ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	----------	Association of African Universities
CET	----------	Cognitive Evaluation Theory
DFID	----------	Department of International Development
ESRC	----------	Economic and Social Research Council
GETFUND	----------	Ghana Education Trust Fund
KNUST	----------	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
MSE	----------	Matured Students' Examinations
OECD	----------	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIT	----------	Organismic Integration Theory
PRC	----------	Professional Regulation Commission
SFEP	----------	Summer Fireside Experience Program
SSHA	----------	Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes
TEP	----------	Tertiary Education Project
UCC	----------	University of Cape Coast
UEW	----------	University of Education Winneba
UG	----------	University of Ghana
UPS	----------	University of Professional Studies
WASSCE	----------	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Many students in universities today are confronted with personal concerns that hinder their academic performance (Morrison, Brand & Cilliers, 2006). Institutions are also under pressure to deliver worthwhile services in support of students' efforts towards their academic goal achievement (Morrison, Brand & Cilliers, 2006). Stakeholders in education have accordingly been perturbed by students' current low attainment, especially at the university level (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009), given the immense individual and national effects of higher education in African countries in particular. Several factors, however, justify the rather high attrition rates among higher education students lately (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). The recent poor performance trend of university students instigated the academic counselling service in several institutions, including those in Ghana. The purpose of the facility was to relieve students of their personal hindrances to commendable performance in higher education (Essuman, 1999; Mishra, 2005). The facility stemmed from the contention that with less personal concerns students would gain better concentration for improved academic attainment (Das & Ghosh, 2011; Asante Somuah, Dankyi & Dankyi, 2014). Significant resource support regarding key students' academic concerns was recorded as essential to stem the poor attainment trend among distance learners in Ghana (Asante Somuah et al., 2014). Accordingly, the counselling service was established as early as 1976, via a Ghana Education Service (GES) circular in Ghanaian institutions in particular to augment students' academic performance (Essuman, 1999; Hunter & White, 2004). Hunter and White (2004) report that the student advising facility is a key support to a fruitful college experience.

Overall, university students report a host of experiences with the academic counselling facilities they enjoy on their various campuses (Campbell & Nutt, 2008; Magolda & King, 2008). Campbell and Nutt (2008) opine that academic advising is the key to successful university education. The essence of the service is, however, justified by several factors, following Olayinka's (2001) assertion that high academic attainment is vital to the

acquisition of certification for worthwhile employment and to secure admission for further education. These two key motives urge university students to seek high academic achievement in their endeavours. Cox, Zhang, Johnson and Bender, (2007) for that matter consider it essential to improve students' academic performance, as young people are confronted with a more challenging adult life and more especially, an increasingly competitive job market that requires advanced learning skills.

In Ghana, academic counselling operates as part of school guidance services (Taylor & Buku, 2006). Taylor and Buku (2006) stress the value of counselling as the central focus of the entire school guidance programme. Counselling primarily aims at redressing students' personal concerns to facilitate their enhanced academic performance (Capuzzi & Gross, 2005; McLeod, 2003). Capuzzi and Gross (2005) equally identify counselling as a critical support for new college entrants. The argument that students generally perform poorly at school due to poor study attitudes, wrong orientations from home and society is factual (Essuman, 2007). Counselling services tremendously affect both favourable and poor study habits (Essuman, 2007). Turner and Berry, (2000) also stress the need to redirect institutional counselling towards students' personal problems, as a means to augment their academic attainment. The authors opine that students' personal concerns, rather than their academics remain the essential determinants of their college attrition, hence their suggestion for counselling services to change focus (Turner & Berry, 2000). This brings the quality of counselling services in higher education into disrepute. Given this situation, Douglas, Douglas and Barnes, (2006) contend that as the direct recipients of university services, students are the best predictors of the quality of available university services. This aligned with the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) establishment of the National Student Survey, to solicit students' opinions on the various aspects of teaching, assessment and support services provided by their universities. Students' experiences with the academic counselling service consequently highlights the benefits or shortcomings of the counselling facility, and further underscore the quality of rendered service. The current study thus focused on students' experiences with the academic counselling service in three Ghanaian public universities. The research was based on the premise that students' access to and use of effective academic counselling

services, yields various influences on their study behaviours and attainment as a whole (Hale, Graham & Johnson, 2009; Campbell & Nutt, 2008).

1.2 Background to the Study

1.2.1 The general significance of higher education

The value of every educational venture lies in its ability to meet the social, political and economic needs of the individual and his society (Johnson & Hirt, 2011). Society benefits markedly from the training of its human resource (Johnson & Hirt, 2011). This underscores the key benefits of education (O'Sullivan, et al., 2000), that includes the holistic development of the individual (Harris, 2001; Johnson et al., 2000). Despite the immediate informative focus of university education, higher education also facilitates the socio-cultural development of the individual (Ostrove & Long, 2007), where students' deep sense of belonging, and the college social class influence, efficiently thrusts their progress into valuable social beings (Ostrove & Long, 2007). Students' development of self-management skills (Wood & Oliver, 2004) and sharper thinking capacities from college training also endorse the valuable effects of higher education (the Times Higher Education, 2009). Similarly, Pacific learners testified to the invaluable socio-cultural and academic paybacks they obtained from their college experience (Chu et al., 2013). The combined influences of institutional, personal and relational factors immensely contributed to their academic and social progression (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013). By stressing the socio-economic rewards of university education, Yigitcanlar et al., (2008) also confirmed the importance of higher education. Knowledge-based institutions notably stimulate urban development, with the Melbourne example typifying the direct institutional influences on culture, novelty, science and national policy to facilitate development (Yigitcanlar et al., 2008). Constructing knowledge-based institutions, on the other hand, remains a challenging task as all stakeholders have a critical role to play in achieving this valuable goal (Salmi, 2003).

In Africa and Ghana for that matter, where trained, knowledgeable and competent people are needed to propel national development (Castells, 2002; Sulemana et al., 2014) successful university education is a basic life necessity (Blundell, Dearden, Meghir &

Sianesi, 1999). The fact that higher education in particular augments national productivity (Baum & Payea, 2005) endorses the facility as the core of nation building (Addo, 2010). This emphasizes the role of universities as major avenues for knowledge creation, knowledge transfer and experience (Altbach, 2005).

Yet commendable performance is essential, not only to successful university education that also stirs the realization of the numerous associated national benefits (Marginson, 2006), but also to the direct advancement of the individual student (Blundell et al., 1999). Undeniably, academic success in higher education assures university graduates of well-paid future employment, irrespective of their astute research skills (Marginson, 2006). Rewarding future employment also promotes a satisfying life (Singh & Thukral, 2010; Calaguas, 2012) that in turn attracts a high social regard and accordingly, motivates the modern-day youth to strive for higher academic excellence. Blundell et al., (1999) also report the national economic benefits of higher education. In effect, the remarkable socio-economic returns of fulfilling university education in Africa, lately endorses the import of academic and psychological support services among higher education students (Eisenberg, Golberstein & Gollust, 2007).

A key reason for the recent emphasis on assistive services in higher education is the vulnerability of international students to psychological problems (Sakorako, 2000). According to Lacina, (2002) higher education institutions could seriously control the high attrition rates of international students via the improvement of students' support services on campuses. Invariably, students' mental and emotional health directly affects their educational outcomes (Eisenberg et al., 2007), thereby rendering stress and depression-related factors as vital factors to students' emotional intelligence development (Ciarrochi et al., 2002). It is thus on record that emotionally weak and unbalanced students easily fall prey to anxiety, desperation and depression that usually degenerates into suicidal tendencies (Ciarrochi et al., 2002). This notwithstanding, emotional intelligence continues to be trivialized where students' academics are concerned (Ciarrochi et al., 2002).

Successful university education, however, does not come on a silver-platter. It requires a consistent record of commendable performance, that culminates in an early programme completion to sanction deeper self-confidence and an overall well-clarified life goal.

Human capital is thus lately reflected in new knowledge, competencies and skills, ultimately realized from attaining higher education (Santiago et al., 2008). Tam (2002) in this regard found students' academic, social and personal experiences in a Hong Kong-based university to promote their holistic development. Likewise Bloom et al., (2006) who opined that higher education increases the technological know-how of a people to promote the growth potentials of African nations (World Bank, 1999; 2002). In this vain, exceptional educational attainment (Nuthanap, 2007), especially at the university level attracts a high social value.

Nevertheless, given the multiplicity of deterrents to high university academic achievement, successful higher education is not easily attainable. Factors like good study skills (Crede & Kuncel, 2008; Robbins et al., 2004) consistent motivation (Singh, Granville & Dika, 2002) and effective time management (Adedeji 2007; Abid 2006) among many others remain essential to efficacious university performance. The profound effects of the mentioned factors strongly demand a resilient attitude on the part of students to promote their performance at the highest level of formal education (Martin 2002). The recent ensuing low performance trends of African university students has accordingly catapulted performance-related issues into central focus among educational stakeholders (Capuzzi & Gross 2005). In essence, the factors are varied and deeply intertwined, thus presenting a quite challenging phenomenon to the patrons (Braxton et al., 2011). A brief synopsis on the development of university education in Africa and Ghana for that matter closely follows.

1.2.2 The history of higher education in Africa

The mid nineteenth century saw the formation and structuring of the modern day university with its special emphasis on scientific studies (Abel & Deitz, 2011). The teaching of science and technology at the university, till date are credited to Thomas Huxley and Wilhelm von Humbodt, of Brtitain and Germany respectively (Abel & Deitz, 2011). Scientific research accordingly became a key feature of the university following this scientific emphasis. Subsequently, the German university was founded based on the principles of the University of Berlin, an institution inspired by Wilhelm von Humbodt in

1810 (Fallon 1980). The University of Berlin essentially thrived on the three constructive principles of unity of research and teaching, freedom of teaching and academic self-governance (Oyeshile & Kenny 2013). These principles later progressed into the central function of universities in those early days to advance knowledge search by critical and original inquiry. To date, these have remain the sole purpose of higher education (Oyeshile & Kenny 2013).

In Africa, the establishment of the Alexandria Museum, Library and the famous Egyptian Al-Azhar in ancient Egypt subsequently established higher education (Mohammedbhai 2008). Indeed, the early missionary infiltration into Africa ushered in western education though the focus was on primary education. In Ghana, the Portuguese are credited with the establishment of the first-ever formal education institution that purposed to win souls for the Catholic faith (Danquah, 1987). It is also recorded that the influx of colonial powers into Africa in the eighteenth century on the other hand slowed down the progress of higher education on the continent (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Belgium for instance was reported to have entirely prohibited the resource in her colonies but Spain and Portugal limited it to the barest minimum. Ogbosu, (2011) and Osinubi, (2003) also cite the unique Nigerian case, where after founding the University College Ibadan in 1948, no further institution saw reality until the opening of the five generation post-independence institutions between 1960-1973. Essentially, the colonial powers' fears of losing grounds to the few educated African natives, placed a severe limitation on the progress of African higher education. In effect, the birth of many African universities came into existence only after the departure of the colonial masters from the shores of Africa (Ogbosu 2011). Among the few famous institutions recorded at the exit of the colonial masters were, the Fourah Bay College of 1827, the University of Cape Town (1829), Liberia College (1862), Makerere University (1922), and finally the University College of the Gold Coast and the University College Ibadan, both established in 1948 (Hayward & Ncaviyana, 2015). To date, France and Britain are the colonial masters in Africa (Teferra & Altbach 2004) who have had the greatest impact following their famous language legacies bequeathed to their colonies. These languages (English and French) still exist as the singular accepted mediums of instruction in many Anglophone and Francophone countries (Ekeh, 1975).

The 1960s and 1970s saw the above-mentioned institutions at their peak, following the heavy governmental support they enjoyed during the period. This glorious age was however short-lived, when the cessation of donor support at the mid-1970s halted the further development of African higher education (Mohammedbhai, 2008). The World Bank's emphasis shift from 'education for all', with special emphasis on primary schooling for example halted the growth of the facility in Africa (Hayward & Ncayivana, 2015, p. 175). During the early twenty-first century when donor funding was restored, higher education regained impetus in Africa and subsequently assumed the position of primary human capital development and technological advancement (Bloom et al., 2005). The resource then came to be recognized as the key promoter of democratic participation and national development (the World Bank, 2002), a trend that amplified the demand for higher education into incredible extents. The ensuing high demand catapulted admission rates to materialize in the 'massification' of African higher education (Mohammedbhai, 2008) the demand placed a heavy strain on the rather limited institutional resources to highlight a problematic situation for institutional leaders. Over-challenged governments quickly adopted the single escape route – privatization to remedy the menace (Heller & Rogers, 2006; Johnson, 2004). Privatization could not however remedy the situation as expected, given its high reliance on consistent monitoring to maintain high standards (Amenyah, 2009).

To date both public and private higher education institutions all over Africa are mostly unable to meet their yearly admission demand owing to limited classroom spaces. Yet with an estimated number of three hundred universities (Teferra & Altbach, 2004), Africa still remains the least endowed in terms of higher education institutions and enrollment worldwide (Task Force on Higher Education & Society, 2000; Mohammedbhai, 2008). Nigeria today reportedly possesses the largest number of universities in Africa (Sabo, 2005); comprising a total of twenty-seven federal owned and thirty-four state owned universities (Olugbenga, 2010). Countries like the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Seychelles in fact, record no university while the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia

and Angola also lost the few they owned to political upheavals (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). The university system of education in place in Nigeria at present is described as the most comprehensive in Africa (Sabo, 2005).

The name “university” was derived from the Latin phrase meaning “community of teachers and scholars” (Ekong, 2013, p. 55). The name generally aligns with the academic mission of higher education institutions. Universities have the core mandate to train and equip young people with academic and social skills that suit the demands of the nation’s labour market (Eggins, 2014; the OECD Thematic Review Report, 2008). Olugbenga (2010) concurs by describing a university as the “…. place where skilled manpower of various capacities are trained and also an avenue to develop human capital needed to sustain the economy” (p. 16). The perfect agreement between the two primarily aimed at equipping the university graduate for a more worthwhile socio-economic future. This endorses universities as “a universe of knowledge” and “a market place” for training in insightful living and the advancement of society (Ekong, 2013, p. 55). The purpose of establishing universities thus justifies the call for undergraduate programmes to be more responsive to the present needs of society (Altbach & Peterson, 1999).

1.2.3 The academic situation in African Universities

The need for commendable academic higher education attainment has heightened stakeholder interest in performance-related issues lately. Laudable performance critically promotes students’ retention, successful graduation and selection for employment (Yadav et al., 2011). The recent performance trends of African university students has, however, not been that commendable (Oyegoke et al., 2015; Mohamedbhai, 2014). A considerable number of students in Botswana were for instance reported to write the supplementary examinations every semester (Oyegoke et al, 2015) while an equally low academic turnout was reported in South African higher education (Letseka & Maile, 2008). The authors described the fifteen percent poor graduation rate among South African higher education students as one of the world’s lowest at the time (Department of Education in 2001). Similar concerns were raised over high attrition rates among first year university students during the post-apartheid period (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). In May

2005, the Minister of Education confirmed the poor performance trend by announcing an over fifty percent attrition rate among South African university admissions after their first year (Department of Education, 2005).

Moreover, Douglas (2013); Gabara, (2010), MacGregor, (2012) and Philander, (2008) attributed the lack of skilled general and technologically advanced scientists and engineers in South Africa to students' weak performance in science (Department of Science and Technology, 2012). Students' low performance in South Africa was also later confirmed by the country's fifty- second position, out of one-hundred and forty-four countries according to the World Economic Forum (2012-2013). The country reportedly assumed an even much lower position of eighty-fourth out of the same one-hundred and forty-four countries when emphasis was placed on higher education.

Similarly, in a news item on a University World News platform Mohamedbhai (2014) lamented the poor quality of higher education graduates in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. He further flagged the low performance of about sixty-three percent of these graduates to perform inadequately at their various employment position, according to their employers. This trend was feared to be much more of a general problem in Africa. The former secretary-general of the Association of African Universities, also a one-time chancellor of the University of Mauritius, identified the recent poor academic performance of African university students as a major factor in the increasing unemployment rates among university graduates (Pauw, Oosthuizen & Van Der Westhuizen, 2008). Students' wrong course choice in recent times and their poor use of guidance services has also culminated in this high unemployment rate in Africa (Pauw et al., 2008).

In 2012 for instance, Mohamedbhai (2014) also noted the Kenyan Legal Council's rejection of several graduate applications to practice law due to poor curricular, lack of qualified lecturers and the shortage of appropriate facilities in several universities in the nation at the time. Many employed graduates' work efforts at the time were found to be relatively appalling while quite a number of them lacked confidence in their capabilities. The graduates could not entirely be blamed for their handicaps given the poor training

they received at university. To crown it all, literature stressed the key role low performance and poor quality of African university graduates played in prompting the general conference of the Association of African Universities (AAU) held in Gabon in May 2013. The conference essentially aimed at examining the disturbing non-employability trend of African graduates at the time.

In another development, DeAngelo, Franke, Hurtado, Pryor and Tran (2011) presented an equally adverse image of African American graduate performance trends in four-year degree institutions worldwide. The report stressed the poor degree completion rate among African American students due to low performance and poor institutional quality (DeAngelo et al., 2011). A further comparison of enrolled ethnic groups on the other hand revealed clear performance dichotomies. The authors reported African American students to typically lag behind their colleague Asian American and White students in completing their four-year degree programmes.

Also in South Africa, Beck (2011) reported high student attrition rates at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Above fifty percent of yearly enrolment at the institution usually dropped out due to poor attainment. In the Financial Accounting department for instance many at risk students scored below fifty percent with majority of these failures reporting challenges with lectures, tests and examinations as well as poor lecture preparation (Beck, 2011).

In the same vien, Ngoma, Ntale & Abaho (2017) report high failure and completion rates among university students in Uganda. The report highlights a mis-match between high university enrollment on one hand and low persistence and completion rates among students on the other. Many students are equally reported to delay in graduating from their degree programmes while a few others complete with poor grades (Adelman, 2004). High School performance trends and learning goals predominantly determined university attainment though students' socio-economic factors recorded no performance impact (Ngoma et al., 2017). Lack of critical thinking, innovation, problem-solving, poor work attitudes and over-emphasis on theory without practical work knowledge (Wane and Martin, 2013) among Ugandan university graduates have left their employers deeply perturbed. The trend is not solely limited to education and at university level as Service

Delivery Indicators (SDI) revealed comparatively low performance trends between Ugandan and Kenyan health workers, teachers and students respectively (Wane and Martin, 2013).

Recently, Owusu et al., (2014) have highlighted the high attrition rate of first year students at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. The researchers attributed the trend to adjustment problems and called for a re-direction of institutional orientation and counselling services to remedy the situation (Owusu et al., 2014). Equally low reports of undergraduate performance were recorded at the University of Ghana in the Humanities, Science and Technology departments (Centre for Higher Education Transformation figures, 2000 – 2007). Cuthbert, (2003) and Hampshire, (2009) likewise justified the low academic performance among university students with the recent admission of poorly motivated students.

In like manner, the Nigerian system of education recorded a gradual decline in the performance trends of higher education students (Osiakhiuwu, 2014). The deep concerns expressed by the author were related to the huge amount of funds injected into the system though not benefiting the country in anyway (Osiakhiuwu, 2014). The neglect of teaching and learning resources as well as political turmoil in the country at the time were nonetheless attributed to the then low attainment trend in the country. Further highlighted contributory factors to the low academic attainment among university students also included over-crowded lecture theatres as a result of high student population, institutional financial challenges, students' unrest, poor infrastructure, frequent staff strikes and the use of outmoded curriculum (Ogbogu, 2011).

Indeed, the numerous factors derailing students' performances in recent times urgently heightened the need for improved support services (Brown & Halloway, 2008, Essuman, 2007; Kangai et al., 2011; Ruane et al, 2011). The ensuing urge to step up these services has been more emphasized lately, given reports that only few students actively patronized the available institutional support offered, despite their critical need for the services (Yakunina et al., 2011). In effect, early academic support for both new and continuing

university students has assumed a central position in discussions regarding students' retention and early graduation in recent times (Andrade, 2006; Owens, 2010).

1.2.4 University education in Ghana

Ghana's 1992 constitution stresses equal rights to education for all (Amenya, 2009). Higher education in Ghana comprises universities, colleges, teacher training, agricultural and nursing training colleges, poly techniques and technical education training centers, among a few others (Amedahe, 2014). In Ghana, the pioneer public universities consisted of the erstwhile University College of the Gold Coast (1948), the Kumasi College of Technology (1951) and finally the Cape Coast University College of 1962. All three universities were at the time tax-supported and thus offered free tuition for students (Danquah, 1987). Until the Robbins Report in 1961, university education in Ghana targeted the elite and focused on leadership training (Effah, 2011). The other post-secondary institutions like the Nursing and Teacher training colleges were more open to all and sundry. The marked transformation in the operations of the pioneer institutions are strongly reflected in their modern names that comprise the University of Ghana (UG), the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and finally the University of Cape Coast (UCC) (Effah, 2003; Mahammedbai, 2008; Morley, Leach, Lugg, Lihamba, Opare, Bhalalusesa … & Mwaipopo, 2010). Three additional polytechnic colleges, nursing, teacher and agricultural training colleges were also later set up to serve Ghanaians at the time.

Presently, the country has nine public universities and over sixty private institutions (Adjei, 2016), a number of Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Nursing Training institutions. Efforts to widen participation in higher education resulted in the emergence of multiple university campuses, as found in the cases of the Universities for Development Studies and Education, each of which are currently endowed with five and four satellite campuses respectively. Effah, (2011) identified poor quality, staffing and rivalry with public universities as the key challenges plaguing the privatisation of higher education in Ghana at present.

A number of educational projects have propelled the smooth development of higher education in Ghana lately. Mention can be made of the Economic and Social Research

Council in collaboration with the Department of International Development (ESRC/DFID) (Effah, 2011), the Tertiary Education Project (TEP) of 1993-1998 (Girdwood, 1999) and the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) (Akyeampong, 2010). Enhanced access and funding of higher education were the primary focus of these projects in the country. The ESRC/DFID Project for instance was a three-year facility implemented in a public (the University of Cape Coast) and private institution (the Central University College) each to achieve widened university education, particularly among females (Moley, et al., 2010). TEP on the other hand was instituted to restructure higher education for better quality. The project also facilitated the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the country (Moley, et al., 2010). Overall, the major set-back that confronted the Tertiary Education Project (TEP) was financial. A huge deficit of about sixteen million United States dollars was incurred solely from the students' loan scheme at the end of the project (Girdwood, 1999). This notwithstanding, TEP achieved a remarkable increase of over eighty percent enrollment and the establishment of two more polytechnics in the country.

Meanwhile, the rather high cost of higher education did not deter the government from funding it. Recent government spending on the resource increased tremendously (MOESS, 2007) with the GETFUND heavily sustaining the facility. The fund likewise enhanced higher education participation and immensely augmented the academic and physical facilities within several universities (Acheampong, 2010). Research has also since the beginning of university education remained a central priority (Ogbosu, 2011). The status of knowledge search in Africa and Ghana has generally been appalling, with poor funding emerging as the major challenge confronting thefacility. The non-budgetary allocations made to research in many African institutions have remained the key contributor to the poor research funding in African higher education. In 2000 for instance, Ghana's pioneer public university received a mere one point four million U S dollars to run her ten-year research institutes (Effah, 2003). Likewise the disbursement of a meagre eighty thousand million United States dollars earmarked for research in the Ugandan Makerere University in 1999-2000. This explains the limited research achievements in many African countries today.

Lately however, Akyeampong, (2010) reports a slight improvement of institutional budget allocation though still below ten percent, to the knowledge search process in Ghana. At the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology for instance the allocation of six percent yearly research budget (Effah, 2003) may seem meagre but it still marked an improvement of the initial situation. Better impacts were also recorded with the restriction of academic staff promotion to research and publications (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). To ensure further national development, efforts are however desirable to direct research funds to appropriate national concerns (Akyeampong, 2010).

In Ghana, the first university counselling centre was established in 1976, at the foremost public institution, the University of Ghana (Essuman, 1999 & 2015; Hassane, 2011). The main purpose of the establishment was to relieve students of their numerous socio-personal challenges to make way for their optimised academic performance **(**Asante Somuah et al., 2014; McLeod, 2003**).** The current study thus assumes that students' satisfaction with the university academic counselling service is closely linked to their retention and performance in higher education (Douglas et al., 2006). The focus of the study on students' experiences with the university academic counselling service therefore facilitates the construction of a blueprint for improved service implementation in Ghanaian universities. The academic counselling service essentially facilitates students' successful completion or graduation from university (Adebayo, 2007; Smith, 2012; Kangai, Rupande & Rugonye,2011).

1.2.5 Factors affecting students' academic performance in higher education

The success of higher education students is primarily attributed to cognitive and emotional factors (De Villiers, 2014). However, the role of the emotional factor in determining students' study outcomes is more vast and critical (Botha et al., 2005). This implies an immense influence of human emotions on cognition (Eisenberg et al., 2007**).** De Villiers, (2014) further underscored the role of personal/social integration in predicting students' academic performance. Indeed, the researcher's assertion that the integration of personal-social factors may occasionally manifest as emotional is authentic. The reports thus confirm the potency of human emotions in controlling the ultimate behaviours

of students, regardless of their educational aims. Additional academic-related factors like anxiety (Eysenck, 2001; Yousefi, et al., 2010), inadequate daily study hours, low effort or engagement (Carini et al., 2006), previous schooling, previous performance (McKenzie & Schweitzer 2001; Zeegers 2004; McKenzie & Gow 2004), students' psychological traits (Robbins et al., 2004), poor motivation, learning preferences and time management (Nobis & Hudson, 2006; Ali, 2014) also predict students' study outcomes.

Literature further confirms a host of other significant factors influencing students' performance ability. They include students' intention to study, their personal identity, perceived behavioural control, anticipated regret and motivation (Phillips et al., 2003), achievement goals and study strategies (Fenollar et al., 2007). A combination of integrated elements has also been documented to hamper students' high attainment. While studies by McKenzie and Schweitzer, (2001) and Zeegers (2004) for instance underline students' pre-university performance as a strong determinant of the first-year university attainment, other researchers, (Keup, 2006; Houston et al., 2007; Hofman & Van den Berg, 2000) discovered a much more complex relationship to exist between the factors. Hofman & Van den Berg for example discovered women's studies to generally appreciate more than that of men, though men's longer study hours generally favoured their performance than did females. Betts et al., (2008) likewise confirmed the relationship between students' previous university performance on their subsequent academic outcomes. They also discovered students' prior studies in a specific subject area to present a tremendous advantage in their initial college year of study Betts et al., (2008).

Studies by Quampah, (2010), Darkwa and Eskow, (2002), Daniyal et al., (2011) additionally stressed the effects of socio-economic factors in obstructing students' high academic performance. New students' poor coping skills in adjusting to their novel college environments significantly predicted their attainment (Wood & Oliver, 2004; Ruane et al., 2011) but the scarcity of research on the effects of emotional states like anger, hope, pride and boredom on students' study outcomes was deeply lamented by Pekrun et al., (2002).

The above perturbing scenario confirmed the urgency for institutional support services in higher education students. The benefits of these services are unfathomable (Drake, 2011, Hunter & White, 2004) though deep concerns have been raised regarding difficulties related to students' support services lately. Tait, (2000) for instance stressed the complete neglect of assistive services among higher education students while Davy et al., (2000) underscored the rather slow advancement of the available facilities for students in recent times. In similar vain, Linnenbrink and Pintrich, (2003) and Schunk (2003) emphasized the urgency to modify students' self-appraisals regarding assistive services in order to deeply optimize university students' academic achievement. The afore-mentioned in fact accentuate students' poor orientations towards assistive services despite their favourable effects on students' overall academic behaviours. It is acknowledged that students' increased insight into assistive facilities would tremendously validate the available amenities for enhanced patronage and subsequent benefits.

The benefits of students' support services underscore their essence and goals. The facilities encompass various institutional facilities aimed at refining students' academic behaviours, sharpening their cognition and clarifying their immediate educational objectives to re-align them towards a clearer and more meaningful set of life goals (Sajiene & Tamuliene, 2012). Academic counselling and advising services comprise key student support services that ultimately promote students' educational skills (Trends VI, 2010). The services often function as invaluable prerequisites to students' successful performance (Sajiene & Tamuliene, 2012) by promoting their studies, redressing their socio-personal challenges for their enhanced well-being to facilitate their educational attainment (Trends VI, 2010). Rogers, 2002; Lacovidou, et al., 2009 endorse counselling and advising as the most vital support to higher education students, considering their positive influence in fulfilling students' efforts at teaching and learning in higher education (Shamsdin & Doroudchi, 2012; Crosier et al., 2007).

To this end, Botha et al. (2005), Bourne-Bowie (2000), Kearney, Draper and Baron (2005) and Moore and Constantine (2005) stressed the dire need to adequately address

students' personal-emotional factors, to augment their performance. Morrison et al., (2006), Jones et al., (2008) and the International Association of Counselling Services (2011) likewise recommend the use of counselling to expand students' academic performance. These reports endorse the current upsurge in counselling service outlets on various university campuses (Hamilton-Roberts, 2012; Randall et al., 2015) where students' emotional and psychological concerns are often addressed to promote their studies (Department of Education and Science, 2005).

Moreover, the quality of support services in higher education institutions has not yet been adequately analysed (Morgan 2012; Mazer & Thompson, 2011; LaPadula, 2003, Jones, 2008). As the major recipients of support services, 'student customers' (Douglas, Douglas & Barnes, 2006, p. 251), comprise the key evaluators of the services. Their genuine perceptions and attitudes towards academic counselling (Weller et al., 2012) for instance underscores service quality and its effectiveness (Hale, Graham & Johnson, 2009). Sajiene and Tamuliene (2012) also suggest the employment of academic and non-academic support dimensions to underline the quality of available support services in higher education institutions. In the event that students place a high premium on institutional efforts to augment their social integration into establishments, Owens and Loomes, (2010) observe that students will candidly assess their institutional support services.

1.3 Statement of the problem

High student attrition, dubbed the 'departure puzzle' (Braxton, Shaw Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997) remains a looming problem in several national economies (Zekpe & Leach, 2005). Yorke, (1999) estimates the annual cost of student attrition at a high hundred million pounds to the taxpayer in the United Kingdom. This breaks down into unrealized tuition costs, various fees and alumni contributions (Scott et al., 2004). Yet college dropout rates continue to rise (Tinto, 2002), creating a deep source of concern to many educational stakeholders (Oyegoke et al., 2015). A strong relationship nevertheless exists between college retention and students' attainment (Scott et al., 2004). Recently, about forty-nine

percent of college students in the United States of America reportedly dropped out of college during their initial study year (Tinto, 2002). Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon, (2011) also reported a worldwide estimate of forty-five percent undergraduates, abandoning their study programmes in their initial college year. This high attrition is however not limited to the initial college year as Barefoot, (2004) reported second year students as being equally guilty of the offense.

According to Braxton, (2000), the student departure puzzle has remained a major research focus for over seven consecutive years. Studies identified poor academic attainment as one of the key contributors to college student attrition (Fakude, 2012; Sommer, 2013). Oyegoke et al., (2015) also reported a gradual worldwide decline of students' academic performance (Barefoot, 2004), but Yorke and Longden, (2004) observed that low performance or poor completion rates among higher education students has diverse implications for the individual, the institution and the state as a whole. The contributory factors to high student attrition are also complicated (Crosling et al., 2009). In South Africa, issues related to academic programme offerings and poor teaching methods in higher education institutions are attributable to the poor graduation rates of students (Yorke & Longden, 2004). Wilcox et al., (2006) likewise highlight social integration as central to students' retention, especially in the college first year. Friendly associations and its invaluable emotional support, efficiently make up for new students' priceless family relationships at college, thereby facilitating their adjustment to their novel study environments (Wilcox et al., 2006).

Incidentally, the devastating effects of alarming non-completion rates among higher education students greatly hampers national development (Fakude, 2012). Low private economic rewards including lesser future employment opportunities (Ishitani, 2006), lack of relevant skills to meet labour market needs (Numez & Livanos, 2010) and low technological national advancement (Oyegoke, 2015) are among the few perturbing consequences of high student attrition on nations. In Australia, student attrition remains a key performance indicator of quality education and serves a critical criterion in the allocation of the Commonwealth Government's Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (Crosling et al., 2009). In the 1982/83 academic year for example, the attrition rate

in the United Kingdom was pegged at a high thirteen percent (Thomas, 2002). Thomas, (2002) subsequently reported a worldwide seventy-five percent college-aged youth, deeply pre-occupied with other activities besides education. The alarming rates of low retention in recent times has therefore heightened governments' increased interest in undergraduate retention in the United Kingdom (Department of Education &Skills, 2002).

Meanwhile, literature confirms the influence of academic advising and counselling on students' academic performance (McFaraine, 2013; Muola and Mwania, 2013; Kolog, Sutinen & Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2014). Efforts to optimise students' academic attainment in Ghanaian institutions necessitated the establishment of academic counselling facilities (Essuman, 1999). Counselling has existed in Ghanaian higher education as early as the early 1970s though later in the 1980s at the first and second cycle institutions (Essuman, 1999). Aside meeting the psychological and mental needs of students, counselling is most critical in redressing students' academic problems (Aidoo, 2011; Kevor, 2013). This justifies the fame and popularity of the counselling service among students at various levels of education in Ghana (Ahyia, 2010). Students surprisingly desired counselling at the beginning of the new term and also at various times in each day (Ahyia, 2010). Service insight is equally high among students at the Cape Coast School for the Deaf though they lacked trained counselling professionals to implement quality service (Eshun, 2016). In 2007, the Ministry of Education re-vamped institutional counselling facilities to augment service quality (NERIC Secretariat, 2007).

Yet research on the benefits of academic counselling services in Ghanaian higher education in particular remains marginal (Hussein, 2011), though several studies focus only on the counselling needs of secondary school students (Amedahe & Owusu-Banahene, 2007). The continued emphasis of higher education counsellors on other guidance needs, suggests that academic counselling is irrelevant to the college students' performance. However, despite researchers' emphatic evidence on a strong correlation between faculty engagement and college students' optimized performance (Metzner, 1989; Ullah & Wilson, 2007), students' academic problems continue to abound in Ghanaian higher education, compounding the already high attrition rate. Literature is also

definite on the central position counselling occupies among the other guidance services (Taylor & Buku, 2006; NCGE, 2004) and Universities meanwhile require academic counselling to buttress their training of academically disadvantaged students (Sink & Stroh, 2003; Lapan, 2001).

The current study accordingly explores the experiences of counselled university students to highlight their exclusive meanings, attitudes and perceptions of academic counselling and its perceived impact on students' study outcomes. Once established, the study findings will inform future strategies to improve service quality and further culminate in the development of a formidable counselling model for future service implementation.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore, understand and interpret the unique experiences or life worlds of academically counselled public university students in Ghana. The study additionally highlights the attitudes, perceptions and benefits students obtained from the service on their study outcomes. Universities are mandated to educate students, which implies influencing their academic and social lives. In seeking to explore the rewards of the university academic counselling service on students' studies, the research would capture and interpret the unique individual experiences of counselled students, to expose the hidden meanings, attitudes and perceptions they ascribe to the academic counselling service. Study findings will ultimately generate a new counselling model that aims at better streamlining and fortifying future academic counselling services in Ghanaian universities.

1.5 Research questions

The following research questions therefore guided this study:

1.5.1 Primary research question

1. What are students' experiences with the academic counselling service in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

1.5.2 Secondary research questions

a. What are the attitudes of students towards the academic counselling services offered in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

b. What are the perceptions of students towards the academic counselling service, offered in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

c. What is the impact of the academic counselling service on the study outcomes of students in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

1.6 Delimitation of the study

I consciously confined the study solely to public and southern-based institutions in Ghana in order to focus on a uniquely rich location to meet my research objectives. Physically based in southern Ghana where five out of nine public universities were sited, I found my proximity to the research sites highly advantageous to my easy access and frequent prolonged interactions with study participants for in-depth data collection. This opportunity favoured the key requirements of the qualitative research approach namely, frequent access and prolonged interaction with participants and I was content with the arrangement.

Secondly, my selection of the three public institutions was determined by my need to interact with a well-informed group of participants from diverse backgrounds, to effectively address my study objectives. The typically sophisticated urbanized setting of Accra the capital, combined with the serene Winneba and the semi-urban Cape Coast settings integrated a holistic picture of the university academic counselling service. In this way, I was assured of capturing the exclusive distinctiveness of the counselling facility as perceived by students from each unique perspective. Bryman, (2012), observes that the goal of purposive sampling is to consciously select participants who are relevant to the research questions. I consequently employed the purposive, convenient and snowball sampling techniques to arrive at my sample in this inquiry.

The study additionally engaged only undergraduate counselled students in the selected institutions and further limited the research scope to students' experiences with the academic counselling service. Finally, the purpose of this study was not to evaluate the existing counselling service in Ghanaian universities per se but to explore students' attitudes, perceptions and the effect of academic counselling on the studies of university students in Ghana.

1.7 Clarification of key terms

1.7.1 Guidance

Guidance refers to the combination of nine institutionally provided support services adopted to redress students' socio-personal concerns that affect their studies (Gysbers, 2001). The orientation, appraisal, information, counselling, placement, consultation, referral, evaluation and follow-up services converge to facilitate students' efforts in achieving their educational objectives (Taylor & Buku, 2006). The term 'guidance' also refers to the student-centered and counsellor-directed functions that seek to help students to obtain and employ realistic life information, for their enhanced decision-making, development of problem-solving skills and to set realistic life goals for the attainment of a meaningful future (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012, p. 270). In Ghana, the school counselling service remains the most central of the school guidance services (Essuman, 1999).

1.7.2 Counselling

'Counselling' refers to the student-counsellor private interaction aimed at assisting students to understand their personal problems and find meaningful solutions to them (Taylor & Buku, 2006; Kochhar, 2000). Counselling addresses several students' personal challenges regarding their self-esteem, interpersonal relationship, stress, fear, trauma, academic problems and depression (Ali et al, 2014). Counselling is usually offered through individual and small group sessions (Robbins, 2012) with a strong emphasis on confidentiality as a professional code of ethics. The service represents the nucleus of all other guidance services (Schmidt, 2003).

1.7.3 The counselling centre

A counselling centre is a specially designed place within a learning institution where confidential, individual and group counselling sessions take place (Teasley & Buchanan,

2013). Students usually present their various concerns in their private meetings with the counsellor for in-depth discussions and meaningful solution at the counselling center. Ruane, et al (2011) refer to such places as counselling clinics or offices of counselling service. The use of a counselling centre facilitates the provision of a more organised, confidential and holistic counselling support for students.

1.7.4 The counsellor

Counsellors are generally trained persons who adopt behaviour change methods and psychological tools to assist students overcome their personal and academic challenges. Such helping professionals often function in counselling centres within learning institutions, with the aim of relieving students of their disturbing social concerns to enhance their concentration on their studies. Students' counselling concerns cover a wide variety of life concerns ranging from academic, socio-personal, health, institutional and economic. Counsellors essentially operate by holding confidential one-on-one or small group discussions with students, confronted with difficulties to resove their problems. Counsellors are often bound by professional ethics not to divulge their clients' counselling concerns to others, except by the clients' consent.

1.7.5 Academic counselling

Academic counselling refers to the confidential one-on-one or small group personal interaction aimed at helping students acquire more effective and efficient study skills for enhanced study outcomes (McWilliams et al, 2013). The programme is designed to assist both academically weak and worthy students in their schooling. Academic counselling service discussions often center on students' educational concerns regarding study time management, academic procrastination, effective notes taking skills, examination preparation and writing skills, academically approved writing skills and memory techniques (Sulemana et al, 2014). In short, academic counselling seeks to redress students' academic problems to promote their studies (Sharkin, 2004).

1.7.6 Academic advising

The students' advising service is an equally essential and supportive institutional facility. Advising occurs when a resource person holds personal discussions with a student regarding a problematic academic issue, some of which may concern programme choice,

study habits, academic time management, test and examination writing skills among others. According to Kuhn (2008), advising occurs when advisor and student discussions are centred on an academic, social, or personal matter. The purpose of advising is to provide insight and direction or better still suggest, discipline, counsel, coach or mentor the student over a personal life concern.

The above definition suggests an intersection between counselling and advising, particularly since both share similar aims to students. Indeed, both facilities are considered part of the student support service in higher education settings. Accordingly in the current study, both terminologies are used interchangeably.

1.7.7 Student Advisor

The advisor in many higher education institutions serves in a similar capacity as the counsellor. Both function by holding private discussions with troubled students to implement meaningful solutions regarding their prevailing concerns. The student advisor also operates as a key promoter of students' personal and professional development, by sanctioning their self-beliefs, encouraging their cognitive and academic progress towards a fruitful integration into their respective institutions of study (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Advisor interactions with students equally increases students' interest in their educational endeavours to fortify their personal capacities regarding their future academic ambitions (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Crookston (2009) also stresses the developmental focus of students' advising with an emphasis on its assistive role in facilitating students' choice of a major course towards a specified vocation around which students subsequently construct and advance their lives. Overall, student advisors often serve as facilitators of students' educational ambitions for their enhanced institutional retention and eventual success.

Again in this research, the roles of the advisor and counsellor are considered similar as they both seek students' ultimate advancement and educational success.

1.7.8 Students' study outcomes or performance

Students' study outcomes in this study refers to the results or grades they obtain on the various institutional assessment activities they engage in. Ali et al., (2014) define

students' study outcomes as the academic gain, learning performance, achievement or educational attainment realized over a specified study period. Students' study outcomes are often used to rate their overall academic performance on a study programme (Boyle et al., 2006). Their accumulated obtained score at the end-of academic year or study programme, known as the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPAs) usually serves as a decision-making data that determines their yearly promotion or end of programme performance (Ali, Haider, Munir, Khan, & Ahmed, 2014).

1.7.9 A college

The United States Department of Education's Federal Student Aid (2018) defines a college as an institution offering bachelor's degrees in the Arts and Sciences. The institution's Arts programmes essentially focus on English, history and drama while the science relate predominantly to biology, computer science and engineering. Both degree programmes often span a four year period after which further provision is sometimes made in some colleges for post-graduate or advanced degree programmes like master's studies once a bachelors' has been attained. Delbanco (2012) endorses the college's focus in conferring various degrees on students after their successful completion of their approved study programmes.

1.7.10 A university

According to the United States Department of Education's Federal Student Aid (2018), Universities on the other hand strictly offer bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degree programmes concurrently, some of which are sometimes run in professional schools like law or the medical school. Compared to colleges, universities are relatively larger or wider in physical coverage and thus attract larger class sizes though emphasizing a purely academic focus. Scholarly or scientific research also remains a key feature in a university.

Differenciating between the two institutions, Delbanco (2012) explains that aside its overall academic goal, the university is also aimed at creating new knowledge through research to advance life in general. This is opposed to the college's singular emphasis in merely transmitting knowledge and shaping students' academic thinking. The key

difference between the two relates to the institutions' focus where the college is primarily concerned with educating undergraduates and society at large, while the university transcends that to stress specialized training of professionals and furthering scientific practice (Delbanco, 2012).

Given their similar focus in academic training and the dissemination of knowledge, whether new or existing, the current study considered both as key partners in higher education and thus used both terms interchangeably.

1.8 Motivation for the study

Life issues often present us with unpredictable challenges. Confusion, disappointment, fear of failure and feelings of inadequacy usually demoralize students' brain functioning to undermine their academic behaviours. Such states often necessitate help seeking, though the process may sometimes seem precarious to students. Meanwhile, the availability of professional counselling within our confines only assures us of a remedy, based on our determination and commitment to help seeking. The academic situation of higher education students in Ghana at present is indeed a dicey one, given students' heavy reliance on brain functioning to achieve their academic objectives.

I took immense motivation from my counselling and teaching responsibilities in my former employment to identify the current research topic. My daily encounters with university students heightened my curiosity in understanding their personal concerns and its effect on their studies. I accordingly sought to understand students' motives and coping strategies in view of my conviction that not all students availed themselves to the institutional counselling service. Essentially, I wondered what students' opinions were, regarding the counselling services we offered them and further sought to ascertain how fruitful they found the services to be. My determination to reach truthful responses in this regard directed me to adopt a qualitative study approach as it enabled my thorough exploration of students' experiences regarding the university academic counselling service. It was my intension on this study, to access students' hidden meanings, attitudes and perceptions of the service on campus and as well, outline the benefits they obtained from it.

Insah et al., (2013) admit the existence of disparities in the academic performance of students at the Wa Polytechnic in Ghana. The authors associate the disparities to the influences of various factors on students' academic behaviour. Similar students' poor academic reports have been recorded in South African universities (Centre for Higher Education Transformation, 2000 – 2007; Ndebele et al, 2013) but in Nigeria, the rather ambiguous family structure also affected university students' overall performance and further discriminated between their attainment by gender (Uwaifo, 2008). Yet Nobis and Hudson (2006) associate students' poor academic performance with their lack of preparedness for college work while Mapfumo, (2001) raises concerns about the myriads of socio-economic problems hindering students' ability to perform remarkably. All the mentioned factors are counselling-related hence, the institutionalisation of the facility on university campuses to relieve students of their burdens and optimise their concentration on their academics (Hassane, 2011; House & Hayes, 2011; Dzulkifli & Alias, 2012). In Ghana the first ever Counselling and Placement Center was opened in 1976 at the University of Ghana (Hassane, 2011). Forty years down the line, students are still overwhelmed with academic concerns that promote poor performance and attrition at college. This emphasizes the existence of a hidden problem. Deep concerns expressed by educational stakeholders regarding the situation are perturbing. The immediate way forward is to explore students' views regarding the existing academic counselling service to reveal the inherent challenges for their resolution.

The current study thus seeks to identify students' motives regarding their non-compliance or otherwise, with the university academic counselling service, and to further outline their hidden meanings, attitudes and perceptions of the service based on the benefits they derived from its patronage. The arrival of first year university students as adolescents in recent times (Akyeampong, 2010; Steinberg, 2005), also emphasizes adolescents' psycho-social needs (Fieldman, 2000; Coon, 2006) in planning appropriate psychological and academic counselling services for present time university students. Steinberg, (2005) stresses a blend of emotional and behavioural characteristics in assisting students to realise their overall life goals. The absolute independence of university life (Shino, 2008; Levy & Earl, 2012; K'Ohul, 2010), coupled with adolescents' naivety, ignorance and

constant search for adventure (Ruane, Kasayira, & Shino, 2011) often exposed fresh university students, to a sudden surge of life issues that often derails their education and occasionally, their entire lives. Issues of sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol abuse, money laundering and violence (Niekerk & Prins, 2001; Fia, 2008) among others, have however characterized university campuses since time immemorial.

University students' search for adventure (Hickerson & Beggs, 2007) amidst the sudden lack of parental control (K'Ohul, 2010) contribute to the problematic life trends on campus. The inability of some students to adapt favourably to boredom at university for instance propels them into deviant and mal-adaptive behaviours (Hickerson & Beggs, 2007). Further concerns of first year students separating from their families for the first time, in addition to the numerous social adjustment concerns and the rigorous demands of the university academic system equally underscore the challenging university life (Brown & Halloway, 2008; Pancer, Hunsberger, Pratt & Alisat 2000).

Finally, my experience in counselling practise attracted me to the numerous concerns students habour and yet are so reluctant to present at the institutional counselling center. My observations reveal a deep lack of confidence and low awareness among students regarding available counselling services. Yet students' discrete social concerns diversely hamper the performance of students and sometimes cause failure, particularly among the first years, though institutional authorities are often unaware of it. The afore-mentioned motivated my interest in this knowledge search process. It is my ardent hope that findings from the current study would not only expose the inherent factors hindering students' fruitful performance at college but also materialize in the construction of a worthwhile model that will improve future academic counselling services in Ghanaian universities.

1.9 Highlights of the chapters

The entire study report comprises five key chapters. The following is a brief synopsis on each chapter.

1.9.1 Chapter one

The preliminary chapter presents a meaningful prelude to the research report. It offers a concise rationale and background to the inquiry, with a set of clearly outlined research questions to guide the study. The research concern is further captured explicitly in this preliminary chapter and a series of operational definitions of relevant terms are proposed to better illuminate the inquiry concern.

1.9.2 Chapter two

The review of relevant literature efficiently contextualizes the research concern by relating it to earlier documented studies. The array of empirical evidence visibly articulates the significant gaps within existing literature and further underscores the two key theories that firmly buttress the current study. Both the self-efficacy and self-determination theories stress the significance of resilience and motivation, as essential factors in promoting students' academic behaviour. Counsellor roles will be tremendously enhanced with the adoption of professional behaviour but students' attitudes, perceptions and academic influence with the academic counselling experience remains revealing to existing service trends in Ghanaian higher education.

1.9.3 Chapter three

In the third chapter, I presented the adopted research methodology. I justified and explicated the interpretivist paradigm, the phenomenological multiple case study design I adopted in the study and the interpretivist phenomenological approach as an appropriate means of data analysis in this research. I further described the study sample and method of sampling as well as the appropriate research instruments used. Data collection methods including ethical processes were equally highlighted while strategies to enhance research credibility were illuminated. The chapter essentially documented the entire processes that resulted in establishing truthful research findings in this case.

1.9.4 Chapter four

The entire inquiry process yielded five major themes relating to the attitudes, perceptions and academic benefits students derived from the university academic counselling service. All the derived themes were further fragmented into key sub-themes and categories, each of which were presented with illustrations from the research transcripts. I however opened the chapter with the personal profiles of the data inventors while highlighting their unique socio-academic backgrounds.

1.9.5 Chapter five

This last chapter offers a host of significant interpretations and discussions of the study results. The emphasis in this chapter was on meaning-making from study results in relation to documented literature to generate study findings. I further related the study findings to the theoretical framework to converge them into a meaningful whole. In conclusion, fruitful recommendations were generated from the study findings subsequent to meaningfully derived summaries and conclusions.

1.10 Conclusion

I reiterate the observation that the existing academic counselling service in Ghanaian universities has not lived up to expectation. Stakeholders have invested so much in university education but only marginal proceeds have been realized. This underscores the need to re-structure the academic counselling service to yield better outcomes on students' attainment. The main rationale for conducting the current study was to explore students' opinions regarding the existing service to couch a better future facility in support of students' overall college education.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I highlight two key theories centered on human behaviour and motivation. I presumed the key principles of the self –efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986) and the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000a), firmly anchor the current study since both theories aligned with my stance to effectively support students in their academic endeavors. I further expand on students' unique experiences with the academic counselling/advising service in this chapter, concentrating more on students' attitudes and perceptions of the counselling service in Ghanaian universities and finally conclude the chapter with some benefits students derived from experiencing the academic counselling service.

I am conviced that poor academic achievement derail's higher education students' ability to design a prosperous future. Students' low academic performance for example hampers their potentials to access fruitful future employment (Pitan & Adedeji, 2012) and further weakens their ability to generate collective benefits for their respective societies and nation as a whole (Uhawenimana, 2012). Pitan and Adedeji (2012), underscore the challenging effects of high graduate unemployment in Nigeria, following the prevalence of skills mis-match among graduates in the country. Low throughput rates, coupled with the absence of appropriately skilled graduates (Pitan & Adedeji, 2012; Boateng, 2002), also depict a gloomy future for most African economies. According to Pitan and Adedeji (2012), the main problem relates to differences in university graduates' possessed skills and those required in the labour market. These have unceremoniously raised the incidence of graduate employability in the nation. Maree (2014) and Ndebele (2013) likewise catalogue the dire national consequences of poor academic achievement, among students in higher education. The perplexing effects of the trend on educators, particularly regarding the future, leaves so much to be desired. Under the circumstances, gradtates poor university performance and choice of more appropriate study programmes emphasizes the roles and functions of student advisors and counsellors functioning in

higher education institutions. The current study focus on students' academic counselling experience thus comes in handy.

2.2 The theoretical framework of the study

I adopted the self-efficacy and self-determination theories in the research, given their correlation with my intensions to explore and describe students' experiences with the university academic counselling service. According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), theories provide deeper focus and understanding of a phenomenon of interest. Theories also represent abstract descriptions of a specified phenomenon from a particular perspective that to me presented a logical description of the concepts and relationships regarding the factors associated with the university academic counselling service (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Bandura's self-efficacy theory buttressed the study by highlighting students' varied academic behaviours, on account of their different efficacy belief systems. High self-efficacious students' fruitful accomplishment was for instance in constant contrast with the poor performance of their low self-efficacious counterparts. Bandura held that high self-efficacious students often adopted a firm and resilient attitude to emerge successful in their endevours but the contrary often prevailed where the low self-efficacious were concerned. Students with low self-efficacy often acted impatiently and easily gave up when the odds were against them. The key issue was in relation to their lack of confidence in their personal capabilities to achieve. The situation thu justified the essence of individual differences among student groups and the general populace on the whole (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013). Koarraju and Nadlier (2013) however attributed poor self-efficacious students' belief in an innate and permanently fixed intelligence. In the event that poor self-believing students accepted their incapacitated circumstances and felt incapable of improving the situation, poor accomplishment remained their automatic outcomes. Their collegue high self-efficacy-believing students on the other hand constantly adopted mastery experience to re-construct their already favourable efficacy beliefs (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

Many studies in fact confirm the strong influence of students' self-efficacy beliefs on their academic attainment (Mill, Pajares & Herron, 2007; Choi, 2005; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007). In Ghana Chowa, Masa, Ramos and Ansong (2015) confirmed the construct's effect on students' school performance. Academic self-efficacy firmly underlined a number of students' characteristics, including school commitment and study goals, both of which were key to their commendable performance (Chowa et al., 2015). Students with well-set goal and high school commitment were found to accomplish their tasks remarkably as compared to their unchallenged colleagues. In the case of Mill, Pajares and Herron (2007) self-efficacy emerged as a more robust factor in predicting students' intermediate French language achievement as compared to self-efficacy for French attainment, anxiety in reading and listening to French as well as French learning self-concept. The crux of the matter lies with students' dissimilar efficacious beliefs and its consequencial outcomes that underscored their need for academic support to facilitate the attainment of the weak ones (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

Academic counselling is an essential students' support service that efficiency initiates 'the central activity of college instruction' (O'Banion, 2009, p. 88). In this capacity the facility primarily facilitates first year students' fruitful college adjustment (Stephens, Hamedani & Destin, 2014). According to Stephens et al., (2014), inexperienced and ignorant students often encounter severe challenges to realize commendable first year college performance. Poor insight regarding college studies, lack of friends and low environmental awareness hinders new students' sufficient rest with rippling effects on their concentration levels. Adjustment undeniably affects many new students' college performance.

In another sense, advising serves as the cornerstone or 'hub of the undergraduate experience' (Hunter & White, 2004, p. 21). The description aligns with Teasley and Buchanan (2013)'s suggestion that the advisor is among the first institutional figures to be encountered by many first year students. As one of the most essential college activities, students' advising sustains and retains them throughout their college years of study. Counselling likewise serves a similar remediating role in meeting students' numerous challenges to progress them on their academic programmes. According to

Muola and Mwania, (2013) counsellors' inability to cope with their heavy workload necessitated the European-based students' advising service in Kenya. Generally, in African countries, students' academic concerns are redressed through counselling and not advising.

Adopting a host of aimaible strategies, the counselling facility aims at equipping students with assertive skills, to triumph over their academic and professional apprehensions (Moon, 2009). Marie Taylor and Neimeyer (2009) highlight the critical role of mentoring, as part of counselling in facilitating the overall development of higher education students. The authors suggest that well-mentored students possess better professional identities, are more confident, academically sound and also emerge as better communicators than the unmentored (Elman, Illfelder-Kaye, & Robiner, 2005). The benefits of mentoring also transcend academics (Marie Taylor & Neimeyer, 2009). Usually in counselling, a trained helping professional holds private in-depth discussions with students over their individual challenges, with the aim of promoting their fruitful decision-making regarding their concerns and available counselling interventions. Counselling further insights students regarding their challenges, either to ultimately overcome or reduce them to the barest minimum. Other academic counselling aims include acquiring efficient time-management skills, improved study habits and critical thinking (Moon, 2009).

Counsellors also adopt motivational strategies, consistent feedback and resilience tactics to assist challenged students. The internal arousal tendencies of motivation for instance prevails over token economy, to thrust students' desirable goal achievement (Ihiegbulem, Ihiegbulem & Igwebuike, 2011; Ihiegbulem, 2006). Husain (2014) and Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley and Carlstrom (2004) also confirm the role of students' achievement motivation and academic self-efficacy as major predictors of their study outcomes. The highlights on motivation as the core of diverse human activity is indisputable (Husain, 2014). In their research, Koarraju and Nadlier (2013) discovered counselling or help-seeking to combine with self-efficacy and academic regulation to impact students' grade point averages. This endorsed the counsellors use of the two (motivation and self-efficacy) as key strategies to promote stiudents' academic attainment.

Interestingly, the influence of self-efficacy transcends various levels of education and academic disciplines. The construct for instance prevails over students' academic behaviours at various levels of education and academic disciplines, including language learning (Magowe & Oliver), Mathematics and science-related subjects (Zeldin, Britner & Pajares, 2008), reading and writing (Pajares, 2003). Literature also confirms the construct's pronounced effect on other general elements like motivation, interest and self-regulation (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012), that may also have educational implications. Zimmerman (2013) thus defines academic self-regulation as comprising the proactive and personally planned activities students undertake to promote their cognitive and academic skills. Academic self-regulation also often combined efficiently with self-efficacy to propel the exceptional performance of several high-efficacy-believing students (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013). Aside their academic importance, both self-regulation and self-efficacy also emerge as broad social constructs that drive various purposeful social behaviour by facilitating personal initiative, resilience in the face of adversity and adaptive skills (Zimmerman, 2013). Overall, individual and students' optimal performance also reflects high levels of motivation though self-efficacy and efficient regulative factors equally share in the ultimate favourable outcome (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). The afore indeed underscore the importance of self-efficacy across a wide spectrum of life areas.

The self-efficacy theory's focus on students' varied levels of attainment, as a result of their different efficacy-belief systems also suggests the existence of three possible student types, namely the high self-believing, the low and the mid-way self-efficacy believing students. Compelling evidence exists regarding the commendable attainment of the high (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013), the unenthusiastically poor (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012) and the averagely performning mid-way efficacious students. Poropat's (2009) theoretical analysis of a number of studies revealed interesting findings regarding students' personality types and academic attainment. Academic performance for instance favourably correlated with the sociable, thoroughness and sincere personality types (Poropat, 2009). The trend is practical given the diligence of the mentioned

personality types. Academic motivation and self-esteem may also remarkably influence students' overall performance (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012), though the poorly motivated will hardly succeeded in their endeavours eventhough they may ocassionally be well-versed in self-monitoring skills.

Bandura's four proposals regarding the sources of self-efficacy belief constructions (Britner & Pajares, 2006) likewise hinge on the assistive aims of academic counselling services among higher education students. Students' science performance correlated strongly with their self-efficacy beliefs though only mastery experience strongly determined students' science attainment (Britner & Pajares, 2006). Zeldin et al., (2008) also confirmed Bandura's four proposals with findings of males relying heavily on mastery experience to construct their science and mathematics efficacies. Females also adopted more of social persuasion and vicarious experience as their chief source of efficacy construction (Zeldin et al., 2008). The key advantage with Bandura's four efficacy construction sources lies with their tendency to pin point useful strategies for academic counsellors' and advisors' use to improve students' academic behaviours.

Self-determination on the other hand emphasizes intrinsic motivation and autonomy-related extrinsic motivation as potential predictors of students' academic performance (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). The theory suggests that students' high levels of curiosity and natural flair for knowledge likewise prevails over their studies at school (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). In agreement with the observation, Turner, Chandler and Heffer, (2009) found intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy as strong predictors of students' academic attainment. The researchers stressed the inherent natural urge to perform where intrinsic motivation is concerned, to drive students' efforts towards fruitful accomplishment. Determination thus referes to a natural internal urge or drive to perform, rather than an externally motivated effort. Despite the confirmed benefits of authoritarian parenting style on college students' academic attainment, the three means of needs gratification comprising autonomy, relatedness and competence remarkably optimised students' study outcomes at college (Turner et al., 2009). The reports thus confirm the import of self-determination regarding students' academic behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Autonomy, relatedness and competence thus comprise the key learning factors that determine students' attainment according to the self-determination theory. In the event that counselling, self-belief and motivation are strongly related to influence human behaviour, I endorse the theories as firm pegs anchoring the current research. It is my deepest conviction that both theories efficiently illuminate the relevant factors involved in the study and would thrust the research process to a fruitful end.

In effect, my emphasis on students' academic behaviour in the current study was in direct agreement with the focus of both theories, which also emerged from the field of Psychology and thus aligned with the psychological orientations of the counselling facility. Ultimately, both theories provided a useful roadmap or guideline on which the research progressed to generate meaningful findings in response to the research questions.

2.2.1 The Self-Efficacy Theory

The word 'efficacy' according to the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) simply refers to the ability to produce a desired result in a specific situation. In relation to Bandura's theory, Zulkosky (2009) defines the concept as the 'power to produce an effect' (p. 95). Further meaningful suggestions of the concept 'efficacy' are effectiveness, productivity or fruitfulness. An integration of this understanding with that of the 'self', which refers to a person's identity, reflects Bandura's theoretical implication that, our self-efficacy belief systems define our thoughts, feelings and behaviour (Zeldin et al., 2008).

The self-efficacy theory holds that individuals' decisions regarding impending tasks, their persistence on those tasks and the strength they expend in carrying out the tasks (Tschannen-Moran & McMaste, 2009) are often determined by their self-efficacy belief systems. Individuals will accordingly avoid or exert less effort in situations about which they feel less capable or possess a lower level of self-efficacy, but with high expectations of the self, others will increase their willingness to persevere on their tasks towards high attainment (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In short, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy belief system operates like a self-fulfilling prophecy where individuals' beliefs in their personal capabilities to perform an act, increases their achievement levels on those tasks.

Lunenburg (2011) similarly likens self-efficacy to a task-specific version of self-esteem that potentially affects students' learning, motivation and output abilities. An individual's self- efficacy belief system is thus judged by the scales of magnitude of his intended task, his conviction to perform creditably on the task and the extent to which the expected results can be generalised across all situations. Pajares, (2009) in concurrence also extends the constructs' potential to all aspects of human life, including the varied fields of medicine, psychiatry, business and sports.

2.2.1.1 Principles of the self-efficacy theory

The two-primary efficacy belief systems Bandura proposes in his theory are the high and low or positive and negative efficacy belief systems (Wood & Oliver, 2004; Pajares, 2009). Both efficacy belief systems represent the different possible human cognitions and their ensuing behavioural characteristics (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). By these assertions, Bandura underscores the role of individual differences among humans, including students as they seek to accomplish their academic endeavours.

2.2.1.1.1 High self-efficacious people

High self-efficacious people are believed to often act in a more organised and well-motivated manner. The singular rationale behind their successful achievements is their strong belief in their personal capabilities to perform. This self-confidence urges them on to confront complex goal-achievement tasks with deep resilience to achieve success (Pajares, 2009). This resilience in turn presents demanding tasks as temporary challenges preceding successful attainments, thus driving them to approach their tasks with greater determination and high commitment to attain success (Britner & Pajares, 2006). In effect, high self-efficacy believing people remain resolute in the face of difficulties and quickly apply a possible solution to triumph in their situations. Such people are often less prone to stress and anxiety (Tschannen-Moran & McMaste, 2009) as they usually attribute failure to insufficient effort that enables them to quickly regain their strength for greater future success.

2.2.1.1.2 Low self-efficacious people

In contrast to the high efficacious people are the low self-efficacy believing ones (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Such people often perceive challenging tasks as threats and thus shy

away from them (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). These apathetic behaviours of low self-efficacious people are usually fuelled by lack of confidence in their personal capabilities that also often makes them doubt their ability to perform creditably on their tasks. This results in their unenthusiastic behaviours towards challenging situations (Britner & Pajares, 2006), thereby causing them to easily give up on their endeavours, since they contemplate failure long before they attempt the up-coming task (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2010). Low self-efficacious people are therefore very much prone to anxiety, stress and depression due to their negative attitude towards work.

Bandura subsequently adopts the Triadic Reciprocal Determinism to explicate the human behavioural process. The social cognitive theory presents the model explicitly.

2.2.1.2 The Social Cognitive Theory

The three key interactive factors that stimulate human behaviour in the theory comprise the environment, the individual and the behaviour itself (Pajares, 2009). The environment or social world of the individual comprises all the external stimuli, including the objects and people around him. The individual factor also consists of the unique personality traits, cognitive factors as well as experiences of the person. The behavioural factor finally represents the manner the individual adopts to undertake his operations within the environment.

In this theoretical discourse, the three components comprising the environment, the individual's behaviour and his personality are in a constant cyclical interaction. As the individual acts on his environment to achieve his daily purposes, the environmental components in turn influence the intensity and frequency of his behaviour to revert to the individual in completion of the triadic cycle. All three levels of interaction however do not occur simultaneously, neither do they possess the same level of potency. Rather they cooperate with each other (reciprocally) to produce the resultant behaviour of the individual (Schunk & Usher, 2012). Humans thus develop their personalities via the interactions of the three constantly interacting factors.

In demonstration of the triadic cycle, Fast, Lewis, Bryant, Bocian, Cardullo, Rettig and Hammond (2010) reported the classroom environment to affect students' Mathematics self-efficacy to predict their mathematics scores on a test. Classroom evironmental stimuli comprising a host of teaching and learning materials determined students' expended mathematics effort on the test to predict their test scores (Fast et al., 2010). A similar Finnish longitudinal study focused on the three components of students' mathematics-related achievement, their enjoyment of the subjects' exercises and self-efficacy in a Finland-based Secondary school (Hannula, Bofah, Tuohilampi and Metsämuuronen, 2014). Students' mathematics self-efficacy was found to be reciprocally associated to their achievement, though a feebler one-way relationship was discovered to exist between subject enjoyment and achievement (Hannula et al., 2014),

In effect, reciprocal determinism suggests that by choosing where we want to belong, (the environment) the external stimuli in our environment affect our behaviours that subsequently also influence our personality features, (including our thoughts, emotions, beliefs and values). The cycle thus continues unabated as we constantly contribute to the nature of our situations and the environmental stimuli in our surroundings to unceasingly mould our various personalities. In essence, Bandura emphasizes that behaviour can be learnt by observation and imitation and not necessarily by reinforcement. This implies that the human internal factors do not determine our behavior but the reciprocal determinism model does.

2.2.1.3 The goal achievement process

A similar cycle is presented in the human goal-achievement process. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive theory, the four stages of self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reaction and self-efficacy (Redmond & Mulnihil, 2015) interact in a fixed continuous cycle to result in the goals we seek to achieve. The initial self-observation stage involves a general assessment of the task ahead for the valuation of the required factors in accomplishing the impending task. The next level (self-evaluation) involves a comparison of the individual's current attainment or performance level with the impending task or goal. The intention is to ascertain one's likely performance on the task ahead, based on

available skills before tackling it. The significance of self-evaluation is also to offer an opportunity of familiarization with the task and to motivate the individual through regularity and proximity. The final self-reaction stage is where the individual undertakes the task to produce a performance (self-reaction). Once accomplished, the individual's performance strength on this task becomes a key source for constructing future self-efficacy belief systems, and an ultimate measure for all future assignments is attained (Redmond & Mulnihil, 2015). In effect, an outstanding performance on a previous task results in a high self-efficacy belief system that continues to motivate the individual into future accomplishments (Redmond, 2009).

2.2.1.4 Sources of self- efficacy beliefs

The four main sources of self-efficacy beliefs comprise mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and physiological reactions (Adeyemo, 2007; Pajares, 2009; Redmond & Mulvihill, 2015). Key among these sources is the mastery experience, which refers to the cyclical process of interpreting one's constructive outcomes to continuously reinforce one's self-efficacy belief systems for future successes. A single well-accomplished task is all one needs to mobilize more energy for further future successes. This implies better and better performances for high self-efficacy believing people (Bandura, 1986). In effect, the continuous accomplishments of simple tasks lead to the accomplishment of bigger or more challenging ones in future (Jackson, 2010). The 'practice makes perfect' principle is thus highlighted though similarity between the earlier and subsequent task is key to the realization of mastery experience.

In the vicarious experience, Bandura underscored the role our peers' successful achievements plays in driving us into the events we would normally never attempt. In effect, people draw inspiration from observing the accomplishments of those around them, either for them to do same or perform better. The vicarious experience is evidenced in the role model or modelling situations (Pajares & Graham, 1998) where young people challenge themselves simply by receiving motivation from their peers' accomplishments (Pajares, 2009). The crux of vicarious experience is however not to copy blindly, but rather to gather some momentum or 'gut feelings' from the peer's enviable performance to

achieve greater future success (Adeyomo, 2007). The other point of emphasis is the new (initially dreaded) area of operation and the subsequent accomplishment of the individual in that field. Resemblance between the model and actor is equally essential in accomplishing the new vicariously motivated task (Hayden, 2014). In effect, the closer the similarity or connection between the model and the actor, the higher the chances of a vicarious experience to occur.

Third is the role of persuasion or verbal messages in developing self-efficacy beliefs systems. Whether by accident or planned, constant verbal encouraging and motivational messages often energize people into useful achievements. Such persistent verbalizations usually drive people into positive thoughts regarding their capabilities, thereby never contemplating failure. Sports fans are usually notable in adopting this strategy to boost the achievements of their contestants and athletes. Just as positive moods can increase persistence and performance in an activity, negative ones could equally result in failure. Bandura however stresses that negative messages or demotivation words tend to have stronger debilitating effects on individuals than did positive ones (Pajares, 2009). Finally, equally important are the effects of negative moods like anxiety, trauma and stress in constructing our self-efficacy belief systems. The focus of this method of self-efficacy construction is thus not on the strength of the mood state, but rather on the meaning derived from the state.

2.2.1.5 Self-efficacy beliefs and academic accomplishments

Bandura's self-efficacy belief theory explicates the focus of the current research. It stressed the importance of students' self-efficacy beliefs in predicting their academic attainment (Vogel & Human-Vogel, 2015; Parjares & Graham, 1999). Vogel & Human-Vogel, (2015) stressed the role of self-identification and students' commitment in attaining academic success. The authors suggested that the more students felt intrinsically motivated towards their engineering study programmes, the higher their personal commitment in their tasks and therefore a resulting higher academic attainment (Vogel & Human-Vogel, 2015). Students' high self-efficacy beliefs equally predicted their remarkable Mathematics performance in their initial study year (Pajares & Graham, 1999)

and further facilitated their college adjustment to engender a rippling effect on their academic attainment (Ramos-Sanchez & Nichols, 2007).

According to Mills, Pajares and Herron (2007), students' self-efficacy mediated their academic regulated acts to impact positively on their French language reading, listening and overall achievement. Students' self-concept in studying French was equally influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs, likewise the mentally agile who consistently monitored their attainment in the subject. In relation to gender, females often displayed higher self-efficacies as compared to their male counterparts in language studies (Mills et al., 2007) but the reverse prevailed in the male dominated subjects like Mathematics and science (Zeldin et al., 2008). Clavin, Fernandes, Smith, Visscher and Deary (2010) confirmed the higher performance of females than males in language studies.

In concurrence with the above authors, Pajares (2009) asserted that students heavily relied on their belief systems to construct academically profitable outlooks like diligence, perseverance and self-reliance. The mentioned factors, severely promote students' academic achievement (Pajares, 2009). Fellonar et al., (2007) and Adeyomo (2007) also confirmed the construct as a critical factor in the acquisition of useful learning habits. This was revealed when the factor emerged as the strongest determinant of students' academic achievement owing to its direct impact on deep information processing (Fellonar et al., 2007). In Adeyemo's (2007) study, students' academic self-efficacy emerged as a strong determinant of their academic motivation and learning. Zulkosky, (2009) likewise amplified the motivational role of students' self-efficacy belief systems, though his emphasis was on general activities like planning, organizing, decision-making, learning and assessments (Singh, 2011). Self-efficacy was equally relevant to teachers' roles in class, in the sense that teachers' use of constant, relevant and accurate feedback about students' learning skills resulted in a remarkable improvement of students' belief systems and optimised their attainment. The researchers thus confirmed favourable self-efficacy belief systems as desirable for academic success among higher education students.

Literature is equally replete with highlights on the association between self-efficacy and self-regulation. Pekrun, et al., (2010) for instance discovered an intimate link between students' emotions and key self-regulatory factors like interest, motivation and learning strategies. The mentioned elements were confirmed to have a strong bearing on students' self-efficacy belief systems. Frankly, students' interest directly depicted their levels of motivation that in turn had a rippling effect on their learning strategies. Accordingly, the authors noted that both negative and positive emotions reflected mixed effects on students' academic self-regulation and achievement, thereby predicting their self-efficacy belief systems. Self-regulation also emerged as a key and direct predictor of students' academic performance in other research. Studies by Human-Vogel (2008) and Onoda, (2014) likewise stressed the association between students' self-regulation and self-efficacy beliefs in determining their academic performance. Human-Vogel (2008) found students' identification with their academic programmes and commitment levels, to promote their academic self-regulation. Self-efficacy also facilitated students' self-regulation to impact on their L2 vocabulary in the Japanese university study (Onoda, 2014). Los (2010), similarly found a positive association between self-efficacy and self-regulation when high self-efficacious students in the study adopted a wider variety of self-regulative strategies in their academics. The students also efficiently managed available resources to reap favourable academic benefits (Los, 2010).

The role of self-efficacy belief systems in determining the first-year university attainment cannot also be over-emphasized. High school graduates often entered college, severely ignorant and unskilled about the social and academic demands of college life (Wood & Oliver, 2004). Nobis & Hudson, (2006) describe this situation as poor college life preparation. Poor preparation justified the life skills module implemented at the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) (Wood & Oliver, 2004). The life skills module sought to equip fresh students with coping skills to ensure their efficient management of university life challenges (Wood & Oliver, 2004). The best predictors of college students' grade point averages as reported by Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley and Carlstrom, (2004) were their academic self-efficacy and achievement motivation. Chemers, Hu and Grarcia

(2001) similarly confirmed the relevance of students' self-efficacy in their successful transition from high school to university.

Students' fruitful academic attainment necessitates their adoption of rewarding metacognitive factors such as high commitment to their studies, consistent performance assessment and an effective use of available favourable resources to engender commendable academic attainment. The mentioned factors firmly aligned with self-efficacy to optimize students' performance. Redmond and Mulvihill (2015) accordingly stressed the three major self-efficacy relevant assessment processes of frequent task analysis requirements, attributional analysis of experience and the assessment of personal and situational resources as paramount in predicting students' self-efficacy belief systems. Embedded in the mentioned three factors were students' resilience, expended time and effort, personal knowledge and the recognition of relevant environmental and emotional factors that promoted task completion (Redmond & Mulvihill, 2015).

Britner and Pajares, (2006) also confirmed the academic significance of Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy belief systems. Their study highlighted mastery experience to account for a greater percentage of students' science attainment though females, in particular, were found to be more compliant with the mastery experience mode (Britner & Pajares, 2006). The other efficacy construction sources were also equally confirmed by Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, (2009) to markedly influence students' academic performance. Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs likewise determined their teaching effectiveness and overall classroom behaviour (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Bandura's Social Cognitive theory (1997) also aligned with achievement-focused behaviours. The goal-achievement process generally stressed individual's requirements for personal success by promoting favourable cognitive and affective reactions that facilitated performance outcomes (Bandura, 1986). As people sought to achieve their personal life goals, their efficacy belief systems invariably affected their expended efforts towards the emergent challenges (Zimmerman, 2013). The same goals additionally activated self-monitoring and judgmental tendencies that equally favoured successful

goal-achievement**,** thereby promoting fruitful accomplishments. In effect, the Social Cognitive theory stressed individual's constant commitment towards a high self-accomplished life.

Self-efficacy no doubt adds tremendous value to human intents and purposes. The profound insight I gained regarding the central role of the construct in all shperes of life plunged me into a deep personal reflection. I found myself reflecting on some key life achievements I made since maturity. Many of these were tailored to my operations as a counsellor and particularly regarding the current enquiry. A number of interesting counselling sessions I earlier held flooded my mind and I also suddenly became aware of the numerous hurdles I encountered in my search for research participants on this research. The trip to Accra with study participants in Cape Coast on that fateful day in May 2016 was my greatest field contest, though also key to the success of the entire research. I accordingly caught little sleep the previous night as I lay down, deeply contemplating how many of my expected participants will really show up for the journey to Accra. Subsequently on the two and half hour drive to Accra on the bus, I couldn't stop praying for God to lead participants in Accra to the agreed venue for the session. At the end of the session, I felt a deep sense of accomplishment envelope me, though I really felt drained at the time. I was in high spirits throughout my journey back home.

My insight into the essence of self-efficacy beliefs on our actions also confirmed my unique position as a qualitative researcher, that implied championing the entire research course of action. In my reflexive mood, I became aware of the depth of my expended effort on the research. I recalled the financial hitches, the poor reception I encountered at two out of my three research sites and the profound feelings of disappointment I felt when some participants never showed up for their scheduled research appointments. Deeper reflections regarding all these actual events created a sense of gratification in me. My determination to conduct the research at the beginning was strong and happily, my high energies drove me to my final goal. I was simply thrilled to realise my resilience extent, and to paricularly acknowledge that I had successfully overcome all the challenges I encountered during the research. My deepest contentment, was in relation to the fact that

all I set out to accomplish on this research expedition had turned out successful and I was frankly amazed at how far Bandura's theory had been confirmed in this particular research encounter.

2.2.2 The Self Determination Theory

The self-determination theory focuses on motivation to achieve gratification for human psychological needs (Reeve, 2012). The theory comprises five interrelated motivation-defined minitheories (Reeve, 2012). Ryan and Deci, (2000b) propose that humans can either be active and engaged or passive and alienated, depending mostly on the conditions under which they operate. Engagement essentially involves partaking in internally fruitful and satisfying activities though individuals' acts may occasionally be solely motivated by external rewards. Vansteenkiste, Lens and Deci (2006) observe that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation or autonomy versus dependence predict human behaviour. However, intrinsically motivated activities have a greater tendency of being realized in view of their internally motivated intentions (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Individual differences also form the basis for variations among internally motivating factors for individuals. This justifies the dichotomies in individuals' reactions regarding certain real-life situations. Ryan, Rigby and Przybylsky (2006) emphasize the role of autonomy and competence in increased concentration and enjoyment of playing computer games. The intuitive nature of this game enjoyment is synonymous to intrinsically motivated acts that constantly receive reinforcement for the act's repetitive occurance (Ryan, Rigby and Przybylski, 2006). In effect, the self-determination theory stresses the social and environmental factors that facilitate or undermine the two types of motivation - intrinsic and extrinsic (Singh, 2011).

2.2.2.1 Principles of the Self-Determination Theory

The natural or innate human tendencies driving individuals into inherently beneficial behaviours is referred to as intrinsic motivation (Lyness, et al., 2013). Intrinsically motivated behaviours often flow spontaneously from the self, given their association with the natural human tendencies. This transforms the activities into internally pleasurable acts for the individual who thus ignores the external rewards associated with the acts (Ryan & Deci, 1999). It is additionally important to stress that our intrinsic tendencies

emerge only under the specific conditions that stimulate their expression (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Different factors also intrinsically motivate individuals and in various degrees.

On the other hand, individuals are sometimes motivated by external factors that control their behaviours (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). This type of motivation is extrinsic in nature. Freedom and choice of activity are usually non-existent where external motivation is concerned due to the prevalence of pressure to deliver results, threats of danger and high order commands that often expel freedom and volition. Instead extrinsically motivated situations often create anxiety, boredom and alienation for the individual. Ryan & Deci, (2000a) contend that meaningful learning never occurs in such restrictive situations, in view of their complete lack of autonomy.

The key factors of the self-determination theory are autonomy, relatedness and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2008). All three conditions gratify human psychological needs (Ng et al., 2012) and combine to determine the means by which humans expend their energies in undertaking various activities. The self-determination theory assumes that people are more prone to internalize their behaviours when they find them valuable to their associates (Ng et al., 2012). Such associates may include family relations and friends, school colleagues and work mates or valued role models. Adopting specific behaviors due to such associations is referred to as relatedness. Relatedness provides a significant 'vehicle of change' in human behaviour (Ryan, Patrick, Deci & Williams, 2008, p. 3). Equally important is the feeling of competence in driving human behaviour. Competence means understanding what an activity entails and having the confidence in one's personal skills and capacities to accomplish the specified task (Teixeira, et al., 2012). Feelings of competence fosters increased practice tendencies to sharpen the individual's skills in the identified area. Competence also results in high self-confidence and resilience.

Autonomous behaviours are often volitional and intentional (Ryan, Williams, Patrick & Deci, 2009), resulting usually in self-organised and endorsed behaviour. Autonomy characterizes self-determination and is closely associated with increased psychological functioning (Deci, 1980) that produces desirable outcomes. In the area of work, job autonomy also stimulates high levels of organisational commitment in employees (Parker,

Wall & Corgery, 2001) and is consequently positively related to significant work outcomes like job satisfaction, desirable results and satisfying performance (Humphrey, Nahrgang & Morgeson, 2007). The presence of autonomy therefore significantly nurtures the emergence of intrinsic motivation that remains a basic requirement for optimum performance (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

2.2.2.2 The academic significance of the Self Determination theory

Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly impact academic performance though from different angles and at varied intensity (Ryan and Deci, 1999). While intrinsic motivation underlines the natural human potential to conduct academic tasks, extrinsic motivation relies on external rewards to facilitate conditionally motivated behavior. The two key factors, affecting learning namely competence and autonomy are critical to the realization of intrinsically motivated acts (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Without a sense of autonomy and competence-driven behaviours, internally attractive behaviours would hardly occur. According to the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), (Deci & Ryan, 1985) challenging tasks, meaningful feedback and the maintenance of a high regard for learners, enhances our intrinsic motivational tendencies (Lyness, et al., 2013). The administrative staff of health centers thus rely heavily on autonomy to impact their learners' lives given its immense benefits in augmenting individual's general health and sense of achievement (Lyness, et al., 2013). This implies that learning would more easily occur in autonomy-stimulating and competence-driven classrooms or home environments. The motivational effects on student groups with both higher and lower self-efficacy perceptions are however immense (Martinelli & Sassi, 2010). In the absence of intrinsically motivating activities among school-related events in recent times, educators are encouraged to create novel internally motivating strategies to facilitate students' learning. On the other hand, insight into the processes of extrinsically motivated behaviours would resonate additional operative teaching and learning strategies.

2.2.2.3 Factors influencing extrinsic motivation

The Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) proposes that various changes occur in extrinsic motivation. The four levels of external regulation, introjected regulation, regulation through identification (or internalization) and finally integrated regulation significantly influence learning at varied stages. The stages stress that individuals mostly progress from a complete lack of motivation to the highest integration stage via external rewards. The process of absorbing values or regulating behaviour in relation to extrinsic motivation is called internalization (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Though high on the extrinsic scale, internalised behaviour essentially remains conditional to the external reward that established. Integration on the other hand occurs when the individual absolutely incorporates the concerned value into his self-concept. This means integration generates higher levels of persistence and thus yields more favourable self-perceptions for enhanced performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Lyness, et al., (2013) subsequently recommend further strategies to sustain effective learning among students. The strategies include seeking learners' opinions on discussion topics, adopting a problem-based learning approach and providing useful specific feedback to learners, to nurture their intrinsic interest in their tasks. Directly following is the conceptual framework of the study as explicated by figure 2.1. The model highlights the key principles of the earlier mentioned theories and their efficient collaboration with academic counselling strategies to augment students' study outcomes.

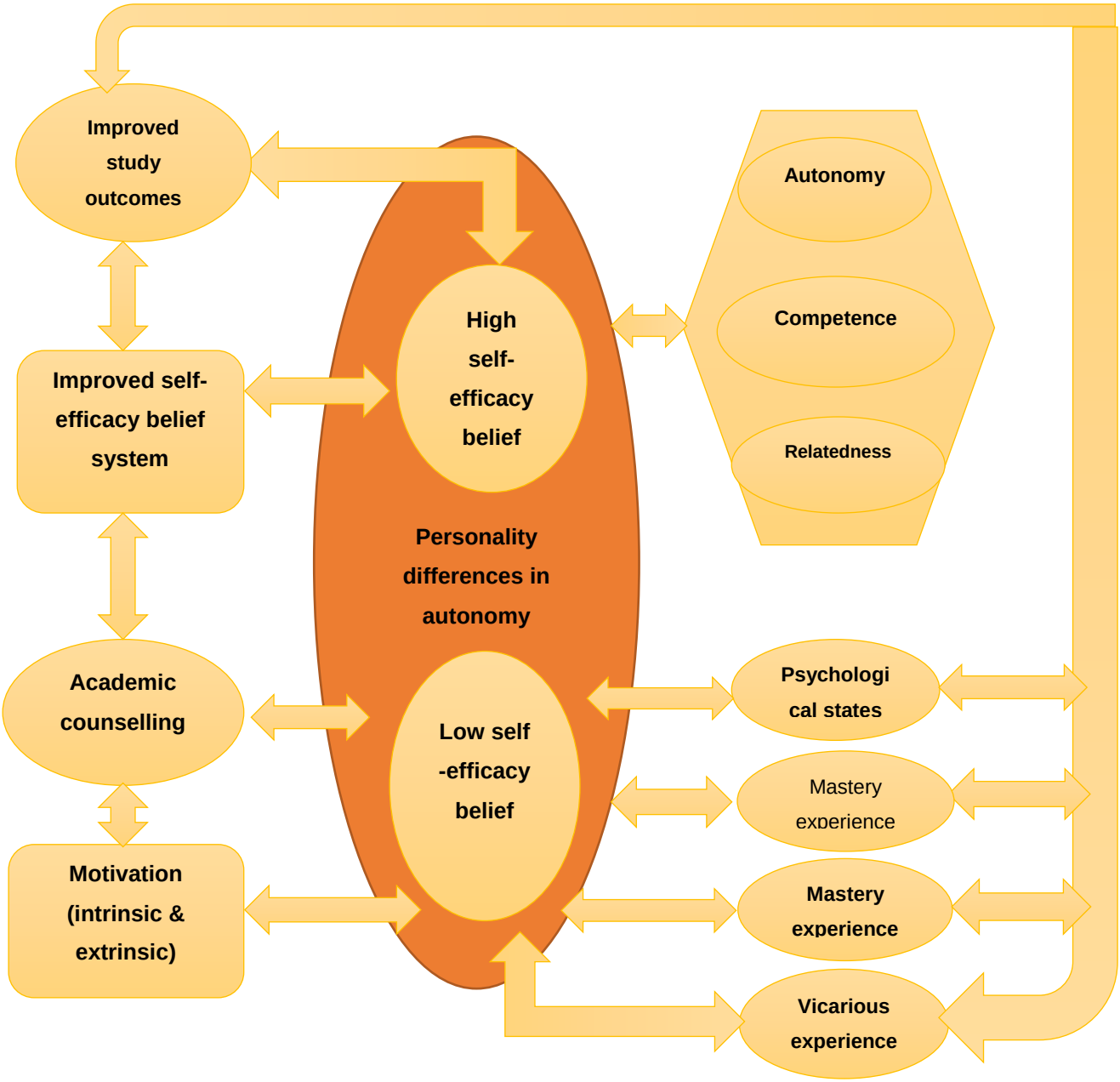


Figure 2-1: The conceptual framework of the study

I couched the framework in figure 2.1 from the key theoretical concepts underpinning the study. Autonomy, competence and relatedness converge with the prevailing self- efficacy belief systems to drive goal-directed behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Bandura, 1986). It is my conviction that each of the factors also blend with academic counselling to engender worthwhile interventions for students' enhanced study outcomes. Counsellors

accordingly have a valuable resource in the highlighted factors, to achieve their purposes within academic institutions. The simple justification is that each element strongly predicts human behaviour, likewise motivation that equally reserves similar control over human behaviour and could accordingly be utilized intermittently to promote the realisation of academic goals. Emphasis on the various sources of self-efficacy construction equally stress valuable methods that thrust students' academic performance. Bandura's four proposals for constructing self-efficacy beliefs, comprising mastery, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and emotional states also affect learning considerably. Counsellors could thus rely on the methods to relieve students of their academic hindrances.

The following explains the intervention process highlighted in Figure 2.1. On the right side are the learning improving factors that influence students' unique personality types, displayed in the central part of the figure, to generate the outcomes presented on the left side of the diagram. Figure 2.1 summarily stresses the relevant theoretical factors that align with academic counselling to produce the favourable effects on students' performance.

2.2.3 Applying the theories to the counselling situation

A lot could be derived from the self-efficacy theory to improve available counselling services offered in African higher education institutions. As educational intermediaries, Pajares (2009) recommends that counsellors directly focus on students' belief systems about their academic capabilities during counselling. Given that students' belief systems reflect their academic levels of motivation, counsellors could easily promote studies among both high and low self- efficacy believing students by adopting the appropriate strategy that would facilitate their academic behaviours. As earlier established, students' favourable thoughts regarding their capabilities remarkably promotes their work but reversing their negative thoughts to optimize their performance will also be in the right direction. Chireshe, (2006) in this regard recommends the use of counselling to modify weak students' academic performance in efforts to redress the high attrition problem confronting several institutions lately.

Other relevant counselling-related strategies may include surrounding low self-efficacious students with encouraging words to thrust their academic behaviours (Bandura, 1986), providing consistent feedback to learners where necessary, adopting effective role models, coaching in good study habits and fostering group studies to optimise academically weak students' performance.

Special emphasis on intrinsic motivation would also add more value to the various counselling services offered in higher education institutions. Students' personal interest in their academics is significant to their optimum performance hence the need to direct counselling efforts towards their internally valuable goals. Lesser emphasis must however be placed on external rewards considering their limited strength in promoting valuable behaviour.

2.2.4 Meta-theoretical Analysis

The mentioned theories underscore the key learning-significant factors. Motivation, individual differences, self-belief and students' need for consistent professional support, to drive their educational achievements are vital, both to the learning situation and the underpinning theories of the study. I subsequently propose the following set of *'self-efficacy-determination'* theoretical assumptions for a coherent conceptual framework towards a fruitful university academic counselling service in Ghanaian higher education.

I begin with Bandura's emphasis on the varied efficacy-belief systems that confirms the existence of individual differences in predicting all human activities, including students' academic performance. Indeed, several dichotomies are perceivable among a group of individuals or class of students. Prevalent differences are easily perceievable in respect of physical height, weight, socio-economic background, interest areas among many others but from the education viewpoint, academic attainment is usually most crucial.

The obvious variations in students' academic attainment is accordingly in agreement with the status quo, despite its challenging implications to educators worldwide. Students' poor

academic performance has remained a problematic trend in all its whims and caprices. Yet since these variations cannot be completely eradicated, educators worldwide as professionals are expected to continuously adopt feasible strategies to bridge the gap between the academically weak and strong. Students' concerns are many but equally so are the available avenues for exploration to redress them, thus compelling professionals to maintain a constant search for effective helping strategies for students. Effective student-centered approaches including problem-solving methods, project work and experiential learning could for instance be adopted, likewise a combination of motivational resources to facilitate learning. In effect, professionals must not rush into labelling students or declaring them failures when a host of avenues remain untapped to benefit students. The challenge has been thrown to them and they must live up to expectation.

Further considerations also led me to question the basis for the selection criteria educators adopted in determining the pass rate of students at the higher education level. What were the factors informing these criteria and how realistic are they in effectively screening students for certification, further education or employment? Answers to these questions will direct professionals to maintain consistent evaluation of the criteria they adopt regarding students' academic attainment rather than maintaining a fixed or static one.

More importantly, the emphasis both theories placed on competence, as a critical factor in facilitating students' academic behaviour suggests a strong area of exploration to design future support services for students. Factors like stress, threats and stringent deadlines have been proven to generate frustrations among students, much more than favourably enduring effects and their avoidance in designing efficient support services for students will be in the right direction. This again suggests a wealth of avenues for exploration considering the varied nature of students' different capabilities and strengths. In effect, educators should strive to couch useful teaching, learning and counselling strategies that focus on learners' capabilities to impact their academic performance.

The factors of autonomy and relatedness in predicting human behaviour, according to the self-determination theory also have a lot to offer in designing favourable strategies to promote students' studies. The vital role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as Bandura's four sources of constructing efficacy-belief systems are all useful factors to be considered in the support service endeavour. In conclusion, I reiterate Toshalis and Nakkula's (2012) emphasis on the importance of social support services in confronting students' academic challenges. Their proposal of motivation to significantly improve students' studies is meaningful though a thorough awareness of students' personal orientations is a key determinant of the most appropriate for various students in each case. Indeed, not all students enter college with the motivation to study and an assurance of useful support services will be a key remedy to students' low performance trends and its associated high student attrition problem in higher education.

2.3 Students' experiences with academic counselling

Experience is believed to be the best teacher in the world. Literature underscores the priceless contributions of academic advising to students' retention and graduation at college (Drake, 2011; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Cox, 2013). Yet authors like Steingass and Sykes, (2008) and Orozco, Alvarez, & Gutkin, (2010) have expressed deep concerns about students' continued poor ratings of academic advising in the recent past. Orozco, Alvarez and Gutkin, in fact, found prevalent poor service patronage and low perceptions of both counselling and advising among African students. The situation was attributed to students' low regard for the service that further engendered an apathetic attitude towards the facilities. Light, (2002) expresses similar concerns by describing academic advising as "the single most under estimated characteristic of a successful college experience" (p. 81). The remark highlights the profound benefits the advising facility has to offer college students. Students' poor perception of the facility thus left much to be desired.

In a Southeastern United States public university, Patterson, (2013) reported mixed experiences of first year students with the academic advising service. The qualitative study adopted interviews with ten first-generation African-American students, purposively sampled for this phenomenological multiple case study. The research aimed at exploring

students' experiences with the academic advising service. Students' positive counselling influences reportedly emerged from the two key factors comprising counsellor availability and students' personally sacrificed time for service. The factors facilitated students' interactions with their advisors and enabled their access to valuable information for their academic success. Students also recorded their preferences for prolonged advising services, given that they provided better returns to their lives. The healthy and constructive interactions students shared with their counsellors also facilitated their transfer of the dependent parental relationships to their college advisors. Several of them equally associated their return to second year studies to the healthy advising sessions they enjoyed in the previous year.

Genuine care and concern for students was equally stressed as key in facilitating their college commitment and integration (Drake, 2011; Allard & Parashar, 2013). The value of academic counselling lies more in its trusted advisor-client relationship than with the comprehensive student record it often conferred (Drake, 2011). Accordingly, care for new students in particular was found to reduce students' vulnerability to the numerous adjustment problems that often hampered their academic performance in the college first year (Allard & Parashar, 2013). The value new students placed on the care and concern they experienced from advisors was unfathomable (Allard & Parashar, 2013). It was thus unsurprising that a caring attitude emerged as the most popular factor in determining students' retention at the 'What Works in Student Retention' (WWISR) (1987) study. Robbins (2012) equally stressed the value of care in advisor training programmes while Hughey, (2011) attributed advisor care for students to their enhanced interactions and strengthened associations with the various institutions of study. Caring advisor relationships ultimately promoted information transfer between the parties and propelled in-depth understanding of college life (Drake, 2011).

Open and frank talk held after class hours also promoted the sharing of meaningful quality time to engender immense effects on students' college retention. Ford and Ford, (1989) also stressed students' preference for care as a normal human psychological need. This is emphasized by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (McLeod, 2014). Student advising thus offers the most desirable support that transforms naïve unfocused first year students into

matured, academically fulfilled and career-oriented graduates. By implication, the academic advisor remains a key and probably the first faculty member who propels the first-year students' adjustment in a new institution. Zajacova, et al., (2005) attributes poor college student performance to the prevalence of adjustment problems and high college attrition. Students' successful integration into college or their '*judgement of fit within the new setting*' (Hoffman, et al., 2002, p. 228) was therefore identified as a contributory factor to their early college drop out.

In a North East United States-based university, Allard and Parashar (2013) reported a mixed methods research that ascertained students' experiences with their institution's academic counselling service. The first phase was a quantitative online study where undergraduate student recorded their satisfaction levels with their institution's advising services. Three thousand three hundred and thirty-one students, representing twenty-five point five percent of the population responded to the questionnaire. Two-thousand nine-hundred and twenty-three of these respondents reported having received advising. The second research phase however engaged one-hundred and three students in eight separate focus group discussions. Each of the sessions lasted about one hour and comprised a maximum of eighteen gender and racially balanced number of participants. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data while the focus group data only confirmed the questionnaire gathered information (Allard & Parashar, 2013). On the quantitative front, students valued the institutional service they encountered, owing to its influence in the achievement of their academic goals. All advisor forms namely, the faculty, professional and informal served the students' purposes. Overall, many students appreciated the advising services though a few had cause to be dissatisfied. Faculty advisors were generally commended for their good efforts that students mostly never appreciated. Focus group data on the other hand stressed advisor unavailability in both categories, but poor administrative support and record keeping proved very challenging for faculty advisors. Some participants for example registered their frustrations in reaching their unavailable advisors by phone. The few student clients who persevered however, benefitted from alternative sessions.

First year orientation events usually welcomed new students to their various institutions of study. The programme also usually initiated students' smooth adjustment to college life while maximizing their potentials towards an exciting and rich academic, personal and experiential growth within their new institutions. Pleasurable activities often took the greater part of orientation services with the aim to enable students initiate useful social and academic networks for their smooth advancement at college. The reported study by Gas et al., (2003) ascertained the long-term effect of the University of New Hampshire orientation programme held in 1984 on students' future lives. The five-day 'Summer fireside experience program' (SFEP) engaged students in various enjoyable and interactive activities, sharing cordiality with faculty, peers and in academic work. A sample size of thirty-two past students were engaged in the study that culminated in interview evaluations with sixteen participants after a seventeen-year period. The goal of the interviews was to capture the programme impact on students' lives. The first evaluation programme occurred after three and half years of graduation and engaged three different groups, namely the original SFEP, a subsequent group and an unengaged or control group. A second evaluation later followed the initial one. Both programmes revealed favourable SFEP effects, first regarding student retention, performance and peer interactions, and secondly compared retention rates between the subsequent and control groups. The final long-term evaluation however confirmed the usefulness of experience mobilisation as a worthwhile research technique.

Another report by Lee and Dawson, (2010) stressed an unproductive and de-motivating result from students' initial experiences with the lecture-based orientation. The event was reported to have been stage-managed by key staff members who made presentations to students. Speakers at the function also encouraged students to manage their time effectively and construct favourable attitude to promote their studies. Not only did the event ultimately fail to achieve its orientation goal but it also increased attrition rates among the target group during their initial college year (Lee & Dawson, 2010). The subsequent support from the University of Birmingham's Learning Development Unit motivated a re-designed event that yielded better outcomes. This time, students' opinions were sought in re-packaging the event. The needs of international and special student groups were for instance well catered for in the re-designed event. A higher turnout rate

was ultimately recorded as students' ideas were deeply incorporated in the re-designed programme (Lee & Dawson, 2010). Lee and Dawson for that matter described orientation as a worthwhile time and resource consuming activity.

In the report presented by Ruthani (2016) the counselling experiences of seventeen clients with final year counsellor trainees was mixed. Study participants were within the age range of 20-35 and were also purposively selected from different counselling facilities located in an east coastal Malaysian state. In-depth interviews were utilized in this qualitative study for data collection and participants provided their consents prior to their engagement in the study. Opportunity was subsequently offered participants who were disinterested to opt out of the study. The sessions were also held in the participants' chosen environment to ensure their comfortability during data collection. Gathered data was analysed via the transcription and thematic content analysis method. The study highlighted three themes that resonated significant client experiences. Not only did clients gain insight into the counselling facility but their profound insight into their individual weaknesses also facilitated their behaviour change to realize their counselling goals. Clients also valued the favourable counsellor qualities and skills they encountered. Counsellors' attentive listening and friendliness for instance affected clients positively. Clients also reported feeling happier and more relaxed about their counselling concerns after their initial encounters. The service turned out to be relieving to clients, given that it assured them of available solutions to resolve their problems. Overall, Ruthani's participants found counselling a rewarding, progressive and innovative experience.

On the other hand, Patterson (2013) reported some participants' negative counselling experiences. According to his report, some students were shunned and poorly treated by their counsellors. Allard and Parashar, (2013) similarly reported some unpleasant advising experiences encountered by some other disappointed students. The advisors in this case were essentially pre-occupied with teaching and administrative tasks. Many of such experiences reflected increased anxiety, frustrations and regretful feelings to the students. Students confronted with such difficulties were accordingly challenged to cater for their personal needs. Their absence of advisors at the appointed advising times left students yearning for advisor proactivity to avoid future disappointments. Absentee

advisors were also encouraged to adopt technological means in managing their busy schedules in order to make time for their scheduled appointments (Allard & Parashar, 2013).

The study report by Mansor and Yusuf (2013) also explored the subjective experiences encountered by students on the practicum sessions with trainee counsellors in the 2012/2013 academic year. Sessions were mostly held in secondary schools where Malay, Chinese, Indian and Indonesian students studied. Trainee counsellors encountered nervousness, worry and anxiety, particularly during the first weeks of their practicum sessions. Their anxieties emerged from uncertainties regarding the anticipated reception school staff would offer counsellor trainees on the field. Environmental adaptation and students' low perceptions of trainee counsellors also created stress among trainees. Ultimately, trainees encountered a tough time meeting their practicum aims due to students' negative perceptions of trainee counsellors and students' preference for their original counsellors' services.

2.4 Students' attitudes towards academic counselling

Students' experience with the academic counselling service immensely influences their attitudes towards the service. Hogg and Vaughan (2005) define attitude as "a *relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols*" (p. 150-151).

Attitudes thus simply refer to our mental dispositions and appraisals of events in our social world. Attitudes invariably tend to be lasting and either maintain or dismiss our judgements of the concerned situation. While positive attitudes enhance learning proficiency, negative ones only reduce the tendency for further interaction with the concerned object (Brown, 2008, p. 181). A positive attitude thus implies several interactions with the concerned event to nurture insight and understanding. Hog and Vaughan, (2005) further stress that a favourable attitude derives beneficial outcomes from a situation but a negative one results in a profound ignorance about the event. Strong

attitudes also result in enduring conducts with a high tendency to impact behaviour (Petty et al., 2003).

At the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, Owusu et al., (2014) discovered students' positive attitudes towards the first-year orientation service. Apart from welcoming students into the university, the orientation programme offered students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with institutional staff, facilities and colleagues. This facilitated students' integration into their novel environment for an enhanced institutional commitment. The study focused on the 2012 university orientation programme. The descriptive survey engaged two hundred and fifty second year students selected via a multi-staged sampling technique. Data was mainly collected via questionnaires. Results generally reflected high student turnouts at the orientation programmes for various reasons. The need to fraternize with colleagues, to access relevant educational information and to gather factual institutional policy information were justifiable motives for conducting the orientation. Students who patronized the first-year orientation programmes often performed commendably in their academic work.

The descriptive survey on students' attitudes towards guidance and counselling in Kenya was moreover conducted in pairs of public and private institutions. K'Okul, (2010) engaged students at the public Universities of Nairobi and Kenyatta as well as the United States International University and the Daystar University as private institutions. Frequent students' riot and indiscipline that characterized Kenyan institutions was the main justification for the study. A total sample of three hundred and fifty-eight students were engaged in the study. Questionnaires, focus group discussions and observation were the key instruments adopted for data collection. Study results confirmed the valuable pastoral care, career guidance and therapeutic services offered as part of counselling services in the studied institutions. However, high patronage of the guidance and counselling services were found among private university students than existed among students in the public institutions.

Flischer and De Beer, (2002) also explored the characteristics of students receiving counselling at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The study aim was to identify the characteristics of students patronizing the university counselling services. A total sample of nine hundred and thirty-two students who received service over a three-year period (from January 1991 – December 1993) were engaged in the study. They mostly accessed counselling either by self-referral or by referrals from institutional staff. The number of sessions ranged between one to twenty-nine, with the majority of 753 students (83.2%) experiencing below six sessions. To project the features of counselled students, the sample characteristics were compared with those of the control group that comprised twenty-three thousand one hundred and fifty-eight uncounselled students in the institution. Nine independent variables were explored via quantitative measures in the study. Overall, adult African women were found to patronise counselling more because they valued it. Non-English speakers, students in the Humanities, undergraduates, first year students, the well endowed and those from outside Cape Town, also attended counselling more than any other group of students.

A study at the Missouri State University also highlighted students' positive attitude towards the advising service via a high patronage of the programme. At the Missouri State University, the Students' Orientation, Advisement and Registration programme (SOAR) was adopted to enable first year students in particular, discuss their academic difficulties with their advisors. SOAR was thus a mandatory semester activity in the institution. Teasley and Buchanan, (2013) engaged ninety-six undergraduate students, forty-eight of whom were first year students and sampled from various faculties, including Psychology. The survey enabled students to rate their advisors on a seven-point Likert scale. The positive attitudes of the majority seventy-six percent students who sought advising services in the previous year was clearly revealed in the study. As many as sixty-five participants, representing (67.7%) also patronised the SOAR programme while many other students were expected to discontinue seeing their advisors actually never quitted seeking advising services. The majority of them in fact, displayed interest in meeting their advisors. Additionally, students who continued their advisor visits mostly required some level of academic support.

The study conducted by Mini, (2016) in the coastal state of Malaysia also engaged seventeen counselled clients at an average age of 25. The study aimed at exploring clients' experiences with counselling sessions offered by counsellor trainees in that Malaysian state. The purposive sampling and interviews were adopted in this study. Study findings stressed the remarkable effects of counselling on clients' lives. Clients essentially reported feeling happier and more relaxed about their problems, after their counselling encounters. They also came to a better understanding of themselves as individuals and subsequently made amends to improve their social relations with others. The study also highlighted some positive attributes of the counsellors they encountered. Friendliness and warmth on the part of the counsellors underscored a welcoming experience for clients. On their arrival to the counselling sessions, counsellors' smiles and warm greetings were comforting to clients. Counsellors' attentive listening and rewarding responses to clients' concerns also heightened clients' confidence in their sessions. They thus felt happy, relaxed and accommodated in their counsellors' presence. Clients who were naturally reserved and would normally not disclose their concerns to others, eventually opened up to their counsellors, owing to the warmth they received from them. Clients' feelings of trustworthiness also emphasized their confidence in the counsellor's capabilities to assist them.

Schwartz and Flowers, (2010) also highlighted a number of best counsellor practices for emulation by trainee counsellors. Key among these practises was for counsellors to earlier phone their clients for a confirmation of their first appointments. This counsellor effort reportedly maintained over sixty percent clients in the counselling situation. It was obvious that the element of care, in making contact with clients prior to their sessions, facilitated this high service patronage. Secondly, the warm counsellor-client relationship established during the sessions firmly secured clients' confidence in the service, thereby tightening clients' commitment to counselling in this case.

Further emphasis on students' attitudes towards counselling underscored the significance of listening in the counselling process. Listening was considered a critical counsellor

behaviour in the British-based study that focused on counselling for the bereaved. Listening offers counsellors, the singular opportunity to hear and actively interpret clients' talk. Payne et al., (2002) stressed the importance of listening in assisting clients to express their painful emotional experiences. Through listening counsellors also actualised the 'therapeutic' and 'cathartic effect' of the clients' talk (p. 171) via the expression of pain through weeping, emotional outbursts and speaking. The activities were essentially relieving to clients. The study adopted a qualitative approach to examine the attendance of counselling in the British primary care services. It was set in the two Southern British communities of Plymouth and Southampton. A total of 76 general practitioners (47 and 29 respectively) were interviewed for the study while the grounded theory approach was adopted for analysis.

Literature generated by Weger, Castle and Emmett, (2010) also associated active or empathetic listening to Carl Rogers (1951). The authors defined active listening as involving an offer of unconditional and dispassionate acceptance to clients, that enables the counsellor a comprehension of the clients' genuine experience. Active listening also ensures the establishment of trust and empathy between counsellor and client by enabling a non-judgemental listening of the client. The active listening process also entails non-verbal involvement, paraphrasing or a re-statement of the clients' report followed by relevant questions on the presented issues.

Students and staff equally displayed poor counselling attitudes in a South-eastern United States establishment (White, et al., 2013). Even though both groups stressed the importance of counselling in their institution, they showed complete ignorance about the service and did little to promote it. The study was conducted in an academic health centre within the United States vicinity in 2011. With approval from the Vice Chancellor of the institution, the Academic Counselling Service engaged 963 staff and 2,067 students for responses on the two-point Likert scaled questionnaire items. Involvement was essentially voluntary and the questionnaires were completed online. According to the results, a majority of both groups acknowledged the relevance of counselling in the institution but only 279 out of the 963 staff were aware of the operations of the service. Only eighteen percent, representing 173 staff also reported ever-referring clients to the

centre for assistance. Students were equally apathetic towards the counselling service given that only seven hundred and twenty-three, out of the one hundred and sixteen students who acknowledged the importance of academic counselling, were conversant with the means to access the service at the facility. As low as nine-hundred and nine students also reported willingly recommending the centre's services to their friends. Aggressive promotional measures were recommended to remedy the situation.

In a similar situation, Turkish students generally avoided the service due to their ignorance about it in their home country. Guneri and Skovholt (1999) and Demir and Aydin (1996) presented Turkish students as mostly novices to the roles of the counsellor, although many of them needed the service. Similarly, Sahin, Sezgin, Tas and Tuganci, (1989), who discovered almost 80% of students in a Turkish University being ignorant about the duties of the counsellor. Stigma and fear of labelling was highlighted as the major cause of this situation among the students. In the event that students' orientations strongly predicted their ability to adapt to counselling changes, the study recommended counsellors' consideration of students' cultural orientations when providing service to them. Also since prior counselling experience resulted in better students' attitude towards the service, counsellors were encouraged to advertise their service more to enhance students' patronage of the service.

The study by Chen and Kok, (2015) sought to ascertain the factors establishing poor counselling participation among secondary school students in a highly regarded Chinese Malaysian school. Two-hundred and seventy-seven students sampled from two high schools in Perak, Malaysia were involved in the study. A hundred and twenty-one of them were males and one-hundred and fift-six, were females. Out of these, 14 had ever encountered personal counselling, eight of them were referred to the service for indiscipline and the remaining 255 had no counselling experience. An open-ended item questionnaire investigating the barriers students encountered in accessing counselling was adopted. Braun and Clarks' (2006) thematic analysis method was used to analyse the gathered data. Study findings highlighted stigma and shame among students as they made efforts to access counselling. Lack of confidence in counsellor competence and

perceived support from family members were equally significant factors that hindered students' participation in counselling.

2.5. Students' perceptions of academic counselling at the University

Students' experiences with the academic counselling service also predicted their service perceptions that in turn affected their academic counselling participation. Overall, cited studies in Africa and around the world reflected mixed perceptions regarding counselling.

In Kenya, K'Okul's (2010) descriptive survey on students' perceptions of guidance and counselling in both public and two private institutions were quite revealing. The Universities of Nairobi and Kenyatta represented the public institutions and the United States International University as well as the Daystar University represented the private engaged institutions. The sample comprised three hundred and fifty-eight students and counsellors while study instruments comprised questionnaires, focus group discussions and personal observation. Students generally perceived guidance and counselling services as useful in stemming their numerous rioting incidents in Kenya. They also proposed adopting peer counselling services to allay the fears of unenthusiastic students. Effective counselling services were suggested for implementation prior to students' examinations, in order to ease their stress and anxiety symptoms. Results on the private institutions presented equally favourable perceptions of counselling. Among them were students' suggestions to integrate guidance and counselling in the institution's curriculum, adopting purposive counselling for radical students, the introduction of support group counselling services and the provision of counselling through club activities. Students further requested for group counselling talk programmes and seminars to enable them to discuss pertinent issues with institutional and governmental authorities.

More also, students' perceptions at the Al Qassim University in Saudi Arabia were found to vary considerably in relation to their understanding of the counselling center's activities. The study explored students' opinions on the functions of the counselling centre at the Al-Qassin University (Al-Bahadel, 2012). Students' views were discovered to be inconsistent

with the actual role expectations of the counselling centre. Their poor understanding of approved counsellor roles and functions of the counselling center further hampered their efficient use of the counselling service. Their wrong counselling perceptions were however attributed to counsellors' engagement in unapproved roles within the institution. Al-Bahadel, (2012) reported these findings in relation to a quantitative study involving one-hundred and twenty-seven students from the university. The sample was selected from the 2009 - 2010 batch of students from the Humanities and Science departments that utilized the institution's counselling center. Data was mainly gathered with a questionnaire and the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was subsequently employed for the analysis. Eighteen poorly filled questionnaires were discarded and thus reduced the sample size to one hundred and nine. Students' wrong perception of counselling center activities were reported to have emerged from the center's inability to meet their needs. Lack of counsellor and insufficient counsellor time established students' poor counselling perceptions.

In another development, Afshar, (2009) also reported mixed perceptions of one hundred and fifty-six undergraduate students, regarding academic counselling in a private urban university. A fifteen-item structured questionnaire and an open-ended questionnaire were adopted for data collection. In phase one, students rated their advisors based on their satisfaction with counsellors' work on a four-point scale. In phase two, students commented on advising processes, discussed issues, their expectations of advisors and how well these expectations were met. The survey was designed and conducted by the university's counselling center. Students were mostly content with items on social and personal needs, as well as advisors' attitudinal skills. They were however dissatisfied with the advisor's lack of knowledge and information on general issues. Additional concerns were raised about poor counsellor information and attitudes but the study offered nothing regarding the role played by advisors' interpersonal skills on campus. Students also perceived advisor effectiveness to include being able to share appropriate information and providing care, love and understanding to students.

Street children and the homeless also form a unique category of young people who stand to benefit tremendously from counselling. Yet little is known about the homeless youth's

perceptions of counselling. The research reported by Cormack, (2009) engaged 16-21-year-old street children in two separate focus group sessions, of three and five. Audio and video recordings were employed to capture the youth's expressed views about counselling. The sessions were also held in the usual terrain of the participants to ensure their free expression. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were assured of confidentiality. The grounded theory backed by Strauss and Corbin's (1990 & 1998) method was adopted for data analysis. Participants' understanding of counselling was found to be poor especially since they misconstrued counselling as a service for crazy people. This propelled their dislike for the service. It was additionally discovered that participants trusted their support workers much more than the trained counsellors whom they mostly perceived as strangers. The unpleasant experiences of some homeless youth may have established their reported low counselling perception. A few participants who ever encountered coerced counselling sessions also nurtured strong feelings of dislike for the service.

The prevalent low students' perception of counselling services on university campuses was promoted by the counselling centers' low emphasis on students' concerns regarding sex related issues. Issues regarding sexual relationships have always been a key area of concern among young people, including university students. College students are undeniably sexually active; hence they often remain keenly interested in sex-related issues. This stressed the significance of sex education and suggested the subject as a vital focus for counselling centers on university campuses.

Reporting on the issue, Hattori, Richter & Greene, (2010) stressed the element of trust as a major contributory factor to the prevalent sexual promiscuity among young people in recent times. Young people's understanding of trust was deeply compromised, where sexual relationships were concerned thus the increased incidence of unprotected sexual activities among students. The two-phased study centered on a Behaviour Change Communication campaign, as a control measure to the increased HIV infections via heterosexual contact in the targeted vicinities. The initial survey centered on 15- 24-year olds selected from Lesotho, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia. The second phase engaged youth from eight sub-Saharan Africa countries in focus group discussions

regarding condom use. The focus groups suggested that increased partner awareness heightened sexual trust that resulted in reduced risk of HIV infection among sexual partners. Young sexual partners accordingly discontinued their use of condoms following their increased trust in their partners. The high admission of youth on university campuses in recent times, demanded the focus of institutional counselling centers to spearhead the campaign for safe sex practises on campuses. University counselling centers were perceived as the most appropriate to address the campaign for safer sex practises among higher education students in recent times.

Similarly, sexual intimacies and alcohol consumption were identified as two prevalent social behaviours among college students. In their report, Brown and Vanable (2007) suggested a strong positive relationship between the two among higher education students. A total of three-hundred and thirty female sexually active college students of varied race and above eighteen years were involved in the survey. The study focused on health and sexual safety among higher education students. Participation in the research was purely voluntary and data was gathered via questionnaires. The questionnaire items concentrated on the study focus namely students' alcohol consumption and their sexual orientations. The high rates of sexual activity and alcohol consumption on university campuses stressed the need for a safer sex campaign by institutional counselling centers worldwide.

Despite the ban on sexual immorality in the country, Adhikari and Tamang, (2009) discovered the prevalence of pre-marital sex among male college students in Nepal. Extremely low levels of sex education accordingly prevailed in Kathmandu, thus increasing the incidence of high immorality among college students in the environs. The research adopted a mixed methods approach and was conducted in the year 2006. The study sought in-depth insight into the causal factors promoting promiscuity among male students in Kathmandu. Five hundred and seventy-three students were randomly sampled from twelve colleges for the study. Two rounds of the random sampling method generated the selected colleges and engaged classes in the study. The questionnaire and interview methods were the main data collection instruments while the chi square statistic was adopted to determine the relationship between the forbidden sexual act and

its prevailing factors. Unprotected sexual activities were found to be equally prevalent among study participants and age was a strong factor in determining male students' attitude towards the menace.

Despite their profound need for assistance, student athletes' low perceptions of counselling have lately emerged as a strong barrier to their professional help-seeking (Watson, 2003). Watson (2003) contended that the students' low counselling perception was motivated by certain career-related factors that hampered their help seeking. First, was the athletes' independent orientations and complacency as lifetime winners. This sense of gratification prevented them from acknowledging the existence of a problem, despite their numerous social challenges that necessitated help seeking. The athletes' attendance of counselling in fact implied denting their high winner images. Besides, their daily hectic schedules also restricted their search for assistance. Accordingly, instead of consulting professional counsellors, athletes preferred to consult their ignorant coaches, family members and friends, regarding their problems. Nevertheless, college athletes were more perturbed than their other school colleagues. Etzel (2011) confirmed this fact though Apaak and Sarpong, (2015) refuted it. Ultimately, the student athletes' continued avoidance of counselling presents a looming problem to their social, emotional and psychological development.

Emphasis on the Student Orientation, Advisement and Registration programme (SOAR), at the Missouri State University also highlighted students' high perceptions of the academic advising service. SOAR was a mandatory first year activity. Teasley and Buchanan (2013) involved ninety-six undergraduate students, including forty-eight first years in the study. The adopted advising satisfaction scale assessed student's perceptions of the advising services. Students' overall confidence in advising facilitated their high service patronage where many of them showed continued advising interest though they no longer required it. The few who students who showed early disinterest in their advising meetings reported encountering frustrations in meeting their advisors. These students also desired some independence in the service.

In Malaysia Mini's (2016) study explored clients' experiences with counselling offered by trainee counsellors. The study that engaged seventeen young clients, adopted interview sessions for data collection. Findings revealed poor counselling perceptions among clients but their initial lack of confidence in counselling and wrong assumptions about the service were all eradicated after their counselling experiences. Clients also gained in-depth insight into their capabilities and subsequently adopted a better outlook on life, after their counselling experiences. Other clients also improved their perceptions about life via their counselling experiences as they came to the realization that confronting several life challenges in fact enhances one's life outlook, rather than presenting him as a failure in life.

2.6 The perceived impact of academic counselling on students' achievement

Compelling evidence also exists to show that academic advising affects students' achievement (Cox, 2013; Rhodes et al., 2002; Barnes & Austin, 2009). Barnes and Austin (2009) for instance identified the doctoral advisor as the most essential contact in the overall social development of the student. The student-advisor relationship was described as purely interactive thus endorsing the students' enhanced socialization. The study engaged twenty-five record-holding doctoral advisors in in-depth interviews regarding the key roles of advisors. The sample comprised advisors from the Natural and Social Sciences as well as the Humanities departments. The research was conducted in 2006 at a high-ranking doctoral graduating University based in the United States. Interview sessions were recorded for future transcription based on Strauss and Corbin's thematic analysis method of data analysis. The three emerging advising themes comprised advisor features, behaviours and student-advisor rapport, advisor duties and advisor roles. Study findings revealed that the focus of advising was usually determined by students' needs, aside providing meaningful direction and research orientation to students. In this way, advising yielded immense benefit to doctoral students.

Cox (2013) likewise found students deeply satisfied with their college academic advising service. The qualitative study adopted a phenomenological design that focused on the

relationship between academic advising and students' success at college. The study was also set in the Midwest Metropolitan community college. Three hundred and twenty second year students, selected by three major criteria comprising experience in counselling, being a registered second year student and finally, having previously participated in the Educational Talent Search were engaged in the study. The probability and random sampling methods were also employed in the sample selection. Data was gathered by in-depth interviews and the analysis accomplished via the transcript method. Second year students confirmed the essence of their first-year experiences with advising in reducing their study difficulties to the barest minimum. Students additionally reported gaining profound insight into the college academic and social life, following the meaningful information they received from advising. The said information enhanced their confidence and facilitated their adjustment within the institution. It also facilitated students' the deeper concentration on their studies. The result was their high academic achievement that ushered them into their second year of study. The relevance of advisor information in this study also resonated the importance of the information component in advisor training programmes (Robin, 2012). Study participants also mentioned benefiting diversely from advisor support, in the areas of choice of major courses, improvement of study skills and a correspondingly smooth progress towards timely graduation.

Pargett (2011) also reported the encouraging impact of advising on students at the University of Nebraska- Lincoln. The study examined the association between institutional college advising and students' academic performance, in relation to their personal details and grade point averages. It further ascertained students' satisfaction levels with the advising services they received. A total of seventy-six Business Administration students selected via the simple random sampling method were engaged in the study. Data was collected via the Academic Advisory Inventory (AAI) developed by Roger B. Winstor and Janet A. Sandor in 1984. Each participant spent a maximum of twenty minutes completing the inventory. Participation in the study was however voluntary while the Nebraska Evaluation and Research Center was engaged in the data analysis. The study revealed that students appreciated the academic advisory service on campus, and thus patronized it on an unscheduled basis. Favourable service effects were also recorded in students'

development, especially when they were consistent with their advisor meetings, and openly discussed more personal issues with their advisors.

In ascertaining the academic returns of counselling on college students' attainment, Renuka et al., (2013) also studied fifty-four students from the Sree Balaji Medical College and Hospital. The sample comprised first year individually counselled students from the 2007-2008-year group. Pre- and post-counselling tests were conducted on study participants, after which questionnaires were administered at the end of the first year to collect intervention effect data. Participation was purely voluntary in the study and questionnaire items focused on the available counselling service as well as the number of sessions attended by participants. Data analysis however involved questionnaire responses and participants' test scores. About fifty-six percent of study participants showed marked improvement in their attainment, following their counselling experiences. Only an insignificant four percent reported no physical performance improvement in their studies. Overall, counselling services were found to be useful, with the most appreciable effect on the performance of more counselling engaged students.

Freeman, (2008) also reported a remarkable effect of the academic advising service on students' achievement at the Wisconsin University, in Oshkosh. In this institution, academic advising was considered an exclusive liaison between students and their advisers, where both shared a comprehensive educational plan to thrust students' holistic development. Until 2002 when advising was revamped, the facility was nothing to write home about. The typically rural institution sited in northeastern Wisconsin was replete with a confused bunch of first-generation students at the time of the study. For over ten years, students remained displeased with advising, faculty members were essentially apathetic and the overwhelming advisor-student ratios rendered service useless. It took the aggressive efforts of an external consultant to turn the tides regarding the advising facility. Subsequently, academic advising at Wisconsin has achieved milestones in students' lives. It has facilitated their couching of meaningful life goals, sharpening relevant study skills and building favourable attitudes to promote their intellectual growth and academic success. The revamped academic advising system has further enabled

students to efficiently explore significant life goals to structure and adopt useful academic schedules for better outcomes.

A similar study investigated the impact of School Based Counselling Services (SBCS) in a semi-rural local authority setting in South Wales (Hamilton-Roberts, 2012). Nine Secondary schools within the Local Authority were involved with an involvement of all four school- based counsellors and nine link-teachers. The study adopted a mixed methods approach that combined questionnaires, interviews and a focus group discussion for data collection. Counsellors were engaged in focus group discussions but link-teachers were involved in interviews and questionnaires. Both focus group and interview sessions were transcribed and analyzed via content analysis but descriptive statistics were adopted for the quantitative aspect of the study. On both research approach fronts, Hamilton-Roberts, (2012) reported that counselling yielded invaluable effects on students' studies. The favourable counselling influences reflected in students' mental health, emotional wellness, study, behavioural and relational benefits.

In another development, Cooper, (2009) examined the effect of secondary school counselling services in the United Kingdom. Thirty studies were examined via a systematic literature search. The selection criteria included a United Kingdom study involving individual counselling sessions with students. Studies should also range between the 1998 -2009 periods and aim at service audit and evaluation. Studies adopting the mixed methods for data analysis were also selected. Reported counselling concerns were essentially relational with males mostly reporting anger concerns. The effect of counselling reflected in stable mental health as majority of the students presented at counselling in distress. Both teachers and students presented counselling as useful, particularly where studies and problem sharing were concerned (Cooper, 2009). Students above all strongly valued counsellors' attending skills and the talk therapy in counselling.

The afore-mentioned reiterate Light's (2001) observation that academic advising is indeed the single most significant students' facility on campus. The service undeniably

promotes students' attainment and its increased provision in higher education institutions will be of great value to the students.

On the other hand, Chen and Kok, (2015), highlighted stigmatisation as a strong barrier to counselling among students in Malaysia. Students' wrong perception of counselling as a corrective measure for people with behavioural problems, promoted this barrier that in turn propelled the stigmatization of counselled students in general. The social stigma thus culminated in reduced services patronage among students. Soon, many poorly trained counsellors took advantage of the low counselling perception to provide shoddy service to ignorant students. The situation worsened the situation among secondary school students. Poor counselling awareness was also identified as a contributory factor to students' low patronage of counselling. Other factors heightening low counselling perception among students were uncertainties regarding confidentiality, poor prior counselling experiences and other cultural factors cited as barriers to the wider counselling participation in Malaysia (Chen & Kok, 2015).

Literature immensely stressed the significance of the advisor-student relationship in every counselling situation. This significant relationship indeed determines the doctoral student's overall professional development, ease at work and programme completion time (Zhao et al., 2007). In the 1999 reviewed research, twenty-seven United States based Universities were engaged. Fifteen of them were outstanding doctoral graduating institutions while the additional nineteen belonged to the Association of American Universities. The study focused on the factors instigating the advisor-student rapport as critical to the students' improved work performance. Engaged students were sampled from eleven disciplines though converged into four, for the purposes of the study. The sample of 4010 well-socialized doctoral students was selected from the first-1996 batch of students. Students were required to rate their advisors' behaviours and also provide reasons for their advisor choice. Quantitative methods were used to analyse the data but aside the various themes that emerged regarding advisor choice and behaviour, the study confirmed a favourable effect of advisor behaviours on doctoral students. Methods of

advisor choice and advisor behaviours also confirmed students' satisfaction with advisor rapport.

2.7 Conclusion

The above review of empirical studies provides an interesting blend of the current study purpose with relevant documented literature to guide the entire study. The review presents a global picture regarding the essence of students' counselling service and thereafter, students' unique experiences with the facility as they sought assistance to improve their academic attainments. The review concurrently mobilised various students' accounts regarding the study goal to define what is anticipated by the current study.

2.8 Summary of review

It is the import of the reviewed literature in the current study to determine relevant data to butress the study, likewise the chosen theories that additionally underpinned the research. The reviewed literature essentially endorsed the adopted interpretive paradigm that further attracted the most appropriate research methodology to be applied in this case. By implication, the review of related literature guided and maintained the research's original focus byt suggesting the appropriate methods and relevant data to generate meaningful findings in response to the research questions.

A clearer meaning of the study goal thus emerged from the review of related literature, where the specific aims and objective of the counselling/ advising services were found to be essential in promoting students' educational endeavours. Related literature in this chapter equally defined the important gap that was yet to be filled by the current study – students' attitudes, perception and benefits derived from the academic counselling service. In the long run, study participants' accounts from the study aligned with the study goal to generate meaningful reponses to the demands of each of the outlined research questions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the literature and theoretical perspectives that relate to the study topic. In this chapter, I discuss the adopted research paradigm and the underpinning assumptions of the study (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010). Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2010) opine that the various research paradigms have exclusive underlying assumptions that differentiate among them. The assumptions of the interpretive paradigm I adopted in the current study, together with the research purpose determined my methodological approach (Krauss, 2005). Krauss (2005) observes that the applied research methodology determines the specific practices adopted in an inquiry process. Research methodology thus refers to how an inquirer approaches and accomplishes his research (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). It simply comprises the researcher's norms, interests and commitments that propels the appropriate research path he adopts to reach truthful study findings (Taylor et al., 2015). From my paradigmatic standpoint, I therefore adopted the appropriate research design, the suitable methods for adoption and raised a strong justification for their choice and use in this particular study.

As a qualitative researcher I also thought about my instrumental role in seeking to reveal the meanings study participants assigned to the university academic counselling service, as it relates to the events of their academic, social and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2013; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Berg (2004) stresses this immense researcher role in accomplishing action-oriented research. The expertise of the researcher, as the key instrument in couching suitable items to mobilise in-depth appropriate data endorses the relevance of qualitative inquirer Berg, 2004). I additionally provided explanations for the ethical issues I considered during the entire study and the means by which I maintained the trustworthiness of the current study (Tracy, 2010). Other significantly sound and valuable qualitative research indicators include the topic relevance and its contribution to society, credibility of the study and respect for participants (Tracy, 2010). The importance of the current study topic to higher education in particular, and the openness I adopted in

conducting and reporting on the various stages of the inquiry process are not disputable. Where necessary, I employed diagrams, pictures and tables to enhance the meanings of the concepts in the applied research procedures.

3.2 The qualitative research approach

I employed a qualitative research approach to explore participants' understanding of the academic counselling service and its impact on their study outcomes during this inquiry. The approach adopts a probing method to gain insight into a situation of interest by penetrating the human understandings and constructions about the phenomenon understudy (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The descriptive goal of qualitative research in general, stresses its comprehensive approach to the inquiry process (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). I further adopted the qualitative approach to emphasize the socially constructed multiple realities participants presented regarding their unique experiences with the academic counselling service. By this approach I determined to reach explicit descriptions and analytic emphasis on the emerging constructive social realities about the academic counselling service. The focus of the qualitative approach lies on the personal experiences and subsequent perceptions of study participants with the phenomenon of interest. Richardson (2000) accordingly projects the crystallisation of object perception, not as "fixed, rigid, two-dimensional" but comprising an "infinite variety of shapes, substance and angles of approach" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 81) that ultimately provides a compounded and deeper personal understandings of the university academic counselling phenomenon.

Qualitative researchers thus employ appropriate methodologies, to understand the intricacies of the life worlds of their study participants (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010; Taylor et al., 2015). The suitability of the applied research methods propels the mobilisation of meaningful study findings (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010). This implies the existence of several research methodologies to derive meaningful findings (Tuli, 2010; Wahyuni, 2012). Tuli (2010) stresses the non-existence of an ideal methodology given that each comes with exclusive benefits and shortcomings. All the methodologies are

however interrelated, considering their common goal in efficiently mobilising significant data regarding social events (Tuli, 2010). Additionally, qualitative research methodologies often progressed inductively, highlighting profound research details towards data depth (Ritchie et al., 2013) and a lesser emphasis on generalization. Ritchie et al., (2013) refer to this as generative research that captures emergent concepts for the creation of novel knowledge. The research methodology is also dependent on the chosen paradigm that guides the inquiry process (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Some methodologies may congregate and others disperse (Grant & Giddings, 2002). Scientific research for that matter, requires methodological skills that remain indispensable to the study.

3.3 The Paradigmatic Perspective

The current study adopts the interpretivist paradigm, following its focus on the meanings of lived experiences of research participants (Taylor et al., 2015). The interpretivists' emphasis on meanings of social phenomena via the actor's personal encounters encapsulates the essence of qualitative research (Taylor et al., 2015). Interpretivism emerged out of Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) that sought to understand the "Erlebni", meaning 'lived experience' of study participants (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 131). The word paradigm means 'pattern', 'model' or 'example' (Groenewald, 2004, p.6), implying that a research paradigm refers to a form of accepted norm, research conceptualization or set of values espoused by a group of people to understand a social situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2010). The interpretivists accordingly embraced a personal view of social phenomenon as perceived by the actor (Mertens, 2010). These personal or internal ideas about social phenomena, in fact represent the individual's belief system or theory about that phenomenon (Sefotho, 2015). In line with Sefotho, (2015), Kamil (2011) further suggested that interpretivists present multiple paradigms that address the various social realities of life, by exploring novel interpretations of multiple findings (De Villiers, 2005). This necessitated a consideration of study participants' individual experiences from their own perspectives in the current study.

The paradigm's profound emphasis on the perceiver's internal ideas, feelings and motives also demanded an unbiased, intrusive and sensitive researcher attitude (Hennink et al., 2010). This attitude aligned well with my aim in the current study, to understand participants' hidden meanings of the university academic counselling service and accordingly motivated me to stick religiously to its use. I consequently, determined to be truthful, inquisitive and probing, during data collection to access the candid and detailed responses of study participants from their accounts. Though achieving this purpose proved quite laborious and demanding, I ultimately found Hennink et al.,'s (2010) above advice to be unbiased and intrusive beneficial, as it enabled me reach the data depth I so much desired.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) additionally assert that research paradigms reflect four key factors consisting of ethics (axiology), epistemology, ontology and methodology. The research ethics or axiology focuses on morality or the researcher's values but epistemology concerns how one comes to know the world. By emphasizing the process of knowledge acquisition, epistemology draws an association between the researcher and his world. Ontology also reflects the nature of reality and the major research paradigms are positivism, post positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Wahyuni, 2012). Next, I present the philosophical assumptions underpinning the interpretivists' paradigm.

3.3.1 Ontological assumptions

The ontological assumption of the study centered on a subjective, relativistic and constructivist reality (Ponterotto, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Bhattacherjee, 2012). Knowledge is what people perceive it to be (Pooly-Cilliers et al., 2014) that implies a rejection of a single unitary and objective reality, to make way for multiple realities (Ponterotto, 2005; Sefotho, 2015). Sefotho, (2015) suggested that researchers' emphasis on varied worldviews commenced with interpretivism. In this study, participants' unique perceptions of the university academic counselling service determined their exclusive understanding of the service, to result in their varied meanings of experiences with the university

academic counselling service. Interpretivism thus embraces a profound emphasis on the construction of knowledge by social actors (Mertens, 2005).

The next ontological assumption highlighted a context-specific and time-bound reality (Sefotho, 2015). Participants' experiences with the academic counselling service largely depended on the physical, social and cultural circumstances in which they were grounded. Their thoughts and perceptions were also coloured by their circumstances and the period of their encounter with the service. This means that participants' perceptions of the counselling service only remained transient reflections of the real service (Willig, 2008) and their perceptions were in reality, different from the actual counselling phenomenon (Plooy- Cilliers et al., 2014). By implication, participants emphasized varied perceptions, based on the specific conditions and time under which the counselling phenomena was experienced (Willig, 2008), thereby resulting in the formation of several individually constructed perceptions of the academic counselling service.

Accessing the personally constructed realities regarding the university academic counselling service thus required my emphasis on the various research sites. I accordingly maintained the awareness of the research setting in this study by conducting all the twenty-two in-depth interviews and focus group session in participants' natural contexts (Hennink et al., 2010). Hennink et al., (2010) opine that participants' cultural orientations has immense effect on their accounts. I also took advantage of the academic social settings of participants by adopting the institutionally accepted language of instruction, English Language to facilitate my data collection process (Squires, 2008). Squires (2008) opines that language in data collection influences the key research measures of trustworthiness comprising credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. I realized that phenomenological studies were better conducted in a familiar language to explicate participants' experiences and perceptions than in an unfamiliar one (Twinn, 1997), and accordingly adopted the familiar language to achieve my study aim. Both the familiar language and natural sites I adopted in the current research thus offered participants the liberty and ease to express trustworthy responses to my questions.

3.3.2 Epistemological assumptions

My epistemological stance in this study was moreover based primarily on the assumption that the search for knowledge cannot be achieved without an intimate discourse between the researcher and participants. Intimacy between the subject or knower and the observed (the object) (Taylor et al., 2015) was necessary to gain insight into participants' lived experiences (Bahari, 2010). Intimacy justifies the description of interpretivist researchers as 'feeling researchers' (Bahari, 2010, p. 22). To achieve intimacy in the current study, I entered into a prolonged interaction and dialogue with study participants in the data collection process. I also assumed Kvale's (1996) 'miner' metaphorical position and dug deep into participants' perceptions to reveal the concealed knowledge regarding their meanings of the university academic counselling service. In the second 'traveller' metaphorical position, I adopted language, as a social constructivist tool to create knowledge from participants' consciously offered accounts through the 'intimate researcher-participant interactive process' (Kvale, 1996, p. 3).

The comprehensive data I desired in the current study also demanded my use of relevant data collection methods like in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion, to delve deeper into participants' lives. Via these methods, I generated appropriate narratives about the university academic counselling service as presented by participants (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). The interviews for instance enhanced rapport and offered participants the liberty to rationalize and record their personal thoughts regarding the university academic counselling service (Gill et al., 2008). My interviews with study participants thus spanned a minimum of thirty minutes each and facilitated my discovery of unique service meanings suggested by individual participants following their experiences with the counselling service (Van Manen, 2016).

Both in-depth interviews and focus group discussion methods sufficiently elucidated the context-specific issues related to the university academic counselling service (Gill et al., 2008; MacDougall & Fudge, 2001). Given their rich descriptive emphasis on the meanings of participants' experiences, I obtained the contextual meanings participants held regarding the university academic counselling facility via these methods (Gill et al., 2008). I additionally took advantage of the sensitivity of the methods to explore novel areas

regarding participants' experiences with the counselling phenomenon in the Ghanaian higher education context (MacDougall & Fudge, 2001). In effect, I mobilized rich data via both methods (Gill et al., 2008) to respond appropriately to the outlined research questions. Gill et al., (2008) describe both interviews and focus groups as the most widespread adopted research tools in qualitative research.

3.3.3 Axiological assumptions

The axiological assumption I adopted in this study also stressed a value-laden reality that generated multiple truths regarding the university academic counselling facility (Sefotho, 2015). The adulteration of reality regarding the understudied phenomenon, in this case facilitated my mobilisation of varied truths regarding the counselling phenomenon (Sefotho, 2015). My selection of a topic of inquiry was equally axiologically facilitated (Ponterotto, 2005). This emphasizes the fact that my personal values, as an interpretative phenomenological researcher cannot be separated from my knowledge search process, especially since I intimately interacted with participants over a protracted period of time, to gather relevant data (Ponterotto, 2005). 'The centrality of the interaction between the investigator and the object of investigation' is an exclusive feature of the interpretivists' inquiry process (ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). Knowledge accordingly cannot be value-free (Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014) and for this reason I reckoned that participants' meanings regarding the university academic counselling phenomenon was essentially moulded by their personal interpretations and that of mine, as the researcher.

Despite efforts to bracket my personal biases during data collection, I discovered that my involvement with study participants, and more especially my orientation as a professional counsellor, partially intruded in our discussions. I occasionally found myself making contributions regarding the academic counselling phenomenon during my exploration of the service, while my professional counselling experience promoted my questioning pattern and also whipped up participants' interest in our interactions, particularly at the focus group discussion (Ponterotto, 2005).

3.4 The research design

I adopted the phenomenological multiple case study design for this study. I chose the design in view of its appropriateness in thoroughly exploring the lived experiences of study participants regarding the university academic counselling service. Lived experiences often present exclusive opinions and perceptions of the reality, according to the perceiver's understanding (Ponterotto, 2005). I therefore found the design most suitable to my current research aim in highlighting the hidden meanings of study participants regarding the university academic counselling phenomenon.

3.4.1 Case study

Qualitative case studies seek meaning and understanding of events to generate richly descriptive findings (Merriam, 2009). The flexibility of case studies in accommodating multiple data collection methods to propel a detailed exploration of real life events confirmed my choice of the approach in the study (Merriam, 2009). Indeed, the exploratory purpose of case studies establishes a 'heuristic' understanding of the academic counselling service (Meriam, 2009, p. 44). Heuristic searches generate heuristic knowledge that is also solely exclusive to case studies (Michalski, Garbonell & Mitchell, 1984).

This all-inclusiveness of the case study design also provided research rigour, coherence and was philosophically justifiable to my establishment of multiple realities regarding the university academic counselling phenomenon (Seuring, 2008). Seuring (2008) suggests a careful case selection and data generation, research dependability and trustworthiness as vital quality criteria for case studies. Gibbert, Ruigrok and Wicki (2008) likewise stress the key elements gauging research rigor in case studies. Credible causal arguments, sound reasoning in data analysis, precision in reality exploration and replication essentially promote case study rigor (Gibbert et al., 2008). Flyvbjerg (2006) also assert that longitudinal case studies efficiently confirm cause and effect in social phenomena. As a key qualitative technique establishing knowledge via inductive reasoning (Willig, 2008), I realised the case study's strength in appropriately defining the contextually bound university academic counselling facility as an object or unit of study (Merriam, 2009). This

contextual emphasis further aligned with the core of my phenomenological research to present a holistic picture of my investigated cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Eisenhardt (1989) also stresses the internal case analysis and study replication as exclusive to case studies.

Case studies further facilitate the construction of a more responsive theory to students' needs regarding the university academic counselling service (Van de Ven, 1989). Via the systematic exploration of the multiples of academic counselling cases, I thoroughly investigated the varied meanings participants assigned to the counselling service, in three different institutions (Eisenhardt, 1989; Ramus et al., 2003). According to Meriam (2009), the multiple case study technique entails 'collecting and analysing data from several cases' (p. 49). This aligns with Creswell, (2013) who maintains that the key purpose of multiple case studies is to highlight the various significant aspects of the same phenomenon. The above observations were immensely appropriate for my efficient evaluation of the academic counselling facility and my subsequent development of useful counselling interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008), including my theory or model construction for use by higher education students at the end of the study. Voss et al., (2002) also confirm the dependability of case studies in equipping researchers with novel ideas to formulate new theories.

The flexibility of the case study design also enabled me to focus on the uniqueness of each of the multiple cases, while accommodating my use of multiple methods to access relevant academic counselling data (Bryman, 2012). The method's high ability for triangulation (Bryman, 2012) likewise generated further usefulness to the current study. I was further able to explicate the inter-related aspects of the university academic counselling phenomenon via the different data sources I adopted with the case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008). My use of an interview guide to collect data ensured consistency in my questioning skills, both at the interviews and the focus group session. This enabled me to off-set the effects of researcher bias (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and also kept my investigation of the academic counselling phenomenon on a relevant course. In agreement with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) an 'exclusive reliance on one method, biases the researcher's picture of the reality she is investigating' (p. 195). I

therefore generated more robust, trustworthy and above all, '…diverse construction of realities' via the multiple case study design (Golafshani, 2003, p. 604). Perceived researcher bias in case studies stresses a 'doubtful scientific value' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 234) or better still a serious weakness to the study's value.

The comprehensive findings I ultimately reached in the current study, also confirmed and authenticated my trustworthy research findings. I successfully captured the varied realities participants assigned to the academic counselling service via the phenomenological multiple case study design. Contrary to the above strengths, the time, resource and cost intensiveness of the case study design (Baxter & Jack, 2008) were all recognizable weaknesses associated with the use of the phenomenological multiple case study design.

pproach to inquiry that has a good fit with nursing philosophy and nursing art: understanding unique individuals and their meanings and interactions with others and the environment. Because nursing is an art and a science that concerns itself with human responses to actual and potential health problems, specialized knowledge for the practice of nursing must reflect the lived, contextual realities and concerns of the clients for whom nurses provide care. It is important for nurse scholars to develop knowledge that is culturally relevant and respectful of the social realities of those living within

3.4.2 Phenomenological studies

My aim to explore the meanings and interpretations of participants' lived experiences, with the university academic counselling service underscored the interpretivists' relativist view of multiple realities in the study. Phenomenology reflects 'a person's perception of a meaning of an event' (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 153). According to Lewis (2015) health practitioners including counsellors often adopt phenomenological studies to enable them recognize, validate and better appreciate the depths of the entire person they are working with (clients and patients). On their part, Lopez and Willis (2004) suggest that phenomenology offers 'a good fit' for nurses and clinicians, given their goal to understand 'unique individuals and their meanings' regarding their interactions with environmental

elements (p. 726). The focus of phenomenological studies further ensures the professionals' deeper understanding of the values and experiences of their work mates (in this case, clients) (Lewis, 2015) to facilitate their assistive services for them. Like nursing, counselling is concerned with human responses to actual and potential mental and health problems, that necessitate specialized knowledge to 'reflect the lived, contextual realities and concerns of the clients' they attend to (p. 726). For this reason counsellors require culturally relevant knowledge that is related to the social realities of those living within the situation. This highlights the knowledge-based focus of phenomenological studies regarding people's perceptions and perspectives of a specific event, to attach meaning to it (Kafle, 2011). Accordingly, Kafle (2011) emphasizes key elements like intensionality, real personal encounters and profound meanings as significant to phenomenological studeis. By implication, this complex world can only be understood either from our personal perspectives or those of others (Sefotho, 2015). Phenomenology therefore implies that people are only sure of things from how they experience them, and the certainty of the impact of academic counselling in the current study, only exists in the consciousness of the university students who have ever experienced it (Eagleton, 1983; Fouche, 1993). The Hursselian meaning of phenomenology was thus synonymous to human consciousness (Lewis, 2015), an element that was inconsistent with objective scientific studies (Fouche, 1993; Giorgi, 2012). As a phenomenological researcher, I thus focused on describing the university academic counselling phenomenon from the experiencers' (study participants') perspective. This agreed with my study aim to explore participants' lived experiences and consequently confirmed the phenomenological multiple case study design as appropriate for this inquiry.

Study participants in an interpretative phenomenological study are usually considered as 'self-interpreting beings', (Taylor, 1985), given that they are often actively engaged in interpreting or making sense of the events, objects and people in their lives (Smith & Eatough, 2017). Smith and Eatough (2017) concur with the observation that interpretative phenomenological studies focus on human experiences to explicate their daily concerns. Interpretive phenomenological studies therefore tend to provide detailed explorations of

personal lived experiences of participants and a close examination of the sense-making process by focusing on the meanings of particular experiences, states, events and objects to participants. Smith (2004) confirms the report by asserting that interpretative phenomenological analysis begins 'with a detailed examination of one case until some degree of closure or gestalt has been achieved' (p. 41). This heightens the significance of the researcher-participant dialogue that ushers the researcher to the participants' 'consciousness' (Holloway, 1997, p. 117). It is only via this means, that participants' thoughts, feelings and emotions about the studied phenomenon can be unearthed.

In view of the loosely bounded confines of the university academic counselling phenomenon, I desired an explicit and comprehensive model to facilitate my definition of the counselling phenomenon I was studying. This directed me to the all-inclusive Algonquin college students' advising model that emphasized the three core advising values, comprising the motivation for advising (what the service seeks to achieve), the pedagogical focus, (the mode of advising transmission) and finally, student learning outcomes (the result of academic advising). Table 3.1 depicts the inclusive and exclusive criteria regarding the study focus while figure 3.1 presents a summary of the Algonquin College advising model.

Table 3-1: Inclusive and exclusive criteria regarding the study phenomenon

Study confines	**Inclusive criteria**	**Exclusive criteria**
The focus of student advising	All purpose-specific information regarding the university academic advising/ counselling service.	All unrelated information to the purpose of student academic advising/ counselling services.
The pedagogy of student advising	All information regarding the implementation or procedure in providing student advising /counselling	All non-implementation or process-related information regarding the student advising/counselling services
Student learning outcomes	All information stressing the effects of academic advising/ counselling on students' academic behaviours and performance.	All information highlighting the uselessness and students' disappointments regarding the

		academic advising /counselling service

Data source:- *The three core advising values in the algonquin college model of students' advising (Hemwall & Trachte, 2005).*

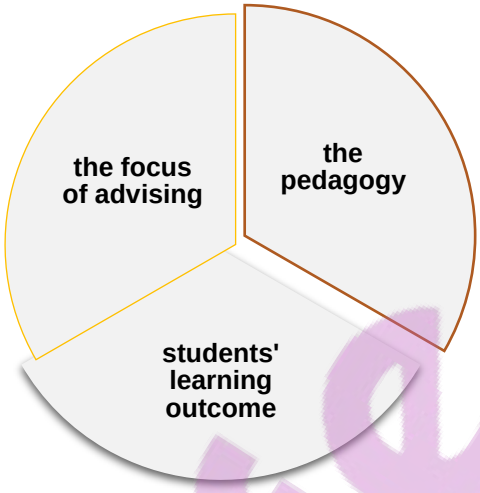


Figure 3-1: The algonquin college model of students' advising (adapted from the council for the advancement of higher education: the role of advising programs 2011).

I also submitted to the principles of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 2002; Patton, 2002) and the relevant ethical requirements (Richards & Schwartz, 2002; Rubin & Babbie, 2014) in my data collection process, to arrive at truthful data. Gathered data was subsequently analysed through the interpretative phenomenological approach (Smith, 2004) which I found equally relevant to generate truthful study findings. Adopting the interpretive paradigm in essence, enabled me to gain deeper understanding into participants' reports to appropriately interpret their views about the university academic counselling service.

3.5 Research Methods

Given that "poorly executed and insensitive research approaches can lead to questionable and possibly misleading findings" (Tuli, 2010, p. 3; Ojeda et al, 2011), I

applied appropriate research methods to accomplish the current research. Lopez and Willis (2004) assert that implementing a research method without exploring its philosophical basis only generates an ambiguous study. In-depth interviews, a focus group discussion (Labuschagne, 2003), purposive sampling and the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) (Flowers et al., 1999; Brocki & Wearden, 2006) were the essential methods I applied in this inquiry. Brocki and Wearden (2006) describe interpretative phenomenological analysis as an exclusive approach to conducting qualitative studies.

The interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) is a unique qualitative research method that emerged from the existing dual meanings of 'phenomenology' during the 20th century (Moran, 2002; Giorgi, 2012; Lewis, 2015). Phenomenology refers to the inductive qualitative research custom related to the early philosophical traditions of Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) descriptive phenomenology as opposed to Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976) interpretive phenomenology (Giorgi, 2012). The emphasis on phenomenology commenced with Hurssel's introduction of a novel method of studying the phenomenon of consciousness. Consciousness simply refers to the means by which we perceive various physical, material and biological phenomena though it strictly remains a medium of access to an experience and not the experience itself (Giorgi, 2012). To Wojnar and Swanson (2007) Hurselian phenomenology enables the exporation of phenomena via direct the inquirer's direct interaction with the object of interest. According to Giorgi (2012), the relevance of the IPA in data handling necessitates the researcher's adoption of a 'psychological phenomenological reduction' attitude (p.4) that enables that researcher to completely empty her consciousness, or better still 'shed all prior personal knowledge to grasp the essential lived experiences' of study participants (Lopez & Willis, 2004: p. 727). The approach relies on 'bracketing', (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007), a major technique that facilitates Hursserlian-related phenomenological studies. Bracketing enables the researcher to inhibit her personal knowledge from influencing presented participants' accounts (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The researcher's goal in the study is to achieve 'transcendental subjectivity' in order that only little effect of the researcher's biases and pre-conceptions prevail over the description of studied events (Lopez & Willis,

2004). Common or universal experiences also form a significant feature of Hursserlian phenomenological studies.

On the other hand, Heidegger's phenomenology focuses on Hermeneutic phenomenology. As the name (derived from Hermes, a Greek god, responsible for message interpretion between gods) suggests, hermeneutics transcends the mere description of concepts, to project hidden meanings of essences that demand deeper reflection for their revelation (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Hermeneutics also reflects the 'Desein' assumptions that symbolize a 'forestructure' of human understanding (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 174). Forestructure relates to an individual's comprehension of the world that in turn guides the individual's interpretation process regarding reality. Forestructure further diverges into the four aspects of fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 174), all of which direct interpretation. According to Solomon (1989), hermeneutic enquiries hinge on human experience rather than knowledge in their conscious. Hermeneutics surpasses the theory of superpersonal identity that centre on the 'Geist' (Solomon, 1989, p. 4) a 'phenomenology of spirit' (Solomon, 1989, p. 3) or better still a 'a general consciousness, a single, common mind to all (Solomon, 1989, p. 3). Rather than stressing the harmony of views, Solomon (1989) further explains that geist refers to the mutual concerns, goals, feelings and beliefs experienced by a group of people. It is simply an interpretation that results in 'divine revelation' about an event. In effect, Hermeneutics stresses, 'a privacy of the mind' or 'distinction' (Solomon, 1989, p. 4) that highlights variations in memories, knowledge and experiences as a result of dichotomous thoughts, ideas and feelings from different people (Solomon, 1989). Knowledge thus remains a prime criterion for personal identity, a key means of drawing interpretation to experiences.

The IPA method's focus on partcipants' personal accounts rendered it most appropriate for the study (Brocki & Wearden, 2006) and accordingly aligned with the interpretive phenomenological multiple case study design as well as the interpretive paradigm that guided the study. Summarily, IPA involves a four step process of perceiving the globally presented picture of the engaged phenomenon, re-considering the image for arbitrary idiosyncratically defined 'meaningful units', converging the derived units into the

researcher's novel picture and finally reviewing the new image via a 'free imaginative method (Giorgi, 2012: p 4). My chosen data collection methods further defined the setting and language I adopted in the research. Given the uncertainties surrounding qualitative fieldwork and my need to appropriately handle emergent issues (Lu & Gatua, 2014) I adopted flexible and appropriate methods to gather relevant data that assured me of meaningful study findings (Lu & Gatua, 2014).

3.5.1 The study population and research site selection

The research population comprised undergraduate students in the three southern-based Ghanaian public universities from which I sampled study participants. The population represents the community of participants that often share similar geographical features (Ritchie, Lewis, Nichols & Ormston, 2014). I stuck to a small sample size to enable me thoroughly to investigate the academic counselling phenomenon. According to Smith (2004), small sample-sized studies tend to be deeply revealing, as they easily established linkages among relevant aspects of the under studied case. Warnock (1987) additionally acknowledged the key benefits of in-depth studies, given their comprehensive exposé of the common reality.

Table 3.2 shows the names and years of establishment for each of the nine public universities in Ghana.

Table 3-2: The names and data on the nine public Universities in Ghana

Name of Institution	**Year of Establishment**	**Regional Location**	**Institutional motto**
University of Ghana	1948	Greater Accra	Let us proceed with integrity
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology	1952	Ashanti	Only the wise can unties the knot of wisdom
University of Cape Coast (the crab)	**1962**	**Central**	**Truth our guide**
University of Professional Studies (the sheep)	**1965**	**Accra**	**Scholarship with professionalism**

University for Development Studies	1992	Northern	Knowledge for service
University of Education (the deer)	**1992**	Central	Education for service
University of Mines and Technology	2001	Western	Knowledge, truth and excellence
University of Health and Allied Science	2011	Volta	Health for service
University of Energy and Natural Resources	2012	Brong Ahafo	Knowledge, integrity and impact

3.5.2 Overview of selected study sites and participant sampling

3.5.2.1 The crab institution

In 1962, the crab institution was established (Danquah, S. A. 1987), as a professional training resource for teachers in the country's second cycle institutions. Graduates of the university were expected to manage the Teacher Training Colleges, Technical Institutes and the Ministry of Education, among others. Nineteen seventy-one saw the institution gaining the mandate to confer its degrees, diplomas and certificates on students and subsequently became a full-fletched institute (Manuh, et al., 2007). Presently, the institution's academic undergraduate focus is in five different areas, each of which represent the five colleges within the university.

Counselling services at the crab institution is essentially decentralized. Professional counsellors operate from the various halls of residence to enhance service access among students (Ungar, 2011). The wide range of service activities offered at the institutional counselling center include HIV/AIDS education, Voluntary Counselling and Testing, Sexual and Reproductive Health education, career, academic and socio-personal counselling (the Counselling Centre brochure, 2010). The counselling centre is currently located at the university's old site and runs an eight-hour daily service.

Picture 3.1 shows the main access area to the institutional counselling centre at the crab institution.

Picture 3-1: The main entrance area to the individual counselling rooms at the crab 0-2 institution-counselling centre

The crab institution was sited in the Fantse-speaking Central regional capital, Cape Coast. The town is conveniently located on the breezy coast of Ghana that rendered it vulnerable to colonial settlement in ancient Ghana. This facilitated the establishment of the first British colonial headquarters in the town (Adarkwa, 2012). To date, the famous Cape Coast Castle and the annual Fetu Afahye festivals remain a key tourist attraction center in Ghana.

3.5.2.1.1 Participant sampling at the crab institution

I presented my letter requesting for research permission to the Assitant Registrar and Director of the Counselling center on my first visit to the institution. I subsequently and adopted the purposive snowball sampling technique to select study participants at the crab institution. The method became my alternative option, following the refusal of the counselling center director to release their records for my sampling purposes. The director

opined that he was protecting the identity of his students and suggested I personally searched for counselled students in their halls of residence. I complied with his request but my first hall encounter proved very challenging and futile.

I accordingly sought assistance from a former Teaching Assistant in my department who later linked me up to a female counselled student. I named this first participant Nhyira. Nhyira consented to participation in the study after briefing and held her first interview shortly after. I additionally requested her for assistance in reaching other counselled students. She complied and also later introduced Nelson, a male final year student to me. Nelson's first interview was also held that same day after briefing about the study.

My further efforts to reach more participants led me to a colleague academic counsellor who also offered me the names and phone contacts of three female students. Only Mawutoh honoured her invitation when I phoned her. As usual, I engaged her in the first interview after briefing.

Following this encounter, a former student of mine also introduced me to Kwame whom I also interviewed after briefing. One other female student who was earlier recommended to me by the academic counsellor subsequently contacted me. I took opportunity to invite 'Lady' to the up-coming focus group discussion in Accra, given the fact that I had reached my sample limit for interviews. She consented and later joined the team on the scheduled date. I subsequently progressed with participants' second interview sessions as planned at the crab institution.

3.5.2.2. The sheep institution

The sheep institution is located in the business and capital city of Ghana, Accra. I purposively selected this institution in view of the fast and sophisticated city life style in the town (Briggs, 2014). Though founded in 1965, the sheep institution was privately managed until 1978 when it became government owned. The institution thus emerged from the erstwhile private Institute of Professional Studies (IPS), to offer professional training in Accountancy, Management and related disciplines (University of Professional Studies, Accra, 2016). It was the first and sole dual-purpose university in Ghana, given

its academic and business-training mission at the time. The undergraduate academic mission of the sheep institution is also reflected in five key disciplines.

To augment the welfare of students in the sheep institution, a modern-styled counselling and gender unit was set up on campus (University of Professional Studies Accra, 2016). Three professionally trained counsellors currently run the unit's activities via orientation for first year students, individual academic, career, personal-social counselling services, referral and research facilities (UPSA Counselling Center Brochure, 2013). Picture 3.2 shows the front view of the sheep institution's administrative block.

Picture 3-2: The front view of the Administration Block for the sheep institution

The institution's eventful city also hosts over 2.27 million (70%) of the entire country's population **(**Adarkwa, 2012). This makes it one of the most populated towns in Ghana. Accra also ranked eleventh, on the list of Africa's largest metropolitan areas (Briggs, 2014). With its high social status, Accra also remains an appropriate home for the first family and as well houses the most modern architectural designed buildings and

skyscrapers in Ghana. Also sited within the capital are the country's best nightclubs, restaurants and hotels. Life in Accra is predominantly hectic with only a few "comparably relaxed places" (Briggs, 2014, p. 111). The nation's capital also houses the presidential office, at the historic Christiansburg castle, where the slave trade once boomed (Government of Ghana, 2016). Accra remains the hub for economic, communications and administrative activities in Ghana. Though the official hometown for the Ga people, Accra is currently over-populated by several tribal groups who have settled there in search of greener pastures. A number of foreigners have also converged in the capital for business and many other reasons.

3.5.2.2.1 Participant sampling at the sheep institution

The cooperation I received from the counselling center staff at the sheep institution was commendable. Being my initial site for data collection in this inquiry, the warm reception the staff offered me facilitated my sampling process. I first introduced myself and presented my letters to the counsellor I met at the site but she assured me of the adequacy of the ethics clearance letter I secured from the University of Pretoria (UP) as sufficient for data collection in all other institutions to be studied in the country. She made this remark after perusing the UP ethics clearance letter I presented. This annulled my plans to seek further clearance from the current institution. I however presented my permission letters at the two remaining research sites. The counsellor subsequently received the director's letter I presented and encouraged me to return in two days' time for the director's response. Appendices D and H present copies of the introductory letter to the directors and the ethics clearance letter from the University of Pretoria I presented at the sites.

I received a list of ten counselled students' names with their corresponding telephone contacts for my research purposes on my second visit to the institution. I purposively selected six students, (three males and three females) from the list and invited them to a briefing the following day. Only three participants, namely Esi, Pee and Seerious showed up at the briefing. They all consented to participation in the study after briefing and subsequently held their first in-depth interviews. The office the director offered me for my research purposes at this site was the most valued support I received. The facility

provided immense confidentiality and comfort both to my interview sessions and entire work at the site.

Two days later, the remaining two participants, Kwesi and Gordee showed up for their sessions. I additionally engaged the earlier three participants in their second interviews but Kwesi and Gordee never honoured their second interview invitations. All efforts to reach them subsequently proved futile but my subsequent perusal of their initial interview transcripts revealed traces of data saturation that made me rest my case. I deeply thanked the director and staff at the site for their immense support at the end of my work.

3.5.2.3 The deer institution

The deer institution was also located in the Central region of Ghana, though established in 1992. To date, the institution remains a strong affiliate of the crab institution, with a similar core mandate to train professional teachers for Nursery and Primary schools in Ghana (Manuh et al., 2007). The deer institution essentially emerged from an integration of seven diploma awarding colleges sited in various towns countrywide (List of Universities in Ghana, 2016). The institution currently runs four campuses with the core at Winneba. This central campus hosts the highest administrative seat of the Vice-Chancellor, in addition to the main institutional administration block as well as four halls of residence. The institution's counselling center is also located on the North (Winneba) campus of the university but the Ajumako, Kumasi and Mampong campuses function as the annexes (Universities in Ghana, 2016).

The deer institution serves a student population of 18,323 (ERNWACA Regional Coordination, 2007) via six faculties, one institute and two centers. Emphasis is placed on undergraduate academic programmes in eight different fields of study (List of Public Universities in Ghana, 2016). Only a relatively small proportion of the student population are accommodated in the university's halls of residence, three of which are sited in Kumasi and one each on the Ashanti Mampong and Ajumako campuses, in addition to the earlier mentioned four (UEW Publications Unit, 2014).

The counselling center at this site offers daily services including orientation for first year students, HIV/AIDS counselling and awareness creation programmes. The desertedness of the site confirmed the low counsellor activity at the center. Further probing revealed that many students often approached their counsellor for service at their departmental offices.

The deer institution was sited in the ancient coastal Winneba township, traditionally referred to as 'Simpa'. Simpa is the capital of the Ewutu Municipal District, in the Central region of Ghana. The town is populated by about 60,331 Efutu-speaking natives (the world-gazetteer online, 2008).

3.5.2.3.1 Participant sampling at the deer institution

I encountered a similar experience I had at the crab institution at the deer institution. My first point of call was at the Assistant Registrar's office to present my request for research permission and subsequently to the Director of the Counselling Center. The counselling center director explained they kept no records on their clients at the center. He opined that keeping such records was rather a breach of the confidentiality agreement they had with their clients and subsequently suggested that I sought help from an academic counsellor at the Faculty of Education. My meeting with this counsellor proved futile as he also had no links to his counselled students. I immediately tried my luck with the institutional chaplain, given that many counsellors in Ghana were clergymen. After making a number of telephone calls after informing him of my visit purpose, he offered me the names and phone contacts of three female counselled students. He was unable to reach any of the male student since they had all exited the institution. I immediately contacted these students for briefing but was able to reach only one of them. I briefed Yaa on her arrival and subsequently booked her for an interview in two days' time.

My second visit to the site yielded so much benefit as I successfully held the first interviews for all three participants. Their second sessions were held on another conveniently arranged day. I again appreciated the chaplain for his contribution to my research prior to my final departure from the site.

Overall, I engaged a total sample of thirteen counselled students consisting of five males and eight females in the current study. Patton, (2002) justifies the use of a homogeneous sample to present a detailed picture of a particular phenomenon. The small but knowledgeable group of students I engaged in this inquiry, meaningfully informed my research purpose (Russell & Gregory, 2003). Welman and Krugger, (1999) also emphasize the importance of the purposive sampling in reaching primary research participants. Overall, my sampling process comprised three different stages, namely the institutional, contact and participants' stages. Hycner, (1999) opined that the under studied phenomenon often determined the type of participants to be selected for a specific study.

I further deemed it most essential to observe ethical considerations particularly during my data collection process and thus followed laid down ethical procedures in my interactions with participants (Tindana, Bull, Amenga-Etego, de Vries, Aborigo, Koram & Parker, 2012). Orb, et al., (2001) contend that participants had the right to know what was required of them in a research. Accordingly, I took the trouble to brief all participants regarding the study purpose, prior to their engagement. I explained their roles as participants at this briefing, the activities they would be involved in and assured them of confidentiality of their identities as well as the information they would provide. They were also given the liberty to quit the study anytime they desired, without being penalized (Vanclay, Baines & Taylor, 2013).

Tindana et al. (2012), also suggest that seeking participants' consent in a research is a show of respect to them, and further enlightens them regarding their expected roles in the study. I thus sought participants' written consent before engaging them in their various interviews and kept their signed consent letters as proofs of their voluntary participation in the study. All particpants also received invitation letters as official proofs for their engagement in the study and it was my usual procedure to schedule convenient dates for their second interviews at the end of each initial session. This strategy ensured that participants were always available for their second interview sessions. Appendices E and F respectively present copies of the invitation and participant's consent letters. For reasons of confidentiality, I also generated pseudonyms for all study participants.

Moreover, I could not limit my sample selection to specific faculties, departments or year groups in all three institutions as originally planned. This was due to my amended participant selection procedures at the various research sites.

3.5.2.4 Participant sampling for the focus group discussion

I took opportunity to invite all interviewed participants to the focus group discussion. The invitations were mostly presented at the end of each participant's second interview session where I took the trouble to assure them all of confidenciality, both of their provided information and their identities. I was fortunate to have seven out of the twelve interviewed participants consenting to their engagement in the focus group discussion. Added to this number was Lady who was not engaged in any interview. The total number of participants for the focus group discussion thus came to eight. Figure 3.4 shows the three-staged participant sampling process I engaged to arrive at my sample for the entire fieldwork.

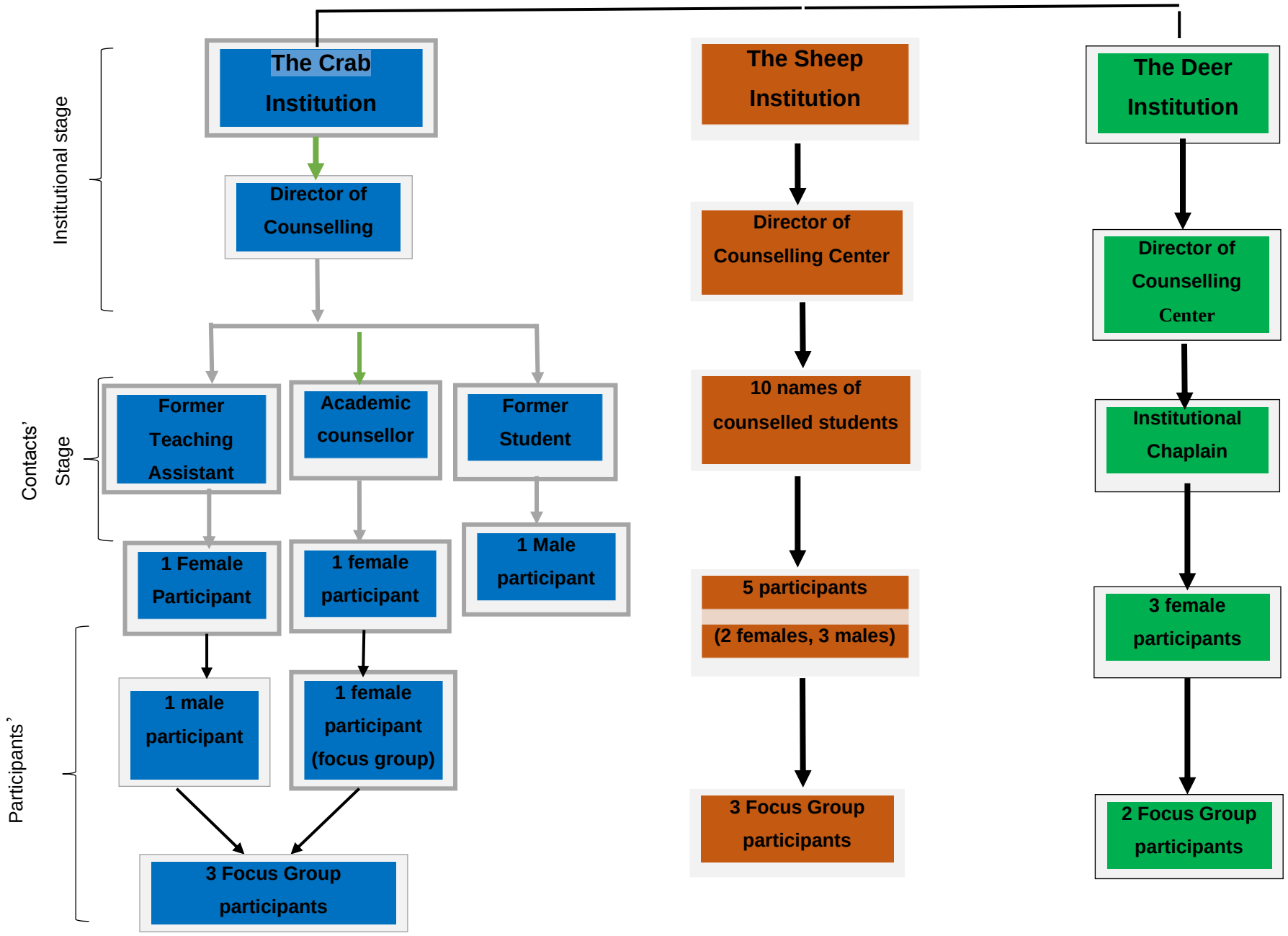


Figure 3-2: The three staged participants' selection process

3.5.3 Characteristics of study participants

Two categories of students are generally identifiable in Ghanaian universities (Zenith University College, 2013; Bonti, 2013). One group is the matured students, who often present for university admission above thirty years of age. Such students often gained admission via the Matured Students' Examinations (MSE) and interviews, organized by the faculties they intend to study in. Direct students on the other hand are often much younger in age and only gained admission after successful performance at the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) (Akyeampong, 2010). I targeted both undergraduate groups of students in the study.

With the exception of one engaed matured student participant who read a two-year post diploma programme at the deer institution, all the twelve others were direct undergraduate students. The sampled participants also comprised both males and females though not in equal gender proportions.

Smith, (1983) defined purposively selected research participants as the consciously sampled well-informed group of participants, with the desired research data. In the current study, I selected the participants mainly due to their experiences with the university academic counselling service, hence their ability to exclusively inform the study. Smith and Osborn, (2008) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2011) however emphasize the absence of laid down rules in determining the sample size for qualitative studies. Only small purposively selected sample sizes were preferable for interpretative phenomenological studies (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003; Creswell, 2009). The authors highlighted the participants' 'commitment to detailed interpretative accounts of the cases' (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 56) as reasonable justifications for their assertion.

Table 3.3 presents the bio data of the sample I eventually engaged in the current study.

Table 3-3: The Bio-data of study participants

Name of Institution	Participant's pseudonym	Participant's Gender & Age	Prog. of Study & Level	Student Type & Level of study	Residential Add.	Religious Affiliation	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Previous Institution	No. of interviews held	FGD
The Crab	Nhyira	F (21)	B. Ed M'gnt in Education	Direct (200)	Takoradi	X'tian	Reverend minister	Nursery school teacher	Nsien	2	Present
	Nelson	M (25)	B. Sc. Maths. in Bus. Edn.	Direct (400)	Tema	X'tian	-	-	-	2	Present
	Kwame	M (22)	B.Ed M'gnt in Education	Direct (100)	Kumasi	X'tian	Ghana COCOBOARD	Secretary	Enyan Denkyira	2	Absent
	Mawutoh	F (26)	B. Sc Psychology	Direct (400)	Asamankese	X'tian	Businessman	-	Huni Valley	-	Absent
	Lady	F (22)	B. Ed M'gnt in Education	Direct (200)	Kumasi	X'tian	Secondary school teacher	Petty trader	Bekwai Seventh Day Adventist	2	Present
The Sheep	Esi	F (23)	B. Sc. Marketing	Direct (300)	Kwashieman	X'tian	Environmental Officer	Seamstress	Central Presec	2	Present
	Seerious	M (23)	B. Sc. Banking & Finance	Direct (200)	Accra	X'tian	-	-	-	2	Present

	Pee	F	(22)	B. Sc. Business Admin.	Direct (200)	Burma Camp	X'tian	Social worker	-	Mawuli	2	Present
	Gordee	M	(25)	B. Sc Accounting	Direct (300)	Pokuase	X'tian	-	-	-	1	Absent
	Kwesi	M	(22)	B. Sc. Banking & Finance	Direct (200)	Dansoman	X'tian	Business man	Petty trader	Abirem	1	Absent
The Deer	Bigails	F	(32)	Post Dip.in Guidance & Counsellin g	Matured (200)	Pokuase	X'tian	Policeman	-	-	2	Present
	Yaa	F	(25)	B. Ed Social Studies	Direct (200)	Goaso	X'tian	farmer	Petty trader	at Ofoase Technical school	2	Present
	Baby	F	(22)	B.Ed Special Education	Direct (200)	Tokoradi	X'tian	-	-	-	2	Absent

3.5.4 Data Gathering

I observed ethical requirements and received permission from institutional gatekeepers prior to data collection in this research. I also adopted feasible sampling strategies at each study site. The most appropriate methods I adopted in my data collection were in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion. I intended to hold two in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion with each study participant to satisfy my goal for detailed information regarding the academic counselling service. However, I eventually held ten paired interviews, two single sessions and a focus group with eight participants. I also relied on the common and accepted medium of instruction in Ghanaian higher education, English Language in all my interactions with study participants (Andoh-Kumi, 2000). This enhanced communication in the study and facilitated my access to participants' ideas their familiar settings of study.

A pre-constructed interview guide based on the themes in the various research questions were used for both interviews and the focus group discussion. The sessions were mainly conversational, flexible and full of open-ended questions that granted participants the liberty to express themselves. Where necessary, I employed probing questions and clarifications for further details in my interactions with study participants. All the interviews and the focus group were also audio recorded, but I always ensured that study participants consented to the recordings. The audio recording enabled me to secure the authenticity of participants' views from their unique diction. Appendices A and B present copies of the interview and focus group schedules. Appendix C also displays the signed focus group attendance sheet. I additionally took field notes to supplement the interview and focus group gathered data. At the end of each interaction with study participants, I verbally appreciated them for their time and contributions towards the study. I finally ended each fieldwork day with transcriptions of recorded interviews for future data analysis.

3.5.4.1 Research instruments

I employed in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion to capture detailed participant information regarding the study topic. I essentially utilized prior-prepared

interview guides to conduct the research and audio-taped each session to facilitate future analysis. The interview guides ensured my thorough coverage of relevant issues, likewise the field notes I mobilised that presented a holistic picture of the study.

3.5.4.1.1 Interview guide

I derived items from the research questions to construct the data collection guides I applied in this research (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2001; Wong, 2014). Guion et al., (2001) stress the facesheet, interview questions and post-interview comment sheet as the three significant aspects of interview guides. The authors similarly underscored the importance of using interview guides to maintain the interaction on significant issues. The themes I engaged in focused on the attitudes, perceptions and influence of academic counselling on students' study outcomes. The focus areas were derived from the research questions guiding the study.

3.5.4.1.2 Interviews

The interviews I adopted in the current study enabled me to penetrate participants' thoughts to access their personal ideas and opinions regarding the university academic counselling service (Arthur, Waring, Coe & Hedges, 2012; Guion et al., 2001). Arthur et al., (2012) describe the interaction as a conscious and carefully planned spontaneous activity. The method suited my goal to explore the personal opinions, perspectives and beliefs of study participants, concerning the phenomenon understudy (Gill et al., 2008). According to Guion et al., (2001), interviews promote programme thorough preparation and appraisal purposes following their openness to exploratory discoveries regarding the feelings and opinions of participants over a concern. The method further facilitated my perception of 'the world through the eyes of the participant' (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 87). During the sessions, I also encouraged study participants to speak for themselves (Watt, 2007) by which means I was able to unearth participants, exclusive meanings of the counselling service, as they experienced it (Guion et al., 2001).

Via the interviews, I successfully established rapport with each participant, for a highly interactive session. I relied on my in-depth subject matter knowledge, flexibility and critical

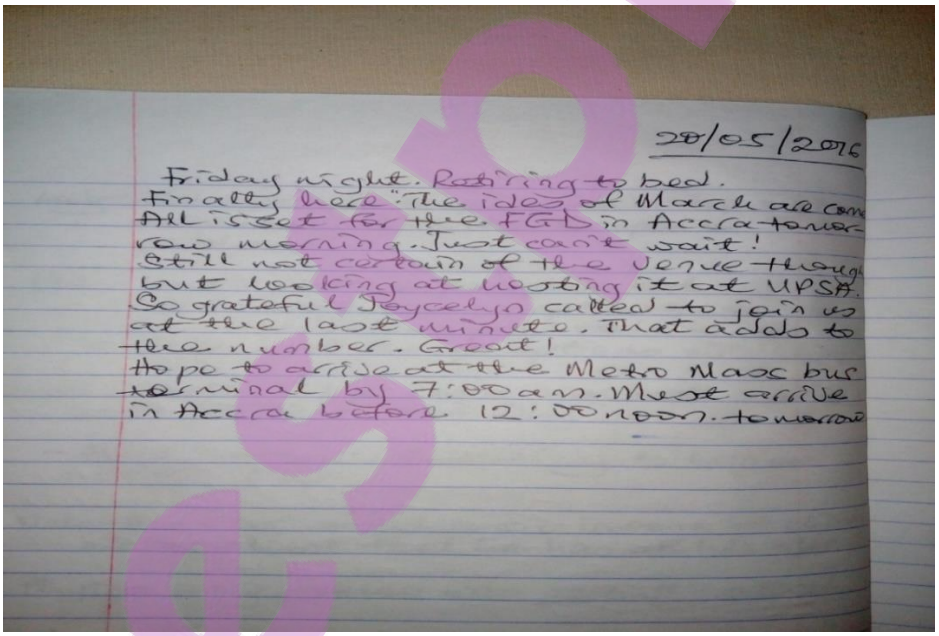
attitude during the interviews (Daymon & Holloway, 2002) to raise meaningful questions during my interaction with participants. I further whipped up participants' interest in our interactions by maintaining healthy eye contact with them (Kasunics, 2010), while ensuring a spontaneous mental flow of questions, rather than reading from the interview guide. I also consciously allowed a day's minimum interval before undertaking the second session for each participant's paired sessions. This enabled me to identify ambiguities and unexplored issues of interest for further clarification in the subsequent session.

3.5.4.1.3 Focus group discussion

Researchers have the power to engender the richness of gathered data via several means (Weick, 2007). Adopting appropriate data collection methods and in-depth probing could help achieve this goal (Weick, 2007). The need to delve deeper into participants' perceptions and attitudes regarding the university academic counselling phenomenon precipitated my use of the focus group discussion. I desired to see participants create an exciting awareness about their social worlds (Ritchie et al., 2013), though via a time and cost-effective means (Strokes & Bergin, 2006). According to Krueger and Cassey (2015), the focus group is a unique group in terms of purpose, scope, structure and proceedures. It essentially seeks to understand the thoughts and opinions regarding a subject matter or facility by a group of people. Given this unique feature of the method, it served a versatile method to my study goal. I also realized its compatibility with the in-depth interview I intended to use for my data collection. I accordingly considered integrating the two methods to accentuate the inherent trends and patterns in participants' perceptions regarding the university academic counselling service.

I finally held the session on Saturday, 21st May, 2016 at the main students' hostel of the sheep institution. The group comprised six ladies and two gentlemen derived from the twelve earlier interviewed participants. Only one female participant from the crab institution was not interviewed earlier. Also in attendance was a male assistant I placed in charge of participant registration and the taking of pictures (Onwuegbuzie, Jiao, & Bostick, 2004). I selected this group for the session based on their shared experiences with the university academic counselling service (Krueger & Cassey, 2015). I also audio

recorded the session for future analysis. The entire session lasted for barely an hour. The focus group method placed me in an active researcher role that allowed me to probe participants regarding pertinent counselling issues. The portable group of eight participants I established in this case (Johnson & Christensen, 2004), efficiently represented my three research sites and I maintained the group's focus on the academic counselling service to generate the diversity of data I so much desired. It was indeed exciting to observe participants present their accounts in a comfortable, peer-motivating and non-threatening environment (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The permissive environment additionally promoted in-depth self-disclosure among participants (Krueger & Cassey, 2015Z). Stokes & Bergin, (2006) however caution that the presence of other participants in the focus group occasionally hindered some participants' contributions due to shyness and feelings of intimidation. This awareness prompted me to pick on reserved members to express their views ocassionally (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). Appendix C shows a copy of the signed attendance sheet for the engaged participants. Picture 3.3 on the other hand presents a snap shot of a field note taken on the night before the focus group discussion in Accra. Picture 3.4 likewise presents a shot of the on-going focus group discussion.



Picture 3-3: A field note taken the night before the focus group discussion day

Picture 3-4: Participants at the focus group discussion

3.5.4.1.4 Audio Recording

The audio recording of both data collection instances was to aid later transcription. Data transcription is a critical stage in the analysis of phenomenologically gathered data (Hycner, 1999). The heavy reliance of efficient data transcription on recordings endorsed Patton's (2002) description of a good tape recorder as indispensable to meaningful fieldwork. Darke et al., (1998) likewise recommended audio recording for a higher education research project in order to generate a thorough interview transcript. Legard et al., (2003) suggest the recording of such research interactions to commence immediately the main research topic is introduced. Given the importance of data recording in qualitative research, I usually sought my participants' permission before recording their sessions. I found it equally essential to put my participants at ease during the audio recording by consistently reminding them of the academic motive of the current study (Johnson & Christensen, 2010). Only one male participant at the sheep institution in fact, expressed initial discomfort with the recording of his interview. Further explanations to him resulted in his change of mind. I essentially relied on the audio recordings to establish a vivid and thick description of participants' expressed experiences to authenticate the

study findings. The audio recordings were all kept under lock and key with my main supervisor in the Department of Educational Psychology at my institution of study.

3.5.4.1.5 Still Pictures

I added more credibility, colour and clarity to my research report by displaying pictures of relevant field events in the text. Pictures essentially serve as additional data in qualitative research, by enabling the researcher to access the unique perception of study participants' world (Berg, 2004). I took these pictures with participants' permission and only displayed the ones they approved for such purpose in the report.

3.5.4.1.6 Field Notes

I also recorded significant field events in a notebook to enrich the final research report (Guion, et al., 2001; Etherington, 2004). Field notes tend to be more precise on field events also form part of reflexive texts in qualitative research. I relied on fieldnotes to record the exciting breakthroughs, challenging times and relevant field observations for future reference. The filednotes I took simply added vitality to the report and reinforced the visibility and transparency of my data analysis and report writing (Emerson, et al., 2001; Ortlipp, 2008).

All interviews and the group discussion were held under quiet and conducive environments at the respective research sites. On the whole, data collection lasted for eight weeks.

3.5.5 Data analysis and interpretation

In this section, I present the processes I engaged to analyze the gathered data. I generated data in this study via in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion (Hatch, 2002; Stokes & Bergin, 2006). Both methods complemented each other to enrich the study findings (Hatch, 2002). The series of actions taken to analyze the collected data, aims at interpreting the results in ways that answer the research questions. According to

Marshall and Rossman, (2011), data analysis generates knowledge to answer research questions. Denzin and Lincoln, (2000) additionally emphasise the interpretive nature of qualitative data analysis ‘to make the world the world visible’ (p.3). My aim to achieve visibility and understanding in the gathered data at my disposal resulted in my emphasis on meaning creation and the drawing of interpretations from participants’ lived experiences (Flowers, Hart, & Marriott, 1999).

3.5.5.1 The data analysis process

I adopted the Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach proposed by Biggerstaff and Thompson, (2008) to analyse my data. Smith and Osborn, (2007) opine that the IPA projects double hermeneutic where the researcher seeks to make meaning from the participants, and the participants in turn pre-occupied themselves with a similar sense-making of their worlds. The IPA is also versatile, facilitating detailed descriptions and explanation of human experience (Fade, 2004; Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Its efficiency in generating thick descriptions rendered it appropriate for my research purposes. I thus entered ‘the code mines’ of gathered data (Glesne, 2006**)** in search of patterns, relationships and categories within the data (Barrett, 2007). The process drew from my perceptual and descriptive skills in identifying contrasts, ambiguities and harmonious thoughts within the data to derive broad-based themes from the study.

Via this method, I was able to focus directly, on the participants’ perceptions, thoughts, involvements and understandings regarding the university academic counselling service (Reid et al., 2005). I applied the method with the aim of thoroughly exploring the meaning-making process of participants regarding their experiences with the university academic counselling service (Smith et al., 2009). I commenced with a one-by-one engagement of interview transcripts through an iterative process (Smith, 2007) and progressed to identify truthful themes and images from the data. By this means, I achieved order and clarity in my data analysis process (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

3.5.5.1.1 Stage 1: First encounter with the text

I commenced data analysis with a verbatim transcription of the raw data (Smith, 2007). Each of the twenty-three recordings were transcribed in this manner. The method enabled me to capture both verbal and non-verbal recorded cues in my interactions with participants (Pettinari & Jessopp, 2001). Both communicative skills are replete with meaning (Pettinari & Jessopp, 2001) though non-verbal often complemented the verbal (Hogg, 2000). Fromkin and Rodman, (1983) describe non-verbal communication as the commonest means of human communication that is also persistent and variously transferable. The interpretive nature of the study emphasized an understanding of the world through authentic experiences and candid reporting of conversations from an insider's perspective (Merriam, 1998). This underscored my emphasis on both communicative stills in my transcription. I was also convinced that 'participants best presented their experiences when allowed to express themselves in their own words' (Henning, 2004 p. 37). Ultimately, I maintained the originality of participants' expressions, thoughts and perceptions, on the university academic counselling service through verbatim transcription (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

I additionally gained a fine opportunity to familiarize myself with the data via the verbatim transcription, hence my determination to accomplish the mission personally. I gained further opportunity via the personal accomplishment of the transcription, to spot premature mistakes and ambiguities in the recordings for subsequent clarification and correction. All other errors, including typographical inaccuracies, spelling mistakes and omissions were subsequently corrected. Then I printed out the completed transcript copies and placed each hard copy in neatly labelled folders to ensure easy identification.

My next move was to read and re-read each printed transcript to the end (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008) while making notes on relevant thoughts, expressed by participants (Larkin et al., 2006). I caught a glimpse of the general picture of the data from the series of readings (Henning, 2004), and created an imaginary picture of participants' perception of the university academic counselling service. In few instances, simply playing the recorded interviews on audio tapes helped to easily capture salient participant issues from the recordings. I found this equally revealing as it usually

brought back memories of vital field experiences which I noted on the left side of the transcript. I also included in these notes, the similarities and differences in participants' expressed thoughts, their language use and personal observations.

3.5.5.1.2 Stage 2: Identification of preliminary themes

I subsequently engaged in further re-readings of the transcripts but this time focused more on the notes I had made on the left side of the transcript. I read and transformed the notes into brief phrases that reflected key elements in the transcript. I ensured that the phrases I couched at this stage reflected participants' expressed thoughts and re-phrased them this time, on the right side of the transcripts (Smith et al, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). I focused more on the meanings participants presented in my reading at this stage – a process Husserl (1999) referred to as bracketing. Bracketing prevented me from imputing my personal prejudices into the transcript reports and further kept me from doing any pre-mature critical analysis of the presentations. In this way, I maintained participants' views in the captured phrases. I then continued with the theme creation process, noting the same theme caption wherever I encountered a similar idea and used various colours and font styles to mark the texts reflecting the captured themes.

3.5.5.1.3 Stage 3: Re-grouping and clustering of themes

I re-produced the themes according to the means by which they appeared from the transcript but a subsequent closer observation revealed a natural clustering pattern that led me to re-organize the themes into more meaningful sentences. I also capitalised on the more advanced themes to further re-group them. Once accomplished, I kept cross-checking from the transcripts to ensure that my merged themes still reflected participants' presented thoughts. This constant cross checking resulted in a back and forth (iterative) movement pattern in the theme creation process. I ended up with comparatively fewer but more meaningful sentences that highlighted key opinions and practical concerns raised by participants regarding the university academic counselling service.

3.5.5.1.4 Stage 4: Creating the summary table of themes

I then broke down the themes into sub-themes and categories and finally presented them on a comprehensive table. I further beefed up data on the table by linking up each theme with their corresponding transcript texts and repeated the procedure for the remaining eleven transcripts. At the end of the realised five broad themes for further discussion in my subsequent chapter. The remaing irrelevant or minor statements that did not fit into the five broad themes I generated were disposed as I thought they had little value to my discussion.

3.5.5.2 Analysis and interpretation of focus group gathered data

Onwuegbuzie et al, (2009) describe transcript-based analysis as the best for qualitative studies. They attributed this opinion to the immense data the method generates. This method however also emerges as cost and time-intensive, aside its demand for expertise knowledge and skill (McLellan et al., 2003). I also deemed the audio-taped focus group discussion as advantageous in capturing the verbatim expressions of participants for enhanced data credibility.

I accordingly maintained the same technique, namely the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008) in analysing the focus group generated data. Larkin et al. (2006), describe the approach as accessible, flexible and applicable. I picked on the method again in this case in view of its idiographic focus that often-generated in-depth data. Following the same process as I did in the case of the in-depth interview, I identified five similar themes as found in the case of the in-depth interview data. I subsequently merged both theme groups and progressed with their interpretation and discussion in the following chapter.

Figure 3.5 represents the IPA process I engaged in analyzing both interview and focus group gathered data.

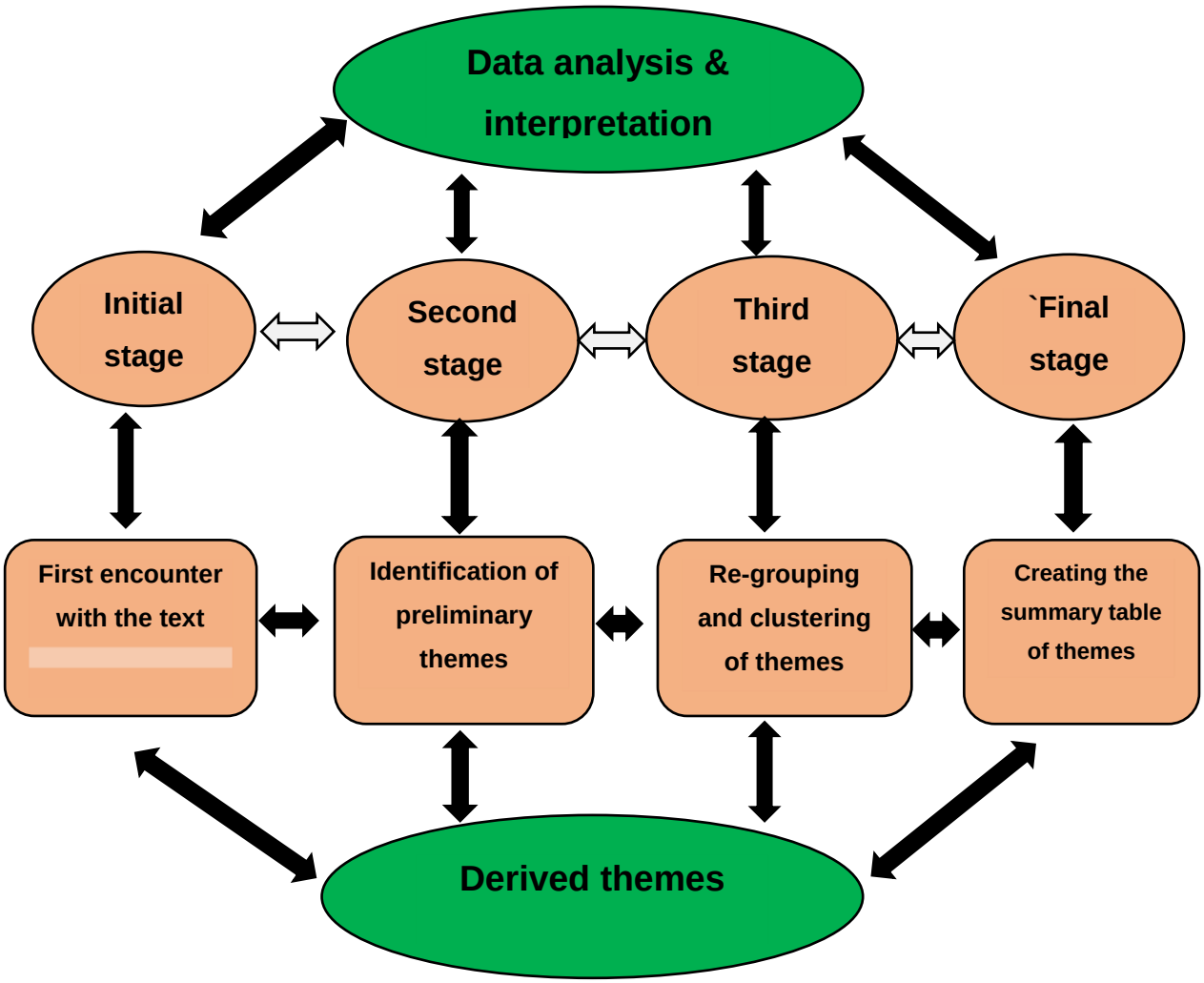


Figure 3-3: The data analysis process

3.5.6 Strategies to establish trustworthiness in the study

The authenticity of a research has implications for reader credibility (Morse et al., 2002). Rigor in qualitative research reflects the study's trustworthiness that also ensures its value (Morse et al., 2002). In qualitative studies, trustworthiness is basically generated via the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The researcher explained how each of these requirements were addressed in the study as follows.

3.5.6.1 Credibility

Credibility simply means building authenticity or confidence in the study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). It ascertains how genuine or sincere the study findings are (Bryman, 2012). Patton (2002) asserts that the researcher's role, as the research instrument in qualitative research facilitates the credibility of the study.

In the current study, I achieved credibility through frequent and extended interactions with study participants via in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion (Gasson, 2004; Morrow, 2005). My efforts at establishing credibility facilitated my foremost decision to concentrate on southern- based Ghanaian public universities. As the main data collection tool in the current study (Watt, 2007), my permanent location in southern Ghana implied a closer proximity to study sites to ensure frequent and easy access to study participants (Williams, 2007). This proximity further provided a more relaxed, unhurried and open-ended data collection process (Williams, 2007).

My vast knowledge in counselling also facilitated my item construction for the thorough exploration of the phenomenon during the interview sessions. I complemented this schedule with good questioning skills to access in-depth data (Labuschagne, 2003). My triangulation of in-depth interview and focus group data (Creswell et al., 2007) also aimed at data credibility **(**Seale, 1999; Creswell et al., 2007)**.** Ultimately, the Focus group data confirmed the in-depth interview data (Mishler, 2000) and further highlighted some commonalities and differences in the meanings participants assigned to the university academic counselling service.

I also achieved member checking (Morrow, 2005; DeVault, 2016) at three different stages of this research. During the in-depth interviews, I occasionally clarified participants' views by re-framing my questions at specific stages. This enabled me to ascertain the consistency of participants' responses. I additionally ascertained interview data credibility with a confirmation of responses from different participants in the same institution at the focus group discussion. Finally, I relied on social media sources like whats app, text messaging and phone calls in few cases, to clarify the ideas captured in the transcripts. Few corrections were subsequently made to the transcripts eventually. At the end of data collection and analysis, I realized the research aims I set out to achieve.

3.5.6.2 Transferability

Rolfe (2006) defines transferability as auditing a study. The essence of transferability lies appropriateness and efficiency in deriving meaningful research findings (Rolfe, 2006). I achieved transferability in this study via a thorough presentation of the processes and methods I adopted in the study (Koch, 2006; Akkerman, Admiral, Bekelmans & Oost, 2008). This comprised presenting study details like the purpose, research methodology and findings or conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stress the value of applying appropriate research methods to reach useful findings. Transferability aims at convincing readers about the study's credibility and further enables them to transfer the methodology to their personal contexts (Morse et al., 2002). Having followed the approved and laid down protocols in conducting qualitative research, I developed deep confidence in my applied research methodology in the current study.

The emphasis of the study on academic counselling for instance justified the three Ghanaian university settings I engaged in the study. The unique contexts of each engaged institution and my reliance on in-depth interviews and focus group discussion in all three settings, engendered suitable information from my exploration of the university academic counselling service (Gasson, 2004). The applied data collection methods, meaningfully complemented each other to generate credible data. Meanwhile, my counselling orientation also endorsed my interest in the current study while the interpretative phenomenological analysis facilitated my data interpretation process to generate the credible study findings I finally derived.

3.5.6.3 Dependability

Dependability also refers to valuable qualitative research. It simply implies consistency in the results of a study over time (Shenton, 2004). The dependability of a study, or the 'inquiry audit' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 317) highlights the replicability of the study and the confirmation of its results (Shenton, 2004; Golafshani, 2003). By implication, only consistent study findings are confirmable and thus credible (Golafshani, 2003). The dependability of a study in turn has implications for the value of the study as it enhances the accuracy of the population quality being measured.

My efforts to achieve dependability in the current study was demonstrated by my presentation of a detailed account on the entire research process (Bryman, 2012). According to Bryman (2012), a detailed presentation of the research process expels doubts about the study. I accordingly placed emphasis on every detail I indulged in during the study. The process ensured that other researchers could easily replicate the study in different locations and at different times (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Despite limiting the study focus to southern-based Ghanaian public universities, I was confident the study could be replicated in private institutions and within other regions, besides southern Ghana.

3.5.6.4 Confirmability

Given the fact that I tried to play a neutral role both in conducting the study and presenting the findings, I established the confirmability of the study. Confirmability emphasizes the genuineness or fairness in which the researcher shaped the study findings with participants' accounts. In presenting my results, I determined to prevent my subjective thoughts, values and interests from colouring the facts (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Bryman, 2012). By this means, I demonstrated that the study findings are not my personal perceptions, but rather, those developed from the data (Shenton, 2003).

Additionally, the nature of the current study denied me any opportunity to manipulate or tamper with the behaviour of participants or the phenomenon under study. Participants' experiences with academic counselling had already taken place and my goal in the study was to investigate their experiences. This implied presenting the existing reality, without passion or bias (Barrett, 2007). In my unique role as the sole research instrument (Smith & Osborn, 2007) and particularly as the presenter of my study findings (Creswell et al., 2007; Baskarada, 2014), I took cognizance of the essence of research ethics in conducting my study and presenting my results. I further considered the value of conducting an authentic study and consequently sought to accomplish the current study, according to acceptable research standards. It was via the mentioned accepted means I arrived at the genuine findings, I presently report.

By adopting consistent data analysis steps and the presentation of verbatim expressions of participants, the current study confirmed the thoughts and perceptions of study participants. I focused more on reports made by participants and made conscious efforts to impartially present them. I additionally allowed my study findings to emerge from the data, by adopting the interpretive phenomenological approach (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008), rather than from the researcher's personal interests.

3.5.6.5 Reflectivity

Qualitative research is essentially reflective in nature (Finlay & Gough, 2008) and usually commences the research process. Reflexivity simply means '*researchers turn a critical gaze towards themselves*' (p. 3) by engaging in a detailed personal exploration for a stimulating and gratifying subject matter to write about. Reflectivity enhances the continuity of the interaction and knowledge interpretation process (Creswell, 2013) in qualitative research. Its role in qualitative research is particularly essential in view of the researcher's exclusive role, both as the primary data collection instrument as well as data analysts (Russell & Kelly, 2002). The researcher thus forms a critical part of the meaning-making process given that, "*it is impossible to remain outside his subject matter, as his presence … will have some kind of effect"* on the study (Anderson 2008, p. 184). Glense and Peshkin (1992) consequently assert that a researcher's subjectivity remains not only the "basis for the story he tells" (p. 104) but also makes him a unique researcher, by equipping him with the perspectives and insights that shape his entire research work. Ellis and Bochner (2000) accordingly describe reflectivity as a "personal tale of what went on in the backstage of doing research" (p. 741).

My personal and practical motives for conducting this study also flow from my orientation, both as a trained and practising counsellor in the past twelve years. Counselling has undeniably been my key purpose in life and a major learning opportunity. This justifies my selection of a research topic in counselling for my further education. I therefore consider this research as a personal contribution to the promotion of effective counselling services in Ghana. My research topic selection was accordingly fuelled by my burning

desire to concretely establish some evidence on the impact of my profession on the lives of the several teeming youths, we as counsellors continue to assist in society. Since ‘good research questions spring from a researcher’s values, passions and preoccupations’ (Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 5), my counselling orientation resonated in-depth interpretations to respond appropriately to the research questions in the current study.

I subsequently captured my reflections during fieldwork in a personal journal to enable me to note all emerging opinions, ideas, observations and personal discourses with study participants for insight into their experiences regarding the university academic counselling service. These notes assisted me in maintaining my focus on the research process and continually permitted me to evaluate the entire data gathering process for continuous improvement. The reflective process further plunged me into deeper insight regarding the university academic counselling service and ultimately enhanced my interpretation process.

3.5.6.6 Triangulation and crystallization

In the current qualitative study, I employed triangulation and crystallisation to facilitate the interpretive validity (Terre et al., 2004) and further established data trustworthiness via the two. Triangulation further helped me to enhance the credibility of my study findings by comparing the lived experiences of twelve participants with the university academic counselling service. In this way, the findings of the study were validated and their credibility enhanced. I further achieved triangulation in the current study by carefully conducting the interviews and focus group discussion with participants in different settings, spaces and at different times. The interviews and focus group discussions also complemented the review of related literature.

3.5.6.7 Ethical considerations of the study

Research ethics is an essentially necessary aspect of the planning and research implementation process (Mertens, 2010). Ethics never relies on the adopted paradigm in an inquiry, neither does it emerge as a supplement to the process (Mertens, 2010). The

ethical procedures I adopted to accomplish the credible research findings in the current study were thus based on ethically sound and acceptable research processes. Data collection in this study commenced with the submission of an application to the University of Pretoria ethics committee for clearance. I subsequently presented letters of introduction to the various gatekeepers at the research sites, after receiving ethics approval and permission to the commence data collection. The above processes were in line with the ethical principles of research that primarily concern showing respect and causing no harm to human participants (Orb et al., 2001; Vanclav, Baines & Taylor, 2012). Researchers' avoidance of deception, commitment to confidentiality regarding provided data and personal maters of participants also form part of research ethical principles (Vanclav et al., 2012). Ramos (1989) subsequently identify the three critical ethical issues as focusing on the researcher-participant relationship, the subjective interpretations of data by the researcher and the research design itself. Others include confidentiality, seeking informed consent and deception (Ramos, 1989).

The researcher-participant rapport essentially determines the type and extent of data gathered on a research (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007), hence Vanclav, et al., (2012)'s emphasis on seeking participants' informed consent as key to the entire research process in general. Pitts and Miller-Day, (2007) accordingly define the research-participant rapport as the foremost qualitative research activity. The safety of research participants on a study likewise remains a sole responsibility of the researcher (Dresser, 1998; Munhall, 1988)Sullivan & Cain, 2004) and human participants require assurances in this regard prior to their engagement in a study. Sullivan and Cain (2004) ccordingly opine that conducting studies concerning battered women is risky and require the careful application of research ethics.

Seeking participants' informed consent means not coercing or deceiving participants to engage in a research (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). By implication, ethical issues meaningfully merged the researcher's world and that of the participant (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). I accordingly took time to thoroughly brief study participants about the purpose of the study, their roles as participants and the activities they would be engaged in during the study (Vanclav et al., 2012). I also offered participants the liberty

to quit the study, anytime they felt like it, without being penalised. I likewise assured them of cconfidentiality, both regarding the information they would provide and their ipersonal dentities. In this regard, instead of using their real names during the entire data collection, analysis and report-writing processes for instance, I generated pseudonyms to refer to each of them (Richards & Schwartz, 2002; Ary et al., 2002). Grinyer, (2002) considers protecting the identities of research participants as vital to research ethics. Threats like feelings of anxiety, discovery of participants in the print media and also wrongful reportage were stressed (Richards & Schwartz, 2002).

In the current study, all consenting participants were provided with invitation letters for their engagement. None of the thirteen participants were thus coerced to indulge in the study and I also treated the information they provided both at the interviews and focus group discussions as confidential. I also limited the use of the data I mobilised solely to my academic purpose.

3.6 The Role of the Researcher

My responsibilities in the current study, as a qualitative researcher was key to the success of the entire research. I basically acted as the research designer, data collection instrument and analyst as well as the faithful reporter. Hammersley and Atkinson, (1983) and Lincoln and Guba, (1985) justify the human element of the researcher-as-instrument role. They explain the importance of human capacity to interact with participants in order to generate the desired comprehensive data. Waddington, (1994) and Patton, (2002) in consonance with Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) project the researcher's involvement in the study as the most reliable and genuine means of comprehending the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of study participants. My presentation 'as the primary instrument for making sense of the phenomenon under study' (Barrett, 2007, p. 417) utterly depended on my wealth of knowledge about the academic counselling service. The process also drew from my expertise in qualitative research, my perceptions and prejudices in interacting with study participants to collect meaningful data.

Part of my research responsibility, also included asking probing questions, appropriately analyzing gathered data and developing a comprehensive report out of my study findings. This put my communicative skills to a test, as I needed to express myself clearly to participants, build useful rapport with them and capture their presented reports for later interpretation. I additionally maintained research rigor by sticking to the salient issues in the study and asking only pertinent questions in order to reach the desired data. I endeavored to encourage study participants to freely tell their stories to enable me capture and construct meaning from their lived experiences with the university academic counselling service.

The two data collection instruments I adopted in the study provided data convergence (Perlesz & Lindsay, 2003). Triangulation comprises data source triangulation, researcher, theory and methodological triangulation (Perlesz & Lindsay, 2003). Smith and Osborn, (2008) argue that using interviews in interpretative phenomenological studies enable the researcher 'to probe interesting and important areas that arise' in the discussion (p. 57). This required closer collaboration with study participants to enhance my data collection process (Patton, 2002). I accordingly established useful rapport with my participants (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Eide & Khan, 2008) and successfully accessed comprehensive data for my purpose. I was additionally attentive and alert, both in my questioning during data collection in order to capture the verbal and non-verbal communication cues as I interacted with participants. At some points in my data collection process, I was challenged by reserved participants who suddenly went mute due to discomfort in expressing negative thoughts about their institutions. I often helped such situations by rephrasing the question and reminding them of the sole academic purpose of the research. I also sometimes added humour to our interactions by cracking simple jokes to liven the discussion. This mostly featured in the focus group discussion.

On the whole, I found my role as data analyst quite laborious given that I personally transcribed the twenty-three-audio recorded in-depth interviews and the single focus group discussion sessions into text.

3.7 Conclusion

Despite the challenging demands concerning fieldwork in the current study, I found gratification in achieving the final goal for which I set out to conduct this inquiry. My ultimate goal was to derive meaningful findings for the promotion of the just course of counselling in higher education institutions. My confidence in the adopted research methods, to facilitate the mobilisation of truthful study findings emerged from the suitability of my study design. The revealed hidden but truthful meanings of the academic counselling service, among Ghanaian university students were clearly outlined and I was convinced that the findings would immensely benefit both students and counselling service providers, within the higher education context in Africa and Ghana. Finally, the direction of the study findings was deeply informative towards the appropriate recommendations that would add immense value to the counselling facility on the whole.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF STUDY RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the methodological processes and research design adopted in the current study. I additionally explained all that transpired on the field in the three studied institutions as I gathered data for the study. Data collected by both interviews and focus group methods, generated similar themes which I catalogue in this fourth chapter. I segregated the five emerged themes into meaningful sub-themes and categories and further expounded the results in respect of the study context by raising participants' verbatim expressions to support my themes. It was my estimation that further discussions and interpretations of the themes would generate appropriate responses to the primary and secondary research questions outlined at the beginning of the study. Figure 4.1 shows the procedures involved in deriving the summary of the study findings.

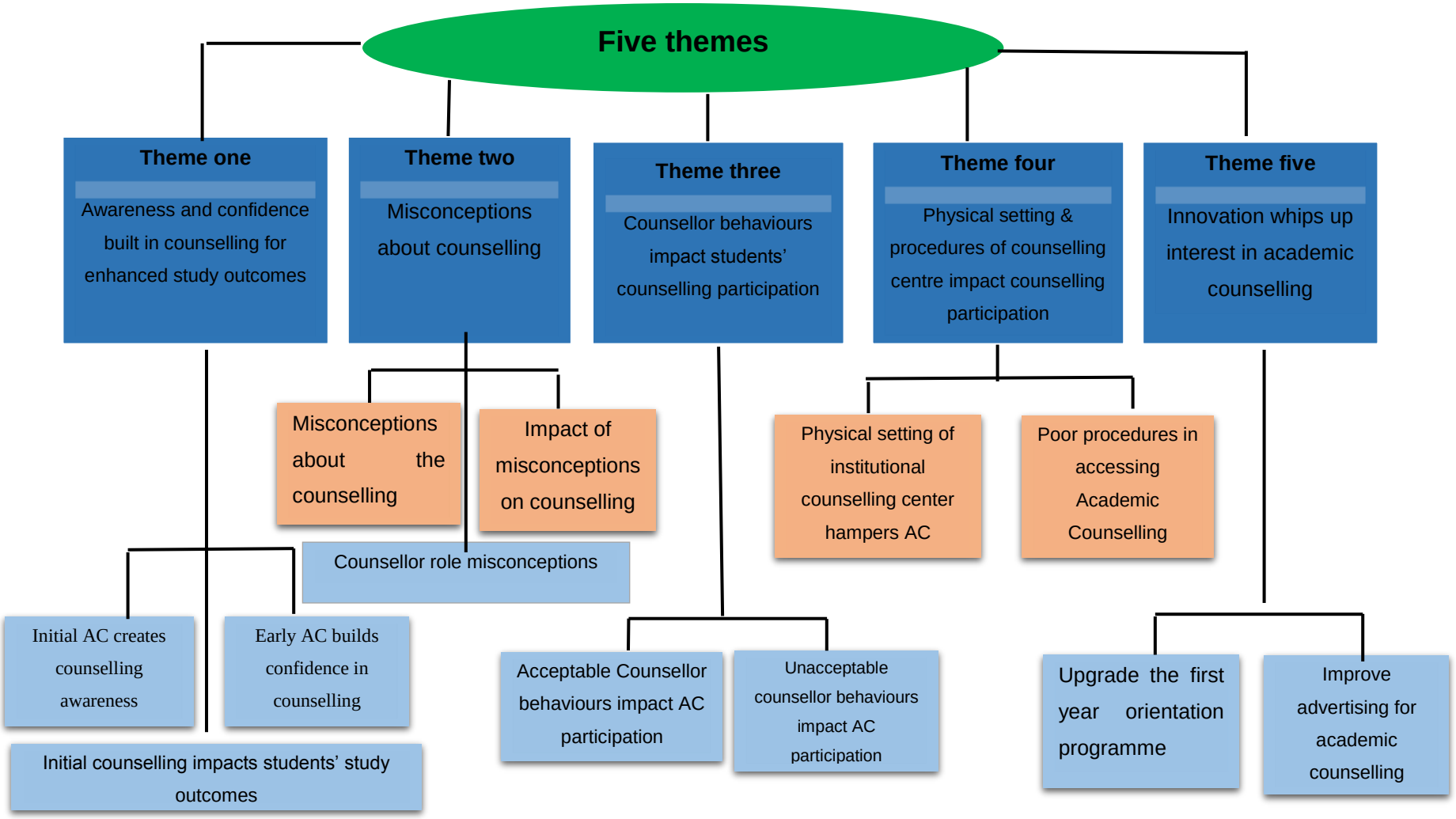


Figure 4-1: Summary of the study results

4.2 Results

In this section, I present the study results under the five broad themes, sub-themes and categories. Theme one (Figure 4.2) presents the effects of initial counselling experiences on students. Participants reported gaining insight and built confidence in the academic counselling service. They also recorded some favourable impact the service made on their academic work. Theme one provides answers to secondary research questions two and three that focus on students' perceptions of academic counselling and the impact of counselling on students' study outcomes. Theme two on the other hand is presented in figure 4.3 and dwells on students' misconceptions about counselling. Theme two also answers secondary research question two that concerns students' perceptions of academic counselling.

In the case of theme three, I emphasized significant counsellor behaviours, and their corresponding effect on participants' engagement in counselling. Answers to secondary research question one can be derived from theme three. I subsequently captured theme three on figure 4.4 but theme four concerned the physical setting and internal procedures at the institutional counselling center on campus. Theme four further dwelt on the effect of the physical setting of the counselling center on students' engagement in counselling. I captured all information regarding theme four under figure 4.5. Information provided under theme four also answers secondary research question one. Theme five reflected participants' suggestions regarding innovative measures to enhance on-campus counselling activities. I captured theme five in figure 4.6.

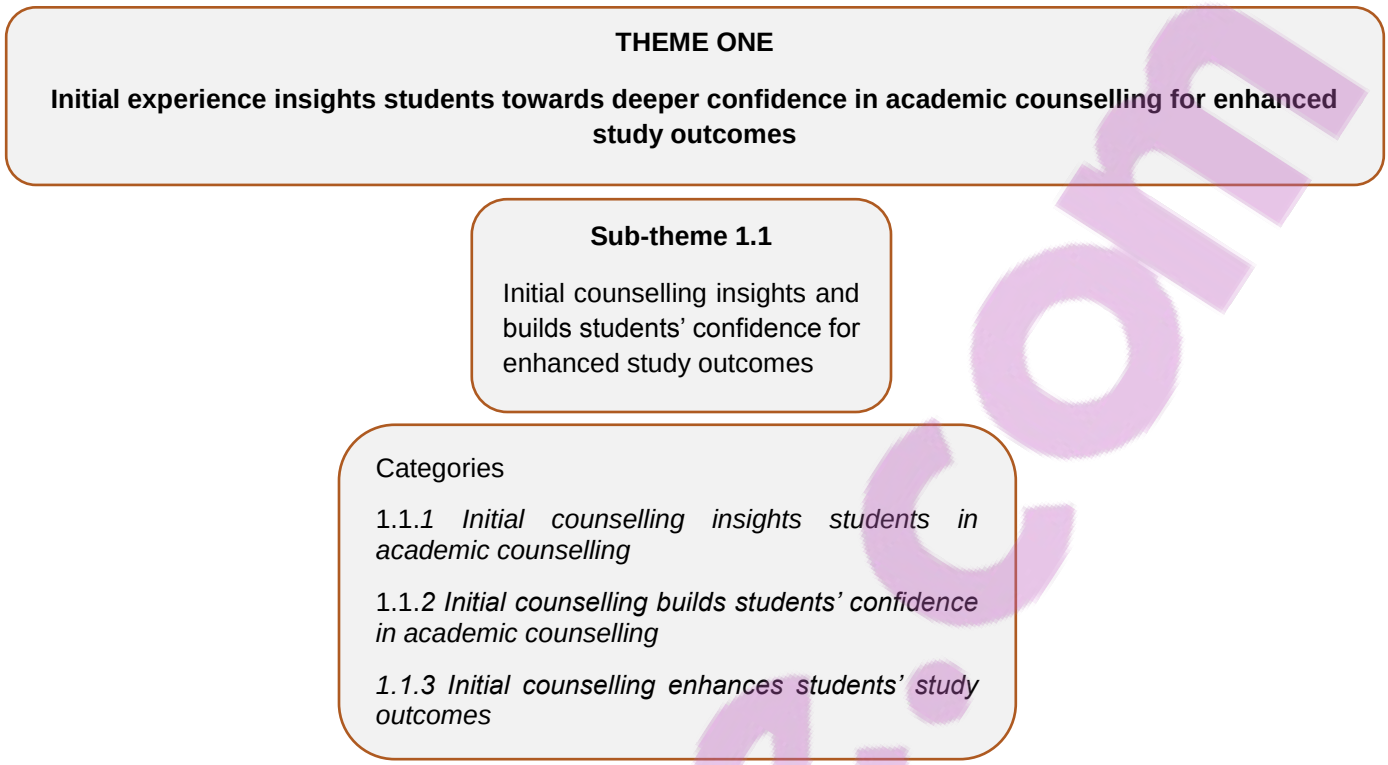


Figure 4-2: Theme one with corresponding sub-themes and categories

In theme one, I featured three categories under sub-theme 1.1. It was exciting to hear participants openly declare the insight, confidence and benefits they made from their first counselling encounters. Table 4.1 presents the exclusion and inclusion criteria of data under theme one.

Table 4-1: incluion and exclusion criteria for theme one

Sub-theme	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
1.1 Initial counselling insights and builds students' confidence for enhanced study outcomes	All information highlighting participants' awareness and confidence in counselling, including the academic gains they made from their initial counselling experiences.	All information inconsistent with participants' awareness, confidence in counselling and the academic benefits they made from counselling.

4.2. 1 Initial counselling insights and builds students' confidence for enhanced study outcomes

Under sub-theme 1.1, I indicated that the awareness participants gathered about counselling during their first encounter, enhanced their confidence in the service. I additionally presented the academic benefits participants made from their initial counselling experience. To explicate theme one further, I relied on verbatim extracts from the various interviews and focus group transcripts to support my observations.

4.2.1.1 Initial counselling insights students socially

Participant eight described counselling as an opportunity for students to solicit for ideas regarding their problems. This reflects an awareness creation encounter with counselling. Her submissions were made in lines 1381-1388:

Participant: So, in that way … I think counselling is just having someone to be able to share your problem with. not necessarily being able to solve it at the end, but then having other ideas about it or to solve the problem. Or let's say just people just want to talk so you just keep a listening ear.

Finally, participant eleven indicated learning more about counselling from experience and studying it. She explained in lines 7429-7435 that:

Participant: Yes, when I got there, the way things happened, the counselling session that he put me through made me realise that ok things happen and you are like, you become confused, you become frustrated, everything turns upside down. But counselling has made me aware, has given me the information that when you are going through a problem, don't take a hasty decision. Just relax and as you calm down so better solutions will flow in.

4.2.1.2 Initial counselling builds students' confidence in academic counselling

Many participants also boldly agreed to promote counselling to their friends. This reflects confidence in the counselling service. Participant one for instance reported in lines 4964-

4969:

Participant: Okay…errm. I wouldn't perceive the person as wasting, wanting to waste his time but I will urge the person, push him on to go for the counselling. Because it is beneficial and it's important. At least, when you go there, you get to know something that you never knew. At least if not for anything, one new word or something like that.

In lines 402-410 participant six also exuded lots of confidence in counselling after her initial experience. She made these comments:

Participant: … okay the first time I went there … errr … because of how he treated me and everything, I really felt some hope that something good could come out of what I have put before him. No, fear of your issue being thrown out and told people never occurred to me because I know with counsellors they have that sense of confidentiality. So, it never occurred to me.

4.2.1.3 Initial counselling enhances students' study outcomes

The academic turnouts of initial counselling experiences on participants' performance were also well recorded by study participants. Participant four was particularly content with her remarkable academic improvement after her initial counselling sessions. She particularly appreciated her lecturer who first invited her to counselling. Her remarks in lines 3728-3737 were:

Participant: Yes, I see physical changes in my results. Eer at first my-my highest mark is 16

16 over 20. That's I have done better.

But in lines 3740-3754, she added more confidently that:

Participant: 12, 13 but this semester my least was 14 and my highest was 20 over 20 and my least was 14. Even that one it is only one subject that I had 14 over 20. The others were better, 20, 19, 17,

A similar report was presented by participant twelve at the deer institution. In lines 8054-8065, the participant reported that:

Participant: I was expecting A's but my-my best grade was B. I didn't have B+, it was B. So, I-I saw it to be low. Now am getting my A's and the B+ so there is there is improvement and I am happy and I think it is because of this-this thing that I have put behind me

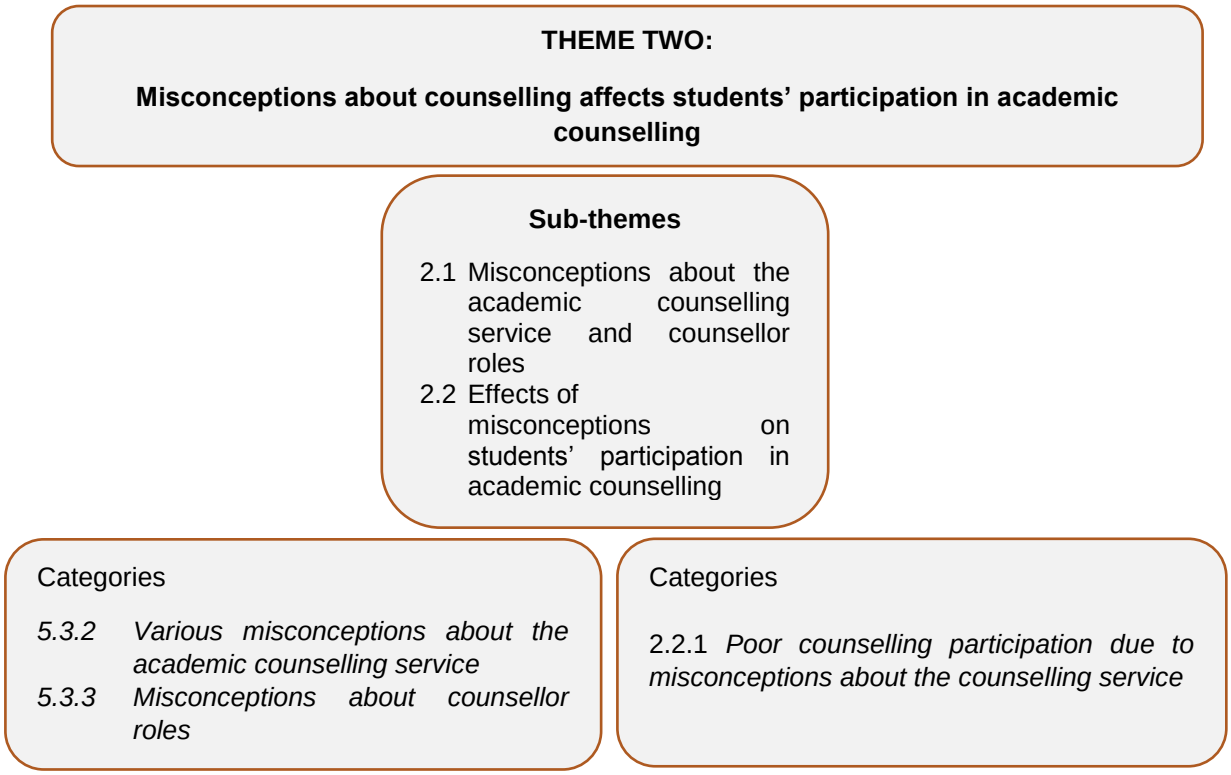


Figure 4-3: Theme two with corresponding sub-themes and categories

Theme two focused on the misconceptions participants presented about academic counselling. The results answered secondary research question two, that concerned students' perceptions of academic counselling. Table 4.2 sets the inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme two.

Table 4-2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme two

Sub-themes	Inclusive criteria	Exclusive criteria
2.1 Misconceptions about the academic counselling service and counsellor roles	All information inconsistent with the academic counselling service and accepted counsellor roles.	All information consistent with the academic counselling service and accepted counsellor roles.
2.2 Effects of counselling misconceptions on students' academic counselling participation	All information indicating low counselling perceptions or hindrances to counselling participation among students	All information highlighting better counselling participation and positive counselling perception among students

4.2.2 Misconceptions about the counselling service

4.2.2.1. Counselling is problem biased

A key misconception highlighted in the study was related to the problem-solving focus of counselling. Participants simply perceived counselling to address only negative or problematic situations. This presented a rather restrictive and misconceived view of counselling.

During the focus group discussion for example, participant six reported being ridiculed by her friends when they learnt of her intentions to visit the counsellor. They immediately thought she needed assistance in handling difficulties with her fiancé. She asserted in lines 10039-10056 that:

Participant: Because when I was going to the counselling eerm session. I remember a friend asked me, because it was the break period. So, she is like "Where are you going", I said am going to the counselling centre. She said "Eei"

They will say "eei". Why eei eei why? They were talking but I didn't mind them and went my way. But am just imagining what was going through her-her mind. She was thinking I have a problem. Generally… mostly when you're going to the counselling centre, it's about relationship. Yeah, that is what maybe… yah so. They don't think about the other

side. They know about relationship, relationship stuff so … BH. Maybe one guy is disturbing me

4.2.2.2 Counselling exposes clients' secrets to strangers

Participants four, seven and ten expressed fears and concern about exposing their secrets to the counsellor. I considered this a misconception because it emphasized pessimism among participants and hinders their attendance to counselling. Participant four observed in lines 3271- 3277:

Participant: Mmm… as I said earlier, the situation was my academic work and I was thinking am going to expose myself to people but it came to-to-to-to my knowledge that no that's the place that I can go and then solve my-my problem and I took that bold step to go there.

Participants mostly reacted negatively towards the above-mentioned misconception. The feelings included worries, discomfort and anxiety. In the case of participant two for instance, the strong feelings of uncertainty and fear prevented him from entering the counselling room but rather made him return home without seeing the counsellor. His expressions were captured in lines 5732-5756

Participant: before I went there … you know I haven't gone to Counselling Centre before. I haven't been counselled before. I was pil … I was asking myself what are the questions this man is going to ask me? What maybe even I went there for the first day. When I got to the gate

I was contemplating whether I should go so I got back and refused to go because you know it's a strange thing, the first time, it will be a strange thing… so I did. So, the next day I went back

I went … I was asking myself what this man is going to tell me? This … what are we going to discuss? There … were so many things that were going through my mind. Yeah, I feared … you know … it was fear, yes. I haven't seen him before. Yes

4.2.2.3 Counselling as advise-giving

A number of participants additionally misunderstood counselling to mean advise-giving. In reference to this participant one said the following:

'It was my first time, my very first time of going for counselling and I thought they just give advices there, advice and they help students. That was all that I knew. (lines 4902 - 4904).

Participant eleven however took time to differentiate between counselling and advise-giving in lines 9282-9289:

Bigails: as she has said, normally when you are outside, like general public think counselling is just advice-giving. So, what is the need? If my Oldman can talk to me, that do this don't do that, then there is no need, that is what people think, but until you go in there, you have a feel of it, you think is just … normally when you say you are a counsellor they think its advise giving and my old man can give it to me more. But it should be given by a professional a competent person. There is a difference between this counselling that people think is the same as advice giving at counselling.

4.2.2.4 Counselling is a first-year service

The fourth counselling misconception was highlighted by participant two. It was in relation to counselling being solely for first year students. This is a misconception as counselling is offered to all year groups on campus. In lines 5761-5776 he asserted:

Participant: Going to counselling it seems … It was ... meant for level 100s. so I am… some way I was shy. I was going to…. I was going to meet level 100s and I will be the only level 300 student. It will be embarrassing. No, no, no, I didn't find it true. I-I realized that even the higher you go the more you needed counselling … counselling

The same participant subsequently cited counselling as a means of support to first year students who need a change in their programmes of study. He observed in lines 9670 - 9675 that:

Nelson: Mm …for me, I will say they changed my perceptions about counselling before I had the first counselling session when I went. Because for me at first, I thought

counselling session was for first years. If you have a problem you go to the counselling centre and your problems will be solved. But I realized that counselling session is for all students and even lecturers and adults .

4.2.2.5 Misconceptions about counsellor roles

4.2.2.5.1 Counsellors as security personnel

The roles of the counsellor were also misconceived by participants twelve and ten. In lines 8156-8168, participant twelve thought counsellors operated like security men and women who would arrest clients' offenders for prosecution. She said:

Participant: Hmm okay, I was thinking it might be eer a sort of I think security personnel something like that. Like when you go there and then you tell them your problem, they will take you to either the Police or they will they will look through and then they-they will see what the problem is. And they will take you to you belongs to. So that-that that was my perception about them. I didn't see them to be normal as in eerm parent-child eer relationship like that. But now I see it to be normal. It's very cool. Yes, it's cool.

4.2.2.5.2 Counsellors operate with laid down standards

Participant ten also expected the counsellor to have a definite answer to his problem. His thoughts were fuelled by the opinion that counsellors operated with a fixed instrument or standard that reflected various solutions to clients' counselling concerns. He thus visited the counsellor expecting him to refer to this standard and offer specific instructions to resolve his problem. In lines 2671-2672 and 2674-2676, he said:

Participant: Yeah, my understanding about counselling then was that Oh I will just come, he listens to what I say and then he tells me his mind.

Participant: Yeah, and then I was even thinking that they will tell me something that like is the way like a standard. Something that after he listens to this particular and he tells him this he should do this. But mine wasn't like that.

4.2.2.6 Effects of counselling misconceptions on students' participation in academic counselling

The above-mentioned misconceptions had various impacts on counselling participation. In lines 9983-9984, the focus group session recorder (my assistant) explained the rationale behind some unlabelled counselling centers. The reason he presented was fear of stigmatisation. His comments were in lines 9971-9972-

Prince: Our own is … you don't want people to know that that is the counselling centre because if you see me walking to the place then you know……..

Figure 4.4 summarises sub-themes 2.1 and 2.2 and their corresponding categories.

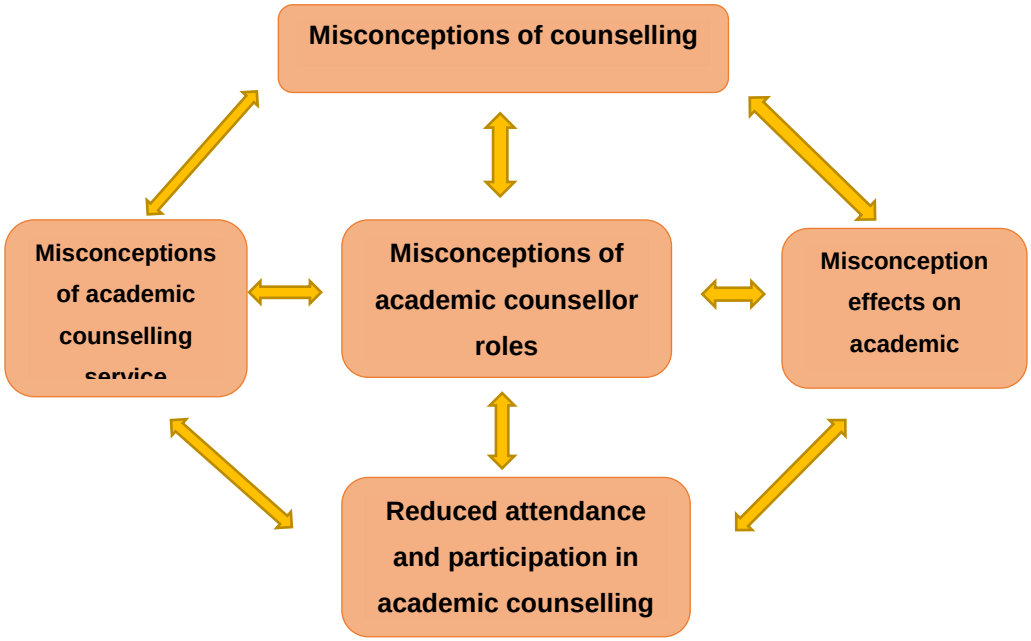


Figure 4-4: Misconceptions about academic counselling impacts students' participation in counselling

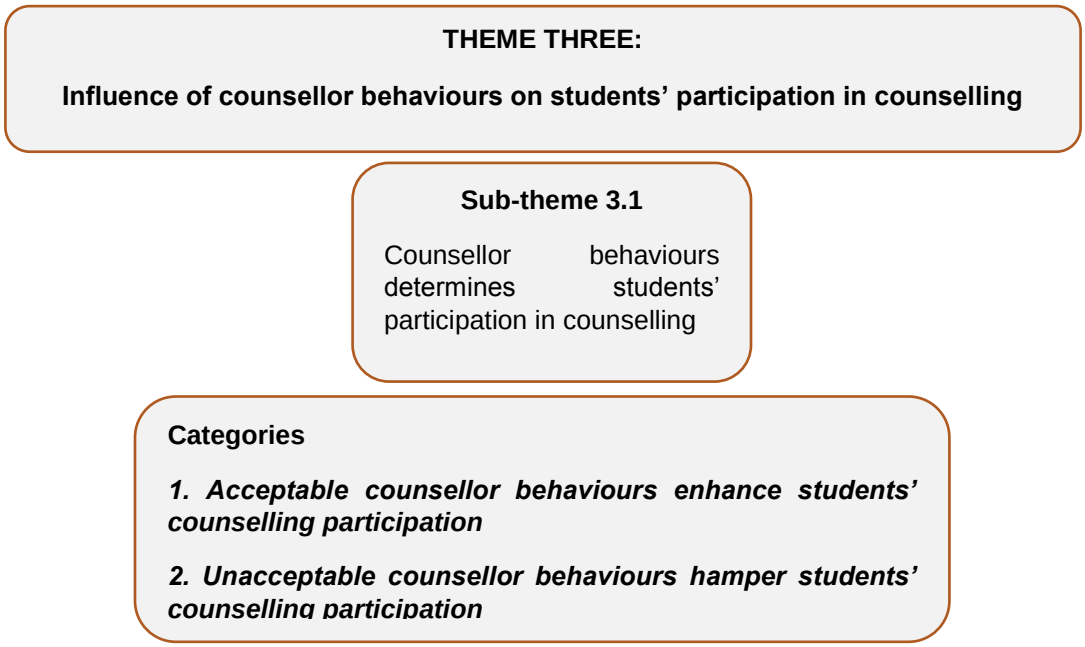


Figure 4-5: Theme three with corresponding sub-themes and categories

Theme three focused on the impact of counsellor behaviours on study participants. The results generated responses for secondary research question one. I generated two categories, 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 out of this sub-theme. The first concerned acceptable counsellor behaviours (category 3.1.1) and the second, unacceptable counsellor behaviours (category 3.1.2). Table 4.3 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme three.

Table 4-3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme three

Sub-theme	Inclusion criteria	Exclusive criteria
3.1 Counsellor behaviours determine students' participation in counselling	All counsellor behaviour-related information that attracts students to patronise counselling	All counsellor behaviour-related information that deters participants from patronising counselling

4.2.3 Counsellor behaviours determines students' participation in counselling

In this section, I highlighted the two categories of counsellor behaviours, namely acceptable counsellor behaviours and unacceptable counsellor behaviours. Each of these set of counsellor behaviours had various influences on participants.

4.2.3.1 Acceptable counsellor behaviours enhance students' counselling participation

The valuable counsellor behaviours participants identified included friendliness, warmth and confidentiality. Under category 3.1.1, I considered all these mentioned acceptable counsellor behaviours.

4.2.3.1.1 Counsellor warmth and friendliness

Information related to counsellor warmth and friendliness were presented under category 3.1.1 Participant six referred to this behaviour in lines 247-250.

Participant: No, they are … they are really friendly. Yeah. They are really friendly. When you go there the way they … they ask … they welcome you and everything.

Participant thirteen also valued the friendliness she received from her counsellor. She said in line 8725:

Participant: What I liked about the counseling is that, the counsellor was free, friendly.

She described this counsellor attitude as comfortable and relaxing therefore making her open up to the counselling discussion. She said that in lines 8731-8733.

Participant: It made me say everything I wanted to say. Everything I was, I was feeling……

Participant two on the other hand expressed surprise at the extent the counsellor went to show warmth towards him. He said in lines 5805 – 5821.

Participant: He treated me … you see the way he received me was like a father receiving his child and I said am coming for counselling. He said ooo come, come, come, come. He gave me … he even ss the … by then the chair wasn't there. So, he took a chair. He

rather took a chair. there and then he placed it for me to sit down. He asked me if I will drink water, I said nooo, it's okay. I was really surprised why a lecturer will give me a chair

4.2.3.1.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality in counselling was another cherished counsellor behaviour. Participant eleven said in lines 7092 – 7094:

Participant: (clears throat and very thoughtful) Urmmm. Talking about what I like, mhmhurmmmm I think the aspect of confidentiality, it is hundred percent. The aspect of confidentiality… it is hundred percent.

And subsequently in lines 7056-7065 she stressed the issue further.

Participant: There are some issues I have discussed with Auntie Christie and I know she is very close to Reverend. Like brother and sister but am very sure, trust me am, very sure Auntie Christie has never disclosed, not even a single word from me to him. Myself, my husband and reverend Wilson sat to have a discussion and I observed to see if Christie will behave funny or will do something for me to suspect that may... Never

The following however displayed some unacceptable counsellor behaviours participants mentioned in the study.

4.2.3.2 Unacceptable counsellor behaviours hamper students' counselling participation

Counsellors' unacceptable behaviours generally conflicted with their counselling profession.

4.2.3.2.1 Counsellor apathy towards client

Participant one recorded her disappointment in her counsellor's frequent inability to recognise her and recall her personal details. She recounted the incident in lines 5086-5096.

Participant: (a bit thoughtful) Okay, I think nothing much just that errm, he didn't keep my name. Sometimes he used to call me on phone and then I also used to call him sometimes

but then anytime he called or I called him, I have to try to remind him of who I am. Even the Benedicta… Yes Yes. Then I will say Benedicta. Then he will be like Benedicta what please. I will have to tell him your client, I came for counselling. Yeah, Yeah. Your full name I will mention...errmm, level? I will have to mention. It will take a very long time before he will say O sorry, sorry I now get you …

4.2.3.2.2 Counsellor impatience and poor listening

Participant seven also accused his counsellor of poor listening and impatience towards him. He opined that the counsellor only jumped to conclusions and tried to push down his (counsellor's) suggestions on him (student). He said in lines 9553-9564:

Seerious: He is rather giving me suggestions meanwhile he doesn't understand my main problem. So, what am trying to say is that we must get qualified people. People who have the passion … if I have it say the passion and compassion to understand where you are coming from. And then know who to-to sit in your problem, and then identify and then give you the relevant suggestion not … because anybody can give suggestion or advise. But when e came counsellors, in fact they have the fore knowledge, they have studied, the spirit of God is with them therefore they can give the relevant advises. In fact, the good one for you to follow and where you must be. So, for me I aam when I went to that place in fact, the man was not able to identify my-my problem. He was just saying that "Oh then you must do this", meanwhile he was just leading me somewhere.

4.2.3.2.3 Counsellor unavailability

Some participants complained about their counsellors dishonouring their appointments without excuse. Participant nine his experience with such a situation in lines 3136-3140:

Participant: ermmm… the only thing is the…… sometimes you come for counselling may be the counsellor is not around. Yeah

Participant one also said in lines 5264-5276:

Participant: Okay I will say that they need to bring in more counsellors because sometimes when I go there, I will have to sit there for a very long time before I get to see my counsellor probably because Oh not that, when I went, they told me, he told me that he is going to be my counsellor. That was what he said. Once he has my form, he will be my counsellor. Yes please, so when I go I just sit in front of his office

I subsequently present an illustration of the counsellor behaviours on participants' participation in counselling. Figure 4.6 illustrates sub-theme 3.1 and its corresponding categories.

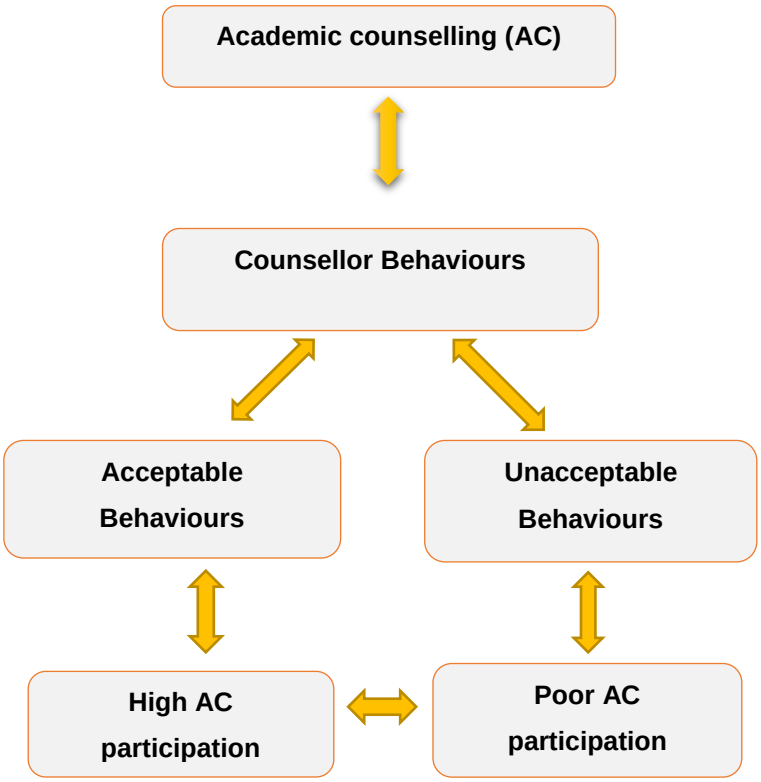


Figure 4-6: Influence of counsellor behaviours on students' counselling participation

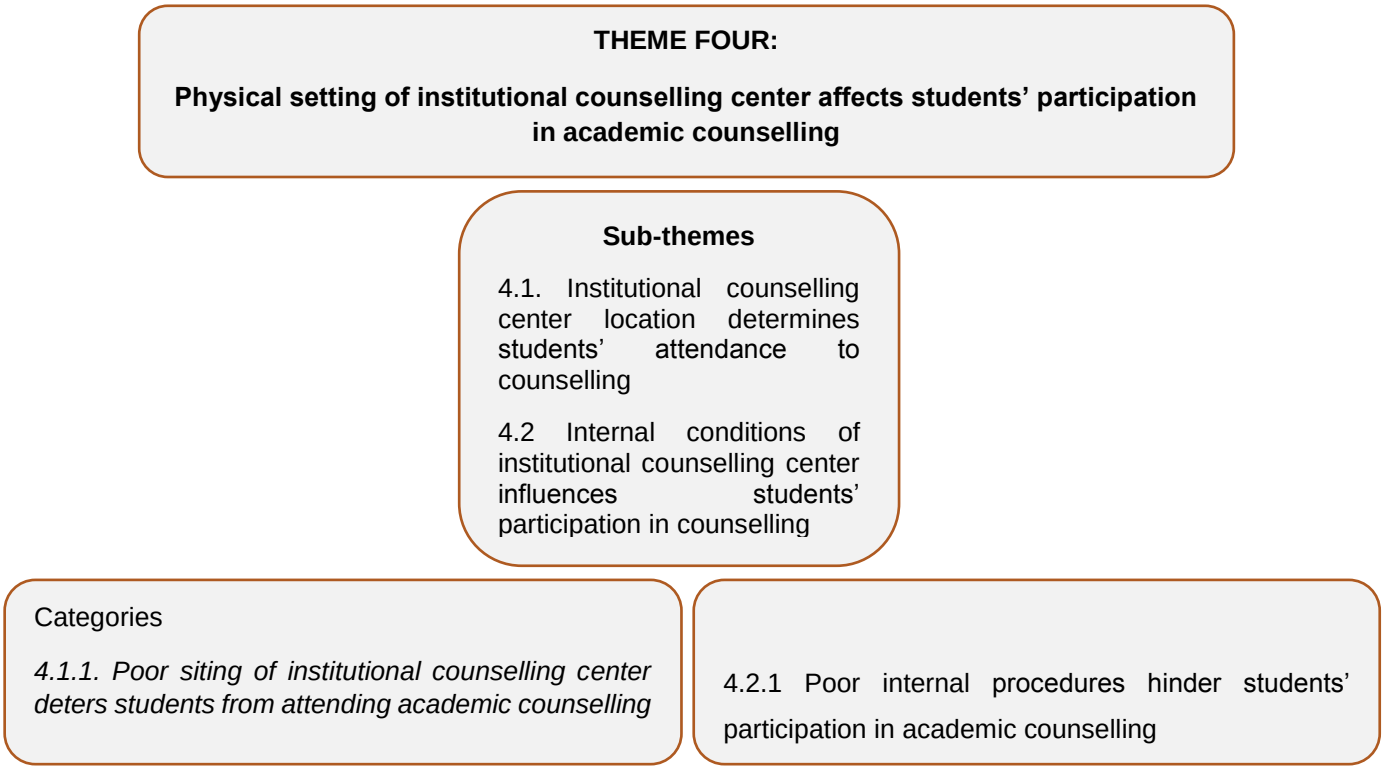


Figure 4-7: Theme four with corresponding sub-themes and categories

Theme four focuses on the physical site and procedures adopted at the institutional counselling center and its effect on students' participation in counselling. I subsequently divided the theme into two sub-themes 4.1 and 4.2. My further categorisation of the sub-themes yielded categories 4.1.1 and 4.1.1. Category 4.1.1 focuses on the poor siting and external state of the institutional counselling center and its effect on students' attendance to counselling. In the case of category 4.2.1, the emphasis was on the poor procedures adopted in accessing counselling services at the centre. Information mobilized under theme four answered secondary research question one. Table 4.4 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme four.

Table 4-4: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme four

Sub-theme	Inclusive criteria	Exclusive criteria
4.1. Institutional counselling center location determines students' attendance to counselling	All information regarding the physical setting of the institutional counselling center on campus	All information unrelated to the physical siting of the institutional counselling center on campus
4.2 Internal counselling center conditions influence students' participation in counselling	All information concerning counselling procedures at the institutional counselling center	All information unrelated to counselling procedures at the institutional counselling center

4.2.4 Institutional counselling center location determines students' attendance to counselling

This theme highlighted the physical location of the institutional counselling center and its effects on students' participation in counselling.

4.2.4.1 Poor siting of the institutional counselling center deters students from attending academic counselling

Participants expressed various reactions regarding the siting of the institutional counselling centers. In one site, participants desired a re-location of the building to an independent site but others thought its shared premises was rather advantageous to counselling. The following comment was made in lines 10031-10038 by participant two. He liked the shared site of the center.

Nelson: But … but for UCC eer counselling center I think it's attached to a certain department. So, when entering no one will say you are going to the counselling centre.

Nelson: So, with that with that … I think its good.

Participant: I think I think the-the education aspect is good.

Contrary to the above view, participants one and three opined that it was better to have the center in an independent building to enhance confidentiality and ensure easy access. Participant three thus commented in lines 4771-4777:

Participant: And I think the counselling center should be a building by its own like it should be a placed by its own. Yeah, it should be an independent building that when you see the-this block you will know that this is the counselling center block. And eerm Prof-Prof is no more at that office but then that place is the counselling center.

Participant one commented that the current location of the center was confusing and unnoticeable. She observed in lines 5479-5489:

Participant: I don't think so. Yeah. Because at first, I even thought it was an office or a department for the education students. When you get there, I know that we have Guidance and Counselling Center written over there but we also have Foundations of … we have other writings over there. We have the Kingdom Bookshop over there and I would wish that the counselling center would have its separate office somewhere that it wouldn't merge with other offices.

Then she offered her reasons for rejecting the current center location in lines 5507-5509 first:

Participant: Yeah. I think that for easy identification of the counselling center it should be somewhere different. Despite the demarcations, well clear demarcations, I still think that it should be a separate office.

The participant further explained in justification of her stance in lines 5529-5530 and finally, 5536-5538.

Participant: Yeah. I don't have a problem with that. Sometimes it makes identifying your lecturer's office very, a bit difficult. I remember a particular case, when we came to level 100, I have really forgotten. The lecturer told me I have an IC so I should see him and I had to search, go around and around (lines 5536-5538).

4.2.4.2 Internal conditions of institutional counselling center influences students' participation in counselling

4.2.4.2.1 Poor internal procedures hinder students' participation in academic counselling

Under this section, I highlighted issues related to counsellor-client interaction regarding access to counselling. Participants one, two and thirteen complained about difficulties in reaching their counsellors when they (counsellors) dishonoured their appointments. Participant one for instance lost her appointment to another client. She said in lines 5273-5275:

Participant: (laughter) Sometimes he will tell me I should come and by the time I get there, someone is there and when I complain, he will be like he didn't know that the person was coming and the person came before me so I should just exercise patience.

Finally, participant seven complained about the poor counsellor follow-up after the termination of counselling. In lines 983-989 he noted:

Participant: I-I I will say the-the I don't know some of the things they-they need in fact to help students as in the-the-the communication the communication. Because one, I-I will come to-to the counselling centre and share my problem but I don't see any feedback like calling me to see how things is going. So, the communication line is very very poor, yeah. Very very poor.

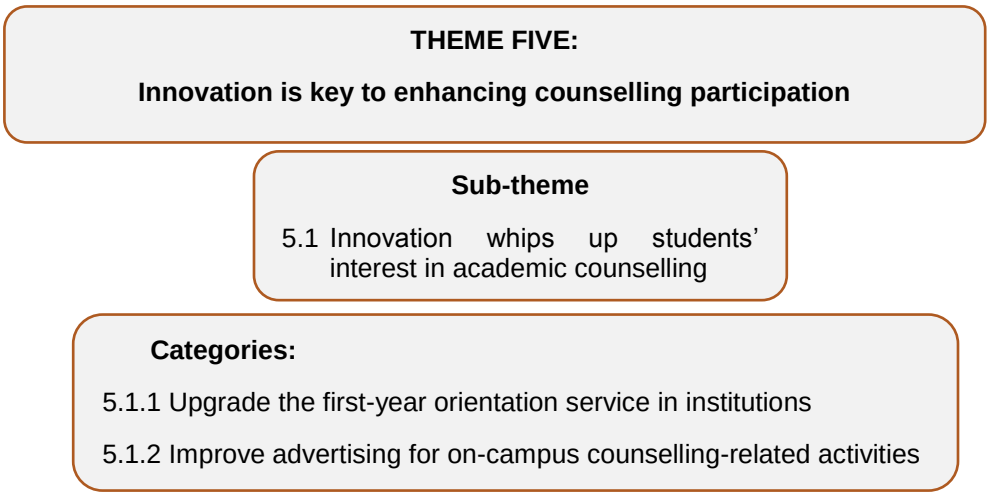


Figure 4-8: Theme five with corresponding sub-theme and categories

A common concern among participants in all three institutions was poor advertising. Participants stressed the need for innovation, more out-door programmes and the re-designing of a billboard to better advertise the counselling service on campuses. I established one sub-theme (5.1) from theme five and subsequently derived two key categories from it. In category, 5.1.1, I emphasized the need to revamp the first year orientation programme for better outcomes. Category 5.1.2 also stressed the need for more advertising of academic counselling on campus. Table 4.5 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme five.

Table 4-5: the inclusion and exclusion criteria for theme five

Sub-theme	**Inclusion criteria**	**Exclusion criteria**
5.1 Innovation whips up students' interest in academic counselling	All information regarding participants suggested means of improving counselling services on campus	All information inconsistent with improving on-campus counselling related activities

4.2.5 Innovation whips up students' interest in academic counselling

The lack of proactivity on the part of counsellors was also strongly highlighted in all three institutions. Participants generally stressed the need for counsellors to step up creativity in their counselling-related activities on campus. Categories 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 concerned the first-year orientation and advertising for counselling on campus respectively.

4.2.5.1 Upgrade the first-year orientation service in institutions

Participants in the study presented their opinions regarding the existing first year orientation service offered on campus. Participant four for example confessed not attending the full session. She said in lines 3672- 3680:

Participant: Okay, they might do it. They might do it because me I didn't come to school

early. Yes, I didn't come early. They were almost done before I came

Similarly, participant six missed some parts of the programme and expressed it in lines *599-603.*

Participant: Yeah, I went through the-the orientation but I didn't complete. So maybe the day I didn't go was the day counselling was announced. I-I-I can't ... But then am-am not am sure … I-I don't think it's supposed to be only in that day during the orientation. Even that is while …

Participant eight was however emphatic that the orientation programme was limited both in time and scope. She made her submissions in lines 2199-2207:

Participant: Of course, but it's-it's quite limited. Because there are other departments they have to talk to. So, they just have to come. I think our-our counselling session or during our orientation it was eerm about drugs, that's where counselling session came in and then someone talked. It was just like few minutes. So just few minutes in level 100.

4.2.5.2 Improve advertising for counselling-related activities on campus

The inadequacy of counselling-related activities and its associated lack of awareness on campus was severely underscored by participant two in lines 6746-6753:

Participant: I think eerm the student body should be … you know it is not only level 100 that we should go for counselling. Maybe level 200 when you-you are in level 200 you can remind us there's-there's counselling centre, yes. You can remind us that there is counselling centre so that … you know when you get to level 200, 300 you easily forget that there is counselling centre.

Similarly, participant eight desired the engagement of role models and student leaders to address them on pertinent social issues at counselling programmes. In her presentation, participant eight reported that:

Participant: People get influenced by those who talk to them. (line 2191)

Participant: … because we-we-we listen more to our peers (lines 2160-2162)

Participant: than older people so when they are able to say this is the SRC President, he is talking to us about eerm counselling sessions (lines 2193-2196)

Participant: let's go try it and see. Something like that.

4.3 Conclusion

I believe the presented study results immensely highlight participants' key attitudes, perceptions and benefits derived from the academic counselling service in Ghanaian universities. The results further underscored some significant student concerns that require immediate attention for better future service on university campuses. Overall, counselling misconceptions and inappropriate counsellor behaviours served as the greatest hindrance to enhanced counselling participation. It is my fervent hope that my proposed study recommendations will propel the good course of counselling services among higher education students in Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the results I realised in the current study. The iterative meaning creation process I engaged in my data analysis, generated five broad themes that illuminated participants' meanings of the academic counselling service in Ghanaian public universities. My focus in the current chapter was twofold. First, to enunciate the various interpretations and implications I derived from the study results, to whip up their discussions for meaningful study findings. Sadala and Adorno, (2001) contend that it is the duty of the qualitative researcher to transform study participants' expressions into meaningfully appropriate interpretations, based on their alignment to the research purpose. Peshkin, (2000) additionally maintains that interpretation is an 'act of imagination and logic', that involves 'selection, ordering, associating and meaning making' to derive universal knowledge (p. 9).

My interpretations of study results in the current chapter were thus established by an integration of 'thoughtfulness' or 'minding', as implied by the term 'phenomenology', (Van Manen, 2016, p. 12) and imagination, logic and analysis, as suggested by Sadala and Adorno (2001) as well as Peshkin (2000) above. These stirred me into in-depth reflection and speculation to establish interpretations of the study results towards apt descriptions and meaning-making. The process essentially captured my 'outsider position' of gathered data, as the qualitative researcher (Reid et al., 2005, p. 22) to resonate further meanings from the results. Finally, I related the study results to relevant literature and the adopted research paradigm, to engender deeper discussions of study results into an integrated meaningful whole (Smith, 2007).

Figure 5.1 presents the process I followed in constructing the current chapter.

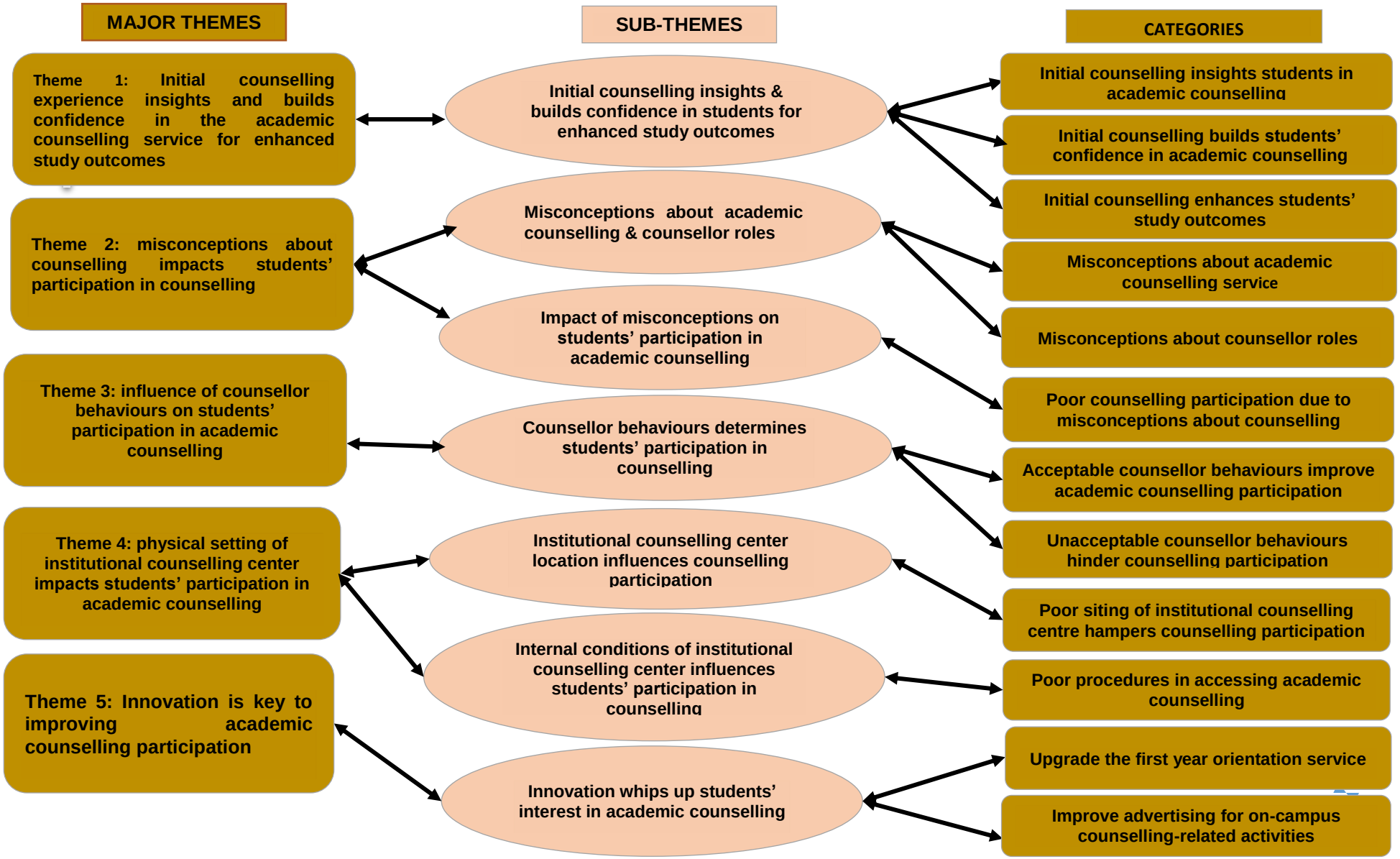


Figure 5-1: Format for developing interpretations and discussions for chapter five

5.2 Interpretation of study results

5.2 1 Theme one: Initial experience insights students towards deeper confidence in academic counselling for enhanced study outcomes.

Under this broad theme, I discussed the three sub-categories concerning students' insights, confidence and benefits derived from their initial counselling experiences. Theme one essentially presented counselling as a worthwhile experience.

5.2.1.1 Initial counselling insights students into the academic counselling service

Participants' initial counselling experiences were mostly revealing. Reports on counselling from participants eight and nine for instance were favourably instructive about the service. Through dialogues with their counsellors, participants mobilized novel methods to redress their personal concerns (lines 1381-1384). Counselling thus offered a rich source of practical solutions to students' personal life challenges. Similar pleasant views were expressed in lines 3026 & 3027, 3916 and 4968 & 4969.

In lines 1381 & 1382 for instance, the desire for problem-sharing aimed at reaching more practical solutions to the participants' problems. Problem sharing implies 'halfing' their burdens, and therefore a reassurance of some relief from their difficult situations (refer to line 3018). The freedom or liberty from the limited confines of participants' problems that ushered them into the lime light of insight, towards exploration and discovery was reassuring. In effect, problem sharing provided an exclusive opportunity to access *'novel ideas'* (line 1384) for insightful living and a subsequent empowerment of participants towards a better exploration of the wider world, to realize their biggest future dreams. The counselling encounter thus represented a unique opportunity to explore greater minds, nurture deeper creativity for the establishment of greater inventions. Thus, problem sharing easily presented participants a rich source of inspiration, thereby, projecting the human mind as the primary seat of ingenuity. This further confirms the notion that *two heads are better than one* (refer to line 8824). Summarily, effective counselling offered

participants an exclusive opportunity to veer into a more meaningful and progressive life path. Nevertheless verbal emphasis of the counselling encounter (refer to lines 1386) necessitates a physical meeting between the two parties for talking and listening (two key counselling skills) to occur in a typical counselling encounter (refer to line 1388), to generate appropriate feedback to derive a fruitful conclusion regarding the participant's plight. Both talking and listening thus promoted the idea creation process in counselling.

Through the counselling encounter, participant nine also gained '*a lot of information'* that he initially *'did not know about…..*' (refer to lines 3018 & 3019). This stressed the instructiveness of counselling to underline its teaching and learning focus. In effect, a consistent engagement in counselling exposes clients to a rich store of creativity and varied proactive solutions to the multitudes of life's challenges. Likewise in several other instances, participants stressed additional non-academic dimensions of the counselling encounter. First, the participant's description of counselling as a profession, (refer to lines 171-172) presents the facility as possessing a well-established code of ethics and a basic training requirement for practise. The uniqueness of the facility as a help-seeking profession (lines 3036-3047) and the rather vast, non-age specific clientele of counselling (lines 230-235, 3803 and 8781) attests to its professional focus. Trained counsellors often displayed profound insight in behaviour change techniques as they applied astute helping skills in their work. By implication, counsellors are best couched for their helping roles and an untrained person can hardly operate as a professional counsellor.

The wide age range of counselling clientele equally endorsed the social usefulness of the facility. Children as young as six or seven years old could benefit from counselling so long as they can meaningfully communicate, likewise the elderly, regardless also of their social standing. Counselling is thus non-discriminatory and assistive to all, including the old and young, rich or poor, coloured or white, high or low in social standing.

Another scenario depicted academic counselling as an enjoyable experience (lines 161-162 and lines 196-197). Participants in this case highlighted the value of care, support and above all, the liberty to off load their burdens to a friendly counterpart without hindrance. They cited the warm greetings, welcoming reception, the undivided attention and non-threatening environment they enjoyed (lines 197-192). Indeed, counsellor warmth and friendliness offered participants a series of exciting lifetime experiences. Overall, the exclusive counselling dimensions underscored the richness of the multi-faceted, socially indispensable and versatile life facility.

5.2.1.2 Initial counselling builds confidence in students

Several incidents in the study also revealed participants' confidence in the counselling facility. Foremost were their confident pledges to promote counselling to their colleagues. This was as a result of the various benefits they reaped from their initial encounters with the facility (refer to lines 161- 162, 4965). In line 4969, the participant adopted a hyperbole to highlight the relevance of counselling. Her statement exuded lots of confidence in counselling and further aligned with participant six's buoyancy in the facility. Her comment in lines 403 and 404 revealed this, '*…I really felt some hope that something good could come out of what she had put before him'.* Her statement was a dual confession that first stressed her confidence in her counsellor for his skilful display of warmth and friendliness and secondly, a confidence in the counselling facility itself to resolve her difficulty. Alternatively, the counsellor's warm reception usually affirmed the profound counsellor-client bond that often endorsed clients' confidence in counselling. In lines 407-410, the participant's blatant denial of fears over her issue being publicized was appropriately captured in her use of the word '*never'* (refer to line 410). 'Never' in this case meant 'not even on one occasion'. It also implied 'unimaginable', in the sense that her counsellor's professionalism would not allow her to do otherwise. This is another incident of confidence in counselling.

The meaning of the word '*good* ' in line 403 also reflected the participant's anticipation of a solution to her challenge and therefore an assurance of a relief from her distressful

state. Only her optimism in counselling provided her hope for a better future and imbued confidence in her. Participants' further confidence in counselling emerged with their realisation of the resource's adaptiveness to all manner of issues that offered rich social insight into life's concerns. In lines 3018, the numerous revelations counselling offered were deeply underscored. Likewise the usefulness of counselling (refer to lines 2661 and 7142), it's non-discriminatory feature (refer to line 3417) and non- status-specific (line 766) state. All these equally stressed the versatility and indispensability of counselling. Indeed, the diverse association of counselling to general child care (refer to lines 7132-7143), marriage (refer to 6935 – 6938, 6948-6952, 7032-7033) and efficient decision-making, (refer to lines 130-131 and 7184-7189) among others highlighted its social significance towards an enhanced participants' confidence. Further counselling associations to religion (refer to lines 71-74) efficient time management (refer to lines 85-90, 795-797, 3090) and sexual issues (refer to lines 7971) also underscore the facility's social value among study participants.

The desire to '*….. seek professional advice'* (refer to line 235) additionally stressed a paradox regarding the disturbing nature of counselling concerns, though it also displays another scenario of confidence in counselling. Problems often thrusted a search for solutions, thus the negative attracts the positive. The expression '*to seek'* however implied desperation. Desperation is often characterised by purposiveness and resilience that facilitated the discovery of a rightful answer or solution to the existing problem. The described scenario brings to mind two Ghanaian developments. First, the proverb that literally says, 'a *toad does not move about in broad day light, except it is being pursued.*' Secondly, the Ghanaian game hunting scenario, where the local hunter plugs fire at the entrance of the game's habitat to smoke it out. The fire in this case symbolized the counselling concern that drags the victim out of his comfort zone to seek counselling. In effect, the demand for counselling only comes with the emergence of a problem but the greater the drive, the stronger the urgency to seek help. The implication is that humans require agility and proactivity to confront the numerous life battles. Only the determined thus, found the correct answers to the numerous life's challenges and therefore ultimately

advanced their lives. In a nutshell, better to be confident about our endeavours than to entertain fears.

Contrary to the above scenarios, a number of incidents recorded particiapnts' lack of confidence in counselling. Participant twelve for instance feared the public exposure of her case, (refer to lines 9638 & 9639). Her fears revealed a clear disregard for the counsellor's professionalism, though her earlier nasty experience with her friend may justify her behaviour (refer to lines 8172-8174). Similarly, lines 403 & 404 also depicted an element of helplessness and a complete dependence on the counsellor for assistance. The client was utterly vulnerable at this stage and relished a restoration of hope into her life via the counsellor's intervention. Clients' usual need for assistance and their fears regarding help seeking often afflicted them with negative emotional reactions. Examples of the mentioned emotional states in the current study were confusion, fear, uncertainty and discomfort (refer to line 7540). Participant six aptly described the confusion she felt prior to counselling as '*… really battling with your mind,……'* (line 234). The expression depicted a difficult mental struggle that highlighted a traumatic situation or a deep academic turbulence. Victory over such a mind battle would be deeply relieving and she earnestly looked forward to it. Similarly, participant thirteen felt mentally liberated after encountering counselling. The scuffle her family problem established was traumatic to her and she equally enjoyed immense relief via deeper academic concentration (refer to line 8860 & 8864).

A similar reaction also sent participant two fleeing from the counselling center on his initial visit. He subsequently mastered courage to meet the counsellor the following day and enjoyed the session eventually. Apparently, participants' profound over-protection of their counselling concern, coupled with their low counselling perceptions promoted their distressful feelings once they contemplated counselling. Ironically, this over-protective attitude never benefitted. By implication, adopting a more positive attitude or confidently embracing counselling reflected better effects on participants than entertaining the unfavourable thoughts that usually afflicted them with disturbance.

Summarily, the cunning integration of numerous life challenges converged with the wealthy replica of counselling-proposed solutions to underscore the deep metaphor of life. Life is ironically replete with challenges but also abounding with solutions. It is only by enduring the prickly thorns on the rose tree that one can own a beautiful rose flower. Thus, a woman labours to deliver her loving new born. Pain and gain essentially form the essence of life and through adversity man attains prosperity. Life in effect is not a bed of roses and humans must accordingly 'suffer to gain'. It is thus more prudent to remain confident, bold and resolute when the troubled waters of life threaten, for in a short while the torrent will die out. Displaying fear and a defeatist attitude only offers us reproach and failure in the end. The fact that study participants eventually benefitted from counselling justifies the need for confidence in the facility.

5.2.1.3 Initial counselling enhances students' study outcomes

Participants two, four and twelve recorded some physical increases in their academic performances, following their fruitful counselling experiences. Participant four for instance appreciated her highest score of sixteen to twenty out of twenty (lines 3732 and 3742), (that was a distinction in the Ghanaian system of education) and the least, from twelve to fourteen. Participant thirteen likewise reported making such gains from counselling (refer to lines 3774-3776 and 8055 and 8057). Participants essentially attributed their academic gains to the favourable study habits their counsellors imparted to them. Frequent and prompt reading of lecture notes, using quiet study settings to facilitate deeper concentration, sitting up-right during studies and noting down summaries in study materials generated the immense rewards to study participants. The variety of adopted strategies however stressed the multi-faceted nature of learning. Indeed, the wide variety of learning significant factors also emphasized the dichotomies among students in general and the uniqueness of their strategies in achieving their personal academic goals. Both participants in this case were extremely overjoyed with their exceptional performance. Their use of the possessive pronoun '*my*' in lines 3728 and 8057 confirmed their joy and proud sense of accomplishment. Indeed the above testimonies justify the goal of the current study and its related literature. Emphasis on the theories underpinning

the current study likewise stress the essence of counselling in optimising students' academic performance. Further details of the study results are subsequently provided.

5.2.2 Theme two: Misconceptions about counselling affects students' participation in academic counselling

5.2.2.1 Various misconceptions about the academic counselling service

Overall, counselling misconceptions stress erroneous and limiting views about the counselling facility. Participants' determination to overcome their personal challenges in the study however facilitated their demand for counselling that eventually yielded rewarding outcomes. Theme two accordingly stressed the negative impact of participants' aversive thoughts on life's circumstances. The subsequent account presents a synopsis of underlined counselling misconceptions in the study.

5.2.2.2 Counselling is problem-based

The above counselling misconception stressed a direct opposite of the generally affirmative counselling purpose to life. Advocates of the above fallacy side-lined the progressive and universal goal of counselling to highlight an unrealistic attention on its idiosyncratic objectives. Such misconstrued perceptions only deterred clients from tapping into the facility's usefulness, and ultimately resulted in an immense wastage, especially where victims are concerned. The misconception additionally exposed the entire counselling clientele, including the physical structure housing the service to social stigma (lines 9970 & 9971).

The above counselling misconception for instance placed participant six in a humiliating position when her colleagues discovered she needed counselling. They immediately concluded she had issues with her fiancé and quickly expressed surprise at her. The expression '*eeii*' in the Ghanaian Akan and Ga languages reflected surprise but the repeated use of the expression (refer to line 10044) echoed deeper surprise to the participant's counselling need. The participant's prompt guess of her colleagues'

suspicion over her counselling motive (refer to lines 10050, 10054 & 10055) also affirmed her personal interest in sex-related matters, likewise her colleagues. The belief that our keenest motives often pre-occupied our thoughts, also justified the participant's situation in this case. Possibly, participant six desired counselling regarding a love proposal from that pastor who harassed her at the fellowship meetings. Another thought also pointed to a possible row between herself and the pastor as lovers, hence, her need for counselling.

The scenario finally confirms young people's sexually active status, given their prime reproductive stage. This makes sexual intimacy a key issue among university students and confirms their institutional counselling centers' need to adopt the issue as a primary focus in their activities on campus. It becomes essential that the centers adopt strategies to champion the campaign for safer sex practices on campuses. Such efforts would address the incidence of HIV/AIDS/STIs, premarital sex and unwanted pregnancies among students in recent times.

5.2.2.3 Counselling exposes client's secrets to strangers

The feelings of uncertainty, worry and fear generated by low counselling perceptions (refer to lines 785 & 786, 5738-5740 and 9638 & 9639) deeply presented counsellors as strangers. Participants who held the above view sidelined the counsellors' professional training, qualification and unique skills and accordingly perceived them as laymen and women. Participant eleven's denial of her counselling problem (refer to lines 7011 & 7012), and her subsequent bold declaration of being self-reliant (refer to lines 7014) placed her among low counselling perceivers. Participant seven (refer to lines 898 & 899) and reported student friends who preferred consulting their family members, instead of professional counsellors were equally guilty of the offence.

Enstranged counsellors usually never won the trust of clients in general and therefore were never consulted by anyone. Such counsellors were mostly perceived as ignorant and thus had nothing to offer their clients. Clients with low counsellor perceptions usually denied themselves of the facility's immense benefits, thereby living longer and enduring

longer discomfort from their counselling concern, given their outright rejection of counselling. The key lesson in this situation is that extreme negativity never yields positive results. In fact, persimism often generated a crippling effect on many endeavours. This makes it our individual responsibility to seek our lives' progress that strongly warrants our positive attitude to obtain a rewarding feedback in each case. Accordingly, the many negative thoughts participant two entertained culminated in his initial failed attempt to seek counselling. His modified attitude on the other hand established a remarkable achievement in his academics (refer to lines 5732-5742). The same applied to participant four whose changed initial thoughts resulted in the realisation of her initially abandoned dreams (refer to lines 3274 and 3732-3742).

In sum, participants' extreme focus on their personal negative counselling concerns heightened their negative attitudes (refer to line 6697) that only ended up hurting them. In the case of participant four, the embarrassment poor performance often attracted for instance precipitated her worries. Yet counselling was the most appropriate and immediate resource to redress her problem and she only needed to change her attitude to benefit tremendously from the facility.

5.2.2.4 Counselling as advise-giving

The confusion between counselling and advice giving has long-remained a source of disagreement among some educational stakeholders. Several professionals opined a similarity in both concepts and thus used them interchangeably. However, though both facilities shared similar goals they adopted different approaches. Advice-giving implies pinpointing a specific intervention to a client as a remedy for his difficulty. The proposal is usually the advisor's idea but the client often obliges due to his confidence in the advisor's helping capabilities. Contrarily, counselling offered deeper insight into the client's challenging situation that ensured the clients' personal choice of a remedy to his difficulty. The key difference between the two is that, while counselling empowers the client to choose a remedy following an insightful discussion on the situation at hand, advice-giving heavily relies on the advisor for a proposal to overcome the difficulty. Clients

are however believed to show higher commitment in efforts to achieve the counselling goal, given their contribution in selecting the final remedy to redress their concerns.

The above explanation renders the assertions in lines 898, 4903 and 4910 fallible. The counselling expectations in each of the mentioned cases were unrealistic as counsellors neither solved clients' problems nor predicted their problems as suggested by the participants. The participant's wrong assumption in this case may have facilitated his disappointment with the counselling outcome (refer to line 833). The presented scenario further aligned with the erroneous perception that counsellors operated with specific standards (refer to lines 2674 & 2675, 2671 & 2672 and lines 1205 – 1211). The true meaning of counselling was however well-articulated by participant eight in lines 1381-1384.

Academic counselling on the other hand often reflected advice-giving since counsellors usually suggested specific study strategies to optimize students' performance. The situation is justifiable by the factual nature of academic behaviours (refer to lines 1159 – 1160, 3542-3553, 6154 -6155, 6443-6447). Academic counselling is therefore limited to direct academic concerns but psychological counselling addressed students' various emotional and social needs. Meanwhile, directive or prescriptive counselling models likewise matched the advice-giving process in view of the counsellor dominance of the processes. All three instances however stress the usual client problem-presenting and the counsellor's key listening roles.

Problem sharing (refer to line 1381) also reflected a typical counselling feature where both client and counsellor remain commited to resoving the problem at hand. Unlike advise-giving where the advisee mostly relies on the dvisor for a remedy, counselling is more of a shared responsibility. Sharing underlines a collaborative effort to reach an amicable solution. The collaborative element in counselling is the key basis for counsellor warmth, care, voluntary participation and a keen sense of commitment and responsibility to assist the client. In the advise-giving scenario, the advisee usually remains passive in the helping process.

5.2.2.5 Counselling is a first year service

Misinformation often distorts the reality. The above fallacy was wrongfully established by participant two (refer to lines 5761 – 5763). As usual, the view mirrored a restricted and erroneous opinion of counselling but also stressed the challenging first year university life. Two interpretations are applicable in this instance. First that the college first year experience often ushered students into a novel and wider world of greater opportunities for their advancement. Extreme care and support is however necessary to coach students in accessing this lively world of development. Counselling thus becomes a valuable key that opens the door to this unique world. Secondly, the problematic first year college life in itself demands counselling to facilitate the adjustment and overall development of the often immature and naive new student group. Both scenarios thus stressed the indispensability and versatility of counselling that flouts the rather restrictive and misconceived perception of counselling. The importance of counselling to the limitless worldwide clientele was eventually highlighted via the participant's determination to overcome his concerns (refer to line 5774). His resilience in confronting the negative thoughts of shyness (line 5763) and embarrassment (line 5767) eventually paid off. Once again, a move from the participant's comfort zone has resulted in the achievement of an incredible life exploit (refer to lines 5720 – 5721 & 6023 – 6027).

The establishment of this misconception also stressed the fallibility of humans. As mortals, humans are liable to mistakes, hence an emphasis on care in accomplishing our endeavours. Environmental effects mostly determined our behaviours (Bandura's Social Cognitive theory) and occasionally heightened our misconceptions of the reality. Indeed, the richer our environmental stimuli, the greater their impact on us that in turn stresses human fallibility. Nonetheless, participants' ultimate discovery of the untruths regarding their initial perceptions of counselling was a welcoming result. The participant's remark in line 5774 for example would not have seen the light of day had he not persevered against his negative counselling thoughts.

5.2.2.6 Misconceptions about counsellor roles

Two key misconstrued counsellor roles are discussed in this section, given that they conflicted with accepted counsellor roles.

5.2.2.6.1 Counsellors as security personnel

The forceful and intimidating interactions of security persons in handling robbers and lawbreakers was in direct contrast with professional counsellor-client interactions. In fact, counselling goals, processes and purposes are in clear conflict with security related activities. The fact that counsellors mostly sought their clients' welfare, offered them protection, genuine care and attention defined the dichotomy between their roles and those of security personnel who essentially adopted force and intimidation in their endeavours. The mentioned contrasts underscored the fallibility of the misconception under discussion.

The subsequent comparison of the counsellor-client relationship with that of a parent and child (refer to line 8164) were however harmonious as both reflected love and care in alignment with counselling interactions. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of the security personnel's' image with parental love or counselling processes established an interesting paradoxical situation. The participant's subsequent description of counselling as '*normal*' (refer to line 8166) mirrored her realization of the true counsellor roles, having experienced counselling. The expression was a gentle recognition of her earlier misconceived understanding of counsellor responsibilities and a follow-up to correct the mistake. In effect, the word '*normal'* actually means not fearful or unthreatening, as opposed to her initial projection of counsellors as security personnel. Nevertheless, the participant's initial fears of her case not being kept confidential and her subsequent shyness prior to accessing counselling (refer to lines 7983-7991) could also be related to her eventual description of counselling as normal. Likewise her use of the word *'cool'* in line 8167 to express satisfaction, contentment and peace. Both terms, 'normal' and 'cool' thus confirmed the participant's modified counsellor role perceptions towards a more realistic and favourable image. This sudden understanding of counsellor roles also debunked the participant's initial fears and hesitations towards accessing counselling as rather baseless and futile.

My earlier deliberations on the operations of counsellors adopting laid down standards suffices for the discussions on counselling as advice giving. I therefore progress to discuss the next issue.

5.2.2.7 Effects of counselling misconceptions on students' participation in academic counselling

Overall, the expressed counselling misconceptions in the current study had limited effects on participants' service patronage. Many of the study participants were thus content at the end of the day, following their worthwhile counselling experiences.

Nevertheless, the stigma associated with counselling and the mentally deranged as well as the controversy surrounding the external labelling of the institutional counselling centers presented a dicey situation in the study. Participants were for example divided over the labelling of counselling centers in the sense that one group stressed the damaging effects of stigmatization associated with the external label on the counselling center building, (refer to line 9971) but the other expressed a contrary view, highlighting the external label as advantageous in facilitating the easy identification of the center on campus. Given the reality of both stands, the final consensus was for each institution to adopt their preferred or appropriate decisions following further fruitful deliberations among the concerned staff (refer to lines 9970 & 9971).

5.2.3 Theme three: Influence of counsellor behaviours on students' participation in counselling

Outlined counsellor behaviours in the study were essentially considered as either acceptable or unacceptable. Either category of behaviours differentially influenced students' counselling participation. The following discussion defined the various counsellor behaviours and their associated effects on students' counselling participation on campus.

5.2.3.1 Counsellors' acceptable behaviours determines students' counselling participation

5.2.3.1.1 Counsellor warmth and friendliness

The primary acceptable counsellor behaviours in the study were 'warmth and friendliness' and 'confidentiality'. According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2011), friendliness connotes kindness and pleasantness. It is a favourable feeling that aligns with another's personal efforts to share cordiality and fruitful interaction, thus presenting safety to the recipient. Friendliness additionally mirrors trust, acceptance and confidence between the involved individuals. It conveys faithfulness, a sense of responsibility, accommodation and reliability that also echoes comfort and peace.

Counsellor warmth often precedes friendliness and communicates love, affection and a genuine enthusiasm to assist the client. Counsellor warmth is also synonymous to rapport building. It can be verbally communicated by sharing greetings, introductions and pleasantries. The essence of rapport or the therapeutic alliance is the effective collaboration between the counsellor and client to work progressively towards the successful achievement of the counselling goal. Rapport equally remains vital to effective communication via its reflection of genuine care, assurance and trust in the helping process. Non-verbal cues like smiles, handshakes, hugs, maintaining healthy eye contact, and patient listening also reflect warmth in counselling. Both verbal and non-verbal communication thus feature prominently in the counselling encounter.

In the study, participants reported being received into their counselling sessions, via warm counsellor behaviours like smiles, being offered seats and some water to quench their thirst. All these aimed at ensuring their comfortability in the counselling setting. The role counsellor smiles plays at the initial meeting of the client cannot be over emphasized. A smile starts a friendship and conquers gloom. This transforms the counsellor's smile into the central attraction to a favourablly initiated future rapport that promotes the counselling process. A smile simply gestures a warm welcome and an ultimate assurance of a future healthy and trusted relationship of joy, peace and care. In effect, the counsellor's smile is an invitation to the client for a permanent stay.

The above symbolized participant two's description of his counsellor's warm reception in line 5794. The counsellor's immediate and repeated invitation to the client *'….. oooo come, come, come, come….*' in line 5802, followed immediately by an offer of a seat and shared pleasantries, assured the client of an enduring friendly relationship. This warm reception propelled the simile in line 5794 that reflected genuine affection for the client. The welcoming reception further assured the client of his counsellor's willingness to assist him. A striking caring counsellor behaviour was highlighted in lines 5804 & 5805 that highlighted deep care and love. Though the gesture was indicative of the counsellor's humility, the client was obviously touched by the incident, hence his frequent reference to it (refer to lines 5810, 5811 and 5816).

Another row of counsellor warmth was cited in lines 245-250, with the participant's repeated use of the word '*really'.* For three consecutive times the word was used to highlight deep counsellor love that often thrusted the client's commitment towards the achievement of the counselling goal. In this particular case the profound relationship propelled the participant's high rating of her counselling sessions (refer to lines 285) and secured her friendship with the counsellor as an added benefit from her counselling experience.

In another instance, the limitless counsellor acceptance and warmth was captured in the description of the counsellor as 'free' and 'friendly' (refer to line 8725). This counsellor attitude attracted the client's relaxation in their counselling interaction to facilitate her genuine out pour of her counselling concern (refer to line 8731). The same liberty eventually emerged as the participant's most valued counsellor quality (refer to line 8725) though the counsellor's comportment aligned with the famous Ghanaian hospitality that stressed the belief that such good efforts only attracted Godly blessings to the households of the providers.

5.2.3.1.2 Counsellor confidentiality

Confidentiality is a significant counselling ethic that implies having confidence in a counsellor to assist the client. It means maintaining the entire counselling discussion in a concealed manner to promote the client's safety. The personal nature of client's

counselling information (refer to lines 898 & 899) necessitates confidentiality to offer them protection and confidence in the counselling process. This confidence usually promotes client's commitment to the counselling process and facilitates the realization of the counselling goal. Confidentiality further fortifies the counselling relationship by imbuing trust, security and respect for the client Confidentiality also represents a general legal issue that offers a singular justification for safe record-keeping in the counselling encounter and also endorses intimacy and rapport establishment in counselling.

In the current study, confidentiality emerged as the most admirable counselling feature for participant eleven (refer to lines 7103-7105). Her careful selection of the ethic as her most preferred quality (refer to line 7093) reflected the seriousness she attached to confidentiality. Her immediate descent into a pensive mood, to voice out the counselling ethic as her most desired quality, endorsed the seriousness she attached to confidentiality. Her anticipation to operate as a counsellor in the nearest future justifies her commitment to confidentiality, though her counsellor's severe loyalty to the ethic may have precipitated hers (refer to lines 7056 – 7065). Accordingly, she adopted an apt simile (refer to lines 7056 – 7065) and such bold expressions like, *'I am sure...', 'trust me…' , 'very sure…'*, '..*never disclosed, not even a single word…'* (refer to lines 7057 & 7058) to illustrate the absoluteness of her counsellor's pledge to confidentiality (refer to lines 7092 – 7094, 7770, 7772 and 7774). Words like *'trust me'* and *'never'* also confirmed the counsellor's success on her confidentiality test to endorse the participant's derived conclusion of her counsellor's absolute commitment to the counselling ethic (refer to lines 7062 and 7063).

5.2.3.2 Counsellors' unacceptable behaviours affect students' counselling participation

On the other hand, apathy, impatience and poor listening, as well as counsellor unavailability were the repelling counsellor behaviours that featured in the study. I discuss the mentioned behaviours below.

5.2.3.2.1 Counsellor apathy towards client

The apathetic experience participant one encountered from her counsellor entailed difficulties by the counsellor in recognizing his client on phone. The rather awkward incident disputed the valued therapeutic alliance that usually bound the parties in

professional counselling. Counselling cordiality endorsed familiarity as a critical counselling requirement, thus promoting the recognition of either client or counsellor wherever they met. However, the poor counsellor recognition described in the study (not even by the clients' voice or name) was quite disappointing and painful, propelling the participant to complain about the ordeal (refer to lines 5086 and 5075 – 5087). The incident essentially threatened the intimacy between the two as it presented the counsellor as not interested in the participant's situation.

The scenario brings to mind John 10:14 in the Bible, where Jesus stressed the importance of familiarity in promoting intimacy between himself as the good shepherd and his flock. The Christians' prompt recognition of their shepherd's voice and vice versa is comparable to the counsellor-client relationship. It is expected that established rapport should sensitize both counsellor and client to each other's exclusive features such that they could easily recognize each other wherever they met. Thus the counsellor's inability to immediately recognise the participant in this case left much to be desired. Indeed the poor client recognition reflected unfamiliarity between the parties that could simply be interpreted as a disinterest in the client's situation. The incident is quite strange and stresses the likely presence of a health condition on the part of the counsellor. It is however worth noting that the counsellor was courteous enough to render immediate apologies to the client (refer to line 5086) once he recognized her.

5.2.3.2.2 Counsellor impatience and poor listening

Impatience in this situation means 'no time to waste' or 'get straight to the point.' It implied a hurried situation that hardly aligned with accepted counselling conducts. Indeed the problem-solving nature of counselling warrants a patient approach and hurrying counselling sessions reflects rejection on the part of counsellor. In the first instance, the participant accused his counsellor of poor listening and jumping to conclusions (refer to lines 9553 – 9562). The situation suggested hurrying the session. The expression '*he doesn't understand my main problem*' (line 9553) also implied a disconnection between the two, since they appeared to be operating at different levels (refer to lines 9550 & 9551). Poor listening, as suggested by the client may account for their varied level of

interaction but other factors like an inattentive or pre-occupied counsellor, a poor presentation of the client's scenario or operating in a noisy environment, could justify the clients' accusations for the counsellor.

Undeniably, the participant's bold condemnation of the counsellor's behaviour was a registration of his disappointment with the turn of events. He repeatedly condemned the counsellor's comportment over seven times within a short space of time (refer to lines 794, 798, 800, 822 & 823, 833, 840). His deep regrets about the situation were recorded by his pronouncements regarding the counsellor's inability to identify his concern and his failure to solve his problem. The truth of the client's accusations cannot however be ascertained considering the fact that there was no third party in the counselling session. However, the incident revealed the participant as a controversial character since he laid the entire blame on his counsellor without acknowledging his (participant's) role in the incident. Undeniably, the counselling encounter engaged two parties and both are responsible for the poor turn of events in each case. It is further unclear what the participant's interest is in consistently discrediting the counsellor so much, instead of seeking further support to progress in life. The behaviour in fact presents a tricky client who probably attended counselling only to test the counsellor and not necessarily to seek assistance. This may be inferred from the participant's earlier reports of his successful counselling sessions and his subsequent show of interest in the counselling profession after his academic programme. It is thus not surprising that he suggested the university endeavoured to employ more skilled and qualified counsellors (refer to lines 9581 – 9583, lines 919 & 930 and 9570 – 9572). He opined that qualified counsellors often listened patiently to their clients (lines 9571-9572), and easily predicted the clients' thoughts even before they articulated their problems. The counsellor's inability to do these thus disqualified him as a professional.

Surprisingly, when confronted with the interview recording during data collection, this participant immediately consulted this unqualified counsellor and accepted his suggestion to permit the interview recording.

Subsequently, by aligning poor listening to the counsellor's impatience in this study (refer to lines 919, 940), the participant stressed the severity of the counsellor's unprofessionalism. Poor listening aligned with impatience and both conflicted with professional counselling conducts. Impatient counsellors thus hardly achieved their goals owing to their poor listening and hastily drawn conclusions. Poor listening also connotes a lack of genuine concern that further hindered the counsellor's understanding of the client's situation. Though poor listening conserved counselling time, it lacked the most essential counselling quality of deep concentration on the client's problem, thereby defeating the key purpose for help seeking. The poor counsellor listening also resulted in the wrong interpretation and the subsequently wrong suggestion offered by the counsellor (refer to lines 9563 & 9564).

5.2.3.2.3 Counsellor unavailability for counselling

Counsellor unavailability was also a commonly reported challenge at all three research sites. Participants were disappointed by their counsellors' absence on few occasions, despite their scheduled appointments with him. They thus lamented the long distance walk to the center and the subsequent waste of time due to the counsellors' absence (refer to line 5254). Their efforts to reach the counsellors by phone or physically proved futile. Participants nine, twelve, two and thirteen were also victims of this situation (refer to lines 3135 – 3136, 6069 – 6073, 8528 & 8535, 8800-8802).

I the counsellors' dishonouring of their appointments a sign of disrespect and an insult to clients. They were simply unprofessional, insensitive, uncourteous to students, particularly in these modern times when distance ceased to be a barriers by virtue of technology. The behaviours also strongly conflicted with counselling principles and I wonder why a simple text message was not sent to avoid all these disappointments. Seriously, the scenario reflected a clear case of staff irresponsibility, given that an act of initiative by the office secretary to send the text messages could have salvaged the situation. Indeed, all such counsellor-client liaison responsibilities should be assigned to the secretary who was reported to be whatsapping on duty (lines 5125 – 5128). Other unprofessional reported incidents where another student took participant one's

counselling appointment time could also have been prevented with the secretary's proactive intervention. Such counsellor behaviours deserve immediate redress given the fact that participants lamented the situation bitterly (line 5264). In the event that clients must maintain their initial counsellors throughout their stay on campus, this problem of counsellor unavailability must be immediately addressed to avoid any such future unfortunate occurrences.

5.2.4 Theme four: Physical setting of institutional counselling center affects students' participation in academic counselling

Under this theme, I discuss some of the highlighted factors that usually influenced students' interest and commitment to counselling on campus.

5.2.4.1 Poor siting of the institutional counselling center deters students from attending academic counselling

5.2.4.1.1 Dependent and independent physical sites of the counselling center

The siting of the institutional counselling center on campus had grave effect on students' attitudes towards counselling in the study. Participants mostly thought a shared building complex for a counselling center was not ideal. They stressed the frustrating nature of accessing centers located in complex buildings. The shared building of the institutional counselling center at the crab institutions was confusing to participant one for example at the initial instance. The directions to the counselling center and the Education Department on the wall were confusing (refer to lines 5470 – 5472). Subsequently, she also had a difficult time locating her lecturer's office within the same shared building (refer to lines 5526-5528). She was accordingly a strong advocate for the dependent counselling center structure.

Participant two on the other hand preferred the shared center site given its advantage in stemming the stigmatization of the center building and its visitors. The misconception that counselling only targeted problem-prone students was the basis for the stigmatization in

counselling. Nevertheless, participants' thoughts about stigmatization and their subsequent desire to conceal their visits to the counselling center stressed the importance of both issues to students. The differences among participants regarding the incidence of stigmatization and its associated discrete visits to the counselling center, equally highlighted the disagreements among students regarding counselling. The call for discrete or open visits additionally underscored students' desire for flexibility in scheduling their appointments to the counselling facility.

On the contrary, advocates for the independent counselling center argued based on the easy identification and access to the autonomous counselling center (refer to lines 6709 – 6713). They opined that the independent structure promoted confidentiality and converging all the counselling staff offices on the same premises would be a more organised arrangement (refer to lines 4776-4777). This arrangement would also ensure uniformity and the efficient organization of counselling-related facilities. The integration of all service staff in a single building would also ease future identification and access to staff whenever necessary (refer to lines 5526-5528).

Other expressed concerns included siting the center in a less noisy and well-cultured terrain (refer to lines 7647 – 7651). Counselling thrives best in less crowded and silent settings (refer to lines 6735-6741) while a beautifully organised terrain adds more attraction to the place to widen students' participation in the service.

5.2.4.1.2 Labelling the counselling center

Equally important were participants' reports regarding the external labelling of the counselling center (refer to lines 7126 – 7129). Mounting a billboard close to the entrance of the center would serve the dual purpose of advertising and directing students to the facility (refer to line 9951 and lines 9955). Both methods stress the relevance of communication but the added advantage of easy identification was paramount (refer to lines 7637-7638). Others opposed the open external labelling suggesting that it would only heighten the center's stigmatization (refer to lines 9970 & 9971). The general

consensus however that was a labelled center would also empower students to access counselling at their personal convenience.

The above concerns highlighted the call for careful planning of the setting and physical appearance of institutional counselling centers on campuses (refer to lines 9970 & 9971). No doubt, the centers' services are essential to students (refer to lines 7129 - 7132) but their more strategic location and overall attractive appearances would greatly influence service patronage. Both external and internal aspects of institutional counselling centers thus mattered to students. I however shelve the discussion on the billboard, as a means of advertising to theme five, where believe it better suits.

In conclusion, I reiterate the observation that individual institutions have the sole prerogative to decide on the most appropriate sites and physical appearances of their institutional counselling centers. The suggestion to progressively educate students on the benefits of the counselling service in particular (refer to lines 9976-9985) would however be beneficial in curbing the numerous counselling misconceptions. The aggressive advertising of counselling services on campus is therefore vital and the adoption of attractive billboards (refer to lines 9939, 9943 & 9944), directional signs among other proactive measures on campus efficiently achieve this goal.

5.2.4.2 Poor procedures in accessing academic counselling at the center

In addition to the already discussed counsellor unavailability, the ensuing are the additional concerns that frustrated participants in accessing counselling in the study.

5.2.4.2.1 Poor client follow-up services

Poor follow-up of terminated counselling sessions emerged as a difficulty for participant nine. He lamented the disappointing scenario as a huge barrier to effective counselling services on campus and accordingly demanded its immediate redress to facilitate students' support services in general (refer to lines 983 & 984). The deplorable situation (refer to lines 985-986) of follow up was expressed with a repeated emphasis of '*very poor*' in line 988. His blended use of the words *'very'* and '*poor'* stressed the deep

unfriendly counsellor attitudes towards temporarily terminated counselling cases. He thought the pain and hurt he encountered from the counsellor's rejection during follow-up was so severe (refer to lines 984-986).

Follow-up generally reflects counsellor's genuine care and concern for the client's welfare, during this temporary counselling termination period. The two key responsibilities associated with follow-up were as follows; first that the client must continue implementing the counselling intervention, despite the terminated sessions. Secondly, that the counsellor was required to initiate occasional follow-up moves for significant feedback on the client's performance. The counsellor's lack of follow-up in the case of participant nine thus provided no feedback on the client's subsequent progress. This reflected some apathy on the part of the counsellor. Instances of client relapse during termination have ever been reported, hence the essence of efficient follow-up to avoid any unforeseen complications.

Overall, a lot more was desirable to eradicate the highlighted students' concerns regarding counselling services on university campuses.

5.2.5 Theme five: Innovation is key in enhancing counselling participation

Study participants mostly recorded the urgent need for increased advertising and a re-organization of the orientation service on their university campuses. The hurriedly organized yearly event deserved more careful and proper planning to whip up students' interest and participation in orientation. Aggressive advertising of such counselling-related activities also required an added flavor of creativity to attract a bigger student following. Participants made their suggestions following their bitter experiences with the mundane, haphazard and outmoded activities they encountered on campus. Students had obviously lost interest in the orientation event, but many were those who also gained admission rather late and so entirely missed the orientation event (refer to lines 5873-5875). Re-structuring the programme would also cater for these late arrivals on campus. The ensuing presentation focused on the two sub-themes under the broad theme five – the call to advertise counselling-related activities, and the need to upgrade the first year orientation programme on campus.

5.2.5.1 Upgrade the first year orientation service in institutions

The need to re-vamp the yearly orientation programme was justified by a number of factors. The event's limited coverage of discussed topics, poor students' attendance and the annual rise in late admissionsto campus (refer to lines 5873-5875 and 9085) instigated this need. Two years ago, the topic on drug abuse barely benefited students (refer to lines 2200 – 2205) as a result of the rushed orientation for the overwhelming number of registered students. The continuous presentation of the event has promoted the gradual decrease in students' turn out at the orientation.

The essence of orientation is to offer relevant college information to new students to ensure their couching of a meaningful college experience. The essence of selecting the topic on drugs for instance was to caution new students on the dangers of consuming such drugs, given their increased vulnerability on campus. Peer pressure has remained the usual mode of students' attraction to the abuse of such drugs and first time home leavers, in particular easily fell prey to such pressure.

University students are often curious, as young adults hence they often ask many questions based on the observations they make in their endeavours. An extremely limited questioning time in an orientation event is thus a profound disservice to students and it is not surprising that turn out to the events have been on a gradual decline following students' loss of interest in it. Students' excuses for partial attendance in the current study (refer to lines 599, 3678 and 5863-5865) was most probably a cunning registration of their disappointment in the event, particularly when nonattendance attracted no penalty at all (refer to lines 2216 & 2217). The mandatory attendance to orientations (refer to line 2209-2211) would have been more effective with a non-attendance penalty or alternatively, an incentive for full attendance.

In their suggestions to enrich the service however, participants stressed the need for creativity in the events (refer to lines 2220 - 2224) and youth-friendly activities (refer to lines 2226 & 2236). The call for innovation stressed the mundaneness of existing events and the outmoded methods in implementing the orientation. By implication, students desired more interesting, insightful and current programmes. Social and academic

relevance were key and the desire to learn more about new or different resources was imminent. Suggestions for the use of colourful flyers and the employment of resourceful personalities to make presentations at the event was relished, likewise students' demand for youth-friendly events that suggested a previous adoption of inappropriate activities. On the whole, the call for a modification both in the planning and implementation of future orientation events was in the right direction. Students also desired their involvement in the event planning to facilitate their increased interest and subsequent participation in the up-coming programmes. Next I present the account on the call for counselling advertisement.

5.2.5.2 Improve advertising of the academic counselling service on campus

Participants' complaints regarding low awareness about on-campus counselling services and center sites (refer to 9939, 9313-9386) generally heightened the need for service advertising. Lines 1090 -1091, 9943-9946 and 10012-10016 revealed the few advertising efforts adopted by the studied institutions. Each of these however made limited impact on participants due to inconsistency and poor advertising. Accordingly, participant two called for the establishment of year group-specific activities to serve as consistent reminders to students (refer to lines 6746-6753 and 6757). He justified this call with students' increased academic activities that often pre-occupied them as they progressed on their study programmes. The demand for year-group targeted activities would also directly align to the needs of specific students in the year groups to the designed programmes. The implementation of this suggestion may seem challenging to counselling center staff but the ideas are laudable given their efficiency in capturing students' interest and improving their counselling participation on campus. By these suggestions, counsellors are advised to exit their comfort zones for a hard working attitude in attaining their desirable work goals.

Comparing the proposals of participants two and eight regarding the improvement of counselling activities aims at establishing more students' needs-specific events on campus (refer to lines 2189, 2193, 6746 -6753). Additionally, the engagement of student

leaders, role models and the adoption of interesting flyers sounds feasible, enthusiastic and very likely to draw the desired crowd in each case. Both recommendations stressed the counsellors' over-use of outmoded strategies that instigated students demand for change. Variety, indeed is the spice of life. Finally, the motives behind participants' suggestions were also practical (refer to lines 2160, 2191 and 6753).

Finally, the call to increase counselling advertisement reflected the counsellors' low sense of responsibility on the various campuses. Common knowledge affirms that proactive counsellors naturally advertised themselves via the numerous creative activities they spontaneously implemented. Conversely, participants' reported ignorance about on-campus counselling activities, in addition to their obvious lack of awareness about counselling center sites emphasized the extreme inactivity of the counselling staff. Employed counsellors in these centers thus require urgent morale boosters to awaken them into reality.

5.3 Discussion of themes and literature control

In the ensuing section, I discuss the study results across the five broad themes as they relate to available literature. My association of study results with documented literature generates meaningful responses to the study's research questions for the establishment of useful study findings. I focused on both correlating and contradicting literature to engender in-depth discussion of salient points, while interrogating emerging concerns. The following discussion progressed according to the earlier outlined categories under the five broad themes.

5.3.1 Theme One: Initial counselling experience insights students towards deeper confidence in academic counselling, for enhanced study outcomes

Results on theme one outlined a wide variety of favourable counselling effects that were typically socio-personal and academic in nature (Sharkin, 2004; Githuthu, 2016).In the study, the social element of counselling was highlighted with the facility's association to social factors like marriage, work, academics, relationships, illnesses and finally, emotional reactions like anxiety and depression (Githuthu, 2016). This finding

emphasized the diverse social worthwhileness of counselling to all and sundry, including students of all age groups and in various life situations. Given this vast versatility of counselling, I categorised the facility's benefits into three key dimensions namely, knowledge acquisition (representing insight), emotional development (representing confidence building) and academic progression (representing improved study outcomes). Each of the dimensions are discussed as follows.

5.3.1.1 Initial counselling insights students in academic counselling

This sub-theme focuses on knowledge acquisition. Wei et al., (2007), confirm the saying that knowledge is power. The authors contend that knowing one's HIV status promotes the individual's adoption of a healthier lifestyle (Wei, et al., 2007), either by remaining safe and uninfected or avoid re-infection. This was a strong basis for the authors' increased emphasis on voluntary counselling and testing among the Chineese populace (Wei et al., 2007). In similar vein, increased college awareness via counselling services promoted self-reliance and independence among first year students (Wei et al., 2005). The students' empowerment in this regard eradicated the usual feelings of anxiety, depression and stress that often characterized life in the college first year (Wei et al., 2005). The paybacks of the counselling encounter were deeply rewarding as students optimised their academic performance and facilitated a more interesting college experience.

In a similar sense, study participants' counselling experiences in the study were purely instructive to their lives. Their reports in lines 1384 and 2385 for instance openly underscored the benefits they obtained from the novel information counselling provided them. The ensuing effect of that insight on their lives was remarkable. Manthei, (2006) however attributed clients' level of counselling insight to their alertness during counselling. Clients' unique positions as counselling recipients often exposed them to a host of life information, based on which they subsequently constructed significant skills to confront their daily life difficulties (Manthei, 2006). Several other reports in the study confirmed the favourable study habits participants built from counselling, (refer to line 3245 & 4853-4855). Sharkin (2004) accordingly confirmed the dual roles of academic counselling

among students, likewise the notable effects of learning communities on students' academic performance (Zhao & Kuh, 2004). Martin, (2002) correspondingly emphasized the unreserved role counselling plays in promoting students' academic resilience. He opined that students may be well-motivated to study but their inability to withstand the academic challenges of their time could impact marginally on their performance (Martin, 2002).

The social benefits of counselling in the study also stressed the wider counselling focus in Ghanaian educational institutions. The need for a more diverse educational focus justified the integrated counselling model in Ghana, where both students' academic and psychological concerns are concurrently addressed (Dibia & Obi, 2013). This differs from what pertains in other foreign settings where academic advising was separately offered (Hunter & White, 2004; Drake, 2011). McWilliams and Beam (2006) prefer the integrated service given its advantage in mobilizing deeper academic support for students (Evans et al, 2010). Another key advantage of the integrated model is its emphasis on a wider and more worthwhile training focus (Abidoye, 1998). Anderson et al., (2010) likewise underlined the early diagnosis and treatment of a wide variety of students' disorders as a prime factor for promoting the integrated counselling model. Examples of the non-academic counselling focus emerging from the integrated model in the current study were related to marriage and relationships (refer to lines 5910), employment (line 5909), sexual abuse (line 7868), fear (line 7885) and health (8287 & 8288). Githuthu, (2016) in concurrence also associated counselling to a wide variety of social service providers who equally relied on counselling skills to assist others (Githuthu, 2016). Views expressed by Maree and Westhuizen, (2011), Ibu and Maliki, (2010) and Minta and Kargul, (2016) also corroborated the social awareness of counselling. The holistic focus of counsellor responsibilities in Ghanaian institutions thus accounts for the mixed social and academic counselling effects that emerged from the study.

5.3.1.2 Initial counselling builds confidence in students

The emotional relief clients usually enjoyed in counselling, often commenced at their initial sessions. The warm counsellor reception primarily instilled deeper confidence in clients and promoted their counselling commitment. It is however the counsellors' responsibility to sustain this rapport till the successful realization of the counselling goals (Bachelor & Horvath, 1999). Duff and Bedi, (2010) therefore described the therapeutic alliance (rapport) as a formidable contributor to the counselling outcome. Rapport strongly binds the two parties towards effective collaboration in the help seeking interaction (Duff, 2008).

The belief that '*a problem shared is a problem halfed*' featured prominently in the helping profession and justified clients' appreciations of their counsellors. In the study, participant four's open declaration regarding her initially abandoned dreams, given her current improved academic performance was a clear example of a worthwhile counselling encounter. Ruthani, (2016) confirmed several other heart-warming counselling effects among clients. Clients' respite from counselling also instilled profound confidence both in themselves and in their counsellors but their further assurance in the counselling profession also offered them hope for a brighter future. Participants' increased self-awareness via the counselling encounter also confirmed their confidence both in their transformed selves and in the helping profession. Counsellor care further promoted counselling interactions to engender rippling effects on students' institutional commitment (Hughey, 2011). This commitment usually thrusted clients' institutional integration to enhance their social adjustment (Hughey, 2011). Manthei, (2006) on the other hand attributed clients' relief in counselling to their commitment while Russel, (1999), Ford and Ford, (2009) and Ackerman and Hilsenroth, (2003) stressed the uncompromising role of the counsellor-client rapport in propelling the entire counselling process. In sum, rapport remains a key prerequisite that deeply brightened the counselling atmosphere to impact students' motivation, confidence and self-efficacy.

Contrary to the above was the somber client mood that stressed feelings of uncertainty, fear and confusion among clients, prior to their counselling sessions (Minta & Kargul,

2016). Such dismal feelings of helplessness, low morale and distress often emerged from clients' feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability to helping professionals, whose support they occasionally renounced (Minta & Kargul, 2016). The reported clients' emotional disturbance and its associated counsellor rejection also concurred with Fox and Buttler (2007). Their reports stressed clients' low counselling perceptions, following fears of lack of confidentiality and uncertainties regarding counselling outcomes. Similarly in the study, participants' over-concerned attitudes and fears of negative counselling outcomes instilled aversive reactions in them. Participant two's initial escape from the counselling center and participant three's subsequent trembling at the commencement of his initial counselling session, in the current study were both clear illustrations of troubled client behaviours in relation to counselling. The scenario also aligns with the reviewed literature report where homeless youth abhorred counselling, due to the few coerced sessions they ever encountered (Cormack, 2009). The inevitable result was the youths' greater confidence in their support workers rather than in their professional counsellors. (Cormack, 2009). Both scenarios confirmed the negative consequence of pessimism as opposed to the earlier reported favourable counselling effect by Ruthani (2016). In effect, optimism promotes success while pessimism facilitates low self-worth to culminate in failure. Counselling was thus evidenced as a useful source to clients' emotional development in the study (Davis et al., 2001).

5.3.1.3 Initial counselling enhances students' study outcomes

Participants' enthusiasm regarding their improved academic performances were also evidenced in the study. Efficient time management via personal timetabling, prompt and consistent revision of lecture notes and the engagement of appropriate study sites were among the useful counsellor-proposed strategies that facilitated students' academic progress in the study. The highlighted elements indiscriminately underscore the role of academic self-regulation to counteract the dire consequences of intricate learning hindrances. Academic self-regulation accordingly promotes students' remarkable attainment (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006) despite the wide variety of prevalent learning factors, including the emotional and personal, socio-economic, context-specific and instructor-related elements (Crossan et al., 2010; Zekpe et al., 2006; Christie et al., 2008).

Haak, HilleRisLambers, Pitre and Freeman (2011) thus underscore the benefits of active learning in optimising students' learning outcomes. Their research confirmed the method in thrusting students' Science, Mathematics, Tehcnology and Engineering attainment (Haak et al., 2011). I further illuminate the significant learning factors under the key categories of institutional, instructor and student-related factors.

5.3.1.3.1 Institutional factors

Context-specific or environmentally related elements that diversely influence students' studies simply pass as institutional learning factors (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) Such prevailing environmental factors strongly shape students' thoughts and actions to endorse their future scholarly attitudes. Zekpe et al., (2006) and Crossan et al., (2010) stress the importance of learners' physical factors in determining their future study outcomes. Both authors intimated that available teaching and learning resources either enhanced or derailed students' learning or knowledge acquisition process (Zekpe et al., 2006; Crossan et al., 2010). This underlines the relevance of rich and deprived environmental factors in influencing students' study behaviours (Crossan et al., 2010). In concurrence with the above authors, Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) endorsed unique teacher behaviours that favourably predicted students' learning outcomes. Such unique institutions notably instilled analytical and critical thinking capabilities in students, thereby engendering their enhanced academic goal achievement. Linnenbrink and Pintrich, (2003) and Schunk (2003) describe this procedure as a modification of students' cognitive self-appraisals to enhance their achievement. Lui and Lui (2000) on the other hand simply refer to it as institutional integration.

Institutional integration occurs when students' personal goals align with those of their institutions to promote their self-confidence and academic success. Institutional integration is almost synonymous to institutional satisfaction (Lui & Lui, 2000) and both absolutely dismiss fears of failure among students for their overall enhanced college attainment. Tinto (2002), Wilcox et al., (2005) and Crosling et al., (2009) confirm students' institutional integration as a vital component to their enhanced academic performance. The authors argued that a well-adjusted college student easily optimised his studies,

given the profound academic concentration he usually enjoyed from his stable college environment. Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols, (2007) also endorsed the concentration element in relation to students' higher academic attainment, even in the initial college year.

Institutional factors thus gravely influence students' academic behaviour, ensuring that they ultimately mirrored the values of their various institutions – a re-iteration of Bandura's Social Cognitive theory. This confirms the role of reciprocal determinism in predicting human behaviour (Bandura, 1986) considering the apparent intricate interaction of the environmental, personal and behavioural factors to generate worthwhile study outcomes. In the event that all and sundry desire commendable performance on their various academic programmes, educators are encouraged to ensure that students study in enriched physical environments to promote their performance. The selection of a quiet, favourable and conducive study environment, coupled with useful academic self-regulated activities suggested by counsellors in the study, considerably improved participants' study outcomes. The ensuing discussion explicates the significant teacher factors that dictate students' ultimate study outcomes.

5.3.1.3.2 Teacher factors

As key learning facilitators, instructors also strongly influence students' studies in various ways. It is common knowledge that the availability of the instructor in class quietly motivates students to seriously pursue their educational objectives. Mumtaz, (2000) endorses this fact with a report that the instructor's expertise and confidence in utilizing available teaching resources strongly generates favourable learning outcomes among students. Indeed, the teacher's choice of teaching aids and its relevance to the specified subject of study predicts the amount of time spent on the knowledge transfer process. All three factors in fact promote learning among students (Mumtaz, 2000).

On their part, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, (2006) recommend an integration of formative assessment methods and the provision of consistent feedback, to deeply optimise students' academic performance (Renuka et al., 2009). Such key teaching roles fall

directly within the purview of instructors whose continuous efforts efficiently promote students' academic efforts. In the reviewed literature, Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) on the other hand cautioned teachers to provide feedback only when essential and necessary to students. The authors stressed the need for teachers to additionally draw students' attention to specific study areas where they are lacking, in order to promote their commendable academic performance (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). The unqualified efforts of such regular learning facilitators are however usually dependent on their experience, training and expertise. These three, in addition to the instructors' choice of teaching method and expertise in delivery, strongly predicts students' learning.

Another significant teacher factor is motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation efficiently affect students' studies but the intrinsic generates better and more enduring influence following its emphasis on the individual student's interest area (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Singh (2011) also stressed the variations in the factors that motivate individuals into higher performance. Factors like age, prior attainment and available support directly predict students' effort outcomes in useful ways (Singh, 2011). Given this fact, the authors challenge educators to seek diverse useful means to promote learning among students.

5.3.1.3.3 Student factors

The third and final student factor concerns students' persevere towards fruitful learning outcomes. Individually, expended effort in the learning encounter endorses the import of Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Since students expended learning efforts aligns with their self-beliefs and its eventual contributions towards their study performance, the self-efficacy theory simply underscores the reality of individual differences and its ascendant variations in predicting students' ultimate attainment (Robbins et al., 2004). Academic self-efficacy and students' achievement motivation emerged as the best performance predictor in their research (Robbins et al., 2004). By implication, a class of students only represents a group of various capabilities, interest and personal orientations.

Lim and Morris, (2009) stress key elements like students' age, preferred method of knowledge transfer, personal orientation, socio-economic background and study period, among few others as major contributors of students' learning outcomes. In agreement, Krumrei-Mancuso et al., (2013) confirm students' personal orientations, their self-beliefs and level of academic resilience to predict their expended effort in realizing their educational objectives. In their initial college year, academic self-efficacy and students' readiness to study predicted both their first semester and end-of year performances (Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2013). Gore (2006) and Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) similarly corroborated Krumrei-Mancuso et al., (2013)'s findings though Gore (2006) stressed differences regarding instrumentation, assessment time and the engaged type of self-belief. On their, Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols (2007) simply resonated students' improved self-efficacy beliefs as a key factor in optimising their academic attainment. Studies by Bryson and Hand, (2007), Crosling et al., (2009), Umbach and Wawrzynski, (2005) and Asunka, (2008) also underscored students' involvement and unique engagement methods to define their study outcomes. While Bryson and Hand, (2007) attributed varied students' performances to their involvement levels as opposed to inactiveness in the learning encounter, Crosling et al., (2009) highlighted a myriad of personal elements including students' unique engagement methods as key performance indicators.

The emphasis on students' personal orientations to determine their engagement methods and preferred teaching style equally highlights the relevance of students' individual backgrounds in predicting their performance. Teachers are accordingly encouraged to seek in-depth awareness into students' varied contexts and circumstances to inform their teaching methodology, curriculum selection and also adopt challenging instructional methods for better teaching outcomes (Tinto, 2000; Bryson & Hand, 2007; Crosling et al., 2009). This again reflects the power of knowledge in promoting favourable outcomes. In essence, deeply involving students in the learning process by adopting the experiential, problem-based, discussion and exploratory teaching styles for instance challenges students into deeper reasoning critical thinking and deeper learning involvement than the

passive lecture method (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005; Asunka, 2008). Similarly, promoting collaboration and team-effort among learners also endorses higher learning outcomes particularly among slow-learners (Benbunan-Fich et al., 2005; Bennett, 2003).

Undeniably, variations exist in students' learning elements, many of which differentiate between their concentration levels to endorse their studies (Lim & Morris, 2009; Muse, 2003). Robbins et al., (2004)'s findings regarding academic self-efficacy and achievement motivation equally highlight the importance of individual differences among students in learning. Insight into significant students' personal factors is accordingly significant in defining effective teaching and learning among higher education students.

Martin, (2002) highlights the dichotomies among students with a reference to the success-oriented, failure-avoidant and failure-accepting student types described in the Needs Achievement Motivation model. Each of the mentioned student type reflects exclusive features that impinge on the teaching-learning encounter (martin, 2002). A similar analogy emerges from the competence factor, as a prime needs gratification element in the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Competence relates directly to academic resilience (Martin, 2002) that drives the individual towards success (Davis et al., 2001). This emphasis on individual differences equally aligns with Bandura's self-efficacy belief systems (Bandura, 1986). Ryan and Deci's (2000) emphasis on the competence factor likewise highlights the uniqueness of individual students.

The above reports firmly justifiy Wilcox, et al., (2005) and Pajares' (2009) proposal for counsellors to focus directly on enhancing students' self-efficacy belief systems rather than their academic performance for improved study outcomes. Pajares, (2009) was in fact emphatic that counsellors represent key partners both in modifying students' efficacy belief systems and in controlling the perplexing college attrition problem in several countries. In effect, students' improved efficacy belief systems engenders better and more enduring academic effects thus serving a worthwhile strategy towards remedying students' academic concerns (Pajares, 2009).

The discussions so far confirm Turner and Berry (2000)'s request for an emphasis shift at various institutional counselling centers, given that students' family and personal problems, rather than academics facilitate their college attrition (Turner & Berry, 2000). On the other hand, clients' confirmations on the direct benefits of counselling center activities in the Vermeersch et al., (2004) and Whipple, et al., (2003) studies endorse the facility's immense contribution to controlling the student college attrition problem (Turner & Berry, 2000). In either case, students highly patronised the counselling facility and subsequently attested to its tremendous benefits in their attainment (Turner & Berry, 2000; Whipple, et al., 2003; Vermeersch et al., 2004). Results of the current study thus sanction the direct impact of academic counselling on students' study outcomes.

5.3.2 Theme two: Misconceptions about counselling affect students' participation in academic counselling

Common counselling misconceptions seemed widespread among student groups and the general public in Ghana. Misconceptions and stigmatization are among the key barriers to the high utilization of counselling services in the country (Ruanic & Xeros, 2008). Both factors are related, given that they both reflect low counselling insight and further denied clients the numerous benefits of counselling (Arthur, 2003; Much et al., 2009).

5.3.2.1 Misconceptions about the counselling service

In the study, participants' low commitment to counselling misconceptions facilitated their correction of their erroneous counselling views. Misconceptions essentially echo negativity and further restrict the worthwhileness of the facility to promote low counsellor perceptions. Literature identifies international students as the most vulnerable to counselling in higher education though they often fell victim to low counselling perceptions. The in turn often denied them the benefits of the counselling facility, given their high incidence of low help seeking behaviours. Students' low help-seeking behaviours often emerged from unfamiliarity and uncertainty about counselling effects on their lives (Arthur, 2003; Ruanic & Xeros, 2008). According to Raunic and Xeros (2008), international students vary markedly from the locals in their presenting problem styles.

Low counsellor perceptions among international students also stressed a generally poor counsellor initiative (Arthur, 2003). The subsequent discussion of counselling misconceptions further explicate the sources of low counselling perceptions among higher education students in Ghana.

Counselling misconceptions largely disputed the overall versatile purpose for which the facility was established. In the current study, the highlighted misconceptions included linking counselling to the mentally deranged, the conceptualization of counselling as an exposure of clients' secrets to strangers, limiting counselling solely to first year students and finally confusing counselling with advise-giving. The mentioned erroneous counselling views could be associated to varied factors including a generally poor counsellor work attitude, immense counsellor role conflicts, students' low self-reliance and poor orientations regarding counselling.

5.3.2.1.1 Counselling as a remedy for the mentally deranged

Aga, (2013) and Cormack, (2009) corroborated the popular belief that counselling only prevailed over the mentally deranged. The immediate consequence of this myopic view usually promoted severe social stigmatization among counselling clientele. Aga, (2013) stressed the dire effects of paying a single visit to the helping professional in Malaysia. The label as a mentally deranged subsequently attracted a severe social stigma that promoted a lonely life (Aga, 2013). Young people (Fox & Butler, 2007) including street children (Cormack, 2009) also dreaded the social stigma counselling attracted. Reports of severe ridicule and labelling heightened this stigmatized life thereby compelling young and street children to shun counselling (Fox & Butler, 2007; Cormack, 2009). Boys in particular abhorred being labelled as ' *wimps'* (Fox & Butler, 2007, p. 106) while counselled students generally rejected being perceived as psychos. Both groups however had high chances of benefiting from the service to obtain rehabilitation. In the report by Hasson-Ohayon et al., (2011), the oppressive and ignorant lifestyles of parents of children with mental problems were so disheartening. The parents' plight in this case also emerged from their association with their mentally disturbed children. The reports thus

confirm misconception, stigma as well as discrimination as the two key barriers to the counselling profession (Arthur, 2003; Ruanic & Xeros, 2008).

Aga's (2013) report however pressed home the role of cultural differences in counselling. The interesting imagery reflected the counsellor's estrangement during counselling (Aga, 2013, p. 181). The reported cultural disharmony in this case derailed the smooth implementation of counselling, given its crippling effect on the counsellor's cultural estrangement. The same cultural disharmony also fuelled the clients' doubts about the counsellor's capability to assist her (Aga, 2013). Popadiuk & Arthur, (2004) likewise reported a cultural conflict that equally hindered the counsellor's responsibility as a helping professional. Contrarily participant one's shared interest in the gospel with her counsellor (refer to lines 5030-5035) rather facilitated the counselling process. Indeed, both parties' awareness regarding their common interest in the scriptures bonded them throughout the session (refer to line 5042).

5.3.2.1.2 Counselling as advise-giving

The confusion surrounding the counselling and advice-giving processes was another well-highlighted result from the study. Both services apparently share similar goals though they adopt slightly different implementation processes. Literature surprisingly endorses the confusion surrounding the meanings of both concepts by constantly advertising the erroneous use of the concepts. Bond, (2015) for instance reports the terms 'guidance' or 'advise' to mean 'counselling' (Bond, 2015, p. 15) and 'counselling' subsequently means 'imparting expert advice' (Bond, 2015, p. 15). These reports imply that the terms are synonymous to each other though that is fallible. The term 'guidance' is however synonymous to 'advise-giving' but counselling as a profession is clearly different from the two. Counselling in fact usually engages a professional who often adopts a cordial and instructive relationship to usher the client into a meaningful process of taking an ultimately decision regarding a personal difficulty. Counselling thus places emphasis on content, ensuring that the client gains insight to promote his decision-making. In the professional counselling situation also, the client always reserves the singular right to take the final

decision regarding a suitable remedy to the counselling concern. Advise-giving contrarily offers a less professional and advisor-specific conclusion.

Cheatham & Ostrosky's (2011) and Githuthu (2016) similarly underline the confusion surrounding the two concepts by associating professional counselling features to advise-giving. First, their wrongful association of a professional therapeutic counselling alliance to a typical advise-giving situation (Cheathem & Ostrosky, 2011) presents both concepts as the same. Duff and Bedi, (2010) in fact, identify the therapeutic alliance as a key professional counselling feature. Secondly, the advisors' use of helping skills in their operations (Githuthu, 2016) suggests a similarity between counselling and the advice-giving process though this may not be the case. Krishnan & Schaefer (2000) on the other hand stressed the accurate health effects of both counselling and advice-giving on clients.

Githuthu, (2016) additionally stressed the dichotomies between the orientations and features of both service-providers. The professional training, certification and systematic process adopted by counsellors was always different from that of the advisor (Adelodun, 2011). While counsellors often trained as helping professionals, advisors usually hailed from diverse social professions like teaching, clergymen, nurses and doctors who casually offered assistance in varied settings just to help family members, colleagues and friends. Finally, counsellors often operated in highly-regarded institutions unlike advisors who were hardly professionally trained and certified (Adelodun, 2011).

5.3.2.1.3 Counselling is a first year service

Human experience and goal achievement activities are essentially driven by environmental stimuli. The physical theory of human agency, according to Bandura, (1997) stresses the value of environmental stimuli in determining human behaviour. In our daily experiences, humans largely depend on their senses to engender meaning and also accomplish their set life goals. Occasionally however, human fallibility promotes erroneous conclusions regarding the physical events they encounter, hence the need for humans to exercise caution in their daily experiences. This implies that human mortals are liable to making imperfect meanings regarding life events.

The negative counselling perceptions stressed in the reviewed literature (Bahadel, 2012; Afshar, 2009; Watson, 2003) possibly emerged from a wrong counselling orientation. Clients in the mentioned studies may have encountered some disappointing experiences and thus jumped to their wrongful conclusions. In the study, participants' limitation of the academic counselling service solely to first year students obviously emerged from a misconceived human assumption. Participant one made that assumption based on wrong information and later discovered that the counselling clientele was wider than he could fathom. It is however important to stress that the continued prevalence of such counselling misconceptions do not augur well for the facility. Overall, students stand to be the ultimate losers where this misconception is concerned.

5.3.2.2 Misconceptions about counsellor roles

Counsellor role misconceptions and conflicts abound in several societies lately (Lieberman, 2004). The prevalence of these erroneous views and role conflicts are largely attributable to the continuous assignment of unapproved duties by institutional heads to counsellors under their jurisdiction (Wright, 2012). Wright asserts that the open nature of the counselling facility exposes counsellors to the several unapproved duties assigned to them. The numerous role conflicts could also be attributable to the overwhelming responsibilities within the various institutions of study. Accordingly, the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) aims at reviewing the counsellors' institutional responsibilities to eradicate the prevalent conflicts regarding counsellor roles within institutions (Lieberman, 2004). In the current study, participants' misconceived counsellor roles highlighted their profound ignorance about the facility. Both counsellor role misconceptions and students' low awareness about counselling, reflect an indifferent attitude to the helping profession, given the over forty years of counselling existence in Ghana (Essuman, 1999). The view that counsellors adopted standards in their operations however reflects a partial reality, considering that most counsellors rely on psychological tools to achieve their aims (Sprinkle et al., 2002; Lindblom-Ylanne, 2004). A number of pharmacy students in this regard received counselling support to optimise their studies, according to Lindblom-Ylanne (2004).

The erroneous role of the counsellor as a security personnel was also reflected the participants' low counselling awareness. The expressed conflicting image regarding the actual counsellor role and that of the security perssonel was key. I continue the write up with an exploration of participants' expressed counsellor role misconception effects in the study.

5.3.2.3 Effects of counselling misconceptions on students' participation in academic counselling.

Counselling misconceptions generally had minimal effect on study participants, given the lip service they paid to the wrong views. This attitude eventually benefitted participants since many of them ultimately discovered the truth about counselling. This reflects the power of optimism. Indeed positive-mindedness promotes the achievement of milestones and further eradicates negative health effects like depression, stress, anxiety and worry. According to Pitkala et al., (2004), optimism reduces the debilitating effects of aging while motivating young students to display varied display attitudes towards their external educational barriers (Matthew, 2011). Students of both races in fact perceived education as key to their future prospects, but the white students' favourable attitude and determination towards their classwork propelled their greater academic benefits (Matthew, 2011).

In the reviewed literature students' low counselling perceptions at the Al Qassim University denied them the numerous benefits of counselling (Al-Bahadel, 2012). The reported wrong perception of counsellor functions promoted confusion among students and ultimately hampered their use of the facility. Counsellor role conflicts are also attributable to the prevalent wrong counselling perceptions in recent times (Lieberman, 2004). A review to streamline counsellor roles would however redress the many discrepancies regarding counsellor perceptions (Lieberman, 2004). Al-Bahadel's (2012) study finding also confirmed the existence of counselling misconceptions.

5.3.3 Theme three: Influence of counsellor behaviours on students' participation in counselling

As key frontline staff in higher education institutions, counsellors represent an important group of stakeholders in education (Hill et al., 2003). Their roles as direct contacts in handling students' counselling needs emphasizes their overall significance in education (Douglas et al., 2006). Students' openness at help-seeking is however critical to their fruitful counselling encounters (Garmon, 2005). This stresses the importance of an open client attitude in presenting at counselling. Meanwhile, interpersonal factors within the counselling encounter, strongly predict service quality (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). Fruitful counselling interactions thus require positive behaviours from counsellors and their student clients to successfully reach the counselling goal (Oldfield & Baron, 2000). The following underscored the various highlighted counsellor behaviours that influenced students' counselling participation in the current study.

5.3.3.1 Acceptable counsellor behaviours enhance students' counselling participation.

5.3.3.1.1 Counsellor warmth and friendliness

The quality of counsellor-client interplay determines the counselling outcome in every experience. This highlights the essence of counsellor 'warmth and friendliness' in the helping process. Both counsellor attitudes in this case communicate client acceptance, understanding, patience and tolerance (Cutcliffe, 2002). The mentioned counsellor sociable behaviours offers deep reassurance and a hopeful future to clients. Clients accordingly capitalise on the counsellor cordiality to construct a strong commitment towards the entire counselling process (Ford & Ford, 2009). Committed clients also often display punctuality, cooperation and an overall assiduousness in counselling (Ford & Ford, 2009).

Counsellor warmth and friendliness also boosts the counselling clientele-base, given that enthusiastic clients often valued the counsellors' interpersonal relations (Hughey, 2011). Not all clients are however passionate about help-seeking (Minta & Kargul, 2016). Clients'

vulnerability to their concerns serves a key attraction to the help-seeking process (Cutcliffe, 2002), likewise their anxiety for immediate answers to their concerns. Counsellor warmth and friendliness thus reflects stronger associations that augment both verbal and non-verbal communication in the helping process. Communication thus nurtures strong relational ties in counselling (Spoor & Kelly, 2004). According to Markel & Markel, (2009) and Morrissey & Callaghan, (2011), non-verbal communication is more influential, easily adaptable and useful. Counsellor warmth is also synonymous to efficiently established rapport between both parties and further reflects a harmonious relationship to promote the therapeutic alliance (Rogers, 1953). According to Rogers, (1953), the therapeutic alliance is key to the counselling relationship. Rakel (2007) and Duff & Bedi, (2010) also describe the therapeutic alliance as a formidable contributor to the counselling outcome. Rapport or the therapeutic alliance fortifies collaboration between the counsellor and client and facilitates the achievement of the counselling goal.

In the current study, non-verbal counsellor communication strategies like smiling, nodding and the maintenance of healthy eye contact promoted cordiality between the two parties. Mini, (2016) confirmed counsellor friendliness and warmth in the reviewed literature. Counsellor smiles at the client during the initial counselling meeting communicated in-depth acceptance to the client. The warm smile also reflected deep warmth that nurtured a secured interpersonal relationship between the parties (Duff & Bedi, 2010). Allard and Parashar, (2013) and Hughey, (2011) confirmed the critical role of counsellor care in the rapport establishment process. The authors presented rapport as a key factor sustaining the counselling relationship. Ford and Ford, (1989) likewise explained that kindness and love in counselling are reassuring to clients. Caring counsellors are generally described by students as accommodating and informative, and thus transformed the counselling experience into a profitable one. According to Hughey, (2011), interpersonal skills strongly relate to effective advising to stress the invaluable counsellor care component in advisor trainings (Robbins, 2012). Care in turn builds client confidence and trust in the counsellor (Ackerman & Hilsenroth, 2003). Clients are accordingly often attracted to caring and kind counsellors. In the reviewed literature, genuine care and support from the doctoral advisor promoted students' advancement on their various study programmes

(Barnes & Austin, 2009). The interaction that occasionally extended beyond professional boundaries was also strictly controlled by ethical considerations (Barnes & Austin, 2009).

5.3.3.1.2 Counsellor confidentiality

A number of participants also valued counsellor confidentiality, given the confidence it offered them. Confidentiality is a critical factor in counselling (McLeod 2003; Bond, 2014) but Jenkins, (2002) identified it as a general legal issue. According to Shuchman, (2007) several students require confidentiality assurance prior to their help seeking (Fox & Butler, 2007). The assurance of confidentiality in fact promotes clients' help seeking behaviour (Shuchman, 2007). Nevertheless, the counselling ethic has gained prominence in promoting conflicting counsellor roles (Fox & Butler, 2007) given that on one hand young people were attracted to confidentiality in help seeking but on the other, they doubted the counsellor's ability to thoroughly maintain it. This dual role of confidentiality underscored its significance in the helping process. Among Indonesian undergraduate students, confidentiality also served a valuable means of impacting students' low counselling perception (Setiawan, 2006).

The emphasis on privacy and confidentiality in counselling further defined the essence of safe-record keeping in counselling (Bond & Mitchels, 2014). Safe record keeping assures clients of their safety and protection, both in respect of their provided information and regarding their personal identities (Bond & Mitchels, 2014). Counsellors' intimate relations with clients also validated confidentiality in the counselling process (Bond & Mitchelle, 2014). In the study, participant eleven's keenest interest in counselling (lines 7103-7105) was related to her counsellors' high commitment for confidentiality (lines 7056 – 7065). The counsellors' caution to student clients never to break confidentiality for external favours, strengthened the participant's confidence in the counselling ethic. This led participant eleven to describe her counsellors' commitment to confidentiality as absolute (refer to lines 7092 - 7094). Wiles et al., (2008) also cautioned researchers never to break confidentiality unless a participant had committed a heinous crime or violated another

person. They further stressed the need for clients to be alerted prior to the breaking of their confidentiality (Wiles et al, 2008; Much, Wagener & Hellenbrand, 2009).

5.3.3.2 Unacceptable counsellor behaviours hamper students' counselling participation

The repelling behaviours displayed by counsellors in the study included apathy, impatience and poor listening as well as counsellor unavailability.

5.3.3.2.1 Counsellor apathy towards client

Participant one reported the apathetic behaviour of her counsellor in the study. The counsellor had difficulties recognising her (the client) anytime she phoned him. The participant was unhappy with this attitude and complained about the long self-introduction she frequently endured to enable her counsellor recognize her. It was quite an unprofessional behaviour that seriously conflicted with counselling ethics.

Leach, (2005) reports that efficient rapport gratifies patients' needs, promotes their treatment and improves assistive service outcomes in the health therapies. Many health personnel accordingly adopt several strategies to promote rapport with their clients (Leach, 2005). Indeed Ayat et al., (2016) identified relationship building as *'the initial and most important step in communication with patients' (p. 1).* The researchers further agreed with Leach, (2005) by reporting that rapport facilitates patients' diagnosis, strengthens trust with them and optimises their submission to treatment. Rapport thus remains critical in the health and helping profession and none should trivialize it in any such instance (Ayat et al., 2016). Based on the above reports, the counsellor's delayed recognition of the client in the study presented a strong hindrance to the realization of the counselling outcome. Apparently, this was not the single negative occurrence in participant one's case. In lines 5254 and 5263-5265, she cited counsellor unavailability and a change in her scheduled appointment times as other equally adverse counselling incidents she encountered. Her account in lines 5101-5111 that registered the poor reception she experienced from the support staff was also a strong reason for her not to have enjoyed counselling. It was thus not surprising that the participant ultimately described her counselling sessions as unfruitful (refer to lines 5162 & 5163 and 9517).

The counsellor's poor recognition of his client in this case aligned perfectly with Ayat et al., (2016)'s discovery of doctors' low empathy level with the health attendees. Additionally, in the event that doctor's personality characteristics, mood, level of curiosity and confidence in the patient's report (Norfolk et al., 2007) remained key hindrances to the establishment of efficient rapport in the health sector, the reported counselling incident leaves much to be desired. Norfolk's (2007) further emphasis on the patients' current emotional state as key to constructing a formidable rapport in helping, also expressed the negative effect of the counsellor's behaviour on the client in the reported scenario.

5.3.3.2.2 Counsellor impatience and poor listening

Communication is fundamental to all human endeavours including counselling (Laungani, 2004; Strong et al., 2008 ; Jack, et al., 2012).The complaint of counsellor impatience and poor listening in the study also reflected immense apathy in counselling. Duff and Bedi (2010) stressed the importance of counsellors' worthy remarks, greetings and commendation of the client as useful to the helping process. The mentioned behaviours instilled confidence in clients for an enhanced therapeutic relationship (Duff & Bedi, 2010). Poor counsellor listening and impatience (line 9553) on the other hand derailed the rapport establishment process. Rapport establishment listening and generating appropriate responsese. According to Lutomia & Sikolia, 2008) listening is a useful counselling tool that transcends hearing. Listening is also a key counsellor behaviour that promotes the helping process (Hutchby, 2005). By aligning poor listening with impatience in this study, the participant stressed the depth of the counsellor's unprofessionalism. Impatience also means inattention to all client's behaviours, including the verbal presentations. Poor listening also connotes a lack of genuine concern that further represents a strong barrier to the counsellor's comprehension of the client's situation (Payne et al., 2002). In the reviewed literature, Payne et al., (2002) stressed the counsellor's inability to actualize the therapeutic effect of the client's talk eventhough he was not bereaved in this case. Clients' verbal presentations are crucial in the counselling

situation. Meaning-making however demands attentive listening to generate suitable responses.

Poor listening also presented a barrier to clients' non-verbal communication (Pettinari & Jessopp, 2001). Non-verbal communication is equally pertinent, both to meaning-making and rapport establishment in counselling (Pettinari & Jessopp, 2001). Both communication types critically promote the counselling interaction, but an integration of the two, generates more information and insight (Pettinari & Jessopp, 2001). From Weger et al.,'s (2010) view however, the counsellor's poor listening and impatience denied the participant unconditional and dispassionate acceptance in his session.

5.3.3.2.3 Counsellor unavailability for counselling

The experience of counsellor unavailability mostly raised hostile feelings among students. Unavailable counsellors generally earned unpleasant names among students (Campos & Rodriguez, *2009*). From 'bad counsellors' to fake 'doctors' (Campos & Rodriguez, 2009; p. 275) and finally pre-occupied counsellors, students recorded their displeasure with absentee counsellors. Abandoned students were primarily anxious and remorseful in their deep ignorance about the perplexing college life. In the reviewed literature abandoned students expressed deep frustrations and hurt over the inadequate service they encountered (Patterson, 2013; Allard & Parashar, 2013). Lack of relevant college information and limited advising support rendered some few students unsettled in their new terrains (Patterson, 2013). Contrarily, the doctoral students' accessibility to their advisors was vital to their academic and social progress (Barnes & Austin, 2009). Advisor availability implied being often accessible for constant student consultation but also served a favourable pre-condition to a successful rapport establishment. Once established, rapport further facilitated collaboration between the parties to promote the professional advancement of the student (Barnes & Austin, 2009).

Students' demand for extension of counselling periods (Fox & Butler, 2007) also aligned with the participants' recommendations to offset the unpleasant experiences of counsellor

unavailability in the current study. Practically, suggestions to employ additional counsellors, as proposed by study participants however implies a further demand for added institutional resources like office space, furniture and accommodation that would rather confound the problem. In my personal view, re-organising counsellor schedules via a carefully designed work schedule would be a more meaningful strategy to redress the unavailability problem. In effect, the challenge appears more as a poor resource organisation than a lacking situation. The suggestion by participant three to maintain the counsellor more within the service facility than in lecturing was equally confirmed by Fox & Butler, (2007). This recommendation seemed more meaningful to redressing the existing unavailability challenge.

The uncompromising role of school counsellors in promoting college adjustment among first year Latino students (Vela-Gaude et al., 2009) in the reviewed literature equally confirmed the above study result of unavailability. Counsellor absenteeism posed a daunting challenge to the academic progress of Latino students (Vela-Gaude et al., 2009). In their anxiety over the frustrating situation, the few counsellor-abandoned students felt challenged to devise means of meeting their personal advising needs. Allard & Parashar, (2013) however recorded students' desire for advisors to adopt proactive measures to avoid any such future disappointment of students. Contrarily in the reviewed literature, the socio-academic information counsellors offered students during advising activities promoted their institutional commitment and overall academic performance (Patterson, 2013; Allard & Parashar, 2013). The benefits of efficient and consistent student advising services can therefore be never compromised.

5.3.4 Theme four: The physical setting of counselling centers affect students' academic counselling participation

The location and physical environment of university counselling centers largely determine students' counselling participation. The same applies to the internal arrangement and decor of the various counselling rooms. Accordingly, siting the institutional counselling center on campus requires meaningful planning to widen students' access, participation

and service impact on students' lives. I subsequently discuss the categories featuring the key factors under theme four.

5.3.4.1 The poor siting of institutional counselling center deters students from academic counselling participation

According to Mcleod & Machin, (2007), the counselling environment impacts both service interaction and process to generate meaningful results. Pearson & Wilson, (2012) likewise assert that the counselling center location significantly influences the counsellor-client rapport. Both reports suggest that clients' proximity to the center determines their willingness and frequency in patronising the center. Meanwhile, frequent counselling visits strengthen the counsellor-client alliance to generate a rippling effect on the parties' commitment towards the achievement of the counselling goal. The distressed state of clients at counselling necessitates a more comfortable and relaxing setting where they can easily off-load their burdens. By implication, the terrain of the counselling center directly impacts the client and the entire helping process, to derive useful outcomes. In the current research, features of the centers' physical setting were captured under three sub-headings, namely, the dependent or independent building type, external labelling of the facilities and finally, the internal procedures in accessing counselling services.

5.3.4.1.1 Dependent and independent building types of the counselling center

The external layout of the counselling environment is one of the key initiators of the relief associated with counselling (Mcleod & Machin, 2007). This report stresses the importance of the dependent and independent counselling center settings in the current study. Advocates of the independent site mentioned easy identification, access and enhanced confidentiality as strong justifications for their choice of the independent facility. The independent site is similar to the centralized advising system that converged all counselling activities under one roof and is managed by a director (Oertel, 2007). The advantage with this system is the easy identification and access to all counselling facilities (Oertel, 2007). Kot, (2014) found the single unit counselling center deeply rewarding to first year college students who remarkably improved their grade point averages via the

facility (Kot, 2014). The direct and easy access to the center may have promoted their patronage to culminate in the favourable impact on their studies.

Contrarily, fears of the opposing group, regarding stigmatization motivated their preference for the dependent center building. Participants opted for the concealed center structure given that it would prevent others from noticing their visits to the center. Considering that both autonomous and reliant centers offered exclusive advantages both building types were acceptable for counselling. However, given that clients often presented for counselling heavily burdened, the autonomous site seemed more appropriate due to its direct and easy access to service. I refer to the experience of participant one who got completely confused and spent hours searching for her lecturer's office in the dependent center site as a strong justification for choosing the independent building type.

Meanwhile, Stone and Archer (1990) recommend the Student Health Services and the Academic Affairs offices as the most appropriate facilities to house the institutional counselling center on campus. Their choice was based on the health emphasis of counselling services (Stone & Archer, 1990). Pearson and Wilson (2012) on the other hand trivialised the issues and proposed a more general counselling center setting. The academic and health-related orientations of Stone and Archer's (1990) recommendation however depicted the key emotional and psychological focus of counselling in higher education institutions. In line with the health focus of counselling, Martens (2011) stressed the healing effect of the counselling center's atmosphere on the client's mental health. Marten's (2011) report concurred with Stone and Archer (1990), Mcleod and Machin, (2007) and Kot, (2014) who confirmed the favourable effect of the counselling setting, both on the client and the entire counselling process. I accordingly found Pearson and Wilson's (2012) suggestion most inappropriate, given participants' disagreements over the center's building type and its effect on clients.

5.3.4.1.2 The external labelling of the center

Still on the physical setting of the center, study participants also desired a boldly labelled counselling center with a beautiful surrounding to attract more students to the center, ensure easy identification and access to service. They opined that such a center would promote the much-desired widened service participation on university campuses. The opposition however rejected this view stressing the label's increased probability of stigmatising the counselling center building and its visitors. They were however convinced that an attractive environment would easily entice students to better patronise the center's activities. In the event that both groups advanced useful justifications for their preferences regarding the center siting, it seems most appropriate to encourage individual institutions to adopt their preferred stance in establishing their centers on campus. This consensus aligned with Bishop's (2006) suggestion for service providers to carefully consider their institutional resources to establish their counselling facilities on campus.

5.3.4.1.3 The internal arrangement of the counselling center

The internal organization of the counselling room also reflects a spiritual and emotional component of the counselling environment. Marten (2011) for instance agreed with Dellinger (2010) in stressing the healing effect of the center's physical atmosphere on the mind, body and soul of the client. Healthcare professionals also concurred with the above report by acknowledging the view that patients' social and physical environments facilitated their recuperation process (Devlin & Arniel, 2003). This view reflects a logical conclusion that chaotic settings generally promote unwholesome influences on individuals while calm atmospheres generate the contrary. In agreement with the above view, Evans (1999) proposed a less crowded, quieter and appropriate design for counselling centers in general.

In line with the above, participant eight condemned the poor furniture choice and arrangement in the studied institutions' counselling rooms (refer to lines 2403 & 2432). She stressed the inappropriateness of the furniture and its arrangement as mis-matching the relieving focus of counselling services. She opined that the desktop computer, upright seats, office cabinet and writing desks in the counselling room reflected more of an 'office-

like' setting and thus conflicted with the desired cozy, attractive and comforting counselling environment (Mcleod & Machin, 1998). Relaxed couches, brightly coloured petals of beautiful flowers, catchy and uplifting poster messages usually converged a relaxing effect on the client. The burdened client indeed drew a lot of inspiration from the counselling setting. In short, the serious 'cognitive business' (p. 326) of counselling centers required a calmer atmosphere to ease off the clients' emotional pain and stress (Mcleod & Machin, 1998).

5.3.4.2 Poor procedures in accessing academic counselling at the center

Counselling procedures and initial reception modes at various counselling units deeply predicted the level of students' participation in the facility. The following write-up focused on the follow-up service in the studied research sites.

5.3.4.2.1 Poor client follow-up services

Uncertainty regarding the future of resolved challenges underscores the significance of follow-up services in general. A terminated problematic pregnancy could for instance present traumatic aftermaths on the victim likewise a difficult counselling case. Counselling termination is however often considered a temporary break that tests the client's commitment to achieving the counselling goal. Follow up thus offers both client and counsellors a huge responsibility and further ascertains the effectiveness of the proposed counselling intervention in each case. According to Korenromp et al., (2007) follow-up facilitates the identification of trauma-prone patients for further health support. Couples with medically assisted reproductive issues equally reflect great adjustment, ten years after their deliveries (Wischmann et al., 2012). The couples also presented a high quality of life, exuding high confidence in parenting the children they delivered via medical support (Wischmann et al., 2012). Indeed, the favourable influence of the medical support established a positive attitude towards future medical assisted deliveries.

5.3.5 Theme five: Innovation is key to enhancing counselling participation

Creativity refers to the ability to thoughtfully design a useful facility to add value and novelty to one's life (Bharadwaj & Menon, 2000). Innovation and creativity often attract greater audiences given that they present a new flavour to the concerned event (Bharadwaj & Menon, 2000). Study participants in the research desired creativity and

enhanced awareness in relation to on-campus counselling-related activities. They were obviously fed up with the monotony of events desired a variation via innovation, advertising and student-centered activities. The first year orientation event had equally lost its significance and deserved re-packaging to warrant the great student following. Effecting such a change in counselling center activities was the responsibility of the director who must ensure that the center maintained a high image (Bishop, 2010). The director's level of proactivity often determined the center's level of awareness on campus. The ensuing is a synopsis on the two key categories under theme five.

5.3.5.1 Upgrade the first year orientation service in institutions

The high school-college transmission has remained a key challenge to many first year students (Lee & Dawson, 2011). Transition effects essentially hinder first year students' academic performance and occasionally hampered their high completion rates (Renuka et al., 2009; Lee & Dawson, 2011). The need to facilitate students' first year college adjustment established the annual orientation programme. The event often sought two key purposes. First to warmly welcome fresh students into their new learning settings and further promote their smooth adjustment to college life (Gas et al., 2010). Adjustment concerns often establish low academic concentration, loss of appetite and poor sleep patterns that ultimately hinder students' initial college year attainment (Kuh et al., 2005; Buboltz et al., 2001). Gass et al., (2003) and Owusu et al., (2014) further describe students' orientation as generally exciting and rewarding. Students' successful establishment of social networks with significant college staff and colleagues at the orientation was useful. The insight students gained rewarding available college facilities at the orientation event equally initiated their college life adjustment process, thereby ensuring the students' enjoyment of an interesting college life in addition to their optimised performance (Owusu et al., 2014). Cabrera et al, (1999) associated students' high attrition to their poor college adjustment, emphasizing stress and racial discrimination as key contributors to students' low academic performance and a subsequently high attrition rate. According to Buboltz et al., (2001), poorly adjusted students on the other hand are

prone to unhealthy sleep patterns that often created tension, confusion, distress and irritation among them.

In the current study, students' orientation programmes were hurriedly accomplished, given the rather large student clientele waiting to be orientated. The poorly organized events accordingly attracted little students' interest and culminated in poor turnouts at the events. This called for enhanced advertising and a re-packaging of the orientation programme to achieve better results. Lee and Dawson (2011) for instance incorporated students in the planning of the re-designed orientation event to whip up students' interest in the service. The new programme attracted a huge student following and also turned out a more effective. By implication, students' involvement in planning future counselling-related programmes will be more productive and better attended.

5.3.5.2 Improve advertising for on-campus counselling-related activities

Setiawan, (2006) identified innovation and awareness-creation regarding counselling center events as key to a wider students' participation. Prior awareness and interest in forthcoming events also attract a large student following. This stresses the role of effective advertising of counselling-related programmes among students (Professional School Counselling, 2007). The people-centered nature of counselling center activities in fact necessitates consistent service advertising. Study participants thus stressed the need for frequent advertising of counselling events following their busy academic schedules. They confirmed the importance of the counselling facility to promote the realisation of their educational objectives but the poor advertising and obvious lack of constant reminders regarding available counselling services, on the various campuses was the greatest dis-service to the student body.

Adopting social-media and e-resources like short text messages (SMS), whatsapp and emails to promote awareness about counselling activities would serve a good purpose, likewise real life events including workshops, seminars, open lecture events or talkshows to generate deeper awareness and attraction among students (Stallman, 2011).

According to Cooper & Archer, (2002) outdoor awareness-creation events are as important as direct individual counselling sessions (the International Association of Counseling Services, 2001). Creative events like rallies, dramas, talent shows and out-door fairs would also add more value and meaning to the counselling service on campus (Villalba, et al., 2007). Given faculty members' direct daily contact with students on campuses, Nolan et al., (2006) stressed the key role faculty could play in referring vulnerable students to the counselling centers for service. The faculty staff and counselling center liaison could additionally facilitate the dissemination of counselling-related information. Other door-to-door campaign strategies within the various halls of residence (Much et al., 2009) would also achieve deeper publicity aims aside the physical distribution of notices on institutional websites and noticeboards.

Students' personal visits to the various counselling centers to acquire deeper service insight cannot also be ruled out of the advertising schedule. The habit of reading notices on institutional bulletins, billboards, magazines and newsletters significantly create awareness creation among students. Electronic media like institutional radio and television stations, if available could also help create deeper counselling awareness on campuses.

5.4 Key findings

In the following synopsis, I present the key findings that emerged from the above discussed themes and categories of the study. The findings comprise salient raised issues that emerged from the study results in relation to documented literature.

5.4.1 Counselling is indispensable

Discussions on theme one highlighted the indispensable nature of counselling. Counselling is immensely beneficial to the overall social development of students. Literature also buttressed the social and academic focus of the facility, thereby stressing its significance to various life settings. This profound significance of counselling further underscored the wealth of loss incurred by students who never took advantage of the

facility to advance their lives. It would be accordingly be useful to avoid any further such waste of resources in the near future.

5.4.2 No pain, no gain

The metaphor of life simply demands that all humans endure pain as a pre-condition to their advancement in life. This implies that the meaningfulness of life lies in the pain humans endure to accomplish the giant achievements they so much desire. This endorses the popular saying, ‘suffer to gain’ that also suggests that life is not a bed of roses. In effect, every great achievement comes at a high cost.

5.4.3 Counselling promotes academic attainment

Related to the above was the academic benefits students gained from experiencing counselling. Research participants deeply sharpened their study skills in reading, revision of lecture notes and self-regulated activities subsequent to their counselling experiences. Academic resilience and a high self-belief were equally stressed as key to students’ high academic attainment in the study. This highlights the usefulness of academic counselling, particularly in institutions where students were found to be handicapped in various disciplines. Re-packaging the academic counselling facility to focus directly on students’ needs in such situations would immensely redress their challenges to promote their academic achievement.

5.4.4 Counselling attracts social stigmatization

The fact that counselling participation attracts social stigmatisation was also deeply stressed in the study. Young people in particular resented the negative label and its associated loneliness that characterized a clients’ life after patronising counselling. This situation presented a strong barrier to a wider counselling participation as participants feared the counsellors’ inability to maintain a thorough confidentiality in counselling. Clients’ mistrust in their counsellors regarding confidentiality thus sanctioned their lack of confidence in counselling.

5.4.5 Optimism conquers the world

Extreme negativity and caution strongly prevented the attainment of higher laurels in various life cycles. Participants who entertained negative thoughts in the study mostly encountered deeper fears, anxiety, uncertainty and intimidation that ultimately prevented them from seeking counselling to overcome their life challenges. Such participants often encountered failure in the end, thereby stressing the importance of counselling to all and sundry. This also confirmed Bandura's emphasis on self-belief and the competence factor in attaining success in all human endeavours. Clients who often rejected counselling were essentially described as two-times losers in the literature, given that they had to contend longer with their difficulties and eventually lost the quick and immense recompenses of counselling.

5.4.6. Inactivity promotes poor social visibility

Overall, lack of counsellor proactivity and inactivity promoted counsellor role conflicts and poor counsellor visibility among study participants. Active counsellors on the other hand often gained prominence in their areas of operations, thereby justifying their need to adopt a hardworking attitude in their operations. The favourable counsellor work attitude in fact usually promoted higher counselling awareness and increased the services' viability among students and the general populace. Similarly, low counsellor activity usually resulted in low counsellor perceptions.

5.4.7 Improve the follow up service to promote service delivery

Enhancing the follow-up service in the various institutions was found to be key. Well-followed up students built deeper confidence in the counselling facility as they received better support to advance their social lives. Frequent follow-up on terminated counselling sessions could also be motivating to as they sought to achieve the outlined counselling goal. In effect, poor follow-up services as revealed in the current study can be demoralising to clients and must not be encouraged in any situation.

5.4.8 Consistent trials can be rewarding

The study confirmed the need for all humans to adopt a resilient attitude in their life endeavours. The determination to keep trying, despite earlier failures remains an assurance to future success. This sends a signal of hope for a brighter future, while endorsing the saying that practise makes perfect. A resilient attitude in life thus ensures that all humans achieve successes rather than become failures in life. The catchword in effect, is for us never to give up easily as only a robust attitude facilitates a rewarding future. In the study, participants' consistent utilization of the valuable academic behaviours they acquired from counselling effectively optimized their study outcomes. Only God knows what they would have achieved should they had given up easily at their failed initial study attempts. The belief that practice makes perfect in this case can only be meaningfully linked to the saying that patience moves mountains.

5.4.9 Humans are fallible

Our constant reliance on human senses occasionally exposes us to develop wrong social perceptions that often lead us into drawing incorrect conclusions about life's events. However, a more careful focus on situations could avoid the incorrect conclusions. Time and available environmental stimuli equally affect our thoughts and decisions. Accordingly, it is essential to avoid a hasty conclusion by adopting a more cautious attitude in deriving conclusions regarding our experiences. Seeking a second opinion about the experiences we encounter and the inferences we derive could also result in a better option than drawing a hasty conclusion.

5.4.10 Action speaks louder than words

In their unique positions as helping professionals, the study revealed that counsellors' behaviours and attitudes immensely influence their clients' perceptions regarding the counselling profession. Undeniably, the counsellor-client rapport demands intimacy between the two thus, the interplay between the two parties strongly influences either

parties. Unfortunately, clients' usual position at the receiving end in counselling is usually impacted by the counsellors' non-verbal commitments. In the study, while counsellor care and friendliness for instance promoted the therapeutic alliance and facilitated the achievement of the counselling goals, clients were apparently attracted to confidentiality as a counselling ethic but rejected pre-occupied, impatient and inattentive counsellors.

5.5 Concluding remarks

I have attempted to interpret and discuss the current study results in this chapter, as they related to empirical evidence. The results emerged from the five broad themes I derived from study data. My key aim in the inquiry was to explore the hidden meanings of students regarding the university academic counselling service and to further ascertain students' perceptions, attitudes and the impact of the service on students' academic attainment. Undeniably, the essence of counselling on students' studies became more pronounce as I progressed with the investigation of students' hidden meanings, perceptions and attitudes of the university academic counselling service. Overall, students' insightful counselling experiences instilled a wealth of confidence in them, and thus pronounced a hopeful and bright future for them. Counselling likewise sharpened their social and academic skills via which they prevailed over the future, both regarding their academic and overall personal life goals. Students' self-belief, level of intrinsic motivation and academic resilience as stressed by the adopted theories of self-efficacy and self-determination additionally strongly promoted students' academic behaviours, thereby confirming the importance of academic counselling on students' lives. Participants were accordingly confident and bold in their positive attestations regarding their fruitful counselling experiences.

I conclude on the current study with the assertion that counselling in higher education is not only impactful on students' academics but also on their entire social lives, hence facilitating their holistic development. Students' counselling experiences were also deeply revealing given the vast practical knowledge they gained in addition to the worthwhile attitudes they developed towards life's events. Overall, students were deeply appreciative of their counsellors for the social and academic insight they offered them and their reports

confirmed a more poised attitude to progress in their future lives. Particularly on the academic front, the benefits students gained from their counselling encounters sharpened their socio-academic life skills to facilitate their greater achievement and higher laurels in the nearest future.

5.6 Literature control

Literature essentially corroborates the findings of the current study regarding the university academic counselling facility. According to Muola and Mwania, (2013) both advising and counselling assist students regarding their academic concerns. The researchers further stressed the facilities' effectiveness in meeting numerous college students' needs while Kuh, (2008) sanctioned their assertion by identifying advising as the most powerful predictor of college students' satisfaction.

Study participants' accounts in the research equally endorsed professionally approved counsellor behaviours like confidentiality, warmth and friendliness. The mentioned behaviours propelled participants' confidence and reassurance in counselling, portraying it as a worthwhile and efficient support service towards students' education. In similar respects, Pargett (2011) argued that the social bond between advisor and student immensely thrusted students' college involvement and commitment to establish an invaluable rapport that ultimately accelerated their academic attainment. Cox (2013) and Hughey (2011) expressed similar sentiments by underlining the comforting and accepting counsellor interactions they enjoyed at school, likewise Patterson (2013) and Drake (2011) who suggested that more personal and in-depth advising discussions resonated students' satisfaction with academic advising. Indeed, Drake, (2011) intimated that advising services easily eradicated new students' college frustrations and replaced them with deeper determination towards their early graduation. The above reports accordingly endorsed the current study's findings regarding themes one and three where students' initial counselling experience promoted insight and fortified their confidence in academic counselling. Theme three on the other hand highlighted some approved counsellor behaviors during service delivery.

Counselling misconceptions are equally replete in the documented literature. Not only did students misconstrue counselling as a service strictly for the mentally impaired in the study but they also confused it with advise-giving and thus rejected the facility. Studies by Stockton and Güneri (2011) in Turkey for instance identified misconception as a key barrier to the helping service. Participants' errorneos view of the facility as a rehabilitative resource typically for the mentally disturbed also limited service participation among the Turks. Indeed Stockton and Güneri (2011) opined that the Turks misconceived both school guidance and counselling as 'giving advice and direction to students who experience problems in or outside of school' (p. 100). Their report agreed with theme two in the current study that focused on counselling misconceptions. Empirical evidence thus confirms the worthwhileness of the current study regarding the university academic counselling service.

5.7 Summary of empirical findings

The current study focused on the lived experiences of student participants on the university academic counselling service. Participants were counselled undergraduate higher education students from Ghanaian public institutions. The importance of the academic counselling service was deeply stressed, given the current poor academic performance trends of university students lately. Without commendable academic attainment, the numerous individual and national rewards associated with attaining higher education cannot be realized. Developing nations in Africa particularly desire the critical thinking capabilities, advanced technological knowledge and relevant skilled manpower that characterise commendable university education to advance their countries.

The research findings regarding students' counselling experiences were deeply revealing. Students' hidden meanings of the university academic counselling service was inspiring despite the few complaints they registered regarding snobbish counsellor behaviours, implementing mundane counselling-related events, poor siting of counselling centers and unfriendly procedures in accessing counselling services at the various institutional centers. Counsellor care and support, reliable rapport and its marked effect

on students' college lives were tremendously valued. Despite the negative influence of counselling misconceptions on students' widened participation, participants' purposeful steps to resolve their counselling problem, rectified their erroneous counselling perceptions. In conclusion, the existing counselling-related activities urgently required repackaging given that they had out-lived their usefulness to students. Change in event-planning and implementation modalities was imminent to whip up students' interest in the counselling-related activities. Aggressive advertising coupled with student-friendly counselling programmes should be adopted to attract the high student-attendance in up-coming events.

5.8 Revisiting the research questions

The ensuing conclusions derived from the study go to answer the earlier outlined research questions. The primary research question was as follows:-

What are the experiences of students with the academic counselling service in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

This was further broken down into three secondary questions comprising:-

a) What are the attitudes of students towards the academic counselling service offered in the three selected public universities in Ghana?
b) What are the perceptions of students towards the academic counselling service, in the three selected public universities in Ghana?
c) What is the impact of the academic counselling service on the study outcomes of students in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

I present the following study findings in response to the above research questions that guided the study.

5.8.1 Secondary research question one: - What are the attitudes of students towards the academic counselling service offered in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

In this study, participants displayed both positive and negative attitudes towards the counselling facility. Counsellor behaviours, the physical counselling center settings and

internal procedures for accessing counselling services depicted participants' attitudes towards the academic counselling facility. The mentioned factors were essentially derived from themes three and four in the research.

As key frontline staff or service providers in higher education institutions, displayed counsellor behaviours while adressing students' needs ultimately influenced participants' attitudes towards counselling. Students' openness to counselling was deeply motivated by appealing counsellor behaviours like warmth, friendliness and confidentiality in the study. Generally, clients are naturally attracted to warm and friendly counsellors (Hughey, 2011; Ford & Ford, 2009), but the adverse effects of repelling counsellor behaviours also tend to deepen low client confidence in counselling. The excesses of pleasant counsellor behaviours were thus enabling for participants in overcoming their counselling concerns, though unappealing counsellor behaviours such as impatience, poor listening, counsellor unavailability and counsellors' apathetic attitude towards student clients were deeply problematic to study participants.

Given the poor influence of the counselling centers' physical appearance and their remote settings on participants' counselling participation, there is a need for a proper planning of center sites for closer proximity and more physically attractive counselling facilities to improve students' attitudes towards service. The external labelling of the institutional counselling center also came at a rather high social cost (stigmatization) to some participants since it equally affected participants' counselling attitudes.

Finally, the problem-prone nature of life and human's attitudinal influence on their behaviours in general underscores the need for students' positive counselling attitudes. This favourable service attitude remains their greatest assets to their remarkable academic and overall life achievements. By defying all odds and taking that bold step to experience counselling for the first time, both participants two and four for instance achieved greater academic laurels they least expected to obtain. In effect, participants' favourable counselling attitudes ushered them into a promising future, making it imperative for all students to embrace the service for their eventual advancement in life.

5.8.2 Secondary research question two: - what are the perceptions of students towards the academic counselling service, in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

Overall, participants presented mixed perceptions regarding the university academic counselling service in the study. Despite their acknowledgement and subsequent appreciation of the positive academic and emotional influence of counselling on their social endeavours, their extreme worries, concern and fears over counselling effects promoted a generally low service perception. Reports regarding fears of counsellors' low commitment to confidentiality likewise created feelings of uncertainty that engendered low counselling perceptions among higher education students. Largely, participants' positive counselling perceptions facilitated their defiance of fears over social stigma and uncertainty regarding counselling outcomes. They accordingly warmly embraced the facility that yielded the tons of rewards they eventually reaped from their initial counselling encounters. On the other hand, prevalent counselling misconceptions and negative thoughts contemplated by participants with unfavourable perceptions eventually presented them as dual losers of life's assets.

Our perceptions of life's circumstances generally determine our attitudes towards life's events. Positive perceptions thus engender favourable life attitudes that often promote remarkable life achievement, though negative ones only propel us towards failure. Dominant situational elements or environmental stimuli in our locations of operation similarly combine with our fallible human senses to define our concluding perceptions about life. Bandura's Social Cognitive theory thus cautions us to be conscious of the physical environmental stimuli that facilitate our meaning making processes and dictate our actions at every point in time. Given this scenario, it is important at every point in time, for us to subject our perceptual conclusions to careful scrutiny and critique, prior to establishing our conclusions about life's events. We may as well seek second opinions from significant others to justify our individual perceptual conclusions. Only after exploring such avenues can we confidently draw meaningful conclusions regarding our perceptions about life. By implication, making progress in life requires careful consideration of a host of factors, in addition to efficient decision-making skills.

In effect, the findings highlighted an interesting chain of life's occurrences where our physical environments blend with our senses to derive meanings about life's events. These meanings in turn overtake our thoughts to colour our perceptions that simultaneously control our attitudes, thereby driving our behaviours to engender various consequences on our lives. Our responsible behaviours or actions thus generate favourable life influences that promote our lives while our irresponsible actions hinder our life's progress. Life is simply replete with an interesting cycle that consistently churns our successes or failures, depending on our actions at any point in time. Overall, a positive perception on life's events provides an exceptional key to unlock and subsequently release the greater fortunes of life. The study findings in relation to themes one and two accordingly reflected mixed participants' perceptions regarding the university academic counselling service.

5.8.3 Secondary research question three;- what is the impact of the academic counselling service on the study outcomes of students in the three selected public universities in Ghana?

Participants' initial academic counselling experiences positively influenced their study habits. They learnt to utilise quiet and appropriately furnished study locations in their studies, promptly and regularly revise their lecture notes, effectively manage their time via personal timetabling, among a few other positive study habits to generate higher academic performance. Participants were accordingly deeply appreciative of their counsellors for the wealthy information they acquired via counselling. However, the counselling-generated rewards did not come on a silver platter. Participants took the initiative and defied all the odds to obtain the rewards. They deeply contended with profound fears of social stigmatization, uncertainties regarding counsellor capabilities to meaningfully assist them and the many misconceptions associated with counselling. It was indeed a big risk they took, but their determination to overcome their personal challenges eventually crowned their efforts. Risk-taking thus remains a key part of life, likewise adopting optimism instead of pessimism in life. Only then can we make it! In

effect, life is simply what we make it and the choice is entirely ours to emerge as goal-getters rather than failures.

Given the multi-faceted nature of learning however, students require constant support to remain abreast with the diverse learning-prevailing factors. The anchor theories' highlights on motivation, determination and confidence, consistent and meaningful feedback, personal orientations, the learning environment among several others cannot be down-played in promoting meaningful academic benefits. Accordingly, the institutional, teacher and student-related factors need to be clearly identified and carefully considered in each learning situation to effectively generate useful learning outcomes. I therefore propose the following academic counselling model to assist students in promoting their efforts to achieve higher academic laurels.

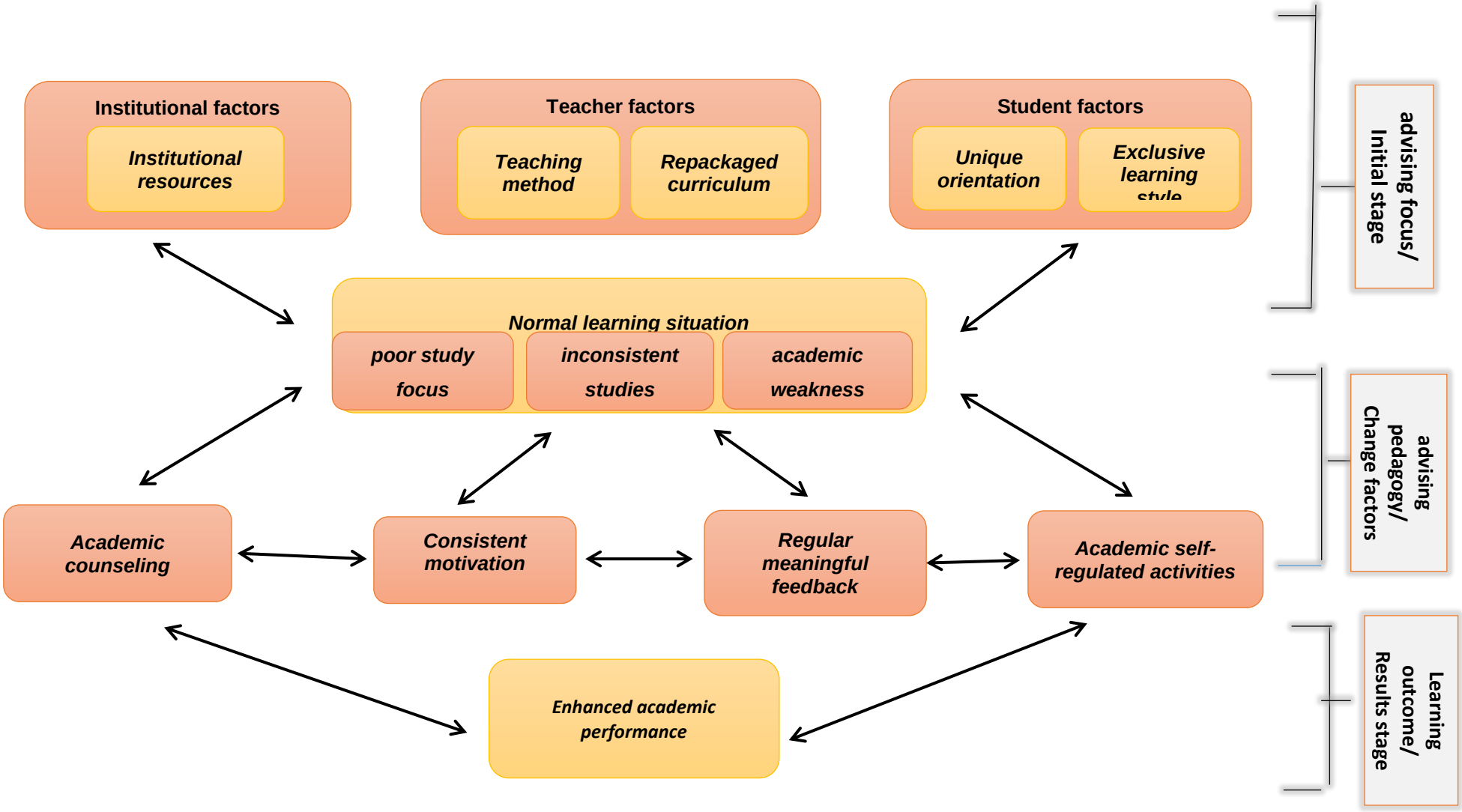


Figure 5-2: The proposed counselling model

5.9 Recommendations for the study findings

Following the highlighted study findings, I recommended the following to optimise the academic performance of students in higher education. I categorised the following recommendations into three key areas, comprising research, practice and policy.

5.9.1 Research

1. Further research to compare the public and private students' experiences with the university academic counselling service will be of further significance to future quality service for higher education students. Such a study would in fact, project the dichotomies between service quality offered in both cases, to suggest better strategies for improved counselling programmes in Ghanaian higher education.

2. Next, an exploration of counsellor experiences during service provision in Ghanaian higher education will also be instructive to the entire counselling profession. The research would for instance reveal the inherent challenges confronting service providers and provide a meaningful platform to redress them towards enhanced future counselling programmes in Ghanaian higher education.

5.9.2 Practice

1. The finding on students' ignorance regarding service facility location and the availability of counselling services in the studied institutions leaves much to be desired. Aggressive advertising is thus desirable at all levels of education, including the Basic, Second cycle and university campuses to widen students' service participation. Annual educational programmes should also be held particularly at the Basic and second cycle institutions to sensitize students on the significance of counselling services, prior to their university admission. These sensitisation programmes will equally eradicate the reported low counselling perceptions and service misconceptions among students. Participants' call for the utilization of more current advertising methods, student-friendly and year group-focused counselling events should also be adhered to. To this end, it is equally advisable to engage a students' representative council in the efficient planning and implementation of future counselling programmes to incorporate students' ideas in scheduled activities at the various counselling centers.

2. Similarly, establishing information desks on various university campuses to champion awareness-creation regarding counselling center activities also enhances

services publicity. It is my anticipation that information desk attendants would liaise with institutional counselling center staff and counsellors for enhanced students' awareness into scheduled events towards higher participation. Colourful and attractively-designed flyers and posters could also be printed and distributed fortnightly campus-wide by information desk assistants. The early distribution of these flyers will enhance programme publicity and increased attendance.

3. To reduce the incidence of students' disappointments and counsellor unavailability at scheduled meetings, secretaries at the various institutional facilities should be tasked with sending early reminder notifications to student-clients prior to their appointment dates. The secretaries should adopt social media platforms like whatsapp and short text messages to reach students. A well-advertised hot-line mobile phone number should be used to receive students' complaints regarding service quality while strategically located suggestion boxes should also be used to gather students' service-related complaints. Yearly in-service trainings and networking meetings with local and international counsellors will further help improve counsellors' professional behaviours. Best service practises could be shared at such trainings to promote counsellor's behaviour. It will be equally helpful for the counselling center Director to invite and hold discussions with the unprofessional counsellor regarding his apathetic client treatment.

4. The Regional and headquarter offices of the Ghana Education Service (GES) should also collaborate with the various Regional Guidance and Counselling Units to address participants' raised concerns regarding poor counsellor behaviours while commending approved ones. Counselling center directors and the Regional counselling coordinators could also invite counsellors for further discussions regarding both approved and unprofessional behaviours. Bi-annual refresher-training programmes should also be organised by the Regional Guidance offices to equip counsellors with new skills and professional behaviours in the profession.

5. To further redress the challenge of counsellor unavailability and poor follow-up services for instance, a detailed duty roaster should be provided at the various counselling centers to ensure the availability of some counsellors at the center when all others are pre-occupied elsewhere. This ensures that students who require service even at break time would be assured of immediate assistance.

6. Additionally, Regional Guidance and Counselling officers should undertake bi-annual monitoring visits to the various counselling centers to redress issues regarding poor follow-up services, lack of record keeping and various students' service-related complaints. Thorough reports should subsequently be prepared and presented to the Regional Director for future evaluation purposes.

7. To improve attendance rates at the first year orientation events, it is advised that various administrative and counselling center staff re-package the entire event to focus more on current and youth-friendly topics. More time should be factored into the programme to ensure deeper student insight regarding the topics under discussion at the orientation event. Innovative methods should also be adopted to implement the events. Participating students should also be commended via tokens and petty rewards to whip up more students' interest in subsequent events. Attendees should also be requested to present a one-page report on their experiences, noting down any innovation they would like to see in subsequent events. A brief evaluation at the end of each counselling-related event would also improve ensure more student-friendly future programmes on campus.

8. Displaying portable counsellor images and names at the main reception area and on each counselling office entrance aims at enhancing familiarisation between students and their counsellors. It is hoped that the posters would initiate a meaningful student-counsellor rapport and promote service access within the various institutions. Increased counsellor introductions and featuring at the various orientation events equally serves the same purpose of enhanced familiarity and rapport between students and their counsellors, prior to their future individual sessions.

9. Finally, deeper counsellor proactivity is recommended within the various institutions to break the barrier hindering students' widened service participation. Institutional heads and center Directors should thus encourage counsellors to implement novel activities in accomplishing their responsibilities on campus. They could for instance take advantage of national social event celebrations like mother's day, valentine's day, emancipation day, etc to hold student-oriented activities. Indeed, center directors should first demonstrate this innovation for the staff to emulate the example.

5.9.3 Policy

1. Given students' complaints regarding late arrival on campus, it is recommended that mid-semester orientation events are designed and implemented for late-arrivals. This will cater for the immediate orientation needs for late arrivals who are mostly disadvantaged because they usually miss the initial orientation event. A policy to implement a mid-semester orientation event within the various institutions would thus be of great relevance in this case.

2. Efficient record keeping at the various counselling centers facilitates yearly service monitoring and evaluation. Accordingly, it is important for the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service to enforce the policy on efficient record keeping at the various institutional counselling centers. The monitoring team, comprising officers from the Regional Guidance and Counselling units must peruse the centers' records and discuss any observations they make during their monitoring visits. The records however must constantly be kept under lock and key for confidentiality purposes.

3. A policy to establish a planning committee to discuss the modalities involved in siting and establishing a counselling facility prior to its establishment on campus is also important. Once established, the committee should decide on issues regarding the external labelling, furnishings and arrangement of the counselling center to ensure improved service provision.

5.10 Limitations of the study

A key limitation of this study was established by the poor cooperation I received from counselling center directors at two of the research sites. This resulted in an alteration of my initial sampling plan on the field. Particularly at the crab and deer institutions, the change in sampling procedures necisitated my adoption of the snowball and convenience sampling method that affected the total sample size and the gender composition of the final number of participants I eventually engaged in the study. At the deer institution for instance, my inability to reach a male participant emerged from the altered sampling procedure, likewise the increased number of female participants as compared to males in the overall study sample used. This may have resulted in a reflection of more female-oriented views in the data than that of males.

Furthermore, my inability to reach some participants to grant their second interviews and also participate in the focus group discussion may have limited the depth of issues raised and discussion extent by participants regarding the phenomenon understudy. Secondly, the excitement and jubilant mood in which I interviewed some participants at the completion of their examinations also thrusted participants' interview responses to exceed the issues under discussion. I however applied a control measure and the effect of these limitations were eventually minimal, given that I reached data saturation at a point during fieldwork.

A final weakness of the study was my focus on public and Southern-based institutions as opposed to private and countrywide focus. It is most probable that such a wider study target would have generated more interesting and detailed findings than currently.

I do not however consider my use of a small and purposively sampled group as a research limitation, given that the small sample enabled my deeper data exploration while the purposive sample was most appropriate in reaching experienced participants to meaningfully and thoroughly interrogate the understudied phenomenon.

5.11 Contributions of the study

The benefits of the current study aligned with its diverse contributions to the professional counselling service in general. Specific contributions however relate to the theories that underpinned the study, the adopted interpretive paradigm and its associated phenomenological focus to generate personal researcher rewards, both as the sole engineer and implementer of the study, and above all as a professional counsellor.

The study theoretically confirmed the role and importance of personal human capabilities including effort in achieving overall life goals. It simultaneously corroborated the supportive emphasis of the academic counselling service among students in general. Emphasis on students' need for counselling support, to realize their educational objectives undeniably aligned perfectly with the theoretical focus on students' self-beliefs and resilience in predicting their achievement. A key relevance of the adopted research theories, namely the self-efficacy and self-determination theories simply relate to their signalling of appropriate research methodology, including data collection instruments to the generation of significant quality assurance

strategies in consonance with qualitative research methods. Indeed, the mentioned theories thoroughly illuminated the significant goal-achievement factors to confirm students' self-confidence and self-determination as key in predisposing them to various life achievements.

Not only did both theories also stress the practicality of individual differences among student groups but they further enlightened all stakeholders of education, including students themselves on the essential elements that incline them to varied levels of academic attainment. Students' insight into such factors for instance instructs them regarding healthy learning methods like teamwork or collaboration with their colleagues towards enhanced performance, rather than exciting them in respect of unhealthy rivalry and competition.

More importantly, theoretical insight appropriately informs significant stakeholders like instructors, lecturers, counsellors, advisors and faculty members in their search for worthwhile methods to promote efficient learning among dissimilar student groups. Individual difference thus represents the core of collective human endeavour and the selected underpinning theories clearly articulated that in the study.

The truthful findings of the study further validated the adopted interpretive phenomenological research approach. According to Ojeda et al, (2011) research credibility is only realised with the application of appropriate methodology to generate authentic findings. The interpretive phenomenological study emphasis was accordingly immensely beneficial in highlighting participants' idiosyncratic concerns regarding the existing academic counselling facility. Each highlighted participant's concern gravely symbolised a global challenge among higher education students in general, thus presenting study participants as astute advocates for the wider higher education student population. Study findings thus reflected the targets' concerns regarding the counselling status quo. The interpretive phenomenological approach that prevailed over my choice of overall research design and data collection tools, their firm data triangulation and reliable steps to generate interesting study findings was accordingly deeply useful.

More also, the proposed counselling model and authentic research findings provide tremendous guidelines to improve future academic counselling services in Ghanaian

higher education. The derived model for instance clearly defines the significant learning factors that further suggest useful methods in implementing the academic counselling service in Ghana. Educational stakeholders in neighbouring Ghana would draw immense benefit from the study findings to advance service quality for their students. Unarguably, the novel research findings go a long way to conceal an apparent gap in documented literature regarding academic counselling service in African higher education.

The feelings of accomplishment and recognition I felt anytime I reflected on the accomplished research is immense. No doubt progress through the entire inquiry process has increased my knowledge, sharpened my expertise and broadened my expertise in qualitative research. The experience I gathered in conducting both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions will remain significant to all my entire research career. Particularly regarding my realisation of the essence of the interpretive phenomenological approach to health and helping professionals (including counsellors), who mostly seek to understand the whole persons they work with (as patients and clients) (Lopez & Willis, 2004), I feel deeply confident in my research exposure. Indeed, lessons learnt from the research field experience firmly assures me of greater future research accomplishments. I conclude by reiterating that the current study represents my ardent personal contribution to the revered counselling profession I have been so deeply involved in over the past fifteen years.

5.12 Research conclusion

Life is replete with profound metaphors that richly blend to present us with various issues. The metaphors often manifest as severe dilemmas, carefully enveloping us with feelings of confusion, resentment and ambiguity. Occasionally, we enjoy pleasurable and exciting moments but mostly the thorny life events hardly allow us any respite, compelling us to search frantically for urgent solutions to our concerns. Help seeking under such circumstances become indispensable and despite our frequent entertainment of fears, confusion and uncertainties regarding counselling outcomes, the counselling facility remains a singularly useful opportunity to redress

our life's concerns. The inevitability of problems in life endorses our need for consistent counselling support and that was visibly confirmed by the study findings.

Practice simply makes life perfect, likewise experience that regularly offers us worthwhile teaching encounters. Our continuous counselling experiences thus sharpen our decision-making and problem-solving skills, to better equip us in redressing our numerous life challenges. Indeed, it is in our utmost power to determine the course of our lives, given our choice of action at the various twists and turns of life. This challenges us into bold confrontation of our problems, thereby, propelling us safely through the fearful tides to the peaceful shore. Essentially, the deeper our insight regarding life's issues, the greater our confidence levels and determination to adopt worthwhile solutions for our advancement. This asset remains our single assurance to a more progressive and enjoyable life. Overall, we are hemmed in by life's troubles but procrastination and a constant evasion of the troubles only complicate the matter, likewise throwing in the towel or giving up prematurely when distressed with the storms of life.

To conclude, progress only comes with a courageous attitude. Living thus remains important but advancement is more rewarding. We can however only achieve our goals by seeking frequent assistance. Counselling is undeniably essential and its early re-structuring within our various institutions will be deeply beneficial to students. Life only gets better when all is well, but given that time and tide waits for no man, the earlier we mobilized our efforts to redress our limitations, the better it will be for us all. My simple advice, to conclude is that, squarely facing our challenges and working steadily towards them assures us of an enjoyable life. Life really is what we make it thus let's not give up our efforts for surely, a bright life shines at the far end of the tunnel!

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

INTERVIEW GUIDE SCHEDULE

Guiding questions for sub-research question 1: Attitudes of students towards academic counselling

1. What have been your experiences with the academic counselling service in your institution?
2. What do you like about the university academic counselling service?
3. For what reasons have you been using the academic counselling service?
4. How do you feel about the academic counselling service in your university?
5. What advice will you give to a friend who likes or does not like the academic counselling service?

Guiding questions for sub-research question 2: Perceptions of students on academic counselling

1. How important is academic counselling to you as a student?
2. What is your perception of the academic counselling service in your university?
3. How do you perceive your colleagues who seek academic counselling?
4. What in your view is the biggest shortfall in the academic counselling service provided at your university?
5. What will you say is the greatest asset in your university's academic counselling service?

Guiding questions for sub-research question 3: Impact of academic counselling on students' study outcomes

1. How have you experienced the academic counselling service in your university?
2. What are some of the benefits and challenges you have encountered from the academic counselling service in your institution?
3. How do you think the academic counselling sessions have impacted on your life?
4. In brief, tell me your general views about your university's academic counselling service.

MK Sefotho ..... 30 April 2016 .....

Dr. Maximus Sefotho — Date

APPENDIX B: THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

SCHEDULE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Attitude of students towards academic counselling

What do you think is your attitude towards the academic counselling service in your university?
Tell me why you think you have this attitude.
What is your view on this attitude towards academic counselling?

Students' perceptions of academic counselling

What do you think is your perception of your university's academic counselling service?
Tell me what you think informed this perception of the academic counselling service.
What is your view on this perception towards academic counselling?

Impact of academic counselling on students' studies

What do you think is the impact of academic counselling on your studies and academic performance?
In general, how would you rate the entire academic counselling service you have experienced in your university? Please rate according to the following scale:- 5 - Highly satisfactory
4 - Satisfactory
3 - Average
2 - Unsatisfactory/ Poor
1 – Completely useless

With clear examples, please provide reasons for your above rating of the academic counselling service.

Dr. Maximus Sefotho

30 April, 2016
Date

APPENDIX C: THE SIGNED ATTENDANCE SHEET AT THE FOCUS GROUP EVENT

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

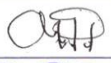
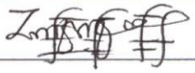
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

ATTENDANCE SHEET FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

DATE: SATURDAY, 21ST MAY, 2016

VENUE: UNIVERSITY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES, ACCRA.

TIME: 2:00p.m.

Pseudonym of Participant	Institution Name	Signature
Pee	University of Professional Studies	
Esi	University of Professional Studies	
Kwasi	University of Professional Studies	
Seerious	University of Professional Studies	
Bigils	University of Education	
Baby	University of Education	
Yaa	University of Education	
Nhyira	University of Cape Coast	
Nelson	University of Cape Coast	
Mawutoh	University of Cape Coast	
Lady	University of Cape Coast	
Kwame	University of Cape Coast	

APPENDIX D: A SAMPLE LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO THE INSTITUTIONAL COUNSELLING FACILITIES

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Dept. of Educational Psychology
Pretoria 0002
South Africa.

10/04/2016

The Director
Counselling Center
University of Cape Coast
Cape Coast

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter introduces Ms. Sylvia Ocansey, a registered full-time PhD student at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. Ms. Ocansey is currently conducting her PhD research work on the topic;- *'the experiences of academic counselling services for students in three public universities in Ghana'*.

The study solicits information on the university academic counselling service from students who have ever experienced the service and can provide practical and objective information on it. The rationale for this study is therefore to explore, understand and interpret the unique experiences of academically counselled public university students in Ghana and the impact of this type of counselling on their study outcomes.

I am pleased to inform you, your esteemed institution is one of the three selected universities for this study. Ms. Ocansey will be selecting her study participants from the records of the Counselling centre. These participants will be mainly involved in interviews and a focus group discussion to provide relevant data for the study. *Their participation in this research is however purely voluntary and they are at liberty to quit this research anytime they feel incapable of continuing it. They will not be penalised for withdrawing and they will also be protected from harm while on this study.* All study activities will also take place on your university campus. The study will highlight the unique

experiences of students with the academic counselling service and further explore, understand and interpret these experiences.

I will thus be most grateful if you would accord Ms. Ocansey the necessary support she requires to enable her interact with your students and gather objective data for her study.

Thank you in advance for your acceptance to support this research work.

Sincerely yours,

Sylvia Ocansey (Ms.)
(Researcher)
Tel.: +27 621779389
ocanseyarm@yahoo.com

Dr. Maximus Sefotho
(Main Supervisor)
Tel.: 072 6380868
maximus.sefotho@up.ac.za

Note:- 'All data collected with public funding may be made available in an open repository for public and scientific use.'

APPENDIX E: A COPY OF THE PARTICIPANTS' INVITATION LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Dept. of Educational Psychology
Pretoria 0002, South Africa.

10/04/2016

Dear student,

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH WORK

I am pleased to invite you to take part in a research work which is envisaged to commence in May, 2016. Your participation in this research is purely voluntary and you are at liberty to quit this research anytime you feel incapable of continuing it. You will not be penalised for withdrawing and you will also be protected from harm while on this study.

Your university is one of the three institutions selected to participate in this study in Ghana. A total of six students, including yourself have been invited from your university for this study, entitled, '*the experiences of academic counselling services for students in three public universities in Ghana.*' The study is part of a PhD programme for a student at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. The findings of the study will however be used to enhance the counselling services offered in Ghanaian universities.

The study seeks to explore, understand and interpret the unique experiences of academically counselled university students in Ghana and the impact of this service on their study outcomes. To gather the desired in-depth information, the study employs two interview sessions with each participant and a focus group discussion. Each interview spans a period of 30 minutes and the focus group discussion, 40 minutes.

The study will highlight the unique personal experiences of study participants with the university academic counseling service. It will also explore, understand and interpret participants' experiences with the service. Study participants additionally get the unique opportunity to:-

- Present students' objective attitudes and perceptions of the existing academic counselling service and its effectiveness in redressing their academic concerns, and
- Provide realistic suggestions to arrive at meaningful solutions in overcoming the weaknesses of the existing academic counselling service.

I look forward to your honoring of this invitation to enable me to build a strong partnership to enhance the academic counselling service for university students in Ghana.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Ocansey (Ms.)
(Researcher)
Tel.: +27 621779389
ocanseyarm@yahoo.com

Dr. Maximus Sefotho
(Main Supervisor)
Tel.: 072 6380868
maximus.sefotho@up.ac.za

Note:- 'All data collected with public funding may be made available in an open repository for public and scientific use.'

APPENDIX F: A COPY OF THE SIGNED PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Details of researcher
Ms. Sylvia Ocansey
Tel.: +27 621 779389
ocanseyarm@yahoo.com

Details of supervisor
Dr. Maximus Sefotho
Tel.: 072 6380868
maximus.sefotho@up.ac.za

PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORM

Please read and sign this form before your participation in your first interview. It indicates your consent to the information provided below.

As a volunteering participant to this research work, I agree that I have had discussions with Ms. Sylvia Ocansey, the researcher and understand that this study is part of her PhD programme. Her study is being supervised by Dr. Maximus Sefotho and Professor Salome Human-Vogel, both of the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.
I have also duly been informed about the nature of the research work, the consent form and my rights on the study have also been fully explained to me. I understand that in consenting to participate in this research, I will be involved in the following activities:-

- Attend the briefing session on the study
- Sign the participant's consent form
- Participate in 2 in- depth interviews and provide frank information
- Participate in the focus group discussion
- Cross check information on interview transcripts when required

I have additionally been informed that the information I volunteer will be kept confidential and I will not in any way be identified in this research work.

I also have information that my consent to participate in this study is voluntary and I am at liberty to quit this research anytime I feel incapable of continuing it, and will not be penalised for withdrawing. I am additionally aware that I will be protected from harm while on this study.

I look forward to an interesting participation in this study.

Thank you.

Bigirle ....

Pseudonym of participant | Signature of participant

..... 30 April, 2016

Supervisor's Signature | Date

Note: 'All data collected with public funding may be made available in an open repository for public and scientific use.'

APPENDIX G: THEME ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE TRANSCRIPTS

THEME ONE: Initial experience insights students towards deeper confidence in Academic counselling for enhanced study outcomes

lines 129 – 141

Researcher: So how did counselling help you?

Yeah it helped me because it actually brought me to make a strong decision that I was battling with my mind. For quite a long time. So after I went through all those processes, I think now … am a free person now. Because I don't …. am not … categorizing it as it was my own effort as in my … I sat down somewhere … I made that decision and I … I wrote those things and stuff … So it has really helped me too … Because now since I stopped that one am really doing well at my church. So I think it … it helping me grow my spiritual life. They … what they were doing there was as if I was creating a bad name. And I didn't want to create that impression so I have to resign before that bad news is … was always with …

lines 8503 – 8518

Researcher: So what benefit did you make from counselling?

One is I-I became confident. confidence Both in myself and then the counsellor Eerm for the counsellor I-I got to know that my secret will be kept there. And then to myself …….based on the advice that they gave me…….. Then the examples that they cited to me, it-it made me confident that my-my problem is not all that a big issue that I should Killing eer dying with.

lines 418 – 445

Researcher: Oh okay. So will you say you enjoyed your counselling session?

I really enjoyed it. Yes. Okay, maybe I enjoyed it because my problem was solved. Yes

Okay, initially I was … I think I was psychologically affected. Because it really gave me a sleepless night. I was really thinking about how I was going to go about the whole thing. So I was … I was really thinking very much. But after the … after passing through the whole process and what he told me and everything. Because I had already thought of something but then I needed proof or I … I needed eerm confirmation before I can put them in action. So after that I think I … I freed my mind. So I was … I was stable. And since then I … I have been a free person. I wasn't … initially I was like I was hiding from someone but now am out. Yeah. I was like … I was coiling in a shell. But now I'm not. So am free. I move about freely.

lines 3728 – 3784

Researcher: the quiz results. How do they compare with the time that you didn't have counselling? Do you see clear physical changes?

Participant: Yes, physical changes. Eer at first my-my highest mark is 16, 16 over 20. That's I have done better. I have done well. Mostly 12 13. 12 13 but this semester my least was 14. The highest was 20 over 20 and my least was 14. Even that one it is only one subject 14 over 20. Better 20, 19,

18, 17 18 17 very earl … ow hmm. Level 200. Hmm. Mm … I read. Although I read but I was not using the library like first Like sitting in a-a-a quiet environment and studying well. I was not using those techniques. Yes, but my counsellor gave me those techniques that I should-I should use … learning at a quiet place with no noise no music. So it helped me a lot. I remember- I lie on my bed. And I had even some waist pain but I went to the hospital and they were saying because of my sitting position.

APPENDIX H: A COPY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER

Ethics Committee

18 April 2016

Dear Mrs Ocansey,

REFERENCE: EP 16/02/01

Your application was considered by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and the final decision of the Ethics Committee is:
Your application is approved.
This letter serves as notification that you may continue with your fieldwork. Should any changes to the study occur after approval was given, it is your responsibility to notify the Ethics Committee immediately.
Please note that you have to fulfil the conditions specified in this letter from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. The conditions include;
1) The ethics approval is conditional on the research being conducted as stipulated by the details of all documents submitted to the Committee. In the event that a further need arises to change who the investigators are, the methods or any other aspect, such changes must be submitted as an Amendment (Section E) for approval by the Committee.
 Any amendments to this approved protocol need to be submitted to the Ethics Committee for review prior to data collection. Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void.
 Final data collection protocols and supporting evidence (e.g.: questionnaires, interview schedules, observation schedules) have to be submitted to the Ethics Committee before they are used for data collection.

2) The researcher should please note that this decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected.

3) *Should your research be conducted in schools, please note that you have to submit proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research.*

4) *The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.*

Please note that this is **not a clearance certificate**.
Upon completion of your research you need to submit the following documentation to the Ethics Committee:
 Integrated Declarations Form (Form D08),
 Initial Ethics Approval letter and,
 Approval of Title.

On receipt of the above-mentioned documents you will be issued a clearance certificate. Please quote the reference number: ***EP 16/02/01*** *in any communication with the Ethics Committee*.
Best wishes,
Prof Liesel Ebersöhn
Chair: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

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