examine how peer recommendations influence students' decisions to use counselling services. They found that peer recommendations significantly increased students' likelihood of utilizing counselling services. Trust in peers and perceived effectiveness of counselling played roles. The study suggested that peer influence should be leveraged through peer education programs and testimonials to increase counselling uptake. In Nigeria, a study was conducted by Oladapo and Ibrahim (2019) to investigate how peer influence affects students' decisions to seek counselling. It was a quantitative study that collected data from 250 students from Nigerian secondary schools through the use of structured questionnaires assessing peer influence, perceptions of counselling, and utilization behaviour. It was found that peer influence was a significant predictor of counselling service utilization suggesting that students were more likely to seek help if encouraged by peers. Brown and Johnson (2019) conducted a study to analyze the impact of peer influence on students' counselling service utilization. 350 students were selected across various educational settings and made to respond to questionnaires measuring peer influence, attitudes toward counselling, and usage patterns. The results revealed that peer influence was positively correlated with counselling utilization, with peer endorsement and social norms playing key roles.

2.4.6 Effectiveness of Counselling Interventions

Contreras, Alvarado and Bleich (2015) conducted a study to systematically review existing research on school counselling programmes, evaluating their effectiveness, implementation, and outcomes. It was a systematic review of empirical studies related to school counselling programmes. The review synthesized findings from numerous studies, totalling over 50 research articles. Data was collected from published research articles, reports, and empirical studies through database searches and inclusion/exclusion criteria and qualitative synthesis and thematic analysis were employed to identify common themes, trends, and gaps across studies. The review highlighted that effective school counselling programmes improved student academic achievement, social-emotional development, and reduced behavioural issues. Successful implementation of the school guidance programme depends on proper training, administrative support, and comprehensive planning. The study recommended calls for more rigorous research on programme outcomes, standardized frameworks for implementation, and increased advocacy for school counselling services. A qualitative literature review focusing on empirical studies and theoretical frameworks to review and synthesize research findings related to the design, implementation, and outcomes of school counselling programmes was conducted by Biever and McMahon (2012). The review covered 40 studies published over the past decade and data sources included academic databases, journal articles, and government reports. The review involved coding and thematic analysis and content analysis was used to identify recurring themes,

effectiveness factors, and challenges in counselling programmes. The results indicated that well-structured counselling programmes positively influence student social skills, academic performance, and career development. Collaboration among staff and administrative support were critical success factors. The study emphasized the need for ongoing professional development, integrating counselling into school policies, and involving teachers and parents in programme delivery. In Nigeria, Okeke, Okafor and Nwosu, C. (2020) carried out a study on the impact of school counselling on student self-efficacy. The study was to examine the effect of school counselling services on enhancing students' self-efficacy in Nigerian secondary schools. In a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group, data was collected from 120 students, with 60 assigned to the experimental group and 60 to the control group. The study employed standardized self-efficacy questionnaires, such as the General Self-Efficacy Scale, administered before and after the intervention and data was analyzed using paired t-tests and ANCOVA to determine the effect of counselling on self-efficacy levels. The results indicated that students who received counselling showed a statistically significant increase in self-efficacy compared to the control group. Counselling positively influenced students' confidence in handling academic and personal challenges.

Adjei and Ofori-Dankwa (2018) investigated how school guidance and counselling influence students' academic performance. It was a correlational study that used questionnaires to assess the availability, quality, and students' perceptions of guidance and counselling services, along with academic records.

The data collected from 300 senior high school students from different schools was analysed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses. The study established a significant positive relationship between effective guidance and counselling services and students' academic performance. It was recommended that schools should strengthen counselling programmes, ensure counsellors are well-trained, and integrate counselling into the academic support system. Adekola and Adeyemo (2020) conducted a descriptive correlational study in Oyo State, Nigeria on the role of school guidance and counselling in academic performance of senior secondary school students. The purpose of the study was to explore the role of school guidance and counselling in improving academic performance among students. 250 students from selected secondary schools were made to respond to questionnaires measuring students' perception of counselling services and their academic performance data were obtained from school records. The data gathered was analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis. A positive relationship was found between counselling services and academic success, with counselling contributing significantly to students' academic improvement. In Ghana, Owusu-Ansah and Agyei-Mensah (2019) examined how guidance and counselling services contribute to students' academic achievement. In a correlational research design, data was collected from 250 senior high school students by the use of questionnaires which measured students' perceptions of counselling services and their academic records of performance. Pearson correlation and regression analysis were employed in analysing the data collected. A significant positive relationship was found

between quality of guidance and academic performance, indicating that effective counselling enhances academic achievement. Agyemang and Owusu-Ansah (2020) conducted a quantitative correlational study on the effectiveness of school guidance and counselling services in enhancing the academic performance of senior high school students in Ghana. Study assessed the overall effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on students' academic performance. A sample size of 350 students from various schools was used for the study. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regressions were employed to analyse the data that was collected. It was found that guidance and counselling services significantly predict academic success; students who actively engage with these services tend to perform better academically. The study suggested the expansion of counselling services, improvement of counsellor-student ratios, and promotion of student engagement in counselling activities. Adu-Gyamfi, Ofori-Dankwa and Osei-Agyeman (2019) conducted a study on the influence of school guidance and counselling on academic performance of basic school students in Ghana and found a significant positive relationship between effective guidance and counselling services and students' academic performance suggesting that counselling services contributed to improved academic outcomes. The study recommended that schools should enhance counselling programs, train counsellors effectively, and integrate counselling into the curriculum to boost academic performance. A study conducted by Wong and Hui (2016) on the effectiveness of school guidance and counselling services in enhancing students' academic achievement in Hong Kong found that students receiving counselling

reported higher engagement and achievement suggesting that counselling contributed positively to academic success.

Sink and Akos (2016) reviewed existing research on counselling outcomes and derive implications for practice and found that counselling outcomes positively impact academic, personal, and social development. The study suggested that schools should implement evidence-based practices and regularly evaluate counselling programs. Brown, King and Vidourek (2015) conducted a study to synthesize findings from six state-wide studies to evaluate the impact of school counselling programs on student outcomes, including academic achievement, social/emotional development, and behavioural issues. The results revealed that the studies consistently indicated positive outcomes associated with school counselling, such as improved academic performance, better social skills, and reduced behavioural problems. A study conducted by Kpodo, Aheto and Akuete (2018) on the impact of school guidance counselling on student outcomes in Ghana revealed that guidance counselling positively affected students' academic performance, social interactions, and career decision-making. Ncube and Mlambo (2017) assessed the impact of school-based counselling interventions on students' academic performance and psychosocial well-being. In a quasi-experimental design with pre-test and post-test control groups, 200 students (100 in intervention group, 100 in control group) were selected from four secondary schools in Harare. Standardized academic performance records and questionnaires measuring psychosocial adjustment were used to collect data which was analysed by paired t-tests, ANCOVA, and descriptive statistics using SPSS. It was found that

students who received counselling interventions showed significant improvements in academic scores and psychosocial adjustment compared to the control group.

Galassi (2017) explored and promoted a strengths-based approach in school counselling, emphasizing how leveraging students' strengths can enhance development and achievement. It was found that strengths-based counselling fosters resilience, self-efficacy, and motivation, leading to improved academic and personal outcomes. The study suggested that school counsellors should adopt strengths-based frameworks, focus on students' assets, and incorporate these principles into their practice to promote holistic development. In Nigeria, Ojo and Adeyemi (2019) conducted a study on effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) in reducing anxiety among University students. The purpose of study was to determine the effectiveness of CBT counselling interventions in reducing anxiety levels among Nigerian university students. 120 students with diagnosed anxiety disorders were randomly assigned to treatment (CBT) and control groups. The result showed that the CBT group experienced a significant reduction in anxiety symptoms post-intervention and at follow-up, outperforming the control group. Kato and Mutiso (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of psychosocial counselling interventions in reducing substance abuse among Kenyan youths. It was a mixed-method design which combined quantitative pre-post surveys and qualitative interviews. Data was collected from 150 youths aged 15-24 undergoing counselling at a youth rehabilitation center in Nairobi. It was found that there was significant reduction in substance use frequency and improvement in psychosocial functioning post-counselling. Qualitative data

revealed increased motivation and coping skills. A study was conducted by Smith and Lee (2018) on the efficacy of cognitive-behavioural therapy for anxiety disorders in college students. The study was to evaluate the effectiveness of CBT in reducing anxiety symptoms among college students. In a randomized controlled trial (RCT), data was collected from 150 students diagnosed with anxiety disorders who were randomly assigned to CBT group (n=75) and waitlist control group (n=75). The result revealed that participants receiving CBT showed significant reductions in anxiety symptoms compared to controls, with effects maintained at follow-up. In the United States of America, a study was conducted by Johnson and Patel (2019) to assess whether group counselling effectively reduces depressive symptoms in adolescents. Data were collected from 120 adolescents aged 13–18, who were divided into intervention group (n=60) receiving group counselling, and control group (n=60). It was established that there was significant reduction in depression scores in the intervention group and there was no significant change in the control group. Nguyen and Garcia (2020) determined the effectiveness of school-based counselling interventions on students' behavioural and emotional problems. It was a mixed-method study with quantitative pre-post assessments and qualitative interviews where data was collected from 200 students selected from five high schools in California. The result showed that there was significant improvement in behavioural and emotional scores post-intervention and qualitative data indicated increased self-awareness and coping skills.

2.5.7 Relationship between Perception and Utilization of Counselling Service

Chen and Hsiao (2016) examined how students' perceptions of counselling influence their likelihood of utilizing counselling services. 300 students were selected from various educational institutions to respond to structured questionnaires measuring perceptions of counselling and their records of actual counselling service use. It was found that positive perceptions of counselling were significantly associated with higher utilization rates. Perceptions related to confidentiality and counsellor competence were particularly influential.

Smith and Jones (2018) conducted a study on student perceptions of school counselling programmes and their influence on service utilization and found that students who viewed counselling programs positively were more likely to utilize services. Specific factors like perceived relevance and trust in counsellors increased utilization. Addo and Osei (2019) examined students' perceptions of the guidance programme and analyze how these perceptions influence their utilization of counselling services. They found that positive perceptions of the guidance programme were significantly associated with higher utilization of counselling services. Students who viewed the program as helpful and accessible were more likely to seek counselling. Mensah and Boakye (2017) investigated the relationship between students' positive perceptions of the guidance programme and their use of counselling services. It was a descriptive study which collected data from 400 students from Ghanaian secondary schools. Correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were employed to analyse the collected data. The study emphasized that a strong positive relationship was found between

favourable perceptions of the guidance programme and counselling service use. Students with positive perceptions were significantly more likely to utilize services.

A study was conducted in Nigeria by Olalekan and Ajayi (2018) to assess students' attitudes towards counselling and evaluate how these attitudes relate to the perceived quality of counselling services. Data collected from 300 students from Nigerian secondary schools were analysed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and correlation analyses. The study found that positive attitudes towards counselling correlated with higher perceived quality of services. Students who trusted and felt comfortable with counsellors reported higher satisfaction. Brown and Wilson (2019) explored how student perceptions influence their evaluation of counselling service quality. The study found a significant positive correlation between positive perceptions and perceived service quality. Perceptions of counsellor professionalism and confidentiality were particularly influential.

Amoah and Gyampoh (2019) carried out a study on perception of the guidance programme and its effects on satisfaction with counselling services among Ghanaian students. The purpose of the study was to analyze how students' perceptions of the guidance programme affect their satisfaction with counselling services. The study established that positive perceptions significantly predicted higher levels of satisfaction with counselling services. Students who viewed the programme favourably were more satisfied. Adekunle and Osagie (2018) conducted a study on the impact of student perceptions on overall satisfaction with counselling services in Nigeria. It was a quantitative correlational study

which collected data from 330 students through the use of structured questionnaires assessing perceptions and satisfaction levels. The results showed that students' perceptions significantly impacted their satisfaction. The study suggested that perceptions of counsellor professionalism and confidentiality were key predictors.

2.5 Summary of the Review

The review indicated that school guidance programme is a comprehensive, developmental program planned to handle the academic, career, and personal/social needs of all students. This definition underscores the inclusivity of guidance programmes, emphasizing that they should benefit every student, rather than being reserved for a select few. A school guidance programme comprises a series of activities designed to help students address educational, vocational, personal, or social challenges they encounter at various stages of their development. The review revealed that school guidance programme largely consists of major guidance services such as orientation, appraisal, information, counselling, evaluation, consultation, referral, placement and follow-up. Each of these services is unique because of their particular roles and plays a crucial role in the development of students.

The literature review indicated that academic guidance, career guidance, personal/social guidance, individual and group counselling, consultation and collaboration, assessment, and evaluation are all interrelated components of school guidance programmes. Together, these elements form a comprehensive and encouraging framework for fostering students' academic success, personal

development, and emotional well-being. The review indicated that, counselling services in senior high schools are diverse, encompassing academic, career, and personal-social dimensions and plays an important function in supporting the academic, career, and personal development of students. The review showed that guidance programmes in high schools play a pivotal function in shaping students' academic success, personal development, and preparation for future endeavours. They are integral to students' academic success, preparedness for higher education and careers, and social and emotional growth, and the reduction of achievement gaps. The multifaceted impact of these programmes underscores their importance in creating a supportive and inclusive school environment that fosters student success and well-being.

In relation to students' perception, the review showed that students' perceptions of school guidance programme are shaped by several factors, comprising the perceived effectiveness and relevance of the programme, awareness and accessibility, the quality of interactions with counsellors, cultural sensitivity, and peer and parental influences. Understanding these factors is necessary for improving the school guidance programme, ensuring that they are responsive to students' needs, and fostering positive perceptions that encourage student engagement. The review showed that the utilization of school guidance programme by students is a critical aspect of programme effectiveness and impact. The utilization of school guidance programme is essential for their effectiveness in promoting students' academic, personal, and career development. Students' patronage of school guidance programme is influenced by factors such as

awareness and accessibility, perceived need and relevance, peer influence, parental involvement and support, and cultural sensitivity and trust.

With respect to factors influencing students' decision to seek counselling the literature review revealed that, help-seeking behaviours can be influenced by socio-cultural, educational and personal-social factors. Socio-cultural factors encompass cultural perceptions, language barriers, collectivism, religiosity, social stigma, socio-economic status, cultural competence, and cultural adaptations. Educational factors encompass academic stress, awareness programs, faculty support, and inclusive policies. Personal-social factors include individual characteristics and social dynamics. All these factors are pivotal in shaping students' decisions to seek counselling. The review revealed that school counsellors employ a range of approaches to address students' social, emotional, and academic needs. The effectiveness of different counselling interventions and strategies is critical in enhancing students' well-being and academic achievement.

According to Social Cognitive Theory, people learn and form their behaviours through the interaction of cognitive processes, environmental influences, and observational learning. This theory is predominantly important in the context of students' perception and patronage of school guidance programmes, as it offers insights into how students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to counselling services are influenced. The Self-Determination Theory focuses on human motivation and the factors that influence individuals' choices, behaviours, and overall well-being. It provides a thorough framework for comprehending how

students' perceptions and behaviours related to school guidance programmes are shaped by autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology employed in the study investigating students' perception and patronage of school guidance programme and its implication for counselling in senior high schools within Tamale Metropolis. The chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, research approach, study population, sample size, sampling techniques, research instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques that were utilized to address the research objectives and ethical issues that were considered during the research.

3.2 Research Approach

A research approach encompasses the approaches and activities of a study, extending from general assumptions to specific methods of gathering, analysing, and interpreting data (Creswell, 2013). Quantitative approach involves using numerical representations to analyse data gathered for study investigation (Brannen, 2017).

Quantitative approach was utilized to investigate research problems that require explaining or describing trends among variables. According to Bloomfield and Fisher (2019), quantitative approach entails explaining how variables impact each other numerically and comparing various outcomes. The quantitative approach included the collection and analysis of numerical data to quantify the relationships among variables. Quantitative approach was considered appropriate and adopted

for this study because it allowed for the systematic measurement of students' perceptions using structured questionnaires or scale. This provided measurable data that was analyzed statistically to determine patterns and levels of perception across the student population. The quantitative data collected facilitated the examination of relationships between perceptions of the guidance programme and the rate of counselling patronage.

3.3 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive research design, chosen for its ability to gather data at a specific moment. This design is particularly effective for assessing variables such as knowledge, attitudes, practices, beliefs, and perceptions, aligning with the study's objectives (Morales et al., 2018). Additionally, the choice of a descriptive research design stemmed from its ease of implementation, efficiency, time-saving nature, and cost-effectiveness in comparison to a longitudinal study design. Descriptive research design was employed to capture a snapshot of the variables at a particular moment, with the sample serving as a representative subset of the population.

Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018) argue that a research design offers a framework for gathering and examining data. It serves as the roadmap for the research, outlining the strategy for collecting and analysing the necessary information to address research inquiries. The design articulates the research's objectives and the methods for accomplishing those objectives.

Descriptive research design is appropriate because this study aims to describe students' perceptions of the guidance program and how these perceptions correlate with their engagement in counselling services. Descriptive research is excellent for gathering data on current situations and identifying relationships. It allows for the exploration of the "what" and "how" of student perceptions and counselling patronage patterns without necessarily aiming to establish cause-and-effect. This is crucial because understanding the current state of these variables before trying to establish causal connections is a logical first step.

3.4 Research Paradigm

The study was grounded in the positivism philosophical paradigm, which depends on measurement and reason. Positivism emphasizes that knowledge is obtained through impartial and measurable observation of activity, action, or reaction (Antwi & Hamza, 2015). It proposes that anything that cannot be observed and measured is considered of little or no importance. Positivism is closely related with quantitative methods of collecting data.

Positivism is suitable for this study because it emphasizes objectivity and measurable data. The study seeks to quantify students' perceptions (e.g., through surveys or questionnaires) and analyze the relationship between these perceptions and counselling patronage. This approach allows for the generation of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed, providing a robust basis for drawing conclusions about the relationship between students' perceptions and their counselling choices. Positivism's emphasis on empirical evidence and measurable variables aligns perfectly with the quantitative approach.

3.5 Study Area

In 2004, the Tamale Municipal Assembly was elevated to metropolitan status through legislative instrument (LI) 2068. Currently, the metropolis is one of the six metropolitan assemblies in the country and the sole one in the six northern regions. Tamale serves as both the metropolitan and regional capital of the Northern Region. Situated in the heart of the Northern Region, the Tamale Metropolis is bordered by Mion District to the east, East Gonja to the south, Central Gonja to the southwest, and Sagnarigu District to the north and west. The metropolis covers an approximate amount of land area of 646.90180 square kilometres (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010). Geographically, the Metropolis is situated between latitudes 9°16' and 9°34' north and longitudes 0°36' and 0°57' west.

According to the United Nations World Population Prospects, the population of the Tamale Metropolis was estimated to be 642,000 in 2020. The demographic distribution indicates a larger proportion of females (50.3%) as related to males (49.7%) (GSS, 2010). The age structure of the metropolis shows a wide base in the age pyramid, with approximately 36% of the population being under 15 years old, highlighting its youthful nature. In contrast, the elderly population (60 years and above) comprises only 5.1%.

Given its strategic location, the Tamale Metropolis serves as a significant local market for products from both the commercial and farming sectors in nearby districts. This competitive edge positions the metropolis to benefit from markets in nearby nations like Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and the northern part of Togo in

West Africa. Additionally, goods travelling from these neighbouring countries to the southern regions of Ghana pass through the metropolis.

The metropolis is home to numerous private and publicly operated high schools, junior schools, elementary schools, and preschools. Consequently, 60.1% of the population is literate, while 39.9% is illiterate. Among the well-educated population, 69.2% are males, and 51.1% are females (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010).

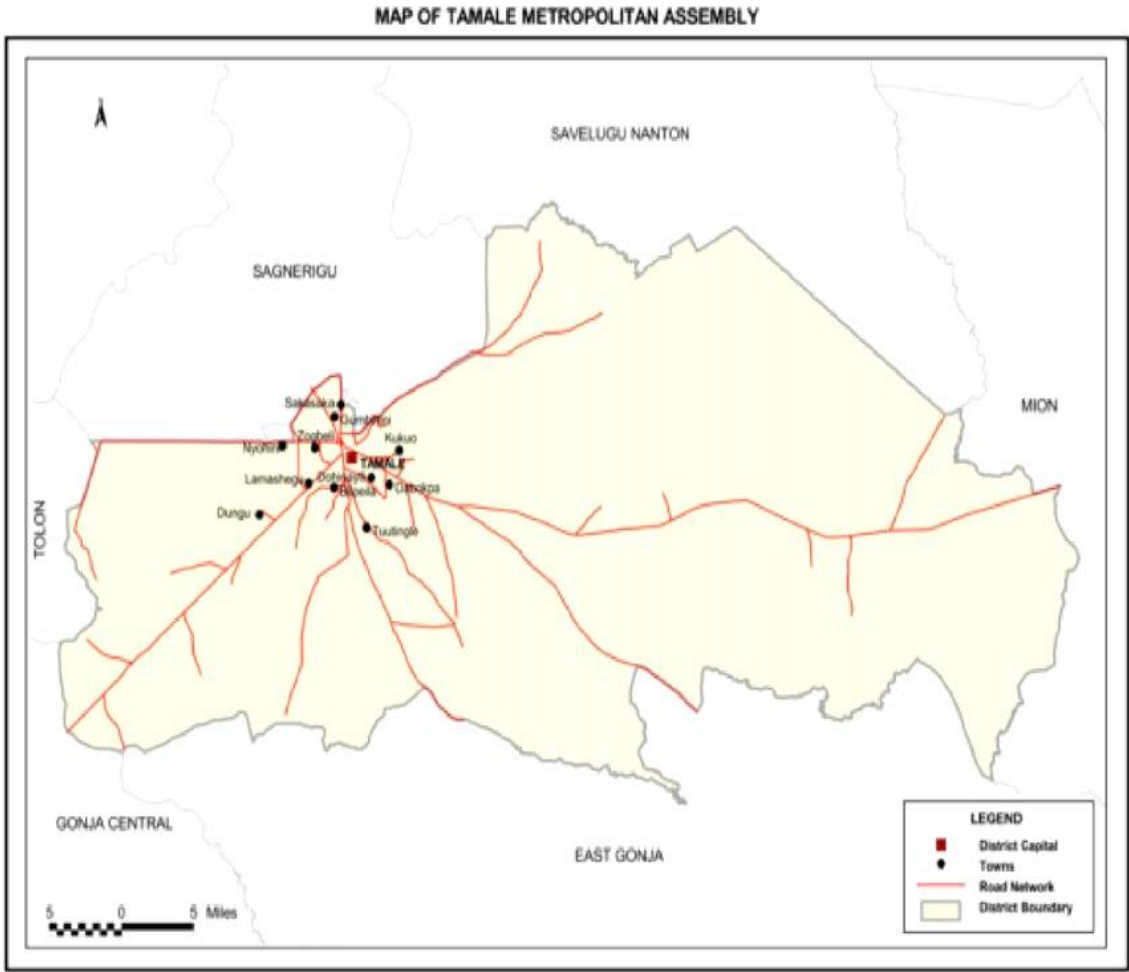


Figure 3: Map of Tamale Metropolis

Source: Ghana Statistical Service

3.6 Population

Hossan, Dato'Mansor and Jaharuddin (2023) define a population as “the entire group of individuals to whom a study’s findings apply.” It refers to any group from whom the researcher wishes to draw conclusion. Additionally, Chakrabarty (2018) define population as “the total collection of humans (subjects), objects, or event that share observable characteristics and are of interest to the researcher”. Willie (2024) attempted to differentiate two distinct populations, namely the target and accessible population.

The word ‘target population’ refers to the total group of persons about whom a researcher seeks to make generalizations. On the other hand, the accessible population refers to a group of participants who consent to engage in the study, and the study sample can be chosen from this group (Willie, 2024).

The study population consisted of senior high school students within the Tamale Metropolis, located in the Northern Region of Ghana. The target total population was 14,453 comprising of 6,077 males and 8,376 girls from four senior high schools within the Tamale Metropolis.

The population was considered owing to three factors. Firstly, this population directly represents the primary stakeholders of the school guidance programme—namely, the students whose perceptions, attitudes, and engagement levels are central to understanding the programme's effectiveness and relevance. Focusing on this group enabled the study to capture authentic insights into students’

experiences and perceptions, which are crucial for assessing the impact of guidance services on their academic and personal development.

Secondly, the Tamale Metropolis, as a major educational hub in the Northern Region of Ghana, offers a diverse student demographic that reflects different socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Studying this heterogeneous population allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how various factors influence perceptions of guidance programmes across different student groups, thereby enhancing the generalizability and relevance of the findings within similar contexts.

Thirdly, selecting four senior high schools provided a manageable yet representative sample that can facilitate in-depth analysis while maintaining the breadth needed for meaningful insights. It enabled the researcher to compare perceptions across different school environments, thus identifying best practices and areas needing improvement.

Table 1: Population Distribution of Respondents

Name of school	Males	Females	Population
Ghana Senior High School	2489	2082	4571
Vitting Senior High/Tech School	1720	1549	3269
Business Senior High School	1868	1285	3153
Tamale Girls Senior High School	0	3460	3460
TOTAL	6,077	8,376	14,453

Source: Administration offices of selected schools

3.7 Sample Size

One of the most critical sampling processes in survey design is establishing the sample size that adequately represents the sample's population. If the sample size is sufficiently large in a descriptive survey, the study results should be generalizable to the entire population (Lakens, 2022). Numerous strategies can be employed to guarantee that the sample is representative, including choosing the sample size, accurately characterizing the population, and avoiding sampling errors and bias (Ahmed, 2024). Sample size determination is concerned with the amount of data required to make suitable conclusions about a certain study. If there is sufficient data, it is more probable that mistakes will be reduced (Kwak & Kim, 2017).

The sample size of the study was estimated and ascertained by Yamane's formula (Uakam et al., 2021) as follows;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \text{Where}$$

n = Sample size

N = Population size

e = precision level (maximum variability)

At 95% confidence level, the sample size is estimated as follows.

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{14453}{1 + 14453(0.05)^2} \approx 400$$

Utilizing Yamane's formula in determining the sample size ensured that the sample is statistically representative of the entire population with a specified level of precision, typically at a 95% confidence level. This sample size balances the

need for accuracy and reliability in capturing the diverse perceptions and experiences of students while maintaining practical feasibility in terms of data collection and analysis.

Choosing 400 students allowed the researcher to achieve a manageable scope for comprehensive data collection, ensuring that responses were thoroughly analyzed without overextending resources such as time, personnel, and finances. Additionally, this sample size is sufficiently large to enable meaningful subgroup analyses—for example, comparing perceptions between males and females, or among different schools—thereby enhancing the depth and richness of the findings.

Moreover, a sample of 400 students provided a margin of error that is small enough to generalize the results confidently to the entire student population within the Tamale Metropolis. This level of sampling precision supports the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions, making the insights obtained both credible and applicable for informing policy and practice regarding school guidance programmes.

Table 2: Sample Size Distribution

Name of school	Population	Proportion	Sample size
Ghana Senior High School	4571	4571/14453 (0.3163)	126
Vitting Senior High/Tech School	3269	3269/14453 (0.2262)	91
Business Senior High School	3153	3153/14453 (0.2182)	87
Tamale Girls Senior High School	3460	3460/14453 (0.2394)	96
TOTAL	14,453		400

Source: Field Data, 2024

3.8 Sampling Technique and Procedure

A proportional stratified sampling technique was utilized to sample from four senior high schools in the Tamale Metropolis. Simple random sampling technique specifically the lottery method was employed to choose the four Senior High Schools out of a total of eight schools in the Tamale Metropolis. The strata were formed based on the number of Senior High Schools (Ghana Senior High School, Vitting Senior High/Tech School, Business Senior High School and Tamale Girls Senior High School) and grade level (SHS 1, 2 and 3). Within each stratum, proportional sampling was employed to choose the actual participants. This ensured that every student in the selected strata had an equal probability of being included in the study.

Proportional stratified sampling is an appropriate sampling technique for this study as it helps ensure representativeness and reduces sampling bias by

segmenting the population into distinct strata and then proportionally selecting participants from each stratum (Lohr, 2019; Babbie, 2016). Proportional stratified sampling technique combined with simple random sampling within strata was used owing to three factors. Firstly, stratified sampling ensures representativeness by dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups (strata) based on relevant characteristics—in this case, school type and grade level. This guaranteed that all key segments of the student population (e.g., different schools and grade levels) were adequately represented in the sample, capturing the diversity of experiences and perceptions related to the guidance programme.

Secondly, it enhanced precision and accuracy. By employing proportional sampling within each stratum, the sample reflects the actual distribution of students across schools and grades. This minimized sampling bias and improved the accuracy of the findings, making the results more generalizable to the entire population.

Thirdly, the use of simple random sampling (lottery method) within strata ensured that every student in each subgroup had an equal chance of selection, promoting fairness and reducing selection bias. This method maintained the randomness necessary for the statistical validity of the study, ensuring that the sample accurately reflected the diversity within each stratum.

3.9 Research Instruments

Research instruments are the means through which data is collected and are described by the type of the research problem being studied (Chao, 2014).

According to Creswell (2012), the selection of an appropriate instrument depends on the research objectives, as the methodology for data collection and the nature of the data significantly influence the outcomes of the study.

A self-constructed structured questionnaire was employed to collect data from the students. The questionnaire comprised 56 items arranged into five sections corresponding to the research questions of the study. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions utilizing a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Very True" to "Not at all True" for sections B and E, and "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" for sections C and D.

Section A of the questionnaire gathered fundamental information regarding students. These encompassed their gender, age, religion, form and residential status. Section B gathered information from the students about their awareness of the school guidance programme; while Section C focused on their perception of the school guidance programme. Section D gathered opinions from students on their patronage (utilization) of the school counselling service and Section E elicited information on the impact of their perception on counselling patronage (utilization). Each research instrument included attached informed consent forms and was written in the English language.

3.10 Pre-testing the Instrument

Following the development of the research instruments (questionnaires), a pre-test was conducted to identify potential weaknesses, deficiencies, ambiguities, and issues in the questionnaire items, allowing for necessary corrections prior to the actual data collection process. The questionnaire items underwent a test-retest

reliability process where 40 students were randomly selected from Tamale Senior High School to provide responses to the questionnaire items. Tamale Senior High School was chosen for the pre-testing because it had common features as the four schools selected for the study. The process was repeated two weeks later with the same group of students. The time gap between the first and second questionnaire administrations was sufficient to minimize recall bias but short enough to prevent genuine changes in the construct. During the interval, there were no significant events or interventions that could alter the measured attribute and this ensured that any differences were due to measurement inconsistency rather than actual changes. The condition under which the questionnaire was administered was consistent across both occasions to avoid extraneous variability affecting the results. Participants were willing and able to complete the test twice, and ethical considerations for re-testing were observed.

The aim of pre-testing the items was to confirm the respondents' comprehension of the items, assess the acceptability of the item sequence, and evaluate the time required to gather information. Additionally, pre-testing assisted in evaluating the internal consistency of the items included in the instrument. Carpenter (2018) mentions that testing internal consistency aids in removing ambiguous statements or those not aligned with the scale type. This process ensured that the items were consistently eliciting reliable information from the respondents.

Table 3 presents the reliability assessments of the scales utilized in this study.

Table 3: Internal Consistency of Research Instrument

Dimensions	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Awareness Level	12	0.764
Perception	13	0.823
Patronage level	25	0.865
Perception impact on patronage	6	0.733
Overall Instrument	56	0.918

Source: Field Data, 2024

3.11 Reliability and Validity

Sürücü and Maslakci (2020) describe reliability as the degree to which methods of collecting data or analysis techniques produce consistent results. A reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. In this evaluation, items displaying negative inter-item correlations were revised. Cronbach's alpha is the most widely used indicator of a survey's true reliability (Cho & Kim 2015).

The reliability assessments for the scales employed in the study, as illustrated in Table 3, ranges from 0.73 to 0.865 with an overall internal consistency of 0.918. These figures suggest strong internal consistencies among the items within each scale. This implies that the items effectively measure the intended constructs, as all coefficients for the constructs exceeded 0.7. Haidari and Karakuş (2019) offer the following guidelines for interpreting Cronbach's Alpha: "> .9 – Excellent, > .8

– Good, > .7 – Acceptable, > .6 – Questionable, > .5 – Poor, < .5 – Unacceptable". According to these criteria, the high values for Cronbach's Alpha coefficients obtained suggest a good internal consistency of the items.

The pre-testing phase resulted in significant and beneficial modifications to the data collection instruments, enhancing the efficiency of data analysis for the main study. This preliminary stage effectively served as a feasibility study for the research. This process ensured the soundness of the research concept and helped to resolve any issues or refine the study etiquette before initiating the actual larger study (Ofori, 2018). Issues encountered during the response process, such as the interaction between the questionnaire and the respondents were addressed and resolved.

Validity pertains to whether the outcomes accurately represent and mirror the subject under investigation. Consequently, according to Mooij et al., (2016), the association between two variables is not solely a cause-and-effect relationship. Validity is the degree to which a measure accurately reflects the concept it is intended to assess (Almanasreh & Chen, 2019). According to Clark and Watson (2019), validity is not centred on the instrument itself, but rather on how the scores obtained from the instrument are interpreted and understood. Put differently, an assessment of an intangible concept is deemed valid when it accurately gauges the intended aspect.

One significant error source in surveys stems from poorly worded questions in questionnaires, often due to the questionnaire's design. When questions are

unclear or lack explanation to the respondent, errors can arise. Extensive consultations and experimentation were conducted to refine the content and wording of the questionnaire before its final implementation.

For this study, the content or face validity of the questionnaire items was determined through a review of relevant literature and expert opinions. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by both my supervisor and a measurement and evaluation expert. Their feedback and suggestions were integrated into the final version of the questionnaires, enhancing the instrument's ability to accurately measure the intended constructs.

3.12 Data Collection Procedure

In order to ensure a high return rate, the instruments were self administered. Before data collection, an introductory letter was acquired from the Department of Educational Foundations of the University for Development Studies and was personally presented to Metro Education Office as well as the heads of the selected schools. The purpose of the introductory letter was to seek for permission from the school heads and solicit for support from the Guidance Coordinators in the selected school for the study. A convenient time was arranged with the Guidance Coordinators on when to administer the instrument to the students. A total of 400 questionnaires were self-administered and the researcher used five weeks for the entire data collection exercise.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations pertain to the standards that safeguard the process of carrying out a study, founded on trust between researchers and participants. Researchers bear the responsibility to uphold ethical norms, mirroring the behaviour they expect from participants (Shaw et al., 2020). Researchers need to protect their research participants, they must develop a trust with respondents, promote the integrity of research, guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their institution or organizations (Cresswell, 2009). In compliance with these requirements, the consent of the selected participants was sought before the questionnaires were administered. No participant was compelled to participate or answer to the questionnaire.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, the questionnaires for the study made no provision for the name of respondents rather; the questionnaires were coded to prevent identification of information by respondents.

3.14 Data Management Plan

A data management plan is a written document outlining the procedures for handling data throughout a research project and detailing post-research data management. Data management plan usually encompasses various stages of the data lifecycle, starting from data exploration, gathering, and structuring, then progressing through quality assurance, documentation, data utilization, preservation, sharing with others, and approaches for dissemination (Michener, 2015).

The data obtained from the pre-test conducted at Tamale Senior High School were digitized for analysis and secured using a password. This method was adopted to uphold the trust of the participants, safeguard their dignity and rights, and ensure confidentiality. Measures for controlling data quality, such as double-entry of data and regular checks, were put in place to uphold data accuracy.

3.15 Data Processing and Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed and presented using descriptive statistical tools. Percentages were employed as a statistical analytic tool to offer a thorough presentation for analysis and interpretation. Demographic information of participants, including gender, age, religion, form, and residential status, was analysed using frequencies and percentages.

The collected data underwent editing, encoding, analysis, and was then presented in the format of statistical tables utilizing Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 20. The collected data were carefully reviewed for completeness, accuracy, and consistency. Any errors, missing responses, or inconsistencies were identified and corrected or addressed appropriately to ensure data quality. The data were then coded into numerical formats to facilitate statistical computation and analysis. The encoded data were entered into SPSS version 20, ensuring that the data is organized systematically, with variables and cases properly labeled. Descriptive statistical tools—such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations—were employed to summarize the data. These tools helped to identify patterns, distributions, and central tendencies within the responses. The

analyzed data were finally presented in statistical tables by SPSS, making the findings accessible and interpretable.

Descriptive statistics specifically means and standard deviations were appropriately used to analyze all research questions because they provided a clear and straightforward summary of the collected data, and this facilitated an effective understanding of the key patterns and trends within the responses. Since the study aimed to describe the characteristics of students' awareness, perceptions, and utilization of the school guidance programme, descriptive statistics served as an essential tool to present the data in an organized, concise, and comprehensible manner. Overall, descriptive statistics were suitable for providing an initial, comprehensive overview of the data relevant to each research question, enabling meaningful interpretation without making inferential claims beyond the studied sample.

3.16 Chapter Summary

This chapter covered several key aspects, including Research Design, Study Population, Sampling Procedure, Instrument and Data Collection Procedure. Additionally, it addressed Ethical Issues, Training of Research Assistants, Data Management, and Data Analysis. One major limitation to this study is the absence of form ones during the period of data collections.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and findings of the study, which aimed at investigating students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and its implications for counselling patronage among Senior High Schools (SHSs) within the Tamale Metropolis. The chapter is presented in two parts; the first part presents the demographic characteristic of participants, whereas the second part presents the results and discussions based on each research questions.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic characteristics of respondents were gender, age, religion, form and residential status. This information's details are shown in Tables 4 to 8.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Gender (N=400)

Sex	Frequency	%
Male	155	38.8
Female	245	61.2
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

From Table 4, 245 of the respondents selected for the study were female representing 61.2% whereas 155 were males representing 38.8%.

The results indicate that, there were more females selected for the study than males. This occurred because one all-girls Senior High School and three mixed Senior High Schools were chosen for the study. Consequently, more female students' perspectives were represented than male perspectives. Table 5 provides the age distribution of respondents in the study.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Age (N=400)

Age	Frequency	%
13-15	13	3.3
16-18	247	61.7
19-21	132	33.0
Above 21	8	2.0
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

In Table 5, 3.3% of the respondents belonged to the age range of 13 to 15 years, 61.8% were aged between 16 and 18 years, 33.0% belonged to the age range 19 to 21, whereas 2.0% were in the age range of 21 years and above. The data indicates that the majority of the respondents, specifically 61.7%, belong to the age range between 16 and 18 years, which corresponds to the adolescent demographic and is typical for studies conducted among Senior High School students.

Table 6 presents the religion distribution of respondents in the study.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Religion (N=400)

Religion	Frequency	%
Christianity	82	20.5
Muslim	316	79.0
Traditionalist	2	.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

As indicate by the results in Table 6, 82 of the respondents selected for the study were Christians representing 20.5%, 316 representing 79.0% were Muslims, whereas 2 were Traditionalists representing .5%. The results indicate that, there were more Muslim students selected for the study. This came about because the location for the study which is Tamale Metropolis is dominated by Muslims.

Table 7 provides the form distribution of respondents in the study.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents by Form (N=400)

Form	Frequency	%
SHS 2	127	31.8
SHS 3	273	68.2
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 7 indicates that 127 students representing 31.8% of the total were in SHS 2, while 273 students representing 68.2% were in SHS 3. SHS 1 were not in school during the period of data collection.

Table 8 shows the residential status distribution of respondents in the study.

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents by Residential Status (N=400)

Residential Status	Frequency	%
Boarder	313	78.2
Day	87	21.8
Total	400	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

As shown in Table 8, 313 of the respondents representing 78.3% were boarders whereas 87 representing 21.8% were day students. The data indicates that the majority of the respondents, specifically 78.2%, were boarders.

4.3 Answers to the Research Questions

The study posed four questions related to awareness level, perception of students, levels of students' utilization and effect of students' perceptions, which are explained below after collecting responses. A five-point scale ranging from 5= Very True, 4= True, 3= Somewhat True, 2= Not True and 1= Not at all True was used to solicit responses for research questions 1 and question 4. For research questions 2 and 3, a five-point scale ranging from 5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree was used.

Table 9: Interpretation of Likert-Scale Scoring

Likert-Scale Description	Likert-Scale	Likert-Scale Interval
Strongly disagree	1	1 – 1.80
Disagree	2	1.81 – 2.60
Neutral/Uncertain	3	2.61 – 3.40
Agree	4	3.41 – 4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21 – 5.00

Source: Pimentel, 2010

For the analysis, the researcher calculated descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for the items on the research instrument. The means were interpreted as follows; strongly disagree in the point range 1.00 – 1.80, Disagree 1.81 – 2.60, Neutral 2.61 – 3.40, Agree 3.41 – 4.20, and Strongly agree 4.21 – 5.00 (see Table 9) (Pimentel, 2010).

4.3.1 Research Question One:

What is the level of student awareness of the school guidance programme?

This research question aimed to determine the level of student awareness towards the school guidance programme. Participants' responses were examined using a set of 12 statements, and the statements were evaluated on a Five-Point Likert scale, with options ranging from Very True (5) to Not at all True (1). Table 10 answers this research question.

Table 10: Level of Student Awareness towards the School Guidance Programme
(N=400)

	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	I am aware of the existence of the school guidance programme	400	4.60	.588
2.	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was during school orientation	400	4.10	1.228
3.	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was through a teacher	400	2.20	1.029
4.	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was by a flyer or a poster	400	1.87	.612
5.	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was through a colleague student	400	1.86	.603
6.	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was through personal enquires	400	1.88	.642
7.	The information provided about the school guidance programme is clear and understandable	400	4.28	.981
8.	I know where to access information about the services provided by the school guidance programme	400	3.71	1.274

9.	I am familiar with the types of services offered by the school guidance programme (e.g., academic counselling, career guidance, personal counselling).	400	3.98	1.183
10.	I am aware of my colleagues who found the school guidance programme information to be very helpful	400	3.84	1.242
11.	I wish I had extra information about the school guidance programme	400	4.17	1.004
12.	I understand the process for accessing counselling or guidance services at our school	400	3.78	1.187
Mean of Means/Standard Deviation			3.36	0.964

Source: Field Data, 2024

From Table 10, the results show a mean of means of 3.36 and a mean of standard deviation of .964. This mean suggests a high level of student awareness towards the school guidance programme generally and the moderate variation in students' responses indicate that while most students agreed with the statements, there was some diversity in opinion. Further discussions of individual items are presented in the paragraphs below.

From the results shown in Table 10, Items 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 have mean scores above 3.40, suggesting that respondents generally agreed with the statements to be true and Items 3, 4, 5 and 6 have the least mean score below 2.61, suggesting that respondents generally disagree with the statements to be true. The results in Table 10 revealed that, the majority of participants (M = 4.60, SD

= .588) are aware of the existence of the school guidance programme. This suggests that the school guidance programme has high level of awareness and visibility among the students. This result supports the view of Johnson and Abrams (2010) who reported high levels of awareness among students regarding the availability of school counselling services. Similarly, Agyemang and Ofori-Dankwa (2021) found that most students had some knowledge of their school's guidance program. The finding of high awareness levels among participants is again supported by Jones et al., (2020) who conducted a survey involving 500 high school students and found that 80% of participants were aware of the school guidance program. This finding emphasizes the importance of maintaining and promoting awareness about the school guidance programme among students. The awareness of guidance programmes influence students' utilization of counselling services. Students who are aware of the availability of counselling services are more likely to seek help when needed (O'Halloran et al., 2019). If students are unaware of the existence of counselling services, they are less likely to seek support (McCarthy & Kroll, 2016).

Item 2 revealed that the most common way participants first heard about the school guidance programme ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.228$) was during school orientation. This finding is supported by Contreras et al., (2015) that well-planned orientation sessions can significantly increase students' awareness and understanding of the available guidance services. This finding is further supported by Biever and McMahon (2012) that structured orientation sessions positively influenced students' perceptions of the school counselling program. This finding

highlights the importance of incorporating effective orientation sessions in introducing students to the school guidance program. It also suggests that the orientation sessions are effective in introducing students to the school guidance programme. Item 3 indicated that a relatively smaller proportion of participants ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.029$) first heard about the program through a teacher. This finding is consistent with the view of Chen and Chen (2017) who found that although teachers were aware of the school guidance program, their involvement in promoting it was limited. In addition, a research conducted by Li (2018) revealed that teachers' collaboration with school counsellors did not significantly influence students' utilization of the guidance program. This finding indicates that teachers' role in promoting the school guidance program might be limited or less direct compared to other factors. This implies that teachers do not play any significant role in promoting the school guidance programme among students. However, this finding is contrary to the view of Wang and Chang (2019) who established that when teachers were actively involved in promoting the guidance program and collaborated with school counsellors, students were more likely to utilize the program's resources. Items 4, 5, and 6 showed that the least common ways participants first heard about the programme (mean scores ranging from 1.86 to 1.88) were through flyers, posters, or personal inquiries. This finding suggests that the program's promotion through visual or physical materials is not as effective as other methods such as personalized guidance and direct communication. The current results is also supported by Kim and Kim (2020) that while visual aids were helpful in raising awareness about the program, they were

not as effective as direct communication and interactions with students. Furthermore, a research conducted by Park and Kang (2019) revealed that students were more likely to participate in the guidance program when they received personalized guidance from school counsellors rather than relying on visual or physical materials alone.

Item 7 demonstrated that participants generally find the information provided about the program to be clear and understandable ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .981$) indicating effective communication of programme details. This finding is consistent with the view of Gyamfi et al., (2020) who found that students perceived the school counsellors' communication style as clear and supportive, which helped them feel more comfortable seeking help for mental health issues. Similarly, this result is supported by the findings of Adebisi (2019) who indicated that students appreciated the clear and concise information provided by school counsellors, which helped them make informed decisions about their academic choices. The result however contradicts the view of Choi and Kang (2017) that although the information was designed to be clear and concise, students still faced difficulties in understanding the program's purpose and benefits. The mean score for knowing where to access information (Mean = 3.71, SD = 1.274) indicated that majority of students know where to access information about the services provided by the school guidance programme. The finding suggests that the school guidance program has been effective in communicating its services and availability to students and this implies that the program has been successful in reaching its target audience and making them aware of the resources available.

This finding is supported by Kofi et al., (2018) who conducted a study on the awareness of school guidance services among students in Ghanaian senior high schools and found that 85% of the students knew where to access information about the services provided by the school guidance programme. The finding is also consistent with the view of Adomako (2019) found that majority of the students knew where to access information about the services provided by the school counselling program. Furthermore, this finding aligns with the view of Okeke et al., (2020) found that over 90% of the students knew where to access information about the services provided by the school counselling program. However, the finding contradicts Owusu-Ansah and Owusu-Ansah (2018) that there are challenges faced by Ghanaian students in accessing and utilizing educational resources. Similarly, a research conducted by Adjei-Mafo and Owusu (2017) revealed that despite efforts to improve access to information, students still faced difficulties in locating and utilizing the resources available to them.

Item 9 indicated that participants have a reasonable understanding of the types of services provided by the school guidance programme ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.183$). This suggests that students' understanding of the types of services provided by the school guidance program is strong or effective. The finding is supported by Agyemang and Ofori-Dankwa (2021) that most students had a reasonable understanding of the services offered by their school's guidance programme. Similarly, the results is supported by the view of Ogunsanya et al., (2019) who found that students had a reasonable understanding of the services offered by their

school's guidance program. The finding is however contrary to the findings of Adjei and Ofori-Dankwa's (2018) who found out in their study that students had limited awareness and utilization of guidance programs, which may suggest that their understanding of the types of services provided by the school guidance program was not strong or effective.

Item 10 showed that participants know some of their colleagues who found the school guidance programme information to be very helpful ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.242$). This highlights the positive impact of the program on some students, but also indicates that there might be room for improvement to benefit more students. This finding is supported by Agyemang and Ofori-Dankwa (2021) that students who utilized the guidance program had better academic performance, career decision-making, and emotional well-being but however, there is room for improvement to benefit more students. According to Adu-Gyamfi et al., (2019), the guidance programme has positive impacts on students' academic performance, but also acknowledged that there is room for improvement in the guidance program to benefit more students.

Item 11 revealed that majority of participants wish they had extra information about the program ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.004$). This indicates that there is a demand for more comprehensive and detailed information about the school guidance programme. Researchers and program administrators should consider addressing this by providing additional resources, workshops, or seminars to enhance students' understanding of the program (Wong & Wong, 2011). This finding is consistent with the findings of Adekola and Adeyemo (2020) that students and

stakeholders sought more information about the guidance programme to enhance its effectiveness. Similarly, Mahommed and Olofinbiyi (2019) found that students, parents, and teachers desired better communication and understanding of the guidance program's offerings to maximize its benefits. Item 12 indicated that participants have a moderate understanding of the process for accessing counselling or guidance services at their school ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.187$). This suggests that, there is the need for improvement to ensure that students are well-informed about the accessibility of the services provided by the school guidance programme. The results is consistent with the view of Adeyemo et al., (2018) that while students were aware of the availability of guidance services, their understanding of the access process was moderate, indicating room for improvement in promoting and explaining the services provided by the school guidance programme.

These findings align with the theories that underpin this study; Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) emphasizes the importance of observational learning, modelling, and environmental influences on behaviour. The fact that students primarily learned about the guidance programme during school orientation aligns with SCT's assertion that exposure to information and modelled behaviours during key environmental events can shape awareness and subsequent behaviour. Orientation sessions serve as observational learning opportunities where students observe and internalize the availability and importance of guidance services. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that competence, relatedness, and autonomy are essential for motivation. Awareness through orientation enhances students'

sense of competence, as they recognize available support systems, which can motivate them to utilize these services voluntarily. When students feel informed and capable, they are more likely to engage actively with guidance programmes, fulfilling their intrinsic motivation to seek support.

The implication of these findings for school guidance coordinators is that, schools should continue to emphasize the importance of school orientation in introducing students to the guidance programme to ensure that all students are informed about its existence. Similarly, efforts should be made to enhance students' knowledge about the types of services offered by the guidance programme and improve access to information about counselling services to increase students' utilization of counselling resources. An additional implication is that, clear and comprehensive communication about the guidance programme should be practiced to help contribute to students' overall satisfaction with counselling services and promote their well-being and academic success.

4.3.2 Research Question Two:

What are students' perceptions of the effectiveness and relevance of the school guidance programme?

This research question aimed to determine students' perceptions of the effectiveness and relevance of the school guidance programme. Participants' responses were examined using a set of 13 statements, and the statements were evaluated on a Five-Point Likert scale, with options ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The findings are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11: Students' Perceptions of the Effectiveness and Relevance of the School Guidance Programme (N=400)

	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	I feel positive about the school guidance programme	400	4.21	1.016
2.	The school guidance program effectively addresses the diverse needs of students	400	3.89	1.113
3.	The school guidance program is beneficial for students' academic success	400	4.35	.886
4.	The school guidance program provides valuable support for personal and emotional well-being	400	4.01	1.101
5.	The school guidance program promotes a positive school environment and culture	400	3.82	1.111
6.	The school guidance programme is overall effective	400	3.46	1.190
7.	The most important aspect of the school guidance programme is academic counselling	400	4.02	1.128
8.	Career guidance is the most important aspect of the school guidance programme	400	3.91	1.033
9.	The most important aspect of the school guidance programme is personal counselling	400	3.72	1.201

10.	I am satisfied with the availability of individual counselling sessions	399	3.73	1.168
11.	The school guidance programme has created an impact on my personal and social development	400	3.84	1.162
12.	The school guidance programme has created an impact on my student friends	400	3.85	1.180
13.	I feel comfortable seeking assistance from the school guidance program if needed	400	3.78	1.293
Mean of Means/Standard Deviation			3.89	1.122

Source: Field Data, 2024

From the results shown in Table 11, a mean of means of 3.89 and a mean of standard deviation of 1.122 were realized. This mean suggests a generally positive perception of the effectiveness and relevance of the school guidance programme among students but with considerable variation in what influences those perceptions. The high variation in students' responses indicate that while most students agreed with the statements, there was some diversity in opinion. Further discussions of individual items are presented in the paragraphs below.

From Table 11, all 13 items have mean scores above 3.40, suggesting that respondents generally agreed with the statements. These statements indicated a high level of positive perception of students towards the school guidance programme. The results in Table 11 revealed that, the majority of participants (M

= 4.21, SD = 1.016) had positive feeling about the school guidance programme. This suggests a generally positive attitude towards the school guidance programme. This finding is supported by the view of Agyemang and Owusu-Ansah (2020) who found that students in Ghanaian schools perceived the guidance and counselling services positively, as they believed these services helped them in their academic, vocational and personal lives.

Item 2 showed that students believe the school guidance programme is moderately effective in addressing the diverse needs of students ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.113$). This indicates that there might be room for improvement in tailoring the program to better cater for individual needs. This finding is consistent with the finding of Agyei-Mensah and Owusu-Ansah (2018) that students in Ghanaian schools perceived the guidance and counselling services as moderately effective in addressing their diverse needs. Similarly, a research conducted by Adewuya (2018) revealed that students perceived the guidance and counselling services as moderately effective in addressing their diverse needs. However, this result is opposed by the findings of Owusu-Ansah and Agyei-Mensah (2019) that there are challenges in the effective implementation and utilization of these guidance and counselling services. In terms of academic success, the results showed that students perceive the guidance programme as highly beneficial ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .886$). This highlights the importance of the school guidance programme in supporting students' academic achievements. This finding is consistent with the views of (Agyei-Mensah & Owusu-Ansah, 2018; Wong & Hui, 2016) who found that students perceived the guidance and counselling services as highly beneficial

in terms of academic success. Item 4 revealed that regarding personal and emotional well-being, students find the school guidance programme valuable ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.101$). This demonstrates that the guidance program contributes to students' overall well-being. This finding confirms studies conducted by Grief et al., (2012), that students perceived the school counselling program as providing valuable support for personal and emotional well-being. This finding is also consistent with research findings of Wyatt et al., (2018) that high school students believed that the school guidance services provided valuable support for their social-emotional competencies. However, this finding is opposed by the view of Brown and Smothers (2019) who found that some students expressed scepticism and dissatisfaction with the school guidance programs, indicating that they did not find them valuable for their personal and emotional well-being.

Item 5 revealed that participants agree that the school guidance programme promotes a positive school environment and culture ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.111$). This shows that the school guidance programme plays a role in fostering a supportive and positive atmosphere within the school. This result confirms the findings of the research conducted by Sink and Akos (2016) that students who received guidance and counselling services reported higher levels of satisfaction with their school experience and perceived a more supportive and inclusive school environment.

Item 6 indicated that participants perceived that the school guidance programme is overall effective ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.190$). This finding agrees with Bofo-Arthur (2019) that students perceived the school guidance program to be overall effective in supporting their growth and development. The finding is also

consistent with the view of Sarfo and Agyemang (2016) that students perceived the guidance program to be beneficial and effective in addressing their personal and academic needs, supporting the idea that the program is overall effective.

The results indicated that students consider academic counselling as the most important aspect of the school guidance programme ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.128$). This suggests that students value the guidance programme primarily for its academic support. This finding is supported by Donkor et al., (2018) that students considered academic counselling to be the most crucial aspect of the program in supporting their academic success and achievement. This finding also confirms earlier findings of Iponmoye (2019) that students in selected secondary schools considered academic counselling to be the most critical aspect of the guidance program, highlighting its significance in supporting their academic development and success. Career guidance is also seen as important ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.033$) demonstrating that students recognize the value of career-related guidance. This finding is consistent with the view of Osei-Tutu et al., (2017) that students recognized the value of career-related guidance in helping them make informed decisions about their future career paths. Personal counselling is ranked third in importance ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.201$). This indicates that students find personal counselling less crucial compared to academic and career guidance. This finding is supported by Harley et al., (2018) that students placed more emphasis on academic and career guidance compared to personal counselling. The finding is also consistent with the earlier findings of Yilmaz and Kim (2019) that students

tended to prioritize academic and career guidance over personal counselling when seeking guidance and support.

The results revealed that students are satisfied with the availability of individual counselling sessions ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.168$) and believe that the guidance program has made an impact on their personal and social development ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.162$). The finding suggests that the school guidance programme has a significant impact on students' personal and social development. This finding is consistent with the view of Santos et al., (2019) who found that students perceived the guidance program as instrumental in enhancing their communication skills, conflict resolution abilities, and overall well-being. The finding is also supported by the view of Atkinson and Thompson (2020) that students expressed appreciation for the guidance program's role in facilitating their personal growth, including increased self-confidence, resilience, and empathy, as well as improved relationships with peers and teachers, underscoring its positive impact on their social development. Similarly, the result in item 12 indicated that students perceive that the school guidance programme to have positively influenced their friends ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.180$) indicating a beneficial impact on their peers' well-being. This finding is supported by earlier findings of the research conducted by Williams and Thompson (2020) who found that students believed the school guidance program had a positive influence on their friends' mental health, social skills, and overall happiness.

Lastly, item 13 indicated that students feel comfortable seeking assistance from the guidance program when needed ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.293$). This indicates that

students have some level of comfort and has no hesitation in approaching the school guidance program for help. This finding confirms earlier research conducted by Thompson and Lee (2019) who revealed that students felt comfortable seeking assistance from the guidance program when needed, perceiving it as accessible, supportive, and non-judgmental, which facilitated their help-seeking behaviour. This finding is also supported by the view of Williams and Thompson (2020) that students have positive perception of the guidance program's accessibility and responsiveness, with students feeling comfortable and confident in approaching the counsellors for support, guidance, and assistance as needed. However, this finding contradicts the view of Adams and Brown (2020) that students identified several barriers, such as stigma, fear of judgment, and lack of confidentiality hindered their comfort in seeking assistance from the guidance program when needed.

These findings are consistent with the key concepts of Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Determination Theory. Positive perceptions reflect students' observational learning and outcome expectations. Once students observe that guidance services lead to beneficial outcomes like improved academic performance and career clarity, they develop positive attitudes and expectations, which motivate future engagement. Moreover, Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes self-efficacy; believing that the guidance programme can help them enhances their confidence to utilize these services. Self-Determination Theory highlights the importance of perceived relevance and competence. When students perceive the guidance programme as effective, it satisfies their need for

competence and relatedness, fostering intrinsic motivation. Such positive perceptions can enhance autonomous motivation, making students more likely to seek help willingly and actively participate.

The implications of these findings are that, school counsellors should ensure counselling services focus on addressing the diverse needs of students to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness in supporting their personal and academic development. Additionally, guidance coordinators should ensure school guidance programme provides comprehensive support for personal and emotional well-being, beyond just academic counselling. Finally, continuous evaluation and improvement of the guidance program's effectiveness are essential to ensure that students receive meaningful support and positive outcomes from counselling services.

4.3.3 Research Question Three:

To what extent do students utilize school counselling service?

This research question aimed to find out the extent to which students utilize school counselling service. Participants' responses were examined using a set of 25 statements, and the statements were evaluated on a Five-Point Likert scale, with options ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The findings are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12: Extent to which Students Utilize School Counselling Service (N=400)

	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	I frequently patronize the services provided by the school counselling service	400	3.51	1.305
2.	I have patronized the counselling services provided by the school in the past year	400	3.45	1.314
3.	I have patronized the academic counselling service provided by the school	400	3.76	1.159
4.	I have patronized the career guidance service provided by the school	400	3.67	1.260
5.	I have patronized the personal counselling service provided by the school	400	3.36	1.270
6.	I have patronized the relationship counselling service provided by the school	400	3.10	1.339
7.	I have patronized the stress or anxiety management service provided by the school	400	3.13	1.292
8.	I am satisfied with the services received during my counselling appointments	400	3.58	1.230
9.	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my academic concerns	400	3.83	1.157

10.	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my personal issues	400	3.77	1.121
11.	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my career-related concerns	400	3.85	1.102
12.	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my relationship issues	400	2.97	1.280
13.	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my stress or anxiety issues	400	3.58	1.326
14.	The counselling services have been helpful in addressing my concerns	400	3.72	1.168
15.	Lack of awareness is a factor that has prevented me from utilizing counselling services	400	3.56	1.329
16.	Stigma associated with seeking counselling is a factor that has prevented me from utilizing counselling services	400	2.83	1.279
17.	Personal preference is a factor that has prevented me from utilizing counselling services	400	2.90	1.278
18.	Lack of time is a factor that has prevented me from utilizing counselling services	400	3.44	1.237

19.	I have ever recommended the services of the school guidance programme to a peer or fellow student	400	3.60	1.313
20.	Increased awareness creation can motivate more students to seek help	400	4.15	.961
21.	Continues assurance of confidentiality and anonymity can motivate more students to seek help	400	4.13	.981
22.	Sensitization on stigmatization can motivate more students to seek help	400	3.83	1.185
23.	Improved religious and cultural friendly approach can motivate more students to seek help	400	3.93	1.122
24.	My experience with the school counselling service has been positive	400	3.99	1.056
25.	I would recommend the counselling services to a friend in need	400	4.10	1.064
	Mean of Means/Standard Deviation		3.59	1.205

Source: Field Data, 2024

From the results shown in Table 12, a mean of means of 3.59 and a mean of standard deviation of 1.205 were realized. This mean suggests a high level of student utilization of the school counselling service but with considerable variation in how students seek for help and support. The high variation in students' responses indicate that while most students agreed with the statements,

there was some diversity in opinion. Further discussions of individual items are presented in the paragraphs below.

In Table 12, items 1 and 2 showed mean scores 3.51 and 3.45 respectively indicating that respondents generally agreed with the statements. These statements indicated a high level of engagement with the counselling services provided in their schools. This suggests that students are taking active role in seeking help and support, which can empower them to take ownership of their own well-being and make positive changes in their lives. This finding is supported by Obeng et al., (2019) that a considerable number of students actively engaged with the counselling services offered in their schools. The finding is also consistent with the view of Nkosi and Mthimunye (2020) who found that students demonstrated a high level of engagement with school counselling services, with many seeking support for academic, personal, and emotional concerns. However, the finding is opposed by the view of Ola and Olaleye (2019) that students had limited engagement with counselling services. The results in Table 12 revealed that academic counselling ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.159$) is the most patronized service of the school guidance programme. This finding indicates students are concerned about their academic performance and are seeking help to improve it. This finding is consistent with Tijani and Ibrahim (2017) that academic counselling was the most patronized service in the school guidance program. This finding is also consistent with the findings of earlier research conducted by Adefisan and Adeleke (2020) who found that academic counselling was the most patronized service in the school guidance program, with students expressing high levels of

satisfaction with the support and guidance provided by academic counsellors. The result of item 4 revealed that career counselling ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.260$) is the second most patronized service after academic counselling. The finding suggests that career development is a critical aspect of student well-being, and that students are seeking support to navigate the complexities of the career development process. This finding is supported by the view of Nyirongo and Sakala (2020) who found that career counselling was the second most patronized service after academic counselling in the school guidance program.

Item 8 indicated that students are satisfied with the services received during their counselling appointments (Mean = 3.58, $SD = 1.230$). This indicates that students are engaged and motivated to participate in the counselling process, which can lead to positive outcomes such as improved academic performance, social skills, and mental health. This result confirms the findings of Owusu and Mensah (2018) that students were satisfied with the counselling services they received. It is also consistent with the findings of earlier research conducted by Anderson and Taylor (2020) who found that students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the counselling support they received. Item 14 showed that students generally find the counselling services helpful in addressing their concerns (Mean = 3.72, $SD = 1.168$). This suggests that students feel heard and understood by the counsellors, which is essential for building trust and rapport. The finding confirms the view of Boateng and Osei (2019) who reported that students found the counselling services helpful in addressing their concerns and emphasized the role of

counselling services in supporting students' personal, academic, and career development in educational setting.

Items 9, 10, 11 and 13 showed to have mean scores ranging from 3.58 to 3.85, suggesting that the main reasons students seek for counselling service is for academic, personal, career and anxiety or stress concerns. This finding suggests that the reasons for seeking counselling services among students are diverse and multifaceted. This result supports the assertion of Adom et al., (2018) that the main reasons students sought counselling services were related to academic, personal, career, and anxiety or stress concerns. Students reported seeking help to improve their academic performance, cope with personal challenges, explore career options, and manage feelings of stress and anxiety. The finding is also consistent with the view of Oluwatayo and Olabisi (2019) that the main reasons students seek counselling services are academic, personal, career, and anxiety or stress concerns. Furthermore, this finding is supported by the view of Dixon et al., (2010) who found that academic stress, personal problems, career uncertainty, and anxiety were the primary factors influencing students to seek counselling services. However this finding is opposed by the view of Lopez and Andrews (2017) who found that while academic, personal, career, and anxiety or stress concerns were important factors influencing students to seek counselling services, students also reported seeking counselling for issues related to identity exploration, cultural adjustment, and trauma. Item 12 revealed that relationship issues is not the main reason why students seek for counselling service (Mean =2.97, SD = 1.280). The finding suggests that relationship issues may be a symptom of underlying issues,

such as mental health concerns, academic struggles, or personal crises. This result is consistent with Kitzrow (2003) that while relationship issues are common among college students, academic stress, personal struggles, career concerns, and anxiety or stress are often the main reasons why students seek counselling services. Similarly, this finding is supported by Gallagher (2012) that academic stress, personal issues, career uncertainty, and mental health concerns were the top reasons why students sought counselling services although relationship issues were also noted as a significant factor but not always the primary reason for seeking support.

Items 15 and 18 revealed that lack of awareness ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 1.329$) and lack of time ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.237$) are the main factors that prevented students from utilizing counselling services. This suggests that lack of awareness and lack of time are perceived barriers for students in seeking help. This finding confirms the view of Rickwood et al., (2007) who found that lack of awareness about available services and time constraints were key factors influencing the help-seeking behaviour of young individuals, including college students. The finding is also consistent with Hunt and Eisenberg (2010) that students often cited lack of awareness about available mental health resources and busy schedules as reasons why they did not utilize counselling services when needed. Items 16 and 17 revealed that stigmatization ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.315$) and personal preference ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.280$) are not factors that prevented students from utilizing counselling services. This suggests that stigmatization and personal preference are not perceived barriers for students in seeking help. This finding is supported by

the view of Gulliver et al., (2010) that while factors such as stigma and personal preferences were identified as factors, other barriers, such as lack of awareness and time constraints, were frequently reported by young individuals in relation to seeking help.

Items 19 assessed students' likelihood of recommending the counselling services to their fellow students ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.313$). The finding indicated that students expressed positive attitudes towards the school guidance programme and agreed they have ever recommended its services to their fellow students. This finding indicates that students feel empowered and supported by the school guidance program, which can lead to increased confidence, self-esteem, and motivation. This finding supports the view of Kpodo et al., (2018) who found that students who received guidance counselling services reported positive attitudes towards the program and recommended its services to their fellow students. They also found that students who received guidance counselling services reported higher levels of satisfaction and well-being compared to those who did not receive guidance counselling services. Items 20 to 25 determined factors that can motivate more students to seek help ($M = 3.83$ to 4.15). The results revealed that students agree that increased awareness, confidentiality assurance, sensitization on stigmatization, and cultural-friendly approaches can motivate more students to seek help. This finding suggests that students need to feel supported and encouraged to seek help and highlights the importance of creating a supportive school environment that encourages students to seek help and provides them with the necessary resources and support. This finding is supported by Passel et al.,

(2019) that increasing awareness, ensuring confidentiality, and addressing stigmatization can create a supportive environment that encourages help-seeking behaviour among students.

These findings are supported by the key concepts of the theories that underpin this study. High utilization indicates that students' observational learning and outcome expectations are aligned positively. Students seeing peers benefit from guidance services, or observing successful outcomes, reinforces their own behaviour to seek counselling. Their perceptions of the usefulness and effectiveness of the counselling service further motivate their engagement which is consistent with SCT's emphasis on self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Utilization reflects the fulfilment of autonomy and competence needs as emphasized by the Self-Determination Theory. When students perceive counselling as beneficial and relevant, their intrinsic motivation to seek help increases. Academic and career guidance satisfy their psychological needs, encouraging voluntary and self-motivated engagement with the services.

The counselling implications of these findings include making sure counselling services continue to offer a variety of services to address academic, personal, career, relationship, and mental health concerns to help meet diverse student needs. Similarly, efforts should be made to increase awareness of the counselling services available, address stigma associated with seeking help, and accommodate personal preferences to improve accessibility and utilization of services. Additionally, school counsellors should enhance the quality, confidentiality, and

cultural sensitivity of counselling services to motivate students to seek help and foster positive experiences with counselling.

4.3.4 Research Question Four:

How do student perceptions of school counselling service influence their utilization?

This research question aimed to find out how student perceptions of school counselling service influence their utilization. Participants' responses were examined using a set of 6 statements, and the statements were evaluated on a Five-Point Likert scale, with options ranging from Very True (5) to Not at all True (1). Table 13 is used to answer this research question.

Table 13: Influence of Student Perceptions of School Counselling Service on their Utilization (N=400)

	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	My perception of the school guidance programme influences my decision to seek its service	400	3.66	1.157
2.	My decision to patronize the guidance programme has been influenced by positive experiences or recommendations from peers	400	3.53	1.159
3.	My positive perception of the school guidance program motivates me to seek counselling services	400	3.86	1.108

4.	I am more likely to utilize counselling services if I perceive the school guidance program as effective and beneficial	400	4.04	.989
5.	A positive perception of the school guidance program enhances the quality of counselling services offered	400	4.00	1.034
6.	My perception of the school guidance program influences my overall satisfaction with counselling services	400	3.75	1.175
Mean of Means/Standard Deviation			3.81	1.104

Source: Field Data, 2024

From the results shown in Table 13, a mean of means of 3.81 and a mean of standard deviation of 1.104 were realized. This mean suggests that student perceptions of the school counselling service influence their utilization. The high variation in students' responses indicate that while most students agreed with the statements, there was some diversity in opinion. Further discussions of individual items are presented in the paragraphs below.

From the results presented in Table 13, item 1 "My perception of the school guidance program influences my decision to seek its service," (M = 3.66, SD = 1.157), item 3, "My positive perception of the school guidance program motivates me to seek counselling services," (M = 3.86, SD = 1.108), and item 4, "I am more likely to utilize counselling services if I perceive the school guidance program as

effective and beneficial," ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.989$) suggest that, students agreed that their positive perceptions of the guidance programme in relation to its effectiveness and benefits influence their decision to seek counselling services. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Chen and Hsiao (2016) which revealed that students who had positive perceptions of the school counselling programme were more likely to seek counselling services. The study emphasized the role of perceived effectiveness and benefits of the program in motivating students to utilize counselling services (Chen & Hsiao, 2016). The finding is also consistent with the view of Smith and Jones (2018) that students who believed in the effectiveness of the guidance programme were more inclined to seek counselling services when needed. Positive perceptions of the programme, such as perceived quality of services and support, were key factors influencing students' decisions to utilize counselling services (Smith & Jones, 2018). Additionally, this finding is supported by Amoah et al., (2019) that positive perceptions of counselling services, including perceived confidentiality and professionalism, were associated with increased willingness to seek help among students.

Item 2, "My decision to patronize the guidance program has been influenced by positive experiences or recommendations from peers," ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.159$) indicated that students agreed that positive experiences or recommendations from peers influence their decision to utilize the guidance programme. The finding suggests that peer-led initiatives, such as peer mentoring or peer support programmes, can be effective in promoting the guidance program and encouraging students to seek help. This result is consistent with the findings of

earlier research conducted by Amankwaa and Mensah (2019) who found that positive peer recommendations significantly influenced students' decisions to utilize counselling services in schools, with students more likely to seek help if they received encouragement and positive feedback from their peers. Similarly, the finding is supported the view of Oladapo and Ibrahim (2019) who demonstrated that positive experiences with counselling services, shared through peer recommendations, increased students' willingness to engage in school guidance programme and seek support for their mental health needs. Furthermore, this result is consistent with (Smith et al., 2018; Brown & Johnson, 2019) who found that positive peer recommendations significantly influenced students' decisions to utilize counselling services, with students being more likely to seek help if they received recommendations from their peers.

Item 5, "A positive perception of the school guidance program enhances the quality of counselling services offered," ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.034$) indicated that students believed that a positive perception of the guidance programme enhances the quality of counselling services. This finding suggests that students' expectations about the quality and effectiveness of the school guidance programme are influenced by their perception of the programme. This results agrees with the assertion of (Addo & Osei, 2019; Mensah & Boakye, 2017) that how students' belief in the effectiveness and credibility of the guidance program enhanced the quality of counselling services provided, with students experiencing better outcomes and greater satisfaction when they perceived the program positively. Similarly, the finding agrees with the view of Olalekan and Ajayi

(2018) who found that students' positive perception of the guidance program contributed to the quality of counselling services provided. Additionally, the result agrees with the findings of an earlier study conducted by Brown and Wilson (2019) that students who believed in the value and effectiveness of the guidance program experienced better outcomes in counselling sessions and were more likely to engage in the services.

Item 6, "My perception of the school guidance program influences my overall satisfaction with counselling services," ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.175$) showed that students agreed that their perception of the guidance programme influences their overall satisfaction with counselling services. This finding suggests that students' satisfaction with the guidance program is closely tied to their perception of the program's quality. This finding is supported by the view Amoah and Gyampoh (2019) who found that students who had a positive perception of the guidance program reported higher levels of satisfaction with counselling services. Additionally, the result confirms the findings of an earlier research conducted by Adekunle and Osagie, (2018) who showed that students' beliefs about the guidance program influenced their satisfaction levels with counselling services.

This finding underscores the role of outcome expectations and self-efficacy as emphasized by the Social Cognitive Theory. Students who perceive the school guidance programme as beneficial are more likely to believe they can effectively use the services and expect positive outcomes, which motivate their actual utilization. Their perceptions serve as cognitive mediators that influence behaviour. A positive perception fosters intrinsic motivation by satisfying

students' psychological needs for competence (belief in the programme's efficacy) and relatedness (perceiving the programme as supportive). When students feel that the guidance services are beneficial and relevant, they are more autonomously motivated to utilize them, leading to higher engagement rates.

The implications of the findings for the school guidance programme are that, coordinators should promote the benefits, effectiveness, and positive outcomes of the school guidance programme to enhance students' perceptions and increase their willingness to seek counselling services. Also, guidance coordinators should implement peer support programmes to encourage positive experiences and recommendations from peers in order to attract more students to utilize counselling services. Additionally, guidance coordinators should seek for feedback from students and actively address the concerns they raise so as to increase their positive perception of the school guidance programme.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter four presented and discussed the main results of the study based on the four research questions. The implications of the findings were also discussed. The study revealed the following findings:

Firstly, there is high level of awareness among students towards the school guidance programme mainly through the information provided during school orientation. Secondly, students have positive attitude towards the school guidance programme and consider it as effective and beneficial in addressing their academic, career, personal and anxiety concerns. Thirdly, there is a high level of

utilization of the counselling service among students in their schools with academic and career counselling being the most patronized. Finally, students' perceptions of the school guidance programme in relation to its effectiveness and benefits influence their utilization of counselling service.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. The summary is comprised of the objectives of the study, some areas of the methods and the major findings of the study. It also contains the conclusions of the findings and the recommendations of the study. Additionally, areas for further research studies are suggested.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and to explore the implications of these perceptions for counselling patronage among Senior High Schools (SHSs) within the Tamale Metropolis. The specific objectives of the study were: Firstly, to assess students' awareness of the school guidance programmes. Secondly, to explore students' perception of the school guidance programme. Thirdly, to examine students' utilization of the counselling service in their school. Finally, the study was to determine the effect of students' perceptions on the utilization of counselling service.

The study employed descriptive research design. A proportional stratified sampling technique was used to sample from four senior high schools in the Tamale Metropolis. Simple random sampling technique specifically the lottery method was used to select the four Senior High Schools out of a total of eight schools in the Tamale Metropolis. In this study, 400 participants were selected. A

self developed structured questionnaire was used to gather information from the students. The questionnaire contained (56) items organized into five sections based on the research questions for the study. All data were analysed using descriptive statistics that is the means and standard deviations.

5.2.1 Major Findings

Firstly, in addressing research question one, the awareness level of students towards the school guidance programme revealed that, there is a high level of awareness of the school guidance programme among students. Majority of the respondents indicated that the most common way they first heard about the school guidance programme was during school orientation.

Secondly, research question two sought to determine what the perceptions of students towards the school guidance programme are. The finding obtained indicated that students have positive attitude towards the school guidance programme. The study also revealed that students consider the school guidance programme as effective and beneficial in addressing their academic, career, personal and anxiety concerns.

Thirdly, in addressing research question three, students' utilization of the counselling service in their school showed that there is a high level of utilization of the counselling service among students in their schools. The findings also revealed that academic and career counselling are the most patronized service of the school guidance programme.

Finally, research question four determined the effect of students' perceptions on the utilization of counselling service. The finding revealed that students' perceptions of the school guidance programme in relation to its effectiveness and benefits influence their utilization of counselling service. The finding also indicated that students believed that a positive perception of the guidance programme enhances the quality of counselling services.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is high level of awareness of the school guidance programme among students through the orientation service. Compared with the information obtained through teachers, flyers, colleagues and personal enquiries, the orientation service organised in the schools provided enough information to student about guidance services. This implies that the school guidance programme may not be as effective in reaching students who miss the orientation session in school.

Additionally, it can be concluded that the school guidance programme has the ability to solve students' academic, career, personal and anxiety concerns therefore making it effective and beneficial. Hence, it was found that students had positive attitude towards the school guidance programme which influenced their utilization of counselling service.

Furthermore, the high utilization rates of counselling service, especially in academic and career counselling, reflect students' recognition of the value these services provide. This trend underscores the need for schools to continue

promoting and expanding counselling service to meet diverse student needs effectively.

Finally, students' positive perceptions of the guidance programme in relation to its effectiveness and relevance influence their utilization of counselling service. This relationship underscores the importance of fostering positive attitudes through effective communication, quality service delivery, and demonstrating tangible benefits, which can ultimately enhance student engagement with guidance services.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained from the study, the following recommendations were put forward;

1. Since most students first learn about the guidance programme during school orientation, school administrators and guidance coordinators should strengthen and expand orientation sessions to include comprehensive information about the services provided by the guidance department. This could involve interactive presentations, distribution of informational materials, and ongoing awareness campaigns to ensure all students are well-informed about available guidance services throughout their academic journey.
2. Given that students have a positive attitude towards the guidance programme and find it effective, school guidance coordinators should continue to promote and highlight success stories and benefits of the guidance services. Additionally, soliciting student feedback periodically can help tailor the programme to meet

students' needs better, reinforcing their perception of its effectiveness and encouraging continued engagement.

3. Since academic and career counselling are the most utilized services, schools should heads and guidance department should ensure that these services are easily accessible and well-publicized. This could involve scheduling regular counselling sessions, creating dedicated counselling periods, and actively encouraging students to utilize these services through classroom announcements and peer promotion, thereby maintaining high utilization levels.

4. Recognizing that students' perceptions influence their use of counselling services, schools should authorities and guidance coordinators should implement awareness campaigns and educational activities that emphasize the benefits and effectiveness of the guidance programme. Training guidance counselors to build rapport and demonstrate the value of their services can further reinforce students' positive perceptions, which in turn will likely increase utilization rates.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

The following suggestions are made for further research:

1. A research should be conducted to examine the specific factors that contribute to students' awareness of the school guidance programme during school orientation and how these factors could be optimized to improve student awareness and engagement with the school guidance programme.

2. Further studies should also be done on students' perception of the school guidance programme and its implication for counselling patronage using a mixed

method. This will introduce new dimensions to the work since this study was purely quantitative.

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APPENDIX A
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS STUDIES
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS
**STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAMME
AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING PATRONAGE AMONG
SHSs WITHIN TAMALE METROPOLIS**

Dear participant,

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of the school guidance programme and to explore the implications of these perceptions for counselling patronage among Senior High Schools (SHSs) within the Tamale Metropolis. It is a study in partial fulfilment for the award of a Master of Philosophy (MPhil.) degree in Guidance and Counselling at the University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale. The information obtained through this questionnaire is for academic purposes only. Please be assured that your participation in this project is completely voluntary and your responses would be treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity. Your agreement to respond to these questions implies your consent to participate in this research process. Your responses will help in understanding the relationship between perception and utilization of guidance services. Please answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

SECTION A

Background Characteristics of Respondent

1. Gender:

- a. Male b. Female

2. Age:

- a. 13 – 15 b. 16 – 18 c. 19 – 21 d. Above 21

3. Religion:

- a. Christian b. Muslim c. Traditionalist d. Others

4. Form:

- a. SHS 1 b. SHS 2 c. SHS 3

5. Residential Status:

- a. Boarder b. Day

SECTION B

Awareness of the School Guidance Programme:

Instruction: This section is to measure your level of awareness of the school guidance programme. Carefully consider each of the following statements and indicate the response that applies to you. Please just tick (✓) next to each statement to show how true it applies to you. Use the scale below:

5 – Very True (VT)

2 – Not True (NT)

4 – True (T)

1 – Not at all True (NAT)

3 – Somewhat True (ST)

NO.	STATEMENT	SCALE				
		VT 5	T 4	ST 3	NT 2	NAT 1
1	I am aware of the existence of the school guidance programme.					
2	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was during school orientation.					
3	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was through a teacher.					
4	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was by a flyer or a poster.					
5	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was through a colleague student.					
6	The first time I heard about the school guidance programme was through personal enquires.					
7	The information provided about the school guidance programme is clear and understandable.					
8	I know where to access information about the services provided by the school guidance programme.					
9	I am familiar with the types of services offered by the school guidance programme (e.g., academic counselling, career guidance, personal counselling).					
10	I am aware of my colleagues who found the school guidance programme information to be very helpful.					
11	I wish I had extra information about the school guidance programme.					
12	I understand the process for accessing counselling or guidance services at our school.					

SECTION C

Perception of the School Guidance Programme:

Instruction: This section is to measure your perception of the school guidance programme. Carefully consider each of the following statements and indicate the response that applies to you. Please just tick (✓) next to each statement to show how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement. Use the scale below:

5 – Strongly Agree (**SA**)

2 – Disagree (**DA**)

4 – Agree (**A**)

1 – Strongly Disagree (**SD**)

3 – Neutral (**N**) (Neither agree or disagree)

NO.	STATEMENT	SCALE				
		SA 5	A 4	N 3	DA 2	SD 1
13	I feel positive about the school guidance programme					
14	The school guidance program effectively addresses the diverse needs of students.					
15	The school guidance program is beneficial for students' academic success.					
16	The school guidance program provides valuable support for personal and emotional well-being.					
17	The school guidance program promotes a positive school environment and culture.					
18	The school guidance programme is overall effective					
19	The most important aspect of the school guidance programme is academic counselling.					
20	Career guidance is the most important aspect of the school guidance programme.					
21	The most important aspect of the school guidance programme is personal counselling.					
22	I am satisfied with the availability of individual counselling sessions.					
23	The school guidance programme has created an impact on my personal and social development.					

24	The school guidance programme has created an impact on my student friends.					
25	I feel comfortable seeking assistance from the school guidance program if needed.					

SECTION D

Patronage (utilization) of the School Counselling Service:

Instruction: This section is to measure your patronage or utilization of the school guidance programme. Carefully consider each of the following statements and indicate the response that applies to you. Please just tick (✓) next to each statement to show how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement. Use the scale below:

- 5 – Strongly Agree (**SA**) 2 – Disagree (**DA**)
 4 – Agree (**A**) 1 – Strongly Disagree (**SD**)
 3 – Neutral (**N**) (Neither agree or disagree)

NO.	STATEMENT	SCALE				
		SA 5	A 4	N 3	DA 2	SD 1
26	I frequently patronize the services provided by the school counselling service.					
27	I have patronized the counselling services provided by the school in the past year.					
28	I have patronized the academic counselling service provided by the school.					
29	I have patronized the career guidance service provided by the school.					
30	I have patronized the personal counselling service provided by the school.					
31	I have patronized the relationship counselling service provided by the school.					
32	I have patronized the stress or anxiety management service provided by the school.					
33	I am satisfied with the services received during my counselling appointments.					

34	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my academic concerns.					
35	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my personal issues.					
36	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my career-related concerns.					
37	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my relationship issues.					
38	The main reason I seek counselling services is because of my stress or anxiety issues.					
39	The counselling services have been helpful in addressing my concerns.					
40	Lack of awareness is a factor that has prevented me from utilizing counselling services.					
41	Stigma associated with seeking counselling is a factor that has prevented me from utilizing counselling services.					
42	Personal preference is a factor that has prevented me from utilizing counselling services.					
43	Lack of time is a factor that has prevented me from utilizing counselling services.					
44	I have ever recommended the services of the school guidance programme to a peer or fellow student.					
45	Increased awareness creation can motivate more students to seek help.					
46	Continues assurance of confidentiality and anonymity can motivate more students to seek help.					
47	Sensitization on stigmatization can motivate more students to seek help.					
48	Improved religious and cultural friendly approach can motivate more students to seek help.					
49	My experience with the school counselling service has been positive.					
50	I would recommend the counselling services to a friend in need.					

SECTION E

Effect of perception on counselling patronage (utilization):

Instruction: This section is to measure the impact of your perception of the school guidance programme on counselling patronage. Carefully consider each of the following statements and indicate the response that applies to you. Please just tick (✓) next to each statement to show how true it applies to you. Use the scale below:

5 – Very True (VT)

2 – Not True (NT)

4 – True (T)

1 – Not at all True (NAT)

3 – Somewhat True (ST)

NO.	STATEMENT	SCALE				
		VT 5	T 4	ST 3	NT 2	NAT 1
51	My perception of the school guidance programme influences my decision to seek its service.					
52	My decision to patronize the guidance programme has been influenced by positive experiences or recommendations from peers.					
53	My positive perception of the school guidance program motivates me to seek counselling services.					
54	I am more likely to utilize counselling services if I perceive the school guidance program as effective and beneficial.					
55	A positive perception of the school guidance program enhances the quality of counselling services offered.					
56	My perception of the school guidance program influences my overall satisfaction with counselling services.					

THANK YOU!!!

APPENDIX B

**UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS STUDIES**

TEL: +233-024-497-0564
E-Mail: asiimon@uds.edu.gh
Website: www.uds.edu.gh/FoE



P. O. Box TL1350
Tamale
Northern Region
Ghana, West Africa

Our Ref:.....

Your Ref:

DATE: 30/01/2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

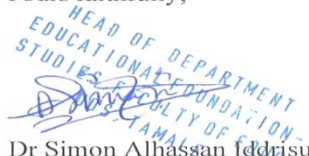
The student whose details appear below is a member of the Department of Educational Foundations, pursuing Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Guidance and Counselling.

He requires your kind assistance to enable him collect information (data) for his research entitled "Students' Perception of School guidance programme and its implication for Counselling patronage among SHSs within Tamale Metropolis"

I should therefore be very grateful if you could kindly offer him the needed assistance.

Name: Evans Yaw Annoh
Index Number: UDS/MGC/0003/22

Thank you
Yours faithfully,


HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION
STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
TAMALE

Dr Simon Alhassan Iddrisu
(HoD, Educational Foundations)

APPENDIX C

Evans Yaw Annoh
P. O. Box TL 732
Tamale – N/R
9/02/2024

THE DIRECTOR
TAMALE METRO EDUCATION OFFICE
TAMALE – N/R

Dear Sir,

**PERMISSION TO COLLECT INFORMATION (DATA) IN YOUR SCHOOLS FOR AN
MPHIL RESEARCH.**

My name is Evans Yaw Annoh a final year Mphil student in Guidance and Counseling with the University for Development Studies (UDS) with the registration number UDS/MGC/0003/22. As part of the requirements to obtaining my certificate, I am required to conduct a research study and present a composite report thereafter.

My research is on the topic: “ Students' perception of the school guidance programme and it’s implication for counselling patronage among SHSs within Tamale Metropolis. By a simple random sampling technique, I am expected to collect information (data) from four schools within Tamale Metropolis. These schools include:

1. Tamale Girls Senior High
2. Vitting Senior High/Tech School
3. Ghana Senior High School
4. Business Senior High School


I write to seek for your permission to collect information (data) from the above stated schools to help me to undertake my academic research.

I hope my request will meet your kind and usual consideration.

Please find attached an introductory letter from my department for your perusal.

Thank you.

Yours Faithfully



.....
Evans Yaw Annoh

APPENDIX D

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

In case of reply the date and reference number of this letter should be quoted

Our Ref: GES/NR/MEO/E. P/VOL.
Your Ref:



Metropolitan Education Office
P. O. Box 6, E/R
Tamale, Northern Region
Tel: 037-2022090

Date: February 12, 2024

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Email: tmetroedu@gmail.com

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

This is to introduce to you Mr. Evans Yaw Annoh, a final year MPhil Student studying Guidance and Counselling at the department of Educational Foundations Studies at the University For Development Studies (UDS). He requires some information from Senior High Schools to write his thesis titled: "Students Perception of the School guidance programme and its implication for counselling patronage among SHSs within Tamale Metropolis.

Kindly give him the necessary assistance he requires to enable him gather the information he needs for the research.

I count on your usual co-operation.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Moses".

(DOMBAWEL K. MOSES)
DEPUTY DIRECTOR – (HRMD)
for: **METROPOLITAN DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**
TAMALE

THE HEADTEACHERS CONCERN
TAMALE METROPOLIS

HsRP