

# Investigating Awareness of Guidance Services among Students in Selected Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region of Ghana

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## Abstract

Guidance and counseling are interwoven with efforts to advance students' educational discourse in all disciplines and levels. This study investigated students' awareness of guidance services in selected Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The study was guided by two objectives: to determine the level of student's awareness of guidance and counseling services and to examine the nature/scope of guidance and counseling services provided to students in Senior High Schools. Employing the quantitative method and a descriptive research design, 16 counselors or teachers who serve as counselors, 14 headteachers, and 325 students were sampled, while structured questionnaires were used to collect participant data. The results showed that most students in Senior High Schools were unaware of guidance and counseling services. Among other matters, the study recommends that the Ghana Education Service, which supervises guidance and counseling, should charge all school counselors to provide all the guidance services, especially career and vocational guidance services, to students to enable them to make informed choices.

**Keywords:** awareness, nature/scope, guidance services, senior high schools

## Introduction

Guidance and counseling are, consequently, utilized in schools to assist students in developing the highest levels of achievement with respect to academic work and career goals, in addition to improving their ability to deal with personal and social challenges. Guidance and counseling have, therefore, become very important because of the numerous challenges students face in schools. Guidance and counseling are fundamental services in every school and should be acknowledged by the administration (Mutie & Ndambuki, 2003). These challenges are significant causes of worry as they may have a negative effect on students' welfare and impact the entire educational process. Some of these issues or challenges may include poverty in families, peer pressure, teenage pregnancies with early marriages, poor academic performance, and other societal expectations. Even more serious challenges in this area may be child maltreatment, high dropout rates, and violence in schools. All these challenges pose a major threat to the welfare and development of the students and critically need to be addressed.

The education sector has discussed and adopted various strategies to address these issues. Within this context, guidance and counseling services in schools emerged or were highlighted as potential solutions to the issues that children were experiencing (Goh & Tan, 2021). Different people may interpret the terms "guidance and counseling" differently. Kinra (2008)

defines them as an interaction process that brings together the vulnerable needing assistance, the counselee, and the skilled and educated counselor. The aim is to help the counselee learn to deal with himself or herself and the realities of his or her surroundings more successfully.

By definition, guidance is described as the process of assisting each person in discovering and realizing his or her potential for pleasure and social contribution. On the other hand, counseling is primarily defined as a procedure where the counselor helps the counselee analyze information related to a decision, plan, or life change that he needs to make. According to Smith (2019), counseling is a series of one-on-one interactions with a person to help him alter his attitude and behavior. Gorton et al. (2006) observed four significant expectations for helping students improve their academic performances. Among other things, these include:

1. Striving for excellence is an essential expectation in an effective school.
2. Teachers and administrators are expected to perform at a high level.
3. Educators should adopt the belief that all young people are capable of excelling.
4. Staff must improve themselves in part by helping each other through experimenting with different approaches to enable the achievement of academic success. There should also be a safe and orderly environment. For guidance and counseling co-ordinators to effectively perform their role, they should

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be well trained. An institution can be transformed by creating various motivation packages, without compulsion or coercion, but rather by encouraging and promoting counselors' constant growth and development (Owens, 2010).

Today, many students attend school without knowing what they should do in the future and leave without any sense of the kind of occupation or career they should pursue (Hurlock, 2002). Additionally, students tend to lack self-awareness, especially when it comes to those with learning disabilities, more sensitive children, those who are emotionally or behaviourally unstable, and like. Since Ghana's independence, various government policy documents have acknowledged the role of guidance and counseling in the administration and management of students' challenges. This began with the 1976 Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies, which suggested that guidance and counseling be taught using subjects like religious education, social education, and ethics. It is, therefore, impossible to overstate the significance of getting off to a good start. Students are more likely to learn well in a laid-back and welcoming setting.

### Theoretical Framework

The multi-attribute attitude model was explored in this study to illustrate the theoretical connections between the variables. This model is thought to be suitable for the study since it has a connection with the variables. The counseling units in the various schools may do their best to brand the guidance and counseling programs in the school and apply the best theories in helping students make informed career choices. However, if the students' attitude towards all guidance services is poor or bad, promoting the guidance services in those schools would still be a considerable problem. Thus, Looking at students' attitudes in the various Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region of Ghana is essential. Against this backdrop, this study reviewed the multi-attribute model of attitude, which talks about the mind-set of individuals towards something, be it a service or product.

The multi-attribute model was propounded by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1977. The basic tenet of the theory works on the assumption that the attitude of an individual towards a product, service, offering, brand, and other elements is a function of the individual's perception and belief of the key attributes as well as his assessment of the critical attributes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). This implies that a student's attitude towards guidance services in secondary school schools would depend on how the student perceives, believes, and assesses all guidance services in the school.

Schiffman et al. (2013) defined attitude as an expression of feelings that reflect whether a person is favorably or unfavorably predisposed to some objects, such as a brand, a product, or a service. Individuals gradually develop a mental attitude in forming attitudes or opinions toward other people, products, ideas, activities, and services in the environment. In secondary schools, students form attitudes towards guidance services that may be favorable or unfavorable. Attitudes can better be explained by understanding their nature and characteristics. Ojha (2018) described three components of attitude to include.

1. Knowledge or cognitive component is learned from interaction.
2. The feeling and effect component reflects an evaluation of favor or disfavor of the product or service.
3. Behavioral and cognitive components that reflect reaction toward a product or service.

The knowledge component is reflected in students' learned knowledge from their interaction with others and their own experiences. The feeling component is reflected in the student's evaluation and the resultant feeling of favourableness or unfavourableness. And finally, the behavioral component reflects the predisposition to act or patronize the guidance services based on the evaluation. In simple terms, if a student has enough knowledge/awareness about guidance services, attitudes will be formed when they finally want to reaffirm their knowledge base to help them make an informed decision. If the student thinks positively about the guidance services, it helps reaffirm their opinion and makes decision-making simpler and faster. Thus, attitude helps in decision-making (Ojha, 2018).

The multi-attribute attitude model is one of the most researched and commonly used theories in explaining the attitude of individuals and how they patronize and promote a service like guidance services in schools. This theory emphasizes that an individual's perception and belief influence the individual's attitude toward a product or service. The attribute component of the theory refers to the characteristics of the services. It is, therefore, essential to identify the attributes of the guidance services students look for during assessment and evaluation. The belief component of the theory refers to the cognition about that specific object or service. A belief measure assesses the extent to which the students perceive the guidance services as possessing a particular attribute. For example, a student might believe that the guidance service is a decent, strong academic service that offers help to students.

Fishbein et al. (1977) proposed a series of attitude models to include.

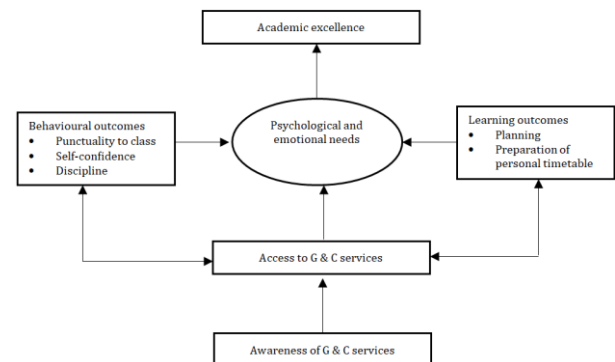
1. The model of attitude toward an object.
2. The model of attitude and behavior
3. The paradigm of reasoned action.

All these models place emphasis on the fact that before any individual patronizes and promotes any brand or service, such as guidance services, he/she assesses the service to find out everything about it to gain knowledge. After assessing and gaining enough knowledge/awareness, their behavior towards the services would be influenced in either a good or bad way. Individuals would now evaluate how the services would benefit them. Some individuals may have a good attitude towards a particular thing, but at the same time, they might not see the need for it or expect any benefit from it. For instance, a student might have a good attitude towards guidance services but might not see any need to seek guidance because they might see it as a waste of time. Thus, counselors must promote it and make it attractive using the push and pull strategies described above. Though the theory might be criticized, its advantages cannot be overemphasized.

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

The Diagram of the Conceptual Framework of the Study



### Empirical Review

#### Awareness of Guidance and Counseling in Senior High Schools

Orewere and Ojochogu (2020) studied the impact of guidance and counseling services on students' job choices in selected secondary schools in Jos Metropolis; they discovered high levels of awareness among students. The descriptive survey research design was used for the investigation. One hundred (100) senior secondary students from two (2) secondary schools in the Jos metropolitan were chosen using the stratified random selection approach as the sample size for the study. A validated questionnaire that was approved by measurement and evaluation specialists was one of the data-gathering tools. "Effect of Guidance and Counseling Services on Students' Career Choice Questionnaire" was the name of the instrument that researchers created. The results demonstrated a considerable

impact of counseling and guidance services on students' career decisions in schools. This was attributable to the schools' strong awareness of counseling and guidance services. According to the findings, it was advised that more guidance and counseling centers be established, the schools hire more licensed counselors, and the government should support advice and counseling by increasing funding.

An evaluation of counseling and guidance services in secondary schools was done by Marandu (2018) in Korogwe Town Council. The study evaluated how counseling and guidance services are provided in secondary schools. Person-centered theory served as the study's foundation. A descriptive survey design and a mixed research methodology were used. Purposive and random selection approaches were used to choose the study's participants. School principals and teacher counselors were chosen intentionally, while classes and schools were chosen randomly. The required information was gathered using surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences tool analyzed the data acquired using frequencies and percentages. The analysis's findings demonstrated that the schools had high awareness of the guidance and counseling programs and that they were readily available. The guidance and counseling services available to them were well-known to the students. However, the service's daily operations were insufficient because there was not enough activity. The study also suggested strategies for overcoming the difficulties, such as providing in-service training for school heads and counselor instructors through seminars and workshops and providing the necessary resources for advice and counseling. Therefore, it was advised that more research be done on providing advice and counseling in schools in diverse circumstances.

The factors impacting students' access to guidance and counseling services in secondary schools in Kenya's central division of Machakos district were also the subject of a study by Muema and Kiilu (2013). The study aimed to investigate the variables affecting students' access to guidance and counseling services offered in Central Division Machakos District secondary schools, both public and private. The study's methodology was a descriptive survey study. The stratified sample technique randomly chose seven public and four private schools. Twenty-three students from each of these schools were chosen at random. The instructors in charge of the guidance and counseling were explicitly chosen from every school. Schedules for interviews and questionnaires were used as data-gathering tools. Four components make up the questionnaires. The general and identifying details of the sampled schools were presented in Section 1. The information on student issues, their opinions of guidance and counseling, and their suggestions were found in sections two onward. It was trimmed and condensed into categories and tables to give the purpose of the information. According to the data analysis findings, most respondents (91%) knew that guidance and counseling services existed. This suggested that most students were aware of the availability of guidance and counseling services at their schools. School guidance and counseling service providers were also recommended to embrace a less onerous curricular workload. This was done to lessen the counselors' stress due to the public's increased awareness.

On the contrary, Nweze and Okolie (2014) found low levels of awareness in secondary schools. They studied "Issues and Roles in Students' Career Decision Making: Effective Guidance and Counseling Programmes in Secondary Schools." The study's objectives included examining secondary school guidance and counseling programs and identifying problems and program contributions to students' career decision-making. Senior school students from ten chosen secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria, were included in the study, which used an ex-post facto descriptive survey approach. The study's sample consisted of 300 respondents—30 headteachers and 27 pupils from each of the ten chosen schools, for a total of 270 respondents—who were chosen using simple random selection techniques. The Senior Secondary School Students Questionnaire and Secondary School Teacher Counsellors Questionnaire were the two separate questionnaires

created for the study's data collection. Through the assistance of research assistants, 270 copies of questionnaires were sent to students; 180 copies were correctly completed and returned, yielding a 90% return rate.

Additionally, 30 questionnaires were distributed to a group of teachers, all completing and returning them. The data analysis findings showed that 77.22% of the population demonstrated that guidance and counseling services to aid students in making career decisions in their institutions are underutilized or completely unheard of. The study found that the various schools' teacher counselors lacked adequate resources.

In their study on guidance and counseling services in Bangladeshi schools, Hossain and Faisal (2013) also discovered low awareness. This exploratory study aimed to provide an overview of the guidance and counseling services offered in Bangladeshi schools. The research was qualitative. The study collected data from all types of schools available in Bangladesh to gain insights into the nature of the current situation of counseling services in schools. As a consequence, ten school categories were chosen. According to the accessibility and availability of the school administrator, teachers, and students for thorough interviews, two schools from each category were specifically chosen. A semi-structured interview guide served as the primary tool for data gathering. The interviews were planned to gather information from children, instructors, and school administrators. School records, including student profiles, curriculum, syllabus, event records, and administrative and academic service records, were also inspected to thoroughly grasp the counseling services offered in reputable schools. The findings suggested that there was no knowledge of counseling and guidance in the schools. The absence of official guidance and counseling programs brought this on. Although certain services were offered to students, they were not well-planned, organized, or comprehensive. Additionally, these impromptu and disorganized services were not primarily meant for counseling and guidance reasons.

Additionally, schools lacked specially qualified staff who were entirely in charge of providing these services. It was determined that it was clear that the guidance and counseling situation in schools was insufficient to meet emerging needs and that an improvement was consequently required. The studies reviewed indicated inconsistencies in the level of awareness students had in secondary schools. As some schools had higher levels of awareness, some schools also showed a lack of or zero awareness levels. However, these differences could be attributed to different data collection instruments and research or study approaches employed. Some employed qualitative studies with few participants, which might not reflect the situation in every context.

### ***Guidance and Counseling Services Offered in Senior High Schools***

A qualitative study on psychological counseling and guiding services in early childhood education (Gencoglu, 2019). The study aimed to ascertain counselors' opinions about psychological counseling and guidance services provided by early childhood education facilities. A qualitative phenomenological research design was used in the investigation. Seventy-three guidance teachers who taught in preschools or nursery classes in primary schools were used as the study's sample. Guidance teachers were interviewed face-to-face using semi-structured interview forms to learn more about their opinions of the counseling and guidance services provided in the schools. The content analysis method was used to analyze the interview data. The study of the data revealed that the schools provided psychological counseling and guidance services such as parental education, preventiveness, and developmental advice. A separate project was suggested to be launched to renovate psychological counseling and guidance services in early childhood education, with a particular emphasis placed on projects about families.

Chireshe (2017) also did a study titled "Career Advisors' Reflections; Career Guidance and Counseling Provisions at a South African University." The study aimed to evaluate the career advisers' perceptions of the university's career guidance and counseling services at a South African university. Three

career counselors participated in an interview as part of the study's qualitative methodology. The data was gathered using a detailed interview schedule. The information covered their services, the resources at their disposal, the people they worked with, and the difficulties they encountered. The audio data were transcribed and subjected to a thematic analysis following the interviews. Based on the meaning they communicated, responses were categorized. The study of the data showed that the primary guidance and counseling services provided included organizing orientation for new students, leading seminars for students on career advice, organizing graduate deployment programs, and occasionally visiting high schools to provide career help. It was suggested that well-equipped guidance and counseling centers be established within the schools. Again, additional guidance and counseling workers should be hired to accommodate the large student population in the schools. However, this study could not be generalizable because the sample size might be too small to draw a broad generalization for every circumstance.

A study on school counselors' opinions of the psychological counseling and guidance services they provide at their schools was undertaken in Turkey by Yüksel-Şahin (2016). This study aimed to evaluate the psychological counseling and guidance (PCG) services provided by school counselors in terms of academic, professional, personal, and social aspects. The study also assessed the school counselors' recommendations for the circumstances needed to improve the PCG practices in their respective schools. The study employed dominant status concurrent design within the in-phase mixed design as a mixed research design category. The study sample consisted of 49 school counselors serving at elementary and secondary schools in Istanbul. Assessment forms for the school's psychological advice and counseling service and a personal information form were used as data collection tools. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were performed on the data that was gathered. The examination of the data revealed that personal PCG services were provided by school counselors at a higher level than academic and vocational PCG services, according to the results. It was suggested that because these services are so crucial to schools, teachers and counselors should receive enough in-service training to give them the necessary knowledge.

Additionally, Eliamani et al. (2014) did a study on the impact of students' access to guidance and counseling services on their academic lives and career decisions. The study investigated the effects of secondary school students' access to guidance and counseling services on their school experiences, study habits, and career decisions. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, along with the descriptive and correlation designs, were used in this study. A self-administered questionnaire and an interviewing guide were used as data collection tools. Sixteen administrators, teachers who were specifically involved in guidance and counseling services, and 152 students made up the sample. The outcomes showed that the services provided at the chosen schools covered academic, health, moral, and spiritual issues. They went on to say that although some schools did not have qualified counselors, the services provided were helpful in influencing students' study habits and forming their attitudes about academics and job options. The researchers concluded that secondary schools needed to prioritize guidance and counseling services because they impacted how students felt about their academic and career choices.

The literature analysis revealed that some institutions provide guidance and counseling services, with career and vocational counseling taking center stage. Different services offered in different schools might imply that schools prioritize and give out the services according to the needs of the students. It was noted that some of the sample sizes used were too small and thus might lack reliability and generalizability.

### Statement of the Problem

The Ghana Education Service's Guidance and Counseling Unit aims to offer a thorough, preventive, and developmental guidance and counseling program, which is essential for all

students to attain excellence. All students will be able to develop the academic, social, personal, and career skills necessary to prepare them for pre-tertiary and higher education, employment, and preparation to function as productive citizens and lifelong learners through guidance and counseling (Nkrumah, 2020). However, there seems to be a gap between what the goal of education expects and guidance and counseling seeks to achieve and what is achieved out there. The situation in the Senior High Schools and the problems students appear to have with choosing a program and a career prove that guidance and counseling are not achieving the target goal. This, therefore, calls for an investigation to identify the challenges and ways to promote guidance and counseling in Senior High Schools.

Working as teachers in the Upper East Region, the researchers observed that many Senior High School students struggle with personal adjustment issues like feelings of insecurity, poor academic performance, peer pressure, loneliness, and conflicts with peers, teachers, and parents, as well as stress issues that cause tension and anxiety in them. However, these students would never seek help from any professional, as Appiah (2013) argued, who opines that a student may never use guidance and counseling services during their time in school.

Some research studies explored schools' benefits and challenges regarding guidance and counseling (Ocansey, 2012; Ofori, 2013). The findings in these studies highlighted some benefits and challenges. However, these challenges were reported from the point of view of the school administration without finding out the perspectives of the counselors/teachers and students. On the contrary, this study sought to discover the awareness and nature of guidance and counseling services in Senior High Schools. Again, this study focused on the views of headteachers, counselors, and students in senior high schools in the Upper East Region of Ghana.

### Objectives

The study sought to:

1. Find out the level of students' awareness of guidance and counseling services in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region.
2. Find out about the guidance and counseling services that are provided in senior high schools in the Upper East Region.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent are students aware of their schools' guidance and counseling services?
2. What guidance and counseling services are provided in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region?

### Methodology

#### Method

The quantitative descriptive research design was used for this investigation. The study was suited for a descriptive survey methodology since it helps in identifying variables linked to specific events, results, situations, or types of behaviors (Labaree, 2009) in order to determine the events, the results, and the situation or state of counseling services in Senior High Schools in Upper East Region. More specifically, the descriptive survey design was chosen because it helps to collect rich data in large quantities and has the advantage of having a high level of general competence in representing a significant section of the population. Descriptive surveys can produce incorrect data because of the weak control over the relatively large sample size and the participants' potential for dishonesty. As a result, written responses may not accurately reflect participants' real behavior (Punch, 2013). However, steps were taken to lessen reactivity, including using straightforward questionnaires. Obtaining information from the perspectives of students, teachers, headteachers, and counselors was one way to ensure accuracy.

### Population, Sampling Method, and Sample

In this study, the target population was all students, teachers, and counselors, whilst the accessible population was students, teachers, and counselors in selected Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The region had 37 public senior high schools with a total population of 52,378 students, comprised of 26,927 boys and 25,451 girls with thirteen (13) trained Guidance and Counseling co-ordinators. Fourteen (14) senior high school headteachers were also included in the study out of 37 headteachers.

Krejcie and Morgan's Sample Table was used to select the number of schools to be used and the number of participants. According to Krejcie and Morgan's table, if you have a population of 75,000, you take a sample of 382, and in this study, the total population of students is 52,378 and 37 headteachers and 37 counselors or teachers providing counseling, making a total population of 52,452. A sample size 355 was chosen for this study since it falls within the range per Krejcie and Morgan's table. Therefore, 16 public Senior High Schools were selected out of a total number of 37 schools. In all, sixteen (16) Guidance and

Counseling teachers, fourteen (14) headteachers, and three hundred and twenty-five (325) students formed the sample size for the study. The schools were proportionately chosen using stratified random sampling. The individual students from each school were randomly chosen using the lottery technique. Headteachers and counselors from the selected schools were purposively included in the study.

**Table 1**  
Sample Distribution for Counsellors, Headteachers, and Students

Respondents' category	Population	Sample
Headteachers	37	14
Counselors	37	16
Students	52,378	325
Total	52,452	355

Note. Data collected by the author in 2024.

**Table 2**  
Enrolment Figures of Sample Schools

Name of school	No of boys	No of girls	Total	No of sample
Bawku SHS	1224	1218	2442	28
Buawku SHS Technical	900	937	1837	21
Zebilla STS/Technical	1123	1014	2137	24
Binduri SHS	230	268	498	6
Bongo SHS	705	880	1585	18
Zamse SHS	1433	936	2369	27
Bolga Girls SHS	0	3080	3080	35
Fumbisi SHS	892	614	1506	17
Garu SHS	505	409	914	10
Chiana SHS	767	625	1392	16
Bolgatanga SHS	1561	1242	2803	32
Notre Dame SHS	481	0	481	5
Navrongo SHS	1271	763	2034	23
Pusiga SHS	539	184	723	8
Samdema SHS	1323	1106	2629	30
Zuarungu SHS	954	1224	2178	25
Total	13,908	14,500	28,408	325

Note. Data collected by the author in 2024.

### Tool

In this study, a questionnaire was designed and adapted to solicit facts on the awareness and scope of guidance services rendered in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region. There were different sets of questionnaires for the various groups of participants. This questionnaire had two (2) sections. The first section solicited socio-demographic information from the students, whereas section B sought information on whether the students were aware of school guidance services. This section had items on all guidance services for participants to rate their awareness of each service (Aware or Not Aware). The Teachers/Counsellors' Questionnaire contained sections A and B. Items on demographic data were included in Section A. Section B had items that sought responses on the nature of guidance and counseling services provided in the schools. Section B had nine items rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (4). By assigning each response a point value from 1 to 4 based on the number of responses. In this case, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 =

*agree*, and 4 = *strongly agree*. A results table was created and mode and mean were found. The mode tells you the most common response to each statement, while the mean gives the overall average response. Headmasters' questionnaire had sections A and B. The demographic data for headmasters was in Section A. Information was gathered in Section B about the nature of guidance and counseling services provided in the school.

### Pilot Testing of Instruments

It is crucial to re-establish validity and reliability once an instrument has been altered or merged with other instruments in a study, according to Creswell (2008), because the initial validity and reliability may be adversely affected. The questionnaires were modified for this study; therefore, they underwent a pilot test to determine their validity in the context of the research topic. As a result, before gathering the study's primary data, the questionnaires were pilot-tested. This was done to make sure the research tools were valid and reliable.

The Senior High Schools were picked because they shared characteristics with the study's identified schools. Five Senior High Schools participated in the questionnaire testing. This allowed the researchers to make clear any unclear issues and identify any obstacles that might arise during the actual activity and how to overcome them. The researchers could assess the instrument's dependability thanks to data from the pilot test. The questionnaire was examined after pilot testing to determine its reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha coefficient reliability). A Cronbach alpha score of .70 or higher is regarded as dependable, according to Nunnally (1970), who uses the Cronbach alpha to gauge internal consistency. After the pilot test, awareness items for students had a Cronbach alpha of .81 and teachers'/counsellors' questionnaire had Cronbach alpha of .92 for section B (nature questionnaire), The headteacher's

questionnaire had a Cronbach alpha of .85 for section B (nature). Overall, good internal consistencies were predicted by the Cronbach alphas.

**Results**

Research question 1: To what extent are students aware of school guidance and counseling services?

This research question explored the awareness of senior high school students about guidance and counseling in their schools. Data on the question "Are students aware of guidance services in the school?" was collected using the above questionnaire and analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations. Table 3 shows awareness of guidance services in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region of Ghana.

**Table 3**  
*Awareness of Guidance Services in Senior High Schools*

Guidance service	Aware <i>f</i> (%)	Not aware <i>f</i> (%)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Orientation service	2 (0.6)	30 (9.2)	16.0	0.01
Information service	4 (1.2)	35 (10.76)	19.5	0.01
Consultation service	12 (3.0)	58 (17.8)	35	0.02
Placement service	11 (3.3)	36 (11.0)	23.5	0.01
Referral service	14 (4.3)	55 (16.9)	34.5	0.02
Follow-up service	19 (5.8)	34 (10.4)	26.5	0.01
Appraisal service	20 (6.1)	25 (7.6)	22.5	0.01
Evaluation service	21 (6.4)	27 (8.3)	24	0.01
Counseling service	2 (0.6)	25 (7.6)	13.5	0.01

*Note.* Data collected by the author in 2024.

Table 3 shows that most of the participants in the guidance services provided in the school. As many as 58 respondents, representing 17.8% of respondents (*M* = 35, *SD* = .02), indicated that they were not aware of consultation services in the school. This was followed by 55 respondents, representing 16.9% (*M* = 34.5, *SD* = .02), who indicated that they were unaware of referral services in their school. In all, as shown in Table 3, the majority of the students indicated their unawareness of orientation service, information service, placement service, follow-up service, appraisal service, evaluation service, and counseling service being provided for them in the school. This implies that majority of the

students were not aware of the presence of guidance services in the Senior High Schools. A few have heard about these services in senior high schools, as indicated in Table 3.

Research question 2: What guidance and counseling services are provided in Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region?

Second research question aimed to find out the types of guidance and counseling services provided in senior high schools. Data on this question were collected using the counselor's and headteachers' questionnaire and analyzed using bar charts. Figure 2 shows the analysis of the responses to the guidance and counseling services provided in the senior high schools.

**Figure 2**  
*Guidance and Counseling Services Mostly Practiced in Schools*

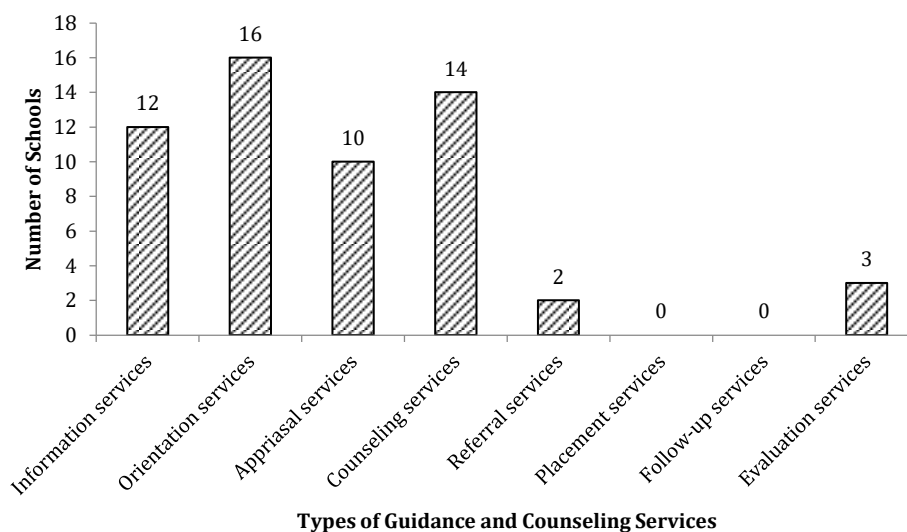


Figure 2 shows that in the sixteen Senior High Schools, orientation service was mostly provided to students, followed by counseling service and information service. In all sixteen (16) Senior High Schools, there was no trace of placement services and follow-up services provided to students. However, the participants indicated that few referral and evaluation services were provided to students in schools. This implies that all the sixteen Senior High Schools provided orientation services to students. Placement and follow-up services were not being provided in any school.

## Discussion

### Students' Awareness of Guidance Services in the Senior High Schools

According to the study's findings, as many as 58 respondents, representing 17.8% of respondents ( $M = 35, SD = .02$ ), indicated that they were unaware of consultation services, including other guidance services in the school. Thus, most students were unaware that Guidance services were provided in their schools. This result is congruent with research by Hossain and Faisal (2013) and Nweze and Okolie (2014), who also discovered that there was little to no awareness of guidance and counseling in the schools. However, the findings of Orewere and Ojochogu (2020), Marandu (2018), and Muema and Kiilu (2013) are at odds with the conclusions of this study. These studies found high levels of awareness of guidance and counseling in the schools compared to the results of this study, where most students were unaware that their schools provided guidance services for students. The reasons for these disparities could be the kind of sensitization that is given in these different contexts. The implications of the lack of awareness of guidance and counseling in schools are that students would not know whom or where to go when they have personal or academic problems. Again, they may try to solve problems independently or by seeking advice from their friends and peers who might be unable to give them professional advice. This would leave the students at a crossroads, not knowing what to do and thus leading to depression, stress, and other psychological distresses. As reported by Nweze and Okolie (2014) and Hossain and Faisal (2013), the reasons for little or no awareness could probably be attributed to the fact that there was a lack of formal programs for guidance and counseling in the schools.

### Guidance Services Provided in Senior High Schools

According to this study, orientation, counseling, information, and appraisal services were the most frequently provided in schools. The study findings confirmed the results of Gencoglu et al. (2019), who also discovered that counseling services were one of the services supplied in the schools. The findings are further reinforced by Chireshe (2017), who discovered that orientation services are one of the services provided in schools. However, Chireshe (2017) again found career and vocational as well as guidance and counseling, which are services that are not offered in the schools in this study. Hossain and Faisal (2013) pointed out that these services were somehow disorganized, planned, or holistic.

On the contrary, Eliamani et al. (2014) found that the services included the schools, which covered academic, health, moral, and spiritual matters, but this study was silent. These differences in the findings may exist because these studies were conducted in different contexts with different instruments. Some of these services are not offered in schools because, as indicated by Chireshe (2017), the schools lacked professionally trained counselors who were trained to offer all services. Thus, the schools would have to rely on teachers who are not trained counselors. Orientation and information services were predominant because when fresh students arrive in the schools, some form of orientation and information is generally given to them. These services help the students to adapt quickly to their new environment. However, the absence of services such as vocational and career guidance and counseling in the schools means that these students would write exams and leave the school without any clear direction regarding the kind of career or job that suits them.

## Key Findings

1. Most students were unaware that guidance services were available in their schools, according to the research on students' knowledge of these services.
2. The guidance and counseling services provided to school students revealed that orientation, counseling, and information services were the most common.

## Implication for Counseling

The findings of the study have implications for the practice of counseling. In the first place, academic counseling activities should be made available to all students in senior high schools; this will help students select the right courses, establish academic objectives, and hone their study techniques. The services should help students perform better in school and have a better chance of getting into tertiary institutions.

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

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

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

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

## Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate awareness of guidance services among students in the Senior High Schools in the Upper East Region. From the study findings, it can be concluded that most of the students in the Senior High Schools were unaware of the provision of guidance services.

It can be concluded from the findings that the most common guidance service provided to students across all the selected schools was orientation service due to the yearly admission of fresh students, followed by counseling service and information service. The rest of the services were either not being provided to students or their provision was insignificant in all the Senior High Schools that were considered in the study.

## Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. In collaboration with headteachers, counselors should work assiduously to conscientious and enlighten students and make them aware of the existence and essence of guidance and counseling in schools. It will increase the student's awareness and encourage them to seek help from counselors. Awareness programs, such as guidance and counseling week celebrations and other programs, can be employed to promote guidance and counseling in the schools. During orientation, flyers and brochures that list the activities and other information about guidance and counseling can be given out to students to remind them of the presence of guidance and counseling in the schools.
2. The Ghana Psychology Council, which supervises guidance and counseling, should charge all school counselors to ensure that every school offers all services, especially career and vocation guidance and counseling services. This recommendation is made because less than half of the students reported benefiting from selecting the appropriate courses that meet their needs. I therefore recommend that, if necessary, vocational guidance be a compulsory service for

all students, especially final-year students. The Ghana Education Service and the Ministry of Education could do this. This will help ensure a smooth transition from the senior high schools to the tertiary institutions, thereby helping set the students on the right path.

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