

# Sensitization and Awareness on the Existence and Importance of Guidance Counseling and the Effectiveness of the Services in Cameroon State Universities

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## ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at assessing the extent to which sensitization and awareness on existence and importance of guidance counseling can foster the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services in Cameroon State universities. The research was carried out in four State universities in Cameroon notably University of Buea, University of Bamenda, University of Douala and University of Yaounde II using a sample of 577 students, 26 guidance counselors and 21 university administrators. The study employed a survey design considering triangulation whereby qualitative and quantitative approaches supported each other to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to sample four State Universities while participants were involved in the study conveniently. Two sets of questionnaire, one for students and another one for GCs were used while an interview guide helped to gather data from the administrators and lecturers. Data were digitalized with the support of EpiData version 3.1, and were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using SPSS 21.0. As for the textual data (qualitative data), their abstraction was reduced following the process of thematic analysis. The findings unfold that majority of students were aware of the existence of guidance and counseling services in their faculties / schools / institutions with a proportion of 88.5% (23). But their

awareness of the importance of guidance and counseling services to them was quite poor. Paradoxically, only 9.2% (53) of the students indicated that they have ever benefitted from guidance and counseling services of their institutions. Participants suggested the improvement of students' awareness of guidance and counseling services, that teachers should help in educating students on the importance of guidance and counseling services, that Guidance Counselors should organize workshops and visit students in their class in order to enhance students' awareness and familiarity with guidance and counseling services and where their offices are found. It was emphasized that on orientation days, university officials and guidance counselors should introduce students to guidance and counseling services.

**KEYWORDS:** *Guidance counselor, sensitization, awareness, existence, importance, effectiveness, services*

## INTRODUCTION

The history of guidance and counselling can be traced back to times when people used to informally sit together in groups and share their experiences on various phenomenal problems and dreams. Years immemorial, human beings have always been faced with incessant problems which have equally always needed solutions. Prominent among these problems are personal, social, health, economic, religious, political, dreams interpretation, making choices and taking decisions about issues concerning their welfare and life expectations. In the past, people of different

societies found it very interesting and rewarding sharing their problems and narrating their life histories to significant persons to whom new ideas and suggestions could help them in finding lasting solutions to their problems, hence the need for formal guidance and counselling.

Guidance and counselling actually took off in many countries after the Second World War (WW2). Whatever the situation, the movement began in reaction to societal changes which necessitated greater attention to individual needs. These societal

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changes were brought about by different events at different times with each country experiencing them differently. As such, different countries introduced guidance and counselling in their educational systems at different times and for different reasons. According to Gibson (2008), school counselling profession in the United States began as a vocational guidance movement at the beginning of the twentieth century to assist students with their educational development and career aspiration. The emphasis was to build career interest, develop character and avoid behavioural problems. Coleman (2001) states that guidance and counselling was introduced in British schools in reaction to societal changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, urbanization, and the World Wars. Those events which brought changes in the society, family life and in schools also created turbulence among students. Coleman further noted that students studied under higher anxiety levels during this period as competition levels had become stiffer, putting pressures on students to choose careers. There was therefore need for vocational guidance to help students take their decisions and make appropriate choices. Also, the wars created social crises like traumatic war experiences which students had undergone with their families and friends. All these events necessitated greater attention to individual needs hence the need for counselling to help them overcome certain experiences.

Guidance counsellors are professionally trained and certificated individuals who provide guidance and counselling services in schools and other parastatals needing their services (Shertzer and Stone, 1980). In the context of Cameroon, MINESUP (2000) states that professionally trained guidance counsellors posted to work in Cameroon's State Universities are by Ministerial Circular No: 00/0003/MINESUP/DAO/SDOA of 31/03/2000 assigned specific counselling missions. In the same document, their roles and activities are also outlined and their documented services also stated. Documented Services according to this study are the standard guidance and counselling services that guidance counsellors are expected to render to students in order to guide and help them in solving their personal, social, vocational and educational problems. These services include; counselling, information, referral, appraisal, selection, placement, follow-up, evaluation and orientation. These components are benchmarks or criteria against which guidance and counselling services can be measured. Other criteria that can be used for the evaluation of guidance and counselling services include; resources and physical facilities, cooperation, outcomes, balance, stability, flexibility, competences of

guidance counsellors, strategies of guidance counsellors, records and counsellor-student ratio (Cobia, 2007; Dimitt, Carey and Hatch, 2007; Gysbers, 2006). For the purpose of this study, four of these variables were used as criteria to measure the extent to which sensitization can foster the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services offered by Guidance Counsellors to students in Cameroon State Universities. They were resources, sensitization and effectiveness of guidance counselling. The tow latter were contextually added though effectiveness of guidance counselling somehow overlaps with competences. Resources: According to this study, resources are inputs put in place to enable guidance counsellors to provide effective guidance and counselling services to students. These include human resources like qualified counsellors and other support staff, physical resources or physical facilities like equipped counselling centres with rooms and other conference rooms for individual and group counselling sessions and financial resources like a budget to run the centre and procure and install material resources like communication gadgets, computers for data storage and other office materials and facilities. The effective and efficient implementation of the school guidance and counselling program will remain a mirage without a realistic consideration of the infrastructural necessities for the counsellors to play their roles effectively (Adana, 2004). Effectiveness of guidance counselling refers to the abilities of guidance counsellors to organize, implement and manage guidance programs to effectively perform their roles of providing the expected services. These services are counselling, orientation, information, appraisal, referral, selection, placement, follow-up and evaluation and which also depends on the efficiency of the strategies they employed Chireshe (2006), among which sensitization. Sensitization of students and other stakeholders of the existence and importance of guidance and counselling services, planning of guidance and counselling services, assessing students' needs and evaluating guidance and counselling services. Peer Counselling which refers to a situation where students are trained to offer counselling services to other students (their peers) (Arudo, 2006) can be a major impetus to the sensitization of students by students. They are trained in basic skills like listening, helping, problem-solving and decision-making. Where guidance counsellors maximize the use of peer counsellors, especially where counsellor-student ratio is high, it helps a wider audience and gives guidance counsellors more time to provide effective guidance and counselling services to students (Myrick, 1991; Lapan, 2001).

Peer counsellors are also called Peer Helpers (Chireshe, 2006).

Theories greatly influence the strategies and techniques that guidance counsellors use in helping their clients. A theory helps to guide the counsellor in a counselling relationship; it also assists the counsellor in predicting, evaluation and improving results (Corey, 1990). More importantly, a theory serves as a working tool that helps to explain what clients may be like and what may be helpful to them. In this study, the following theories are considered; Psychoanalytic Theory by Sigmund Freud, Trait and Factor Theory by E.G Williamson, Rational Emotive Theory by Albert Ellis, Self-Theory by Carl Rogers and Eclectic Theory by Frederick C. Thorne. These theories are examined in chapter two under Theoretical Review.

Contextually, State Universities in Cameroon are meeting grounds where students from different social, cultural, economic, religious and educational backgrounds converge to study. Students therefore have problems created by these diversities. As they come to study in the universities, they encounter additional problems. These problems which are personal, social, educational, vocational and psychological include: poor sexual behaviours, smoking, alcoholism, violence, unrests, poor study habits, poor time management, fear, anxiety, choice of companions, decisions on careers and selection of courses, adaptation to university life, stress, frustration, depression, discouragement, poor self-concept, vandalism, disrespect for constituted authority, etc.

Aware of these problems, the government of Cameroon decided to establish guidance and counselling services in higher institutions in Cameroon in 1989. To emphasize the importance of these services in Cameroon State Universities, the government has come out with important texts like the Ministerial Circular Letter No. 00/0003/MINESUP/ DAO/SDOA of 31/03/2000 and the 2001 law on higher education where the specific missions and activities of Guidance Counsellors have been outlined. In those same documents, their roles and the services they are expected to render are given. Guidance Counsellors in Cameroon state Universities are expected to provide effective guidance and counselling services to help students find solutions to their problems. This standpoint is backed up by MINESUP (2000) which states: *“It should be noted that in the university environment, the guidance counsellor is called upon to contribute to the success of the students by identifying the difficulties they encounter and guiding them in the search and*

*identification of solutions to these difficulties through appropriate activities”*. The importance of guidance and counselling services in Cameroon State Universities is further highlighted in MINESUP (2000), in its declaration as follows: *“Considering the importance of guidance and counselling in the process of improving on higher education training system, services and officials in charge of guidance and counselling should be provided as much as possible with adequate working means (consultation rooms, offices, basic equipment, access to statistics, scientific reviews, computers and internet site) by the competent officials of the universities”*

From the above excerpt, it is clear that the government of Cameroon is confident that provided with adequate working means, guidance counsellors who are professionally trained and competent are able to effectively develop methods and strategies to guide and help students solve their personal, social, vocational and educational problems. These problems are manifested in the negative behaviours and attitudes of students. With effective guidance and counselling, this situation can improve with positive outcomes like improved behavioural attitudes, improved academic achievements, improved use of time, good study habits, positive self-concept, encouragement etc. On the contrary, this researcher has observed that deviant behaviours, poor study habits, poor time management etc. are on the increase. Unfortunately, in Cameroon State Universities especially in the University of Buea where this researcher has been a student for many years, he observed with keen interest that Guidance Counsellors (who are the providers of guidance and counselling services) are assigned administrative duties which conflict their normal duty as counsellors. He also observed that guidance counsellors share the same offices with other administrative and academic officials. This does not only make the place of privacy and confidentiality which is central to counselling complicated, but discourages students from presenting themselves for counselling. This is more so because specialized physical facilities like consultation rooms, test rooms for psychological consultations and interviews, as well as information centres and equipment are lacking.

### **Statement of the problem**

As mentioned earlier, the duty of the guidance counsellor is very demanding. Assigning them with additional duties which conflict their normal work as counsellors might make it difficult for them to have enough time to provide all the guidance services as expected and to carry out all the activities they need to, in order to render effective guidance services. The inadequacy of their services is glaring as from

concrete observations, thus prompting the need for an empirical study as to come out with appropriate and contextualized resort measures.

### Objective

This study is to find out the relationship that exists between sensitization on the existence and importance of GCSs and the effectiveness of the services in Cameroon state universities.

### Significance of the Study

This study is important in that the findings will provide vital information that will help not only the students but also guidance counsellors, researchers, university authorities and policy makers. Students will, through the study, gain from the increased awareness of the available guidance and counselling services that guidance counsellors in Cameroon State Universities can offer. They will also not only be able to have needed information to rate the value of guidance and counselling services offered to them but also have the opportunity to make suggestions for the improvement of the services offered and how they are implemented.

From the study, guidance counsellors will be able to have a set of criteria with which to evaluate their services. They will also need information from the study to make some decisions as regards what services to provide, how and when to provide them depending on the needs assessment of the students. Such information will also help guidance counsellors to be more effective in service delivery.

Policy makers in the Ministry of Higher Education and the University authorities can also use the results of the study to base their future policy on guidance counselling activities in other universities. This study will add to the literature on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in Cameroon, especially in state universities.

### Justifications for the Study

Guidance and counselling was introduced in Cameroon State Universities in 1989. Since then, different legal instruments such as the circular letter No.00/003/MINESUP/ DAO/ SDOA of 31/03/2000 and the law of 2001 on education have come up to strengthen the activities or the roles guidance counsellors in State Universities have to play in order to meet students' concerns. Despite this effort by the government, it is observed that students in Cameroon State Universities are increasingly involved in problems such as smoking, alcoholism, poor sexual behaviours, poor dressing, violence, vandalism, thefts, unrests etc. The universities should through the activities of guidance counsellors help students to solve these problems. It is for this reason that this

investigator deemed it important to evaluate the extent of effectiveness of guidance counsellors' activities vis-à-vis the services they render to students. Also, this investigator is not aware of any study carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance counsellors' activities vis-à-vis their documented service in Cameroon State Universities since the inception of guidance and counselling in these institutions. It was therefore important to attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance services to see whether they are meeting their intended objectives of helping students solve their problems or whether there are needs for adjustments or improvement on service delivery.

### Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This study was expected to be carried out in the eight Cameroon State Universities. For proper control and management, four of them were sampled to represent the eight. The four selected for the study were the Universities of Buea, Bamenda, Douala and Yaounde II. All guidance counsellors posted to work as counsellors in these universities were involved in the study. Third year students from departments of faculties and schools of the universities concerned were also involved in the study. Contextually, the study was limited to the evaluation of the effectiveness of guidance counsellors' activities vis-à-vis their services in Cameroon State Universities.

The focus of the study was limited to the following concepts: Guidance and Counselling, Guidance and Counselling Services, Activities or Roles of Guidance Counsellors and Guidance Counsellors' strategies. Lastly, the study limited itself to the three study variables which were: Sensitisation and Awareness, Resources and Effectiveness of Guidance Counselling.

### Research Design

The study employed a survey design considering triangulation whereby qualitative and quantitative approaches supported each other to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

### Area of study

This study was carried out in four selected state universities in Cameroon. The universities included: the University of Buea, the University of Bamenda, the University of Douala and the University of Yaounde II. States universities in Cameroon have been observed to have structural and functional inadequacy as far as GCSs are concerned. In the University of Buea, GCSs offices are located in areas that are not conducive for counselling. For instant, GCs' offices are found in the Vice Dean's secretariat (Faculty of Social and Management Sciences), GCs share offices with non-professionals (Faculty of

Education), GCs are assigned different functions etc. Some faculties/schools do not even have counsellors. Two of these universities, the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda are in the English speaking regions of Cameroon while the other two; the University of Douala and the University of Yaounde II are in the French speaking regions of Cameroon. The reason for this was that it was judged by the researcher that these state universities were representative in terms of the bi-cultural and linguistic nature of our country. Selected students from all the departments of faculties and schools of the universities concerned were involved in the study. All the guidance counsellors in these universities and one administrator who could either be an HOD, a Vice Dean, a Dean, a Deputy Director or a Director from each faculty/school were also targeted for the study.

### Population of the Study Sites

The population of interest to this study was 53570 in the four selected state universities distributed as follows; 53506 third year students, 37 guidance counsellors and 27 administrators. This is the target (parent) population of the study. Guidance counsellors are those who provide guidance and counselling services while students are the intended beneficiaries. University administrators are major stakeholders whose involvement is that guidance and counselling services should be successful. They are therefore better placed to give the relevant information needed on the effectiveness of guidance counsellors' activities as regards their services in the State Universities. The breakdown of the target population can be seen on the tables below.

**Table 2: Distribution of students' population by universities**

Universities	Population		Total
	Male	female	
University of Bamenda	7844	7591	15435
University of yaounde II	3796	3385	7181
University of Buea	2234	1903	4137
University of Douala	13874	12879	26753
Total	27748	25758	53506

**Source:** University of Bamenda, Yaounde II, Buea and Douala.

**Table 3: Distribution of Guidance Counsellors by Universities.**

Universities	Population		Total
	Male	Female	
University of Bamenda	7	3	10
University of Yaounde II	6	4	10
University of Buea	3	2	5
University of Douala	5	7	12
Total	20	17	37

**Source:** University of Bamenda, Yaounde II, Buea and Douala.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

Simple random sampling was used to sample the two francophone universities. To do this, the names of all the francophone universities were written on pieces of paper, folded and mixed in a cup and two universities were then drawn. The two francophone universities were universities of Douala and Yaounde II. For the Anglophone universities, the two state universities were involved.

### Administrators

Twenty seven (27) administrators (the Dean, vice Dean, Director, Deputy Director or Head of department) were targeted for convenient sampling from twenty seven Faculties/ schools from the four selected Universities. That is to say any administrator that was available and willing to accept us was used in the study.

### Guidance Counsellors

There were 37 Guidance counsellors in the four selected universities but only 26 were effectively involved in the study, 6 refused for personal reasons and 5 were absent from work.

### Students

Students were sampled conveniently, that is, the researcher went to the universities and visited all the faculties and departments and whenever a student was available, he or she was included in the study provided he or she was a third year student. The number of students was proportionately distributed based on the population of the third year students of the respective universities.

**Sample size**

Sample size was calculated using sample calculation for one proportion with the support of EpiInfo 6.04d (CDC, 2001) as explained by Nana (2012).

$$n = \frac{NZ^2P(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + Z^2P(1-P)}$$

Where N=total population, Z= Z value corresponding to the confidence level, d= absolute precision, P=expected proportion in the population, n effective=n\*design effect.

The prospected prevalence will be 50% for an optimal sample size. The precision will be 5%, a design effect (marginal error) of 1.5 that is greater than 1, given that we are applying convenience sampling for the selection of students and not simple random sampling. By increasing the design effect, we increase the sample size and so far the variability of the sample.

For a total students population, of 53506, the sample size at 95% CI estimated as explained above is 577. This sample size is shared to the school proportionately to their population.

**Table 5: Distribution of sample of third year students by Universities**

Universities	Sample		
	Male	Female	Total
University of Bamenda	88	85	173
University of Yaounde II	53	49	102
University of Buea	51	50	101
University of Douala	98	103	201
Total	290	287	577

Source: Universities of Buea, Douala, Yaounde II and Bamenda.

**Table 6: Sample flow table**

Specification	Expected	Effectively sampled	Coverage rate
Students	577	577	100%
Guidance counsellors	37	26	70.3%
Administrators	27	21	77.77%

The overall coverage was perfect for students and satisfactory for administrators and guidance counsellors with a return rate of 77.77% and 70.3% respectively.

**Instrument and Measurement**

Instruments are what the researcher uses to collect information for any investigation. The instruments used for this study included students' questionnaire, guidance counsellors' questionnaire and an interview guide for university administrators. The items for the instruments were adapted from the roles that GCs are expected to carry out and from literature reviews. The questionnaires were self-administered.

**Validity and reliability**

Validity as a concept is the ability to produce findings that are in agreement with theoretical or conceptual values (Amin, 2005). Validity can therefore be referred to as the accuracy of an instrument in measuring what the researcher intends to measure. Validity goes with reliability. Reliability is the degree of consistency that the instrument(s) show(s) (Amin, 2005, Nana, 2018). The research instruments underwent content, construct and face validity. As for content and construct validity, they were validated by supervisor, the statistician and a guidance counsellor not involved in the study based on the relevance, adequacy and comprehensiveness of the items of the tests.

**Pilot study**

The data collection instruments were trial-tested in a University not involved in the study. It was an opportunity to check for face validity and reliability. It also helped to perfect the instruments by testing them, eliminating ambiguous items, anticipating and amending difficulties regarding the study and establishing feasibility of the study. The instruments were administered as follows: Students' questionnaire to 30 students, Guidance Counsellors' questionnaire to 4 Guidance Counsellors and interviews to 5 University Administrators.

**Table 7: Reliability analysis for the pre-testing of research instrument**

Conceptual components	Cronbach's Alpha	N <sub>cases</sub>	N <sub>item</sub>
Students' needs assessment	0.507	30	15
Sensitization	0.875	30	9

The internal consistency was not violated for any of the conceptual components with Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient ranging from 0.507 to 0.956. Generally above 0.5, Alpha is considered satisfactory (Nana, 2018).

**Table 8: Reliability Analysis for the Study**

Conceptual components	Cronbach's Alpha	Variance	N <sub>cases</sub>	N <sub>items</sub>
Provision of guidance and counselling services	0.891	0.12	324	9
Level of satisfaction with guidance and counselling services	0.885	0.13	563	9

The internal consistency assumption was not violated for any of the conceptual components as in all instances; Alpha was greater than 0.05. The results of the reliability tests showed that the instruments were highly reliable.

### Data management and analysis

All survey questionnaires were entered into a pre-designed EpiData Version 3.1 (EpiData Association, Odense Denmark, 2008) database which had in-built consistency and validation checks. Further, consistency data range and validation checks were also performed in SPSS version 21.0 (IBM Inc., 2012) to identify invalid codes. They were now analyzed descriptively and inferentially using SPSS 21.0. As for the textual data (qualitative data), they were transcribed verbatim their abstraction was reduced following the process of thematic analysis whereby concepts or ideas were grouped under umbrella terms or key words.

### Ethical Considerations

Several researchers have articulated the need to address ethical issues in conducting research in education (Amin, 2005; Johnson and Turner, 2003). It is therefore ethical that this researcher ensures that the research is conducted in a way that is in the best interest of the respondents. Ethical issues concern aspects such as identification, informed consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation. It is argued that if such issues are addressed adequately, it increases the chances of getting honest responses from respondents and consequently more reliable data. In this study, ethical considerations pervaded each phase of data collection.

### Findings

#### Socio-demographic characteristics

##### Institution for administrators

Administrators as well were sampled from the four sampled universities namely University of Buea 28.6%(6), University of Bamenda 38.1% (8), University of Douala 23.8% (5) and University of Yaounde II 9.5% (2). They were from 19 different faculties.

**Table 10: Description of institution for administrators**

Institutions	University of Buea	6	28.6
	University of Bamenda	8	38.1
	University of Douala	5	23.8
	University of yaounde II	2	9.5
Faculties	Arts	2	9.5
	Science	3	14.3
	SMS	1	4.8
	HICM	1	4.8
	FSJP	2	9.5
	COLTEC	2	9.5
	Education	2	9.5
	FSEGA	1	4.8
	ENSET/ HTTC	3	14.3
	ENS/ HTTC	1	4.8
	Faculty of Engineering	1	4.8

**Personal information for administrators****Age**

The mode age was 46-55 years with proportion of 42.9% (9), followed by 36-45 years with a proportion of 33.3% (7) while the least represented was 56 years and above with proportion of 28.6% (6).

**Highest certificate**

Most of the administrators had PhD with proportion of 90.5% (19) as against 9.5% (2) for those who had masters.

**Specialties**

Administrators were of 20 different specialties.

**Posts of responsibility**

Among the administrators, 80.95% (17) were heads of department and 19.5% (4) were vice deans.

**Academic ranks**

They were 12(57.14%) lecturers,8(38.1%) associate professors and 1(4.8%) professor.

**Gender**

Administrators were dominantly male with a proportion of 86.0% (18) as against 14.0% (3) for the female.

**Sample description for administrators****Table 11: Personal information of administrators**

Indicators	Categories	N	%
Age	36-45	7	33.3
	46-55	9	42.9
	56 and above	6	28.6
Highest certificate	PhD	19	90.5
	Masters	2	9.5
Specialty	Literature	2	9.5
	Petroleum geology	1	4.8
	Anthropology	1	4.8
	Corporate financing	1	4.8
	Private law	1	4.8
	Political and economic history	1	4.8
	Political science	2	9.5
	Creation and management of tourism	1	4.8
	Crop production	1	4.8
	Agric. Financing	1	4.8
	Biologiemoleculaire et cellulaire	1	4.8
	Electro technique	1	4.8
	M Ed in counselling	1	4.8
	Marketing	1	4.8
	Geotechnical Engineering	1	4.8
	Applied Zoology	1	4.8
	Electronics	1	4.8
	Special Education	1	4.8
	Fisheries and hydrology	1	4.8
	Agric and Vet Med	1	4.8
Current post of responsibility	Head of department	17	81.0
	Vice Dean	5	23.8
Rank	Lecturer	12	57.1
	Associate professor	8	38.1
	Professor	1	4.8



**Sample Description for Guidance Counsellors****Table 12: Sample description for guidance counsellors**

Background indicators	Categories	n	%
Gender	Male	14	53.8
	Female	12	46.2
Highest academic qualification	Bachelor degree	18	69.2
	Masters	6	23.1
	PhD	2	7.7
Highest professional qualification	DIPCO	22	84.6
	DIPCO II	4	15.4
University	Douala	7	26.9
	Buea	5	19.2
	Bamenda	7	26.9
	Yaounde II	7	26.9

N=26

Guidance counsellors were sampled from the University of Buea 19.2% (5), University of Bamenda 26.9% (7), University of Douala 26.9% (7) and then University of Yaounde II 26.9% (7)

**Gender**

Though the majority of guidance counsellors were male with proportion of 53.8% (14), this proportion was not too far from the 46.2% (12) of the female.

**Highest academic qualifications**

As far as highest qualification for guidance counsellors was concerned, the mode was Bachelor degree with a proportion of 69.2% (18) followed by masters degree 23.1% (6) and the least represented was PhD with a proportion of 7.7% (2). All of them had DIPCO

**Sample Description for Students****Gender**

The ages of the students were distributed as follows: 1.7% (10) were aged 16-17 years, 19.8% (114) 18-20 years and 78.5% (453) were aged 20 years and above.

**Level**

Only third year students were sampled for the study

**University** Students were sampled from four different universities among which were university of Buea with a proportion of 17.5% (101), University of Bamenda 30.0% (173), University of Douala 34.8% (201) and University of Yaounde II 17.7% (102) and from 89 different departments (appendix ).

**Duration of schooling**

The average duration of stay in the institution was 3.3 years (Median=3.00; Min=3; Max=5).

**Table 13: Sample description**

Background indicator	Categories	n	%
Gender	Male	239	41.4
	Female	338	58.6
Age	16-17	10	1.7
	18-20	114	19.8
	20+	453	78.5
Level	300/400 (third year)	557	100
University	University of Buea	101	17.5
	University of Bamenda	173	30.0
	University of Douala	201	34.8
	University of Yaounde II	102	17.7
Duration of schooling in the institution	Mean=3.3; Median=3.00; Min=3; Max=5		

N=577

**Research Question: What relationship is there between sensitization on the existence and importance of GCSs and the effectiveness of the services in Cameroon state universities?**

**Guidance Counsellors' perspective**

**Services guidance counsellors are expected to provide to students as perceived by guidance counsellors**  
Counselling (“*Psychological counselling*” “*Personal counselling*”, “*Social counselling*”, *academic counselling*”) and orientation (“*orientation*”) were the most highlighted services that guidance counsellors said that they are rendering to students in equal weights, followed by information (“*Information*”), sensitization (“*sensibiliser*”), registration (“*Registration of students*”)and listening (“*ecouter*”). Other services rendered to students by guidance counsellors were selection, placement, follow-up/monitoring,(“*suivi*”) and referral (“*Referal*,”*reference*”).

**Services guidance counsellors are expected to provide to students as perceived by administrators**

Guiding students on admission procedures (‘*Counselling and orientation*’, ‘*To guide students take courses and choose courses even before they start study*’), choice of professional career (‘*Advise them on job orientation*’), and giving academic advice to students (‘*Help students out of stress and academic problems*’) were the most highlighted services that administrators emphasized that guidance counsellors should render to students. Facilitate the integration of students into the university system (‘*Les aider á adapter et a s’inserer dans le système universitaire*’), assisting students in their psychological problems (‘*Meeting the psychological needs of students and teachers*’), ensuring peace in the university environment (‘*They are responsible for making students’ life and academic environment free of physical, emotional, psychological, academic and other social obscurities*’) and providing information to students (*Information*) were other aspects that administrators expected that guidance counsellors should provide to students.

**Table 14: Thematic analysis depicting the services guidance counsellors are expected to provide to students as perceived by guidance counsellors**

Code	Code description	Groundings	Quotations
Counselling	Giving students the necessary advices to put them on the right track	19	“Counselling”; “Pyschological counselling”; “Personal counselling”; “Social/ academic counselling” ‘conseil’
Orientation	Guide and assist students to adapt to campus life and studies	19	“Orientation”
Information	Help in keeping the students current on job and studies opportunities	11	“Information”
Selection	Help to select and register students	5	“Selection”
Placement	Guiding and helping students to be where their abilities permit	2	“Placement”
Research	Networking with others stakeholders to get current information on students that could help solve their problems	2	“Research”
Listening	Listening to the students	7	‘ecouter, sensibiliser, conseil’orientation’
Follow up	Monitoring the students	3	“Follow up of students”; ‘suivi’
Sensitization	Holding seminars and workshops to sensitize students	8	“Seminars” ‘sensitization’
Registration	helping to get students enrolled into their courses	7	“Registration” “Registration of students”
Referral	Referring cases that they cannot handle to appropriate authorities	2	“Referral” ‘reference’
Evaluation	Evaluation	1	‘evaluation’

**Table 15: Thematic analysis depicting the services guidance counsellors are expected to provide to students as perceived by administrators**

Code	Code description	Groundings	Quotations
University integration	Facilitate the integration of students into the university system, that in their academic and social life	5	'Les aider a adapter et a s'inserrer dans le systeme universitaire' 'Orientation of students in academic work and social life on campus'
Admission procedures / orientations	Guiding students in the admission procedure	8	'Orienter les etudiants dans les demarches d'inscription'; 'Counselling and orientation'; 'Guide students on courses and choose them even before we start study'
Professional career	Guide or counselling students for their professional career	7	'Orienter les etudiants aux emplois futurs' 'Advise them on job orientation'
Psychological assistance	Assisting students in their psychological problems	4	'Meeting the psychological needs of students and teachers'; 'Help student out of stress and academic problems'
Academic advice	Guiding and counselling students in their studies and help them solve academic problems	7	'Guide and counsel students in their studies'; 'Counsel students on their studies and career orientation'; 'Help student out of stress and academic problems'
Peace	Make the university environment peaceful and conducive for social life	2	'They are responsible for making students' life and academic environment free of physical, emotional, psychological, academic and other social obscurities'
Information	Providing the necessary information to students	1	'Information'

**Importance of guidance and counselling services to students as perceived by the administrators**

They help in solving students' problems through orientation, (*'They are useful to especially fresh students who come new and need orientation'*), choosing of appropriate careers (*'Students are helped to choose right career paths'* *'Guide students to choose their careers'*), adjusting to changes (*'They create awareness and spirit of adjustment for students to change positively in behaviour and attitudes'*), solving psychological, emotional (*'The services are very important because students and teachers are confronted with emotional as well as psychological problems everyday'*) and social problems (*'Students are encouraged to develop positive behavioural attitudes and to relate well with other members of the university community'*) were some of the aspects that made administrators to perceive guidance and counselling services as being important to students' education and schooling.

**Table 16: Thematic analysis depicting the importance of guidance and counselling services to students as perceived by the administrators**

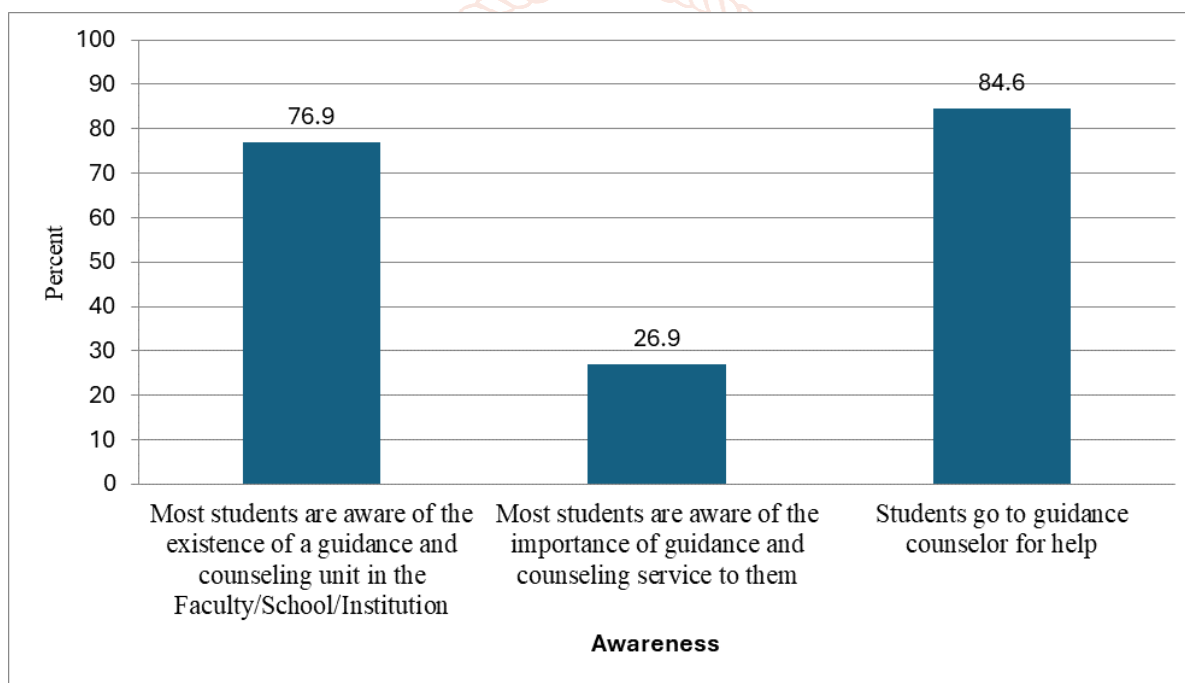
Code	Code description	Groundings	Quotations
Problems	They are often psychological and emotional problems to solve	1	'The services are very important because students and teachers are confronted with emotional as well as psychological problems everyday'
Awareness& adjustment	Students need to adjust towards a positive change in behaviour and attitudes	3	'They create awareness and spirit of adjustment for students to change positively in behaviour and attitudes' 'They help students to adapt to university life'

Orientations	Students are faced with problems that need orientations	4	‘They are useful to especially fresh students who come new and need orientation’They help students during registration and in selecting and choosing their courses and career respectively’
Career and Employment	Students are faced with the problem of choosing careers and future employments	4	‘Students are helped to choose right career paths’,Direct the students in choosing their careers” They guide and orientate students towards their future careers”
Socio-personal adaptation	Some students have the problem of relating well with others	3	‘

### Students’ awareness of guidance and counselling services

#### Guidance counsellors; perspectives

According to the guidance counsellors, majority of students were aware of the existence of guidance and counselling services in their Faculty/School/Institution with a proportion of 88.5% (23), however, less than the majority of them acknowledged that most students were aware of the importance of guidance and counselling services to them with a proportion of 26.9% (7) while 84.6% (22) stated that students used their services. Among the 22 counsellors who said students come to them for guidance and counselling services, 8 making a proportion of 36.4% said they come often while the rest 63.6% (14) said they come seldom or very seldom.

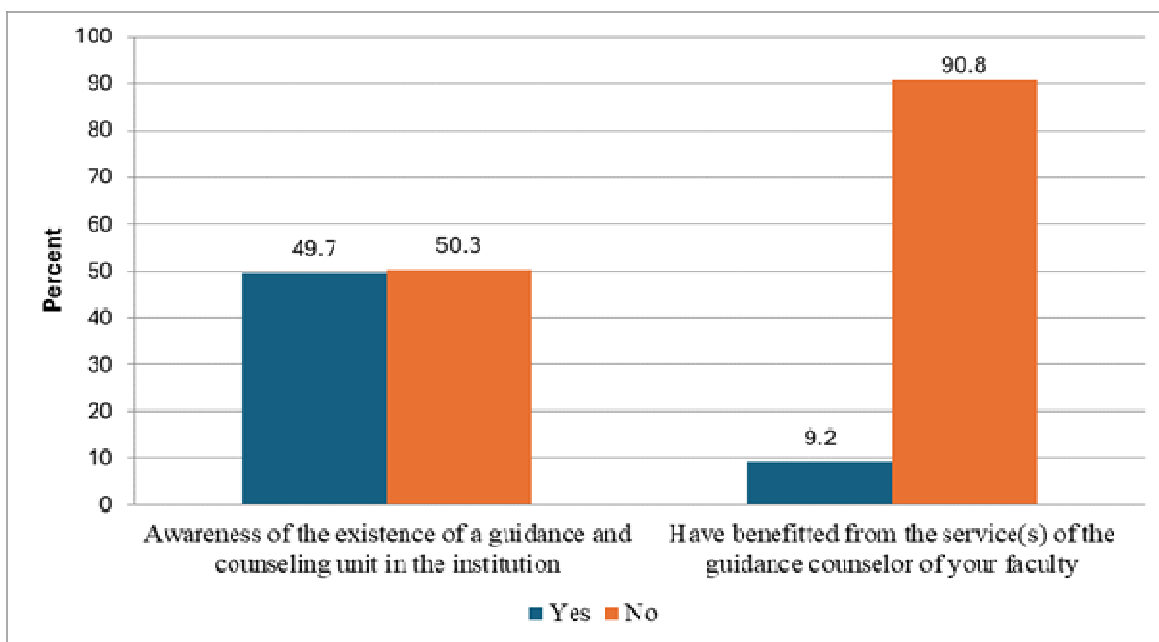


**Figure 6: Students’ awareness of guidance and counselling services as perceived by the guidance counsellors**

#### Students’ perspective

##### Awareness and usage of guidance and counselling unit in the institution

Roughly half of the students were aware of the existence of guidance and counselling services in their institution with proportion of 49.7% (287).



**Figure 7: Awareness of the existence of a guidance and counselling unit in the institution**

**Table 17: Awareness of the existence of guidance and counselling services in the institution by background indicators**

Background indicators	Categories	Awareness of the existence of guidance and counselling unit in the institution		N	Chi-Square test
		Yes	No		
Institution	University of Buea	64.4%%(65)	35.6%%(36)	101	$\chi^2=72.571$ P=0.000
	University of Bamenda	70.5%%(122)	29.5%(51)	173	
	University of Douala	32.2%(65)	67.7%(136)	201	
	University of Yaounde II	34.3%(35)	65.7%(67)	102	
Gender	Male	47.3%(113)	52.7%(126)	239	$\chi^2=0.987$ P=0.320
	Female	51.5%(174)	48.5%(164)	338	
Age	16-17	30.0%(3)	70.0%(7)	10	$\chi^2=2.008$ P=0.366
	18-20	47.4%(54)	52.6%(60)	114	
	20+	50.8%(230)	49.2%(223)	453	

**Usage**

Only 9.2% (53) students indicated that they have ever benefitted from guidance and counselling services of their institution. Usage of guidance counsellors’ services was not dependent of age and sex (P>0.05) but significantly associated with University (P<0.01). These services were mostly used in the University of Buea 18.8% (19), followed by the University of Bamenda 12.1% (21), University of Yaounde II with a proportion of 4.9% (5), not too far from the 4.0% (8) of the University of Douala.

**Table 18: Students who have benefitted from guidance and counselling services in their institutions by background indicators**

Background indicators	Categories	Have benefitted from guidance and counselling services in their institutions		N	Chi-Square test
		Yes	No		
Institution	University of Buea	18.8%%(19)	81.2%%(82)	101	$\chi^2=21.801$ P=0.000
	University of Bamenda	12.1%%(21)	87.9%(152)	173	
	University of Douala	4.0%(8)	96.0%(193)	201	
	University of Yaounde II	4.9%(5)	95.1%(97)	102	
Gender	Male	8.4%(20)	91.6%(219)	239	$\chi^2=0.327$ P=0.568
	Female	9.8%(33)	90.2%(305)	338	
Age	16-17	0.0%(0)	100.0%(10)	10	$\chi^2=2.789$ P=0.248
	18-20	6.1%(7)	93.9%(107)	114	
	20+	10.2%(46)	89.8%(407)	453	

### Administrators' Perspective

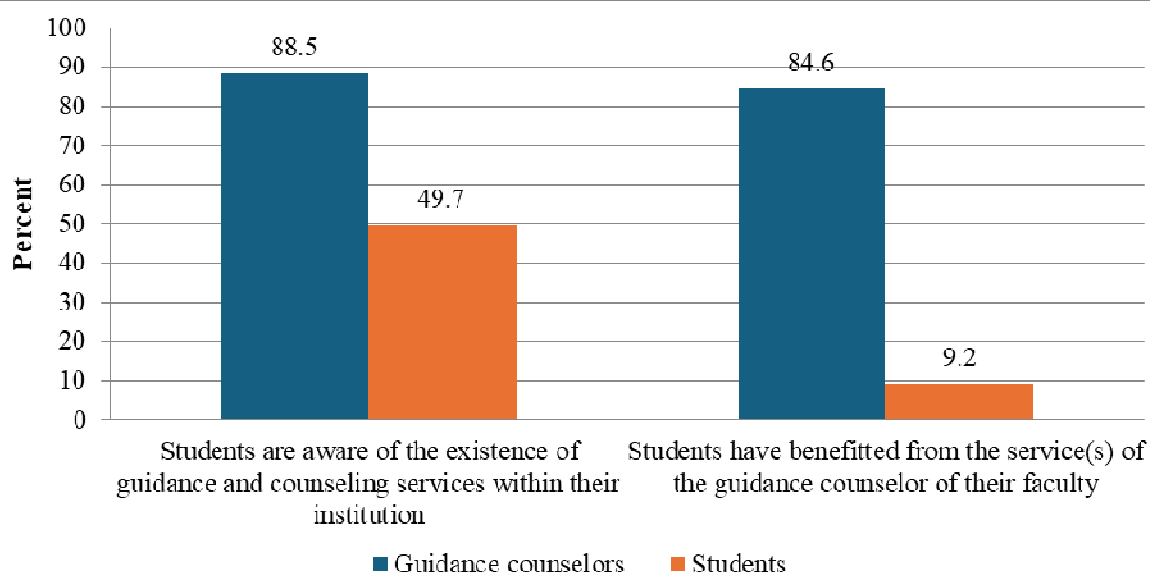
Administrators equally acknowledged that many students were not aware of the services of guidance counsellors (*"Majority of students do not know anything about these services"* *"Many students do not take advantage of these. They prefer meeting returning students of their departments"*).

**Table 19: Thematic analysis depicting if students are taking advantages of guidance and counselling services as perceived by administrators**

Code	Code description	Groundings	Quotations
Knowledge of the services	Many students are not aware that these services exist in their institutions.	7	"Majority of students do not know anything about this service" "Many students do not take advantage of these. They prefer meeting returning students of their departments."
High counsellor: student ratio	There are fewer counsellors for very many students	5	"No because the counsellors are not" "Not really because the counsellors are not" "Somehow but not up to expectation"
Ignorance of the importance of guidance & counselling services	Majority of students have not been sensitized on the importance of these services	9	"Pas vraiment" "Not really, students seem to be ignorance of the importance of these services"

### Contrasting counsellors and students' perception on awareness of guidance and counselling services

It was statistically obvious that the viewpoints of the two stakeholders significantly contradict ( $P < 0.05$ ). More precisely, 88.5% (23) stated that students were aware of guidance and counselling services as against 49.7% (287) for the students. As for the usage, 84.6% (22) of the guidance counsellors acknowledged that students used their services as against 9.2% (53) for the students.



$\chi^2$ -test: Awareness:  $\chi^2=14.93$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $P=0.000$ ; Benefiting from service:  $\chi^2=123.14$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $P=0.000$

**Figure 8: Comparing students and guidance counsellors' viewpoints about awareness and usage of guidance and counselling services.**

### Way forward

#### Strategies guidance counsellors used to make students to be more aware of the existence and importance of guidance counselling

The need for sensitization was really emphasized Several quotations supported this vision (*"Teachers should help sensitize students in class to go for counselling"*; *"Reaching out to students by meeting them in classes to encourage them to come for counselling"*; *"Media announcement about their services"*; *"Talking to students on the importance of guidance and counselling services"*; *"By informing them of the availability of counsellors and their services during general orientation of students and during their registration"*; *'sensibiliser les*

etudiants'). Departmental and faculty orientations was the second most highlighted suggestion and was abstracted from number of quotations (“*Raise awareness during departmental and faculty orientations*”; “*Pendent les journees d’orientation academiques et professionnelles nous proposons des fiches pratiques pour aider les etudiants a choisir une filiere*”; “*Uniquement dans les journees d’orientation academiques et professionnelles organisees une fois l’annee*”). Besides these two most highlighted strategies used by guidance counsellors to make students to become more aware of the existence and importance of guidance counselling, we had the organization of seminars (“*hold seminars to raise awareness*” “*Organize seminars*”), classroom visitations whereby GCs were requested to visits students in their classrooms to make them know more about them, their services, and where their offices are located in the University (“*Counsellors should visit students at their*”), the need to organize workshops to enlighten people on guidance counselling services (“*Organize workshops*”), and the use of posters to ease students assess to counsellors offices (*Put posters for students to locate our offices*”) were also other strategies mentioned by guidance counsellors.

**Table 20: Thematic analysis depicting the strategies guidance counsellors used to make students to be more aware of the existence and importance of guidance counselling**

Code	Code description	Groundings	Quotations
Seminars	Improve students awareness of guidance and counselling services	4	“hold seminars to raise awareness” “Organize seminars”
Sensitization	Teachers should help in educating students on the importance of guidance and counselling	11	“Teachers should help sensitize students in class to go for counselling” “Reaching out to students by meeting them in classes to encourage them to come for counselling”; “Media announcement about their services”; “Talking to students on the importance of guidance and counselling services”; “By informing them of the availability of counsellors and their services during general orientation of students and during their registration”; ‘sensibiliser les etudiants’
Departmental and faculty orientations	To raise awareness in students during orientation days	7	“Raise awareness during departmental and faculty orientations” ‘Pendent les journees d’orientation academiques et professionnelles nous proposons des fiches pratiques pour aider les etudiants a choisir une filiere’; ‘Uniquement dans les journees d’orientation academiques et professionnelles organisees une fois l’annee’
Workshops	GCs should organize workshops	1	“Organize workshops”
Classroom visitation	GCs should visit students in class	2	“Counsellors should visit students at their respective classrooms”
Posters	To ease students direction of counsellors offices	1	“Put posters for students to locate our offices”

### Strategies guidance counsellors employed for students to be more aware of the existence of their services as perceived by administrators

Despite the fact some administrators said that they are not aware of anything being done to make students more aware of the importance and existence of these services “*No measure has been taken*” “*Nothing that I have heard of*” “*I do not think anything is done*” “*Nothing*”. At the same time, the use of orientation days was one of the most highlighted strategy that administrators know are used to help students to become more aware of the existence of guidance and counselling services (*They are introduce to these services during university, faculty and departmental orientations*” *Lors des journees d’orientation academiques*” “*Information donnee aux etudiants pendant les journees d’orientation de l’universite*”).

**Table 21: Thematic analysis depicting the strategies guidance counsellors employed for students to be more aware of the existence of their services as perceived by administrators**

Code	Code description	Groundings	Quotations
Orientation Days	On orientation days university officials & guidance counsellors introduce students to guidance & counselling services	11	“They are introduced to these services during university, faculty and departmental orientations” “Lors des journées d’orientation académiques” “Information donnée aux étudiants pendant les journées d’orientation de l’université” “Only at orientations” “Nothing so far except on orientation days”
No known strategies that guidance counsellors use	Many administrators state that they are not aware of anything being done to make students more aware of the importance and existence of these services	9	“No measure has been taken” “Nothing that I have heard of” “I do not think anything is done” “Nothing”
Other means	Other means are used to sensitise students	3	‘Lecturers are encouraged to sensitise students in class’ ‘The establishment of university radios’ ‘Les rendre visites’

### Discussion

Guidance counsellors in Cameroon state Universities are aware of the services they are expected to render. These services are orientation, counselling, information, selection, placement, referral, evaluation and follow-up as found in Literature (Lunenburg, 2010; Shertzer and Stone, 1976). Whereas the findings also revealed that the most highlighted services that are rendered are orientation and counselling, it further revealed that information, sensitization and registration of students are other services that are provided in a lesser degree. This suggests that not all the services are rendered to students. From the perspective of the administrators, the findings revealed that guiding students in admission procedures, orientating students, guiding them to take courses, counselling students and helping them to integrate into the university system were the most highlighted services that administrators expected from guidance counsellors. It also revealed that orientation was the single most highlighted service by both guidance counsellors and administrators. An orientation plan for fresh students is a programmed activity in the calendar of all the State Universities in Cameroon. It is no surprise therefore that orientation was the most highlighted. The major finding emerging from this dimension of study is that not all the expected services are rendered in Cameroon State Universities. Another finding emerging from this study revealed that majority of the administrators; 15 (71.4%) out of 21 perceived guidance and counselling services to be very importance to students. This standpoint is exemplified in the following quotations (extracted from the thematic analysis table). One administrator had this to

say; “These services are very important because students are confronted with emotional as well as psychological problems everyday”. Another administrator said, “They create awareness and spirit of adjustment for students to change positively in behaviour and attitudes”. This perception of importance by the administrators maybe because they might have learnt from their own schooling experience that lack of orientation, counselling etc. negatively impacts on students’ adjustment and academic achievements. Another finding emerging from this study is the conflicting perceptions from guidance counsellors and students on student’s awareness and usage of services. Statistically, the view points of the two stakeholders significantly contradict. Of the 26 counsellors involved in the study, 22 (84.6%) perceived that majority of students were aware of the existence of GCSs in their institutions. On the other hand, roughly 287 (49.7%) of the 577 students sampled for the study, indicated that they were aware of the existence of these services in their institutions. Another contradiction emerging from this study is on the usage of GCSs. While 22 (84.6%) counsellors acknowledged that students make use of their services, only 53 (9.2%) students indicate that they had benefitted from their services. Of the 22 counsellors who indicated that students come often to them for help, 8(36.4%) of them said that students come often while the rest 14 (63.6) said that they come seldom or very seldom. The students’ position however was generally upheld by the administrators in response to an open-ended question that was asked them. The question sought to find out whether students are really aware of the importance of GCSs. All 21 administrators involved in this study



responded to this question, 6 of them said majority of students do not know anything about these services and do not take advantage of them. 5 others said that students do not know the importance because the counsellors are lacking. Still, 9 others said that students seem to be ignorant of the importance of the services.. These findings are indicative of the fact that many students are not really aware of the importance of GCSs in Cameroon State Universities. This explains why many students do not go to counsellors for help (very low rate of usage 53(9.2%) out of 577 (students). These findings concur with those carried out by other researchers in Tanzania (Eliamani et al, 2013), in Kenya (Ndegwa, 2013) and in Nigeria (Akinboye, 1987). Eliamani (2013) found out that GCSs have no significant effect on students' school life in Kenya. He concluded that many students have not realized the importance of GCSs and to him this was due to lack of trained counsellors and the attitudes of the students themselves towards the services. In his study, Ndegwa (2013) revealed that since the inception of GCSs after over three decades, most of the guidance counsellors in Kenya have a vague understanding of what really it entails and the students do not fully utilize the services and do not understand its role. The study further revealed that since the introduction of the services, there has been no change in the behaviour of students. In a similar study carried out in Nigeria, Akinboye (1987) revealed in his findings that GCSs have neither been embraced nor have impacted students' lives. The study also revealed that most Nigerian youths are today engaged in occupation not on the basis of reasonable choice but on the basis of fate. Also, cases of maladaptive behaviours are on the increase among students. All these further illuminate the fact that there is a problem at the level of awareness of the importance of GCSs and hence their usage on the part of students. All these point to the fact that students are likely not sensitized enough on the importance of GCSs. This gives a reason why they are not making good use of the services. Guidance counsellors and administrators were asked in an open-ended question to suggest strategies that can make students to be more aware of the existence and importance of GCSs. The results of the data analysis revealed the following strategies proposed and these were placed in three main groups: i) Improve students' awareness by organizing seminars and workshops; ii) Raise awareness in students during general, faculty and departmental orientations; and iii) Sensitization of students through classroom visitations by counsellors, through lecturers during lectures and through media announcements and posters. The most mentioned strategy was sensitization. These proposals are in line

with those of Gysbers and Henderson (2001). According to Gysbers and Henderson (2001), school counsellors should use orientations, workshops, newsletters, local media and community presentations to sensitize students on the importance of GCSs in their education. The findings for this research question one are that: GCSs are very important in the education of students, that students are not properly utilizing these services because they are not aware of their importance. When majority of students do not use the services, there is little or no impact on their school life. This means that the purpose for which these services were introduced in our state universities seem not to be realized. Therefore, students' non awareness of the importance of GCSs has a negative effect on their usage as well as on their effectiveness. On the whole, the implication of the findings on students' sensitization on the importance of GCSs is the need to seek a way to mobilize all the stakeholders to get involved in a massive sensitization campaign to raise awareness amongst students on the existence of GCSs in their institutions and the importance of these services in their education.

### **Conclusion**

The main purpose for which guidance counselling was instituted in state universities was to help students to solve their numerous problems (social personal, vocational, educational and psychological). If it was instituted to help students, then students must take advantage of that. Based on the findings of the study it can be concluded that students have not been sufficiently sensitized on the importance of GCSs. This is why out of 577 students sampled for the study, only 53 of them benefited from GCSs. Furthermore, as many as 290 (50.3%) out of 577 students acknowledged that they were not aware of the existence of GCSs in their institutions. It can also be concluded that since students are not actually taking advantage of these services, GCSs in Cameroon state universities are largely ineffective. Guidance and counselling services are most effective when students voluntarily seek them (Gibson, 2008). It can be further concluded based on the findings of this study that, the absence of counselling centers, conducive offices and other career motivations for GCs, all work against GCs competencies. This eventually has negative effects on the effectiveness of GCSs in Cameroon state universities. From the findings, it can also be concluded that there is high need for more qualified GCs to be posted to state universities. As the universities are expanding, the counsellor – student ratio is also leaping. Findings show that guidance counsellor either seldom or very seldom go to students. These findings have revealed challenges that can be converted into opportunities. Guidance

counsellors should make themselves known to students instead of waiting only for students to come to them.

### Recommendations

The purpose of introducing GCSs in the university system was to increase students' academic achievement by helping students develop positive self – concept, make wise selection of courses and careers, improve their behavioural patterns, proper adaptation to university life, acquire job searching techniques, effective study habits, effective goals setting and time management etc. Above all, the services should assist students to understand themselves, their situation, their environment, discover their potentials and opportunities in life and learn how best to effectively utilize their assets as well as minimize their weaknesses to live a maximum productive life. The effectiveness of GCSs is affected by how publicized they are and the role guidance counsellors play in sensitizing students and other stakeholders about their services. Therefore the low level of usage of these services by students may not be unconnected with the challenges or hindering factors which guidance counsellors said they are faced with in discharging their duties. These challenges were also confirmed by the administrators. All these findings emerged from the study. Based on these, it was recommended that massive and consistent sensitisation by all stakeholders through every available means to boost awareness of the importance of GCSs in the education of students. Opportunities such as orientation days could be exploited. Teachers could also helped in this respect. GCs could organize workshops and visit students in their class in order to enhance students' awareness and familiarity with guidance and counseling services and where their office is found.

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