

Appraisal of Provision of Guidance and Counselling to Postgraduate Distance Learners in Open University X, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Background: One of the most important learner support services that can be provided to distance learners is guidance and counselling. This allows them to cope with their cognitive, psychological, and social needs while studying. Such services can bridge the gap between the institution and the student, as it acts to compensate for the isolated “individual” and the absence of “live support” from the teacher.

Objective: The aim of the study is to establish how guidance and counselling services meet the needs of postgraduate distance learners in Open University X, Regional Centre, Malaysia.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was employed among postgraduate distance learners in Open University X. Data were collected through questionnaires that aim to appraise the provision of guidance and counselling among the respondents. The survey instrument was tested for face validity and its content validity index ranged from 0.80 to 1.0. The reliability of the instrument was computed and the Cronbach’s alpha was revealed to be .732.

Results

A total of 33 postgraduate distance learners participated in the survey. The study revealed that about 42.4% of the respondents were not aware of the guidance and counselling services in the university. One-third (33.3%) of these respondents agreed that guidance and counselling were most needed during the application process. Additionally, reasons related to academics ranked first (mean=1.5758) among the students’ perceived need for the service to address their issues. Moreover, one-third (33.3%) of the respondents viewed the lack of student awareness of such service as the main challenge in terms of guidance and counselling.

Conclusion

It was concluded that there is low awareness of the guidance and counselling services among students. As a result, there were only a few currently availing them. It is therefore recommended to create and increase awareness of the availability of guidance and counselling services. Also, training more counsellors can improve their quality and effectiveness.

Keywords: Appraisal of Provision, Guidance and Counselling to Postgraduate Distance Learners, Open University

INTRODUCTION

Since distance learning does not involve face-to-face instructions and interactions, it promotes independent study among students. For this to be possible, these students need to be supported by the institutions providing this type of education. This support is crucial in order for institutions to provide students with quality education even through distance learning (Moore, 2013; Simpson, 2015). These support services aid in the development of the students, particularly in terms of their career, academics, and even in personal aspects, as well as address the difficulties they may face that is tied to distance learning. In particular, it should help them overcome challenges largely related to studying from a distance, particularly feelings of isolation (LaPadulla, 2003). It should also be noted that these support services, according to Mills (2003), contribute to distance education's two major controversies: *recruitment and retention*. Reid (1995) said that students' delays in finishing their studies, or them completely dropping out from the program, is likely to happen due to the lack of support they experience as they study. Scheer & Lockee (2003) also stated that any learner support mechanisms present in various distance learning institutions are usually underdeveloped, or worse, overlooked.

Among the various support services that can be provided to distance learners, guidance and counselling are considered to be of utmost importance. These services help distance learners to cope with their various social, cognitive, and psychological needs throughout their education. Krishnan (2012) believed that these act as the interface between the student and the learning institution because, as per Pulist (2001), these can be used as compensation for the "individual's" isolation and the lack of a teacher's "live support."

There are various factors affecting the development of any guidance counselling program, as well as its effectiveness. These can range from intrinsic factors, specifically to situations involving guidance and counselling, to dealing with organizations in general and the implementation of such programs. A statement made by the Global Counselling Centre in 2002 pointed out the different factors that resulted in the failure of programs focusing on guidance and counselling. These factors are the lack of personnel with sufficient training, overall failure of the institution's administrators when it comes to offering support to the program and leadership, perception of the students and tutors towards the program, insufficient facilities, unclear program objectives, allotted time for the program, and the counsellor's personality. It is important that the goals of guidance and counselling are accomplished without interruption, as this will allow effective distance learning of students to occur.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework used in the study shows the various support services offered by different open and distance learning institutions that are made available to their students. Among these, the guidance and counselling services were particularly chosen for the study. In order to gauge the effectiveness of the said services in open and distance learning, the following were selected as the main variables of the research: student **awareness** of the guidance and counselling services, the **periods** wherein such services were most needed by students, the **issues** and **challenges** involving counselling, and any **suggestions** that will help distance education learners benefit more from these guidance and counselling services. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study:

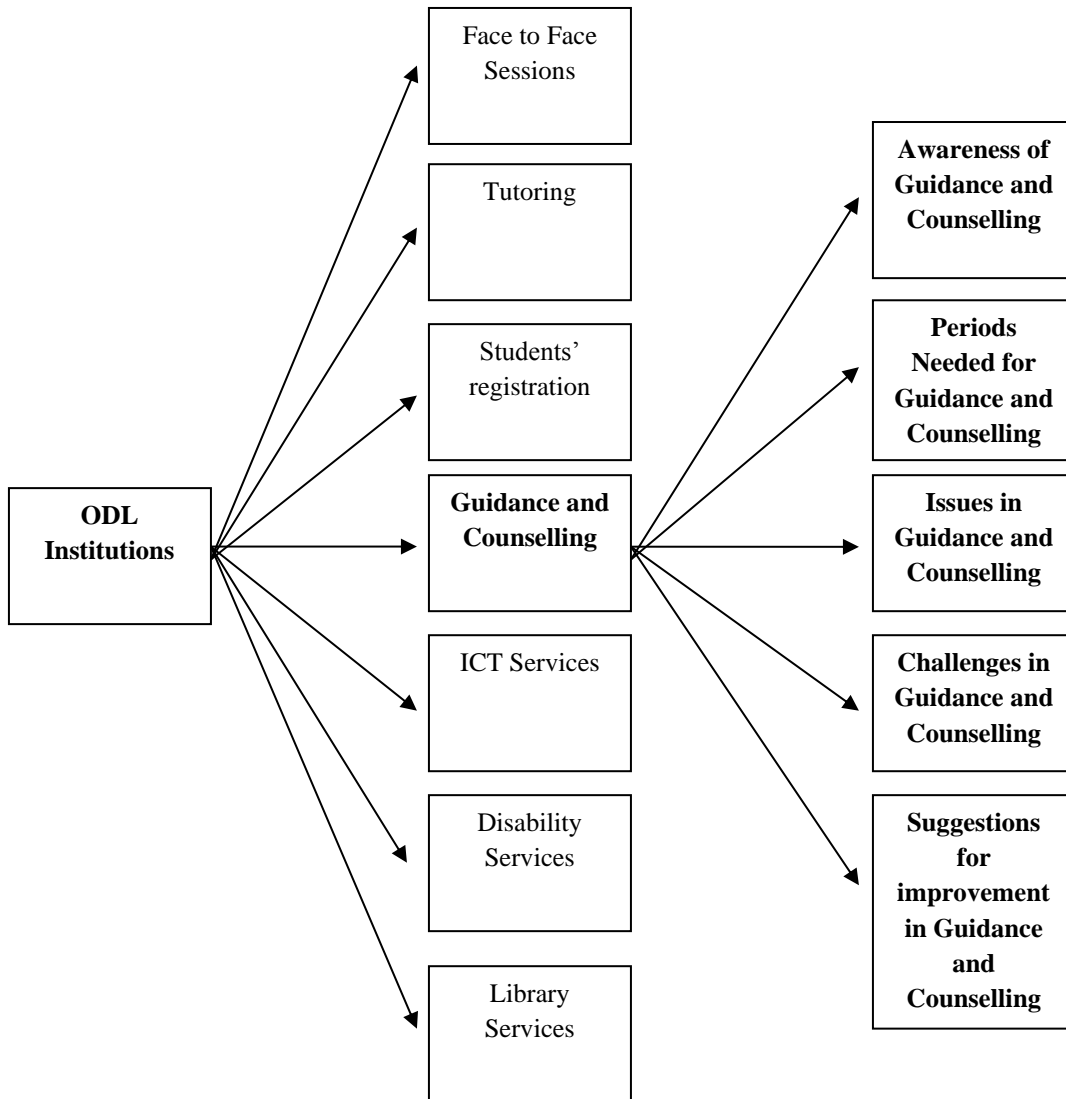


Figure 1: Student Support Services

The researchers find Moore's theory of transactional distance to be relevant for this research study. This is due to the fact that Open University X, as an ODL institution, appears to exhibit some elements of transactional distance, specifically in terms of the challenges students face in accessing its support services. Appreciating the transactional distance in Open University X's learner support system, and thus increasing its transactional presence, will go a long way to address the gaps in its student support initiatives. In particular, this will address the challenges students face in availing the guidance and counselling support service the institutions offer.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to establish how guidance and counselling services meet the needs of postgraduate distance learners in the Open University X (OUX), Regional Centre. The following sub-problems were used as research questions, which assisted in answering the aforementioned main research question:

1. What is the current state of the guidance and counselling services in the OUX, particularly in terms of student awareness?
2. When are guidance and counselling services most needed by distance learners in the OUX?
3. How important are guidance and counselling services in helping postgraduate DE learners, particularly in terms of (i) academics, (ii) social, (iii) personal, (iv) occupational, (v) health, (vi) family, and (vii) spiritual aspects?
4. What are the challenges perceived by the postgraduate DE learners when it comes to guidance and counselling at the OUX, Regional Centre?
5. What strategic measures can be suggested by DE learners to improve the quality and effectiveness of guidance and counselling the institution provides?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Makinde (1984), a guidance and counselling program plays a part in promoting self-realization, as well as in the development of people to reach their maximum potential. This, then, will be beneficial not just to themselves but also to society. Because of this, various academics support that idea that such services help increase the probability of having students push through with their studies and successfully complete their program (Biswalo, 1996; Commission for University Education, 2015; Wango, 2015). In fact, among the duties of universities is to provide their students with these services to aid them in the completion of their studies. Despite this, records show that only a few students studying at the university level avail such services to address their psychological distress (Khan and Willimas, 2003; Raunic and Xenos, 2008). Raunic and Xenos (2008) even made that discovery that only around 2% to 4% of these university students, with more females than males, avail them in their university. Yorgason, Linville, and Zitzman (2008) supported these findings when they found out that among American college students, 30% to 60% of them were

clueless or are unsure about the services focusing on mental health that are being offered in their campuses, with just 14% aware where the counselling centre in their campus is. Wango (2015) also did a study in Kenya wherein he discovered that the university students did not maximize the use of such services. These figures are a cause of concern, as Marzo (2016), in his study involving medical students, discovered that nearly 40% of them are psychologically stressed. More alarming is the revelation that the factors that caused stress to them were tied to their education: excessive workload, academic demands, mental tension, exams, increased psychological pressure, and feelings of helplessness. Additionally, Marzo stated that the pivotal transition stage of medical school, which is the pre-clinical to the clinical training period is also seen to contribute to the respondents' stress.

Coping with student life is not the only benefit of counselling. In fact, it is known to give these students the chance to improve their decision-making skills, as well as give them the chance to grow in their current environment, especially in terms of their life goals, values, career, and interpersonal relationships. This is also seen as a way to address various problems common to undergraduate students, such as in terms of their interpersonal and family relationships, academics, depression, loneliness, anxiety, financial challenges, spiritual aspects, and issues involving their sexuality, self-esteem, and self-identity, as reported by Nyaga, Oundo, & Kamoyo (2014). Mutie and Ndambuki (2011) further added that the majority of students believed that guidance and counselling services are a must-have, especially during the orientation period and at the start of each semester. These services are already common in higher education, owing to the fact that students at this level need to seek guidance in relation to their career and in academics.

One positive discovery was made by Ondima, Mokogi, Ombaba, and Osoro (2013) in the Nyamira District of Kenya's secondary schools, wherein the students had positive feedback regarding the guidance and counselling programme. These students found the services to be effective, especially when it comes to improving their competencies in academics, career, and personal lives. This feedback was echoed by the district's headteachers and teacher counsellors, as well as Ilgar (2004), who revealed that these services aid in the adaptation of students to their schools, help them make more educated choices, and introduce them to the various facilities of the school during orientation. A related study was conducted by Kangai, Rupande, and Rugonye (2011) that focused on the quality of guidance and counselling and its effectiveness. It was revealed that there was a need for an effective and up to par service for the majority of the students at the Zimbabwe Open University. Not only that, but these students also needed academic support, especially in terms of coursework management, issuance of learning materials, communication, tutorials, examination processing, and even one-on-one counselling. Canel (2007) also mentioned the role of counselling in guiding students when it comes to making choices about their elective course, with Kepceoglu (1994) echoing his sentiments and adding its role in choosing a student club and in practices that promote the reduction of exam-related anxiety.

Despite its importance, Ginott (2001) stated that the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services is affected by the lack of resources. For example, counsellors may find themselves not having enough time to deal with each student who approaches them, as they need to be aware of each students' problems or issues at the individual level. Yilfashewa (2011) mentioned a 2008 study by HERQA about the various challenges involving guidance counselling, which was

also cited by various Ethiopian universities. For example, Adama University mentioned the lack of awareness of students about such services, insufficiency in terms of qualified counsellors, and the university not fully recognizing these services as among their program's challenges. In a related study, Yusof (1998) also mentioned the lack of counsellors as one of the hindrances in the implementation of the service. Turnover is also a challenge, as exemplified in Hawassa University wherein the licensed psychologist eventually resigned, and also in Mekele University where this service is no longer offered because of the lack of a counsellor to provide the service. It was discovered that students at Haramaya University lacked awareness about the service and that the program present was of poor quality, while the University of Gondar's students and administrators reported contradicting claims about the university's counselling system, with students not fully aware where to go to when they need to avail of the service. Bahir Dar University attributed the low number of student patronage to the fact that most students were oblivious to it. The program at Arba Minch University also suffered from the lack of manpower, as their counsellor also did other duties on campus. Wako (2015) mentioned several challenges in terms of providing guidance and counselling services, namely the lack of facilities, information dissemination about the service, and even budget, and these challenges affect the effectiveness of the program.

As a result of all these findings, the researchers decided to appraise the provision of guidance and counselling services to the postgraduate distance learning students of Wawasan Open University in Malaysia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Profile of the Study Area

The Open University X (OUX) is one of the three full-fledged distance learning institutions in Malaysia that deliver distance learning programs with a heavier focus on engagement in an online learning environment. OUX is an independent, council-governed, private, and not-for-profit tertiary institution dedicated to adult learners. It is a 'people's university' funded by the Education Foundation (EF), a tax-exempt entity. OUX was established in accordance with the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act of 1996 (Act 555), with the goal of providing tertiary education opportunities through the open and distance learning (ODL) mode. This is also in line with the government's policy to create a knowledge economy consisting of highly skilled human resources to steer the country towards becoming a fully developed nation by 2020. To date, 47 programs offered by OUX are accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and are approved by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). OUX offers over 40 undergraduate degree programs in the fields of business, technology, education, and liberal studies. It also offers Masteral and PhD programs at the postgraduate level. The main campus of OUX is in the northernmost part of Malaysia, and it has six regional centres and three regional support centres throughout Malaysia. At present, approximately 150 individual courses are offered each semester via the Open Distance Learning (ODL), which are under the degree programs offered. The total number of new student enrolment per semester is around 1,000, whereas

approximately 4,000 students are active in a given semester. And nearly 88% of OUX students are working adults between the ages of 21 to 55 years.

B. Population and Sample

A population is the total collection of elements that the researchers wished to make some inferences. The target population selected were the postgraduate DE students in the OUX Regional Centre.

C. Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

According to Cooper and Emory (1995), the basic idea of sampling is that by selecting part of the elements in a population, conclusions may be obtained about the entire population. For this study, the sample size was 33 postgraduate students that were randomly selected (via a random number generator) with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level.

D. Research Design

The major research design adopted for this study was a quantitative and descriptive cross-sectional survey strategy which entailed obtaining data at a single point in time and using just one questionnaire or other data collection instruments (Fogelman in Coleman and Briggs, 2004).

E. Research Instrument

A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data and this research instrument was divided into two sections. Section A focused on the sociodemographic data of students, while Section B focused on guidance and counselling support for DE students. The survey instrument was tested among five experts in the field (3 professors in DE and 2 guidance counsellors) for face validity and content validity. The Content Validity Index (CVI) ranged from .80 (4/5) to 1.0 (5/5). 95% indicated that they understood the questions and found them easy to answer, and 90% stated the appearance and layout would be acceptable to the intended target participants of the study. The instruments were pilot tested to 12 respondents, who were undergraduate distance learners, to check the reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha was computed and was revealed to be .732. This means that there was a good correlation between the items and the questionnaire. Thus, it has good internal consistency reliability.

F. Data Collection

The data was collected during tutorial face-to-face sessions at OUX, Johor Regional. The respondents answered the questionnaire in 3-5 minutes. This timeframe also included the time used up in explaining the purpose of the study.

G. Analysis of Data

Data were transcribed and analyzed using the SPSS software in order to determine frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The data were then presented in tabular form to make it easy to understand and more meaningful.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were obtained from the respondents' information indicated in the questionnaire. The summary is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Respondents

	Frequency (F)	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Male	19	57.6
Female	14	42.4
Age (years)		
21-25	2	6.1
26-30	4	12.1
31-35	7	21.2
36-40	11	33.4
41-45	8	24.2
46-50	1	3.0
<i>Mean age (years) = 36, Std. Deviation = 5.87802</i>		
Race		
Malay	8	24.2
Chinese	16	48.5
Indian	9	27.3
Years Studying in WOU		
1	11	33.3
2	9	27.3
3	9	27.3
4	4	12.1
Faculty		
School of Business and Administration	21	63.7
School of Science and Technology	4	12.1
School of Humanities and Social Sciences	4	12.1
School of Education, Languages and Communications	4	12.1

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. This table showed that at 57.6%, there were more male students in the sample population than females (at 42.4%). It also revealed that almost one-third (33.4%) of the respondents were between 36 to 40 years old. The majority of the respondents were Chinese (48.5%) and more than half came from the School of Business and Administration (63.7%)

RQ1: What is the current state of the guidance and counselling services in the OUX, particularly in terms of student awareness?

This question was answered and analysed through data obtained from the respondents' information on the state of students' awareness and utilization of guidance and counselling services. The summary is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents' Awareness of Guidance and Counselling Services in WOU

Variables	Frequency (F)	Percentages (%)
Awareness		
Yes	19	57.6
No	14	42.4
Use of Guidance and Counselling Services		
Yes	4	12.2
No	29	87.8

Table 2 presents the results when it comes to the respondents' awareness and utilization of the guidance and counselling services provided by the institution. It revealed that only 57.6% of the respondents were aware of the in the university, while 42.4% of the respondents were completely unaware. This percentage of students awareness is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Yorgason, Linville, and Zitzman (2008). Their study showed that only 12.2% of the respondents were currently using the university counselling services, while the majority (87.8%) indicated that they are currently not using it. While some students often utilized university counselling services, there was evidence that a higher number was reluctant to do so (Mertler and Vannatta, 2005; Raunic and Xenos, 2008; Wango, 2015). This is in spite of Biswal's (1996) argument that most students in the university years experienced unique challenges. This period is actually a time of significant personal growth and decision-making phase regarding one's values, interpersonal relationships, career and other life goals, all within a stressful student academic environment. Hence, there is a greater need to patronise the service. However, some university students had the secondary school mentality, in which they saw counselling as a service for deviants. This belief was inhibiting them from seeking counselling services.

RQ2: When are guidance and counselling services most needed by distance learners in the OUX?

This question was answered with the data from the respondents' information about their counselling needs from the questionnaire. The summary is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Guidance and Counselling Most Needed

Periods	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
During the application process	11	33.3	1 st
Beginning of every semester	9	27.2	2 nd
During student orientation	6	18.2	3 rd
During the registration process	4	12.1	4 th
Beginning of every academic year	3	9.2	5 th
Examination period	0	0	6 th

Table 3 presents the respondents' beliefs when guidance and counselling are most needed. It revealed that one-third (33.3%) of the respondents agreed that guidance and counselling were most needed during the application process, followed by the commencement of every semester (27.2%). Other periods wherein they felt it was most needed were: during student orientation (18.2%), during the registration process (12.1%), and at the beginning of every academic year (9.2%). This is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Mutie and Ndambuki (2011) wherein they found out that guidance and counselling are mostly needed during the orientation period, application process, and at the beginning of every semester. Surprisingly, none of the respondents mentioned the need for it during the examination period, which is contradictory to the study done by Kepceoglu (1994). The reason why OUX students agreed that guidance and counselling are not important during the examination period is due to the fact that there is good support coming from the faculty or course coordinators during this period, wherein they provide a revision class one week before the examination.

RQ3: How important are guidance and counselling services in helping postgraduate DE learners, particularly in terms of (i) academics, (ii) social, (iii) personal, (iv) occupational, (v) health, (vi) family, and (vii) spiritual aspects?

This question was answered with data from the respondents' information on the areas of importance of guidance and counselling services to address students' issues. The summary is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents According to Their Counselling Needs.

Issues	Very Important (1)	Important (2)	Moderately Important (3)	Not Important (4)	Mean	Rank
Academic	17 (51.5%)	13 (39.4%)	3 (9.1%)	-	1.5758	1 st
Social	10 (30.3%)	14 (42.4%)	9 (27.3%)	-	1.9697	2 nd
Occupational	5 (15.2%)	16 (48.5%)	9 (27.3%)	3 (9.1%)	2.3030	3 rd
Spiritual	3 (9.1%)	20 (60.6%)	6 (18.2%)	4 (12.1%)	2.3333	4 th
Personal	2 (6.1%)	17 (51.5%)	10 (30.3%)	4 (12.1%)	2.4848	5 th
Health	5 (15.2%)	8 (24.2%)	15 (45.5%)	5 (15.2%)	2.6061	6 th
Family	2 (6.1%)	11 (33.3%)	17 (51.5%)	3 (9.1%)	2.6364	7 th

Table 4 shows the students' perception of the importance of guidance and counselling services to challenging issues. The ranking was done based on the mean. This table showed that academic issues ranked first (mean=1.5758) when it comes to their perception of the importance of guidance and counselling to students' issues, while the social issues ranked second (mean= 1.9697). The other issues were: occupational (mean= 2.3030), spiritual (mean= 2.3333), personal (mean= 2.4848), health (mean= 2.6061), and family (mean=2.6364). While family issues ranked lowest, it is still considered important because of the mean. These findings are in line with various studies that posited that it is pertinent for student guidance and counselling to inculcate the provision of knowledge and skills relating to the students' personal and social development, self-awareness, decision-making, and planning (Shoffner and Briggs, 2001; Ondima, Mokogi, Ombaba, and Osoro, 2013).

These results imply that the guidance and counselling needs of the respondents are most prominent in the aspect relating to their academic issues. Results show that they focused on academic matters, which are the main components of tertiary education. This agrees with the study made by Martin (2002), who posited that the fundamental thought behind guidance and counselling, in general, lies in the fact that people often need guidance when faced with the need to make significant decisions that affect both themselves and those around them. Hence, counsellors should focus their attention on the development of effective study habits, in relation to how postgraduate students can utilize their assets and manage their abilities for optimal career development. In addition, the respondents' perception of the quality and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services was influenced by their cognitive styles and individual experiences with the guidance and counselling processes, as well as the available information which they might have gained through their peer's experience. Guidance and counselling services are

very important in helping them with academic and social issues. This may be due to the fact that these kinds of services for tertiary students are usually aimed at helping them make appropriate decisions for a more productive academic, social and personal development (Rana, 2000).

RQ4: What are the challenges perceived by the postgraduate DE learners when it comes to guidance and counselling at the OUX, Regional Centre?

This question was answered with data from the respondents' information on the challenges with guidance and counselling at the regional study centre. The summary is given in Table 5.

Table 5: Challenges in Guidance and Counselling at the Regional Study Centre

Challenges	Frequency (F)	Percentages (%)
Lack of student awareness of such services	11	33.3
Absence of guidance/counselling office	7	21.3
Students' apathy towards guidance and counselling	7	21.3
Busy schedule for available counsellors	6	18.1
Lack of trained counsellors	2	6.0

Table 5 presents the respondents' areas of challenges in guidance counselling at the regional study centre. It shows that one-third (33.3%) of the respondents viewed the lack of student awareness of such service as the main challenge in guidance and counselling. This finding is consistent with the results of the study conducted by Sekyi(2013), Yilfashewa(2011), and Ginott(2001). Other challenges mentioned are the absence of a guidance/counselling office (21.3%) and students' apathy towards guidance and counselling (21.3%). The challenges regarding the absence of offices at the regional study centre can be attributed to the fact that the regional centre is located on a rental property with no allocated space for such purposes. This infrastructural deficit can be overcome by employing the use of online counselling, as in the case of University of South Africa (UNISA) wherein students are encouraged to visit <http://www.unisa.ac.za> for guidance and counselling issues that may be career-related, academic, or personal. The early identification of various challenges and understanding of opportunities in guidance and counselling services to university students are very important.

RQ5: What strategic measures can be suggested by DE learners to improve the quality and effectiveness of guidance and counselling the institution provides?

This question was answered with data from the respondents' information on how to improve the quality and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in the university. The summary is given in Table 6.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents on the Improvement of the Quality and Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services

Suggested Improvements	Frequency (F)	Percentages (%)
Creating awareness of availability of such services	12	36.4
Training of more counsellors	12	36.4
Effective supervision of counsellors	5	15.1
Offices at all centres	4	12.1

Table 6 shows the ratings on how the guidance and counselling services of the institution can be improved. Results showed that the majority of the respondents suggested that creating awareness of the availability of such services (36.4%) and training of more counsellors (36.4%) can improve its quality and effectiveness in OUX. Other suggested areas for improvement were in terms of the effective supervision of counsellors (15.1%) and by having offices at all centres (12.1%). These findings corroborate the opinion of Bysbers and Henderson (2006) that awareness is an ideal initial step towards a successful counselling and guidance programme for students. These findings are also in line with the studies in some selected universities in Ethiopia, such as Haramaya University, Adama University and Bahir Dar University. These institutions mentioned that the main challenge of the provision of guidance and counselling services was the lack of students awareness on the existence of such services. This also supports the findings of the study of Yusof (1998) that an inadequate number of counsellors is another challenge when it comes to providing the services. Students perceived that they need more counsellors at their various regional centres for effective guidance and counselling services that will take care of their interests. And this will then lead to improved service delivery by counsellors. Addressing the challenges may increase the cost of providing guidance and counselling services borne by academic institutions. It should, however, be noted that providing such services is part of the social service rendered by tertiary institutions (Idowu & Adeoye, 1990).

CONCLUSION

The need for students at Open University X to have guidance and counselling services, as well as their level of awareness and the issues and challenges these programs and students face were the focus of this study.

Based on the results, student awareness and engagement in such service were determined to be low. This meant that the assistance that was expected to be provided to these students, especially in terms of addressing their social, personal, health, spiritual, occupational, and academic issues, was not fully provided and this prevented them from becoming fully competent. The students who took part in the study expressed their desire for the university's guidance and counselling services to be provided during the application process, at the student orientation, and at the start of every semester. It was also discovered that there are major roadblocks when it comes to the guidance and counselling program implementation, mainly in relation to the lack of student awareness about this service. With this, the students

recommended increasing awareness about the service through various means, as well as having more counsellors and sufficiently training them to improve the quality of the service they provide in order to be effective.

It is not easy to provide guidance and counselling services, let alone in open universities. That is why people need to understand better why providing this service is crucial, especially for students. Since people adapt in different ways, there is a need to identify the challenges in providing guidance and counselling services to these students and overcome them by coming up with viable alternatives. Also, there is a need to determine how effective such services are in open and distance learning institutions for counsellors to meet the needs of students, whether these are something they only think they need or they actually need.

For better implementation of the guidance and counselling services, there should be offices catering to guidance and counselling services in all study centres. This will then allow more students to avail of the service. And in order to increase awareness, information dissemination is a must, this can be done through the creation of posters and other forms of visual advertisements and must be posted on various vantage points, such as on notice boards, especially on tutorial days wherein there is an increased chance of more students seeing them. Accessibility to these services can be improved through the use of emails, phone calls, and text messages, allowing students to use the service whenever and wherever they need to. The researchers stated the need for OUX to address student needs in different aspects, and one of the ways to do so is by having an ideal counsellor-to-student ratio, which also helps in making the service effective. They also suggested the preparation of guidelines for the establishment of a guidance and counselling centre for orientation.

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