



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

Self-Perceived and Self-Expressed Social and Personal Problems of Students: the Case of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana - Implications for Guidance and Counselling

Reverend James Kwesi Ansah

Dean, School of Business and Management Studies, Cape Coast Polytechnic, Cape Coast, Ghana

Abstract:

This paper examined the self-perceived and self-conceived social and personal problems of students with particular reference to the Cape Coast Polytechnic with a view to examining how these problems can be influenced by effective counselling. It identified the self-perceived social and personal problems of the Marketing students. It then examined how effective counselling could influence the students' academic performance and their perception of their problems. Finally it determined strategies for improving counselling to address students' problems effectively. Both published and unpublished studies on students' problems were viewed. The researcher developed questionnaires for lecturers and students for data collection. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse data to answer the research questions.

The studies revealed that students were beset with several problems which could affect their academic performance, that majority of them desired the services of professional counsellors to address their problems, and that counselling services provided for the Marketing students improved the students' attitude towards their academic work, reduced the ranking of their concerns for studies and relations to people, and improved their examination results. Based on the above findings some useful recommendations and suggestions for further studies were made. Prominent among them are: (1) A counselling centre must be provided manned by professionally-qualified Counsellors, (2) Lecturers must be motivated to participate fully in the counselling of students to help address their problems, and (3) Lecturers' teaching loads must be reduced to offer them the opportunity to have time to counsel the students.

Keywords: Counselling, Guidance, Counsellor

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the Study

Since creation, problems have confronted human beings for which they consulted others for advice or solution. Those consulted included fortunetellers, prophets, elders, relations and friends. Sometimes, however, instead of finding solutions to their problems, the troubled ones rather had more problems created for them by those consulted.

Many issues constitute worry for students – depression; anxiety, nervousness, worrying; schoolwork and grade; relationship with romantic partner; self-esteem, self-confidence; procrastination, getting motivated, managing loss; relationship with family and parents; decision about major career; concentration; irritability (Michigan State University, 2014). Higher education students have concerns relating to personal-social, education and career issues (Gibson and Mitchell, 1990). Campus Blues (2002) cited lack of motivation, adequate time management and study skills as some of the college students' problems. In addition students indulge in drug abuse, alcoholism, and other forms of substance abuse. Darkwa and Erkow (2000) stated that higher education in Africa is confronted with several challenges including limited choice of subjects and academic progress, inflexibility in course selection, increasing cost and decreasing quality.

Students do not put much effort into developing academic skills and this makes their studies burdensome (Polytechnic Education Special Service, 2002). Koplík and Derito (in Pancer et al, 2000) emphasized that students' problems included performing tasks formerly done by their parents including managing their finances and doing their laundry. According to Denham J. (2013), within just four years, the number of student suicide has doubled in women and risen by over a third in men. Denham continues that students are facing intense pressure to succeed under heavy financial burdens due to high tuition fees and a tough job market; yet long waiting lists for university counseling services dissuade many in need of help from seeking it in the first place. At the Behavioral Medicine Clinic

at Boston University, students come in to discuss problems related to, among others, stress caused by academic problems, and relationship distress

Other students problems include: (a) Searching for job opportunities (Kuh and Sturgis as cited in Arp, Holmberg and Littrell, 1986); (b) Matching skills with jobs, learning job-seeking and job-locating skills (Hughes, Mardoyamm, Allenman and Cochran (in Arp et al, 1986); (c) Family issues impeding the educational achievement of many female adult students (Solomon, as cited in Walther et al, 2002); and (d) Role demands vis-à-vis career demands hindering educational advancement of many female adult students (Money and Anderson in ERIC Digest, 2002). Guardian News and Media limited (2015) reports that in the University of Glasgow, 20% of the students consider themselves to have a mental health problem.

Tertiary students' problems can leave unspecified numbers of students in crises – which can affect their adult years negatively. This is why some tertiary institutions in Ghana and elsewhere have established guidance counselling centres to provide a service that assists students know themselves better, make wise decisions in life, and develop their potentials and enable them adjust favourably to some of their worries.

1.2. The Problem

The Cape Coast Polytechnic, like other tertiary institutions, is made up of students from different cultural, economic and social backgrounds who exhibit different needs and behaviors that affect their studies and development. The need to help identify these groups so as to aid their total development makes it necessary to set up effective guidance and counseling programmes to address students' problems. Again, students must be guided and helped to make useful decisions regarding finances, sex and marriage, use of drugs and other important personal, social and economic matters. Some polytechnic students do not put much effort into developing academic skills and this makes their studies burdensome (Polytechnic Education Special Service, 2002). This also emphasizes the importance of guidance programmes in the polytechnic. However, some polytechnics do not have well established counseling centres. In such institutions, therefore, students' problems tend to be compounded because teachers and other officials fail to understand the unique problems of the students to provide them the needed assistance. While some of the students are crying out silently for help to resolve their real worries, school authorities may be providing answers to questions which nobody or perhaps only a few are asking for. It is to address the problem of non-existence of effective counselling programmes at Cape Coast Polytechnic that this study was carried out.

The topic is essential to examine because it will lead to defining the self-conceived and self-expressed worries of the students with a view to alerting the Cape Coast polytechnic administration on the consequences of these problems as they remain unattended to. It will also suggest what services, resources and facilities must be put in place to improve the counselling situation at the polytechnic so that students' worries can be minimized to improve the polytechnic's public relations and enhance its marketability.

1.3. Research Questions

The researcher investigated the problem through the use of the following questions:

1. What are the specific self-perceived, self-expressed, social and personal problems of Cape Coast Polytechnic students?
2. What differences (if any) exist between the self-perceived problems of male students and those of female students?
3. What differences exist between the self-expressed problems of younger (below 25 years of age) students and older students (25 years or above).
4. Are there any differences between the self-perceived problems of first year students and continuing students?
5. What differences exist between the self-perceived problems of single students and married students?
6. Which problems do the students consider to be of greater relevance or concern and which areas are of less relevance?
7. What are the effects if students are not effectively counselled on their problems?
8. What proportion of the student's desire the services of formal school counseling in the resolution of their personal and social problems?

1.4. Objectives of the Paper

The research was designed for the following objectives:

1. To identify the self-perceived and self-expressed social and personal problems of the Cape Coast Polytechnic students
2. To identify the relationship existing between the self-perceived problems of male and female students
3. To find out the differences existing between the self-expressed problems of younger (below 22 years of age) students and older students (25 years or above).
4. To identify the differences between the self-perceived problems of first year students and continuing students
5. To find out the differences existing between the self-perceived problems of single students and married students
6. To identify which problems the students consider to be of greater relevance or concern and which areas are of less relevance
7. To find out the effects if students are not effectively counseled on their problems
8. To assess the student desire for services of formal school counselling in the resolution of their personal and social problems

2. Methodology

2.1. Design, Population, Sample and Research Instrument

A combination of survey and ex-post facto research design was used to assess student's specific problems at the polytechnic. The study was based on ex-post-facto research design because the independent variable namely gender, age, marital status and year at the Polytechnic were not controlled directly or manipulated by the researcher. The investigation of the problems of the students involved experiences, which were completely beyond the researcher's power to manipulate. The target population for the study consisted of all the students and lecturers of the Cape Coast Polytechnic. The total number of students stood at 2,020 as at the time of the study, and that of the lecturers stood at 36. In all 300 Marketing students were used for the study – 100 first year students (from a total of 142), 100 second year students (from a total of 136), and 100 third year students (from a total of 151). Also twenty (20) lecturers were randomly selected representing 55.6% of the total number of lecturers.

Students profile revealed that out of 2,020 students' population 1,091 were below the age of 22 years. Of the 1,091 students, 804 were in first year (with an enrollment of 1087), 231 in second year (with an enrollment of 639), and 56 in third year (with an enrollment of 320). Since the majority of the students were in their late adolescence, the researcher used as a research instrument, in addition to questionnaires, the Revised Version of Ikeme's Adolescent Problem Inventory (API), 1989, a self-report inventory covering a number of items grouped into eleven problem areas which students generally are known to encounter including health, finances, boy/girl relationship, sexual concern, relationship with people, self esteem, moral and religious concerns, family-related issues, future studies and adjustment to school. Two sets of questionnaire were used, one to collect data from students and the other to collect data from lecturers.

2.2. Data Collection Procedure

Copies of the questionnaire and inventory forms were given out to a selected number of lecturers and to all students in the Department of Marketing Studies at the beginning of first semester. Students and lecturers were to submit their completed forms after a week. After four weeks, the same instruments were administered to three hundred students randomly selected who responded to and returned the questionnaires. The same lecturers' questionnaires were administered to the same twenty lecturers at the same time. To determine the degree of reliability of the instrument, the scores of the initial test and retest were collected and compared using rank order correlation.

3. Presentation of Findings

The paper presents in this section the responses to the questions indicated in the introduction as follows:

3.1. Research Question 1

What are the self-perceived, self-expressed social and personal problems of the Cape Coast Polytechnic students?

Tables presented below (i.e. Tables 8 – 11) deal with the problem of the polytechnic students. Each of the problems indicated under the eleven areas of concern shown by the API was actually expressed by the students. The problems therefore include those relating to health, finances, boy/girl relations, sex, and relation to people, self-esteem, moral and religious issues, the future, family, studies and adjustment to school.

3.2. Research Question 2

What differences exist between the self-perceived problems of male students and those of female students?

STUDENTS' CONCERN	MALE (185)		FEMALE (115)	
	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage
Health	158	85	98	85
Finances	179	97	113	98
Boy/Girl Relations	177	96	110	96
Sexual	177	96	108	94
Relation to People	165	89	113	98
Self-Esteem	175	95	108	94
Moral/Religious	168	91	104	90
Future	183	99	113	98
Family	178	96	110	96
Studies	150	81	93	81
Adjustment to School	178	96	111	97

Table 1: comparison of problems by age

The data in Table 1 indicate that there is little difference between the problems of male and those of female students. Both male and female respondents scored more than 80 percent in all the eleven areas of worry.

3.3. Research Question 3

What differences exist between the self-perceived problems of younger students (those below 25 years) and older students (those 25 years or above)?

Data in Table 2 are used to answer the Research Question 3.

STUDENTS' CONCERN	Below 25 Years Number = 189		25 Years or Above Number = 111	
	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage
Health	180	95	110	99
Finances	179	95	110	99
Boy/Girl Relations	170	90	77	69
Sexual	177	94	105	95
Relation to People	167	88	99	89
Self-Esteem	150	79	104	94
Moral/Religious	171	90	107	96
Future	173	92	105	95
Family	176	54	105	95
Studies	155	83	93	84
Adjustment to School	170	90	102	92

Table 2: Comparison of problems by age

The data in Table 2 indicate that differences exist between the problems of younger students (below 25 years) and older students (25 years or above). In ten of the eleven areas of worry, it can be noted that older students consistently expressed greater worry than younger students. Younger students expressed concern for boy/girl relations more than the older students

3.4. Research Question 4

Are there any differences between the self-perceived problems of first year students and continuing students?

Data in Table 3 are used in answering Research Question 4

STUDENTS' CONCERN	YEAR ONE STUDENTS NUMBER = 100		CONTINUING STUDENTS NUMBER = 200	
	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage
Health	96	96	194	97
Finances	90	90	186	93
Boy/Girl Relations	91	91	156	78
Sexual	95	95	186	93
Relation to People	89	89	174	87
Self-Esteem	81	81	164	82
Moral/Religious	97	97	192	96
Future	93	93	190	95
Family	90	90	164	82
Students	85	85	168	84
Adjustment to School	97	97	190	95

Table 3: Comparison of problems by year at the polytechnic

The data in Table 3 show that there are differences between the worries of year one students and worries of continuing students. In all the eleven areas of worry, except boy/girl relations, continuing students consistently expressed greater frequency or worry than first year students.

3.5. Research Question 5

What differences exist between the self-perceived problems of single students and those of married students?

Data in Table 4 are used to answer Research Question 5

STUDENTS' CONCERN	MARRIED STUDENTS NUMBER = 105		SINGLE STUDENTS NUMBER = 195	
	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage	Frequency of Respondents	Percentage
Health	99	94	116	89
Finances	102	97	118	91
Boy/Girl Relations	59	56	89	69
Sexual	89	83	106	82
Relation to People	99	94	114	88
Self-Esteem	95	90	113	87
Moral/Religious	98	93	119	92
Future	98	90	117	90
Family	67	96	83	64
Students	95	90	108	83
Adjustment to School	93	87	114	88

Table 4: Comparison of problems by marital status

It can be noticed from Table 4 that differences exist between the concerns of married students and single students. Except in the case of boy/girl relation and future worries, married students consistently expressed greater frequency of worry than unmarried students.

3.6. Research Questions 6

Which problems do the students consider to be of greater relevance or concern and which areas are of less relevance?

To answer research question 6, the data in Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8 below were used by the researcher. In the tables presented below, the areas of worry are ranked according to the number of items ticked per area of worry. The more the number of ticks, the greater the level of concern in that specific area of worry.

STUDENTS' PROBLEMS	RANK ORDER	MALE NO. = 185		STUDENTS' PROBLEMS	RANK ORDER	FEMALE NO. = 115	
		Freq.	%			Freq.	%
Finance	1 st	174	94	Finances	1 st	111	97
Future	2 nd	168	91	Future	2 nd	107	93
Moral/Religious	3 rd	164	89	Moral/Religious	3 rd	104	90
Boy/Girl Relations	4 th	162	88	Boy/Girl Relations	4 th	102	89
Sexual	5 th	156	84	Health	5 th	95	83
Health	6 th	152	82	Studies	6 th	92	80
Self-Esteem	7 th	141	76	Self-Esteem	7 th	89	77
Studies	8 th	120	65	Sexual	8 th	86	75
Relation to People	9 th	119	64	Adjustment to School	9 th	84	73
Adjustment to School	10 th	116	63	Relation to People	10 th	81	70
Family	11 th	113	61	Family	11 th	75	65

Table 5: Ranking of problems by gender

Table 5 above indicates the problems that are of most concern to the students with regard to their gender. For both male and female, the problem of finances is the topmost on the list. This is followed by future, moral and religious issues and then by boy/girl issues. Again self esteem (7th position) and family related problems (11th position) had similar ranking orders for both sexes. In the case of male students the 5th and 6th positions were taken respectively by health and sexual issues, while in the case of the female students, those positions were taken by health and studies problems respectively. The 8th, 9th, 10th positions for male students were taken by studies, adjustment to school and relation to people in that order, while the female students ranked in the same positions sexual, adjustment to school and relation to people.

STUDENTS' PROBLEMS	RANK ORDER	YEAR ONE STUDENTS NO. = 100		STUDENTS' PROBLEMS	RANK ORDER	CONTINUING STUDENTS NO. = 200	
		Freq.	%			Freq.	%
Finance	1 st	87	87	Finances	1 st	184	92
Future	2 nd	81	81	Future	2 nd	180	90
Moral/Religious	3 rd	80	80	Moral/Religious	3 rd	174	87
Boy/Girl Relations	4 th	79	79	Boy/Girl Relations	4 th	172	86
Health	5 th	72	72	Sexual	5 th	168	84
Sexual	6 th	70	70	Health	6 th	166	83
Self-Esteem	7 th	69	69	Studies	7 th	162	81
Studies	8 th	64	64	Self-Esteem	8 th	160	80
Adjustment to School	9 th	60	60	Adjustment to School	9 th	154	77
Relation to People	10 th	57	57	Relation to People	10 th	75	75
Family	11 th	51	51	Family	11 th	142	71

Table 6: Ranking students' problems by year at school

Data in Table 6 above show that both groups ranked identically the problems of finances, future, moral/religious, boy/girl relations, adjustment to school, relationships with people and family in the same positions – 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 9th, 10th and 11th. The problem of health was ranked 5th by the first year students, but 6th by the continuing students; the problem of sex was ranked 6th by the first year students but 5th by continuing students; the problem of self-esteem was ranked 7th by first year students but 8th by continuing students, and the problem of studies was ranked 8th by first year students but 7th by continuing students.

STUDENTS' PROBLEMS	RANK ORDER	BELOW 25 YEARS NO. 189		STUDENTS' PROBLEMS	RANK ORDER	25 YEARS OR ABOVE NO. = 111	
		Freq.	%			Freq.	%
Finance	1 st	158	84	Finances	1 st	107	96
Future	2 nd	156	83	Future	2 nd	105	95
Moral/Religious	3 rd	153	81	Moral/Religious	3 rd	104	94
Boy/Girl Relations	4 th	152	80	Boy/Girl Relations	4 th	102	92
Health	5 th	149	79	Sexual	5 th	95	86
Sexual	6 th	147	78	Health	6 th	92	83
Self-Esteem	7 th	146	77	Studies	7 th	89	80
Studies	8 th	143	76	Self-Esteem	8 th	86	77
Adjustment to School	9 th	141	75	Adjustment to School	9 th	81	73
Relation to People	10 th	135	71	Relation to People	10 th	80	72
Family	11 th	131	69	Family	11 th	77	69

Table 7: Ranking students' problems by age

Table 7 above shows the problems that are of most concern to the students as far as their ages are concerned. Both age groups have identical rankings (1st to 4th positions) respectively for finances, future, moral/religious concerns and boy/girl relations. The last three concerns i.e. adjustment to school, relationship to people, and family were identically ranked by both age groups. For the fifth to eight positions, the two age groups gave different ranking orders with health (5th), sexual (6th), self-esteem (7th) and studies (8th) for ages below 25 years, and sexual (5th), health (6th), studies (7th), self-esteem (8th) for ages 25 years or above.

STUDENTS' PROBLEMS	RANK ORDER	SINGLE STUDENTS NO. 195		STUDENTS' PROBLEMS	RANK ORDER	25 YEARS OR ABOVE NO. = 105	
		Freq.	%			Freq.	%
Finance	1 st	182	93	Finances	1 st	101	96
Future	2 nd	179	92	Future	2 nd	98	93
Moral/Religious	3 rd	176	90	Moral/Religious	3 rd	95	90
Boy/Girl Relations	4 th	174	89	Family	4 th	90	86
Health	5 th	171	88	Sexual	5 th	89	85
Sexual	6 th	167	85	Studies	6 th	87	83
Self-Esteem	7 th	164	84	Health	7 th	83	79
Studies	8 th	147	75	Self-Esteem	8 th	81	77
Adjustment to School	9 th	146	75	Adjustment to School	9 th	80	76
Relation to People	10 th	135	69	Relation to People	10 th	75	71
Family	11 th	120	62	Boy/Girl Relations	11 th	47	45

Table 8: Ranking student's problems by marital status

Table 8 presents the ranking of students' problems according to their marital status. The data in the table indicate identical rank orders for the first three categories of problems. For both single students and married students, worry about finances is the most prominent. This is followed by worry about future, then moral and religious issues. Respondents again had identical ranking for worries about adjustment to school and relationship with people.

Single students had boy/girl relations issue in the fourth position, while married students had this in the last position. While single students had health, sexual, self-esteem and studies worries in the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth positions respectively, married students had them in the seventh, fifth, eighth and sixth position respectively. While single students had family problem in the last position, married students ranked this problem fifth.

3.7. Research Question 7

What are the effects if students are not effectively counselled on their problems?

Data on Table 9 and Table 10 below answer the Research Question 7. Table 9 provides information from the point of view of students while Table 10 provides information from the point of view of lecturers.

ITEM	RESPONDENTS STUDENTS	FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES							TOTAL
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
What are the effects if students are not effectively counselled on their problems?	NUMBER	224	75	93	164	182	86	242	300
	PERCENTAGE	75	25	31	55	61	29	81	300

Table 9: Data on the effects from students' perspective

KEY FROM 1 – 6

- 1 – Students left in crises, feel rejected, hopeless, and uncared-for
- 2 – Students resort to drinking, smoking, and other vices
- 3 – Absenteeism, poor academic performance
- 4 – Lack of interest to work hard, write assignment, etc
- 5 – Lack of joy in being at the Polytechnic
- 6 – Ill preparation for examination leading to examination malpractices
- 7 – Students not willing to recommend the Polytechnic to friends and other prospective students

Table 9 shows that of the 300 respondents, 224 (75%) indicated that the absence of effective counselling services for them to resolve their problems leaves them in crises because with their problems not solved and remaining with them, they feel rejected, hopeless and uncared-for. Table 6 shows that 75 (25%) respondents said they resort to drinking, smoking and other vices. Moreover ninety-three 93 (31%) respondents indicated that the effects on them are absenteeism, and poor performance during class test, exercises and examinations. Again 164 (55%) respondents attributed their lack of interest in working hard at their assignments to the ineffective guidance and counselling. To 182 (61%) respondents, the effect is lack of joy on their part in being at school. To 86 (29%) respondents, they are always ill-prepared for examinations and thus resort to various forms of examination malpractices. It can be

seen that students lack of joy in being at the Polytechnic, lack of interest to work hard and write assignments, etc and absenteeism and poor academic performance rank highest in that order as the consequences of ineffective guidance and counselling programmes at the polytechnic. As many as 242 (81%) of the respondents said they are unwilling to recommend the polytechnic to their friends and other prospective students.

ITEM	RESPONDENTS (LECTURERS)	FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES				
		1	2	3	4	TOTAL
What are the effects if students are not effectively counseled on their problems?	NUMBER	11	14	12	13	20
	PERCENTAGE	55	70	60	65	100

Table 10: Data on the effects from lecturers' perspective

KEYS FROM 1 – 4

- 1 – Rampant absenteeism
- 2 – Poor attitude to work, attendance, writing of assignment
- 3 – Poor class contribution
- 4 – Students resort to examination malpractices because of ill-preparation for examination

From the point of view of lecturers according to Table 10, the absence of effective counselling of students on their problems affect the students in four ways – 14 (70%) respondents said students show poor attitude to work, 13 (65%) said students resort to examination malpractices because of their poor preparation for examination since they are always thinking about their problems; 12 (60%) said students made poor contributions during lecturers; and finally 11 (55%) said students involved themselves in rampant absenteeism.

3.8. Research Question 8

What proportion of the student's desire the services of formal counsellors in the resolution of their problems?

Data in Table 11 show the desire or otherwise of the students for formal counsellor service on the basis of their gender, age year in the polytechnic and marital status.

CRITERIA	YES Number	YES %	NO Number	NO %	INDEFFERENT Number	INDEFFERENT %	TOTAL Number of Respondents
FIRST YEAR STUDENTS	92	92	5	5	3	3	100
SECOND YEAR STUDENTS	90	90	6	6	4	4	100
THIRD YEAR STUDENTS	85	85	7	7	8	8	100
TOTAL	267	89	18	6	15	5	300

Table 11: Percentage distributions of responses indicating desire for counselor assistance to address student problems

Table 11 reveals the following:

1. Of the total of 100 first year students studied, 92 (92%) responded 'Yes' to the Question, 5 (5%) responded 'No' and 3 (3%) did not respond at all.
2. Of the total of 100 second year students studied, 90 (90%) responded 'Yes' to the question, 6 (6%) responded 'No' and 4 (4%) were undecided.
3. Of the total of 100 third year students studied 85 (85%) responded 'Yes' to the question, 7 (7%) respond in the negative and 8 (8%) were indifferent.
4. Of the total of 300 marketing students studied, 267 (89%) responded 'Yes' to the question, 18 (6%) responded 'No' and 15 (5%) remained indifferent.

In conclusion, a great proportion of respondents indicated that the services of formal school counsellors in the resolution of students' problems are desired. Only a small proportion indicated indifference to formal counselor assistance in solving students' problems.

4. Discussion and Implications of the Findings

4.1. Gender and Age Differences of Students' Problems

The study revealed little difference between the problems of male and female students. Both male and female respondents scored more than 80 percent in all the eleven areas of worry. Except boy/girl relations, all cases considered showed older students expressing more concerns than younger students doubtless because of greater pressure on them to make education/vocational decisions when they are about to complete school, and to develop skills to enable them interact favourably with other adults in society. The study also revealed that both younger and older students have identical ranking for finance, future, moral/religious concern, and boy/girl relations from first to fourth positions respectively. The last three concerns – relations to people, adjustment to school and family issues were identical for both older and younger students.

4.2. Marital Status Differences of Students' Problems

The study revealed that differences exist between the concerns of married students and unmarried students. Except in the case of boy/girl relations, married students consistently expressed greater frequency of worry than the unmarried students have. In most cases the married students were older than the single students and the factors leading to increased pressures on older students may apply here. Apart from this the problems of finances for oneself and dependants, and increased pressure and obligation on one, as one's social responsibilities increase, also lead to increased worry of many married students. Worry about finance is the most prominent in both marital statuses followed by worry about the future and then moral and religious issues. Both marital statuses again have identical rank orders for worries about adjustment to school and relationship to people.

4.3. Differences of Students' Problems According to Year in the Polytechnic

The research revealed that continuing students consistently expressed greater frequency of worry than fresh students. As regards ranking of worries by one's year in the polytechnic, the study revealed that both fresh students and continuing students rank identically the problems of finance, future, moral and religious issues, boy/girl relations to people, adjustment to school and family issues.

4.4. The Desire of Students for Counsellor Services

The study indicated that more than 85 percent of the students desire the establishment of effective Guidance and Counselling programmes to help them solve their personal and moral problems. Forde (2000) supported this by indicating in her studies on the worries of Ghanaian adolescents that over 80 percent of the respondents would appreciate counsellor services to resolve their problems. According to The Guardian (2015), demand for counselling services on campuses in UK has risen by a third since 2008. In the University of Glasgow, for instance, the number of students seeking counseling has doubled.

To conclude it can be said that while such factors as age, year in the polytechnic and marital status lead to differences in students' worries, the factor of gender is not important as far as difference in students' worries are concerned. Both male and female students have similar worries. The most important areas of worry to all the respondents are finance, future, moral/religious issues and boy/girl relations. The problems least worried about are relationship to people, adjustment to school and family issues. Family problems were consistently ranked last.

4.5. Implications of the Results

Having seen that students are encumbered by several problems which have serious toll on their academic performance, there is the implication that the Cape Coast Polytechnic authorities must wake up to their responsibilities to establish and ensure effective guidance and counselling programmes. This will enable students cope with or overcome their social, psychological and physical needs (Alache, 1991; Forde, 2000). Since majority of the students expressed their desire for counsellor services, the implication is that they are faced with problems unknown to the polytechnic authorities. According to (Forde, 2000), the authorities must bear in mind not only the fact of individual differences but also the fact that students with similar characteristics tend to have similar worries. The findings that male students have more concerns about sex and sexuality than their female counterparts call for the polytechnic counsellors to pay particular attention to this situation especially when dealing with the males, knowing that the males generally do not disclose their worries as readily as females do. The counselor should make every effort to ensure that the sexual worries of this group are not neglected. The assistance of their significant others could be solicited and good use may also be made of peer counselling (Forde, 2000).

Forde, (2000) stressed that the findings that the frequency of expressed worry increased with age also constitutes a clear call for school counsellors to interact and intervene especially with older adolescents before they complete their programme when it might be too late to help them. Their concerns should be addressed early enough to forestall later crisis. Forde (2000) stated:

“While the majority of students may be in varying degrees of need for counsellor service, only a few may have the courage to take the initiative and disclose their problems to school helpers. The implication then is that the counsellors must make every effort to be approachable to those they seek to help. Frequent random invitations to students and greater effort by counsellors to

provide a congenial environment in the counselling process may help these young people to lose some of their reserve and take advantage of counsellor services where they are available.”

The fact that students’ problems can be minimized through a strong counselling base has been confirmed by the University of Oxford. University of Oxford (2015) states that the Counselling Service helps students gain understanding and insight into any difficulties they may be experiencing, to develop emotional resilience and put into effect real changes, enabling them to fulfill their academic and personal potential. Warwick Counselling Service (2015) provides examples of comments from those who benefited from the University’s Counselling Service as follows to lend support to the assertion that a strong counselling base can minimize students’ problems:

“I identified the origin of my problem and developed ways of tackling the issue”

“Counselling helped me to understand that what I was feeling wasn’t so strange and that talking about it can really help”

“Counselling helped me understand why I was feeling particular emotions and helped me get to the bottom of certain areas I was finding difficult to explore”

“I feel like I understand myself and my thoughts better. I understand the impact of my negative thoughts and am now developing strategies to overcome them”

Chendo (1991) stated, for instance, that some students use drugs because they have not been counselled on the consequences of drug abuse. Speaking at the 8th congregation of the Presbyterian University College (PUC) on 12th December 2014 at Abetifi in the Kwahu East District of Ghana, Professor Adow Obeng, President of the University, emphasised the importance of guidance and counselling in ensuring graduates choose the right programmes and exhibit excellence particularly, good communication skills and critical thinking, to become relevant for the job market. Professor Adow Obeng observed that effective career guidance programmes in secondary and tertiary schools could help reduce graduate unemployment. He added that:

“Lack of effective guidance and counselling programmes to provide the needed information about the job market and direction to graduates has contributed to the high rate of graduate unemployment. There was a mismatch between the output of universities and the labour needs of industry because most of private universities are offering similar programmes leading to over production of graduates in some of the programmes.”

Making reference to the People’s Daily Graphic, (February 28, 1992, p.7), Adusei (1996) says some people erroneously think that Guidance and counselling is needed only for pupils and students who are poor either economically or academically. The newspaper maintains that students who are brilliant in all areas but do not have courage to pursue further studies to acquire skills in the areas also need guidance and counselling. Teachers must also understand their pupils and students and how best they can learn and behave for their optimum development. Besides helping the teachers in this wise, guidance and counselling services also help them to plan meaningful programmes of activities that will meet the needs of individual pupils and students. Finally, since life begins at home, and parents play a major role in moulding their children to be useful citizens in their community, guidance and counselling services are also needed by parents, especially in child raising and family living. Thus guidance and counselling services are needed both at home and school.

Many issues constitute worry for students for which they need counselling – depression; anxiety, nervousness, worrying; schoolwork and grade; relationship with romantic partner; self-esteem, self-confidence; procrastination, getting motivated, managing loss; relationship with family and parents; decision about major career; concentration; irritability (Michigan State University, 2014). Healy and Reily (in ERIC Digest, 2002) indicated that students of all ages need career exploration assistance. Students of higher education institutions need counselling for such problems as: (a) searching for job opportunities; (b) matching what students learn with labour needs of industry (Obeng, 2014); (c) family issues impeding the educational achievement of many female adult students (Solomon, as cited in Walther et al, 2002); and (d) role demands vis-à-vis career demands hindering educational advancement of many female adult students (Money & Andrew, in ERIC Digest, 2002).

5. Recommendations

It is evident that a strong counselling base can minimize students’ problems. The following recommendations are made by this paper.

1. The polytechnic authorities must provide a counselling centre where students can visit and receive counselling services along the same lines as those provided by the top universities in the world including the Universities of Warwick and Oxford. Essuman (as cited in Boham, 2005) outlines, as follows, the various guidance programmes offered by counselling centres of the three top universities in Ghana which are worthy of consideration:
 - a. University of Ghana – counselling of students; occupational orientation and placement services; administration of vocational training schemes for Sciences, Geography and Administration studies; orientation programmes for secondary schools on university courses; preventive counselling programmes for students
 - b. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology – orientation courses for freshmen; awareness campaign for students; counselling seminars; career conventions for second cycle schools
 - c. University of Cape Coast – counselling services to staff, students and to institutions outside the university; seminars, workshops, conferences and orientation courses to the university community and beyond; collection and dissemination of educational, vocational and personal-social information to students and staff.

Warwick Counselling Service (2015) provides the following guidance and counselling services:

- a. Email counselling – helpful to be able to write down issues and see your own words so you can reflect on them, and useful if you want to take advantage of when you choose to allocate time to your issues

- b. Face-to-face individual counselling – beneficial if you want to talk through your issues in person, at a pre-scheduled appointment time.
 - c. Group therapy – valuable if you want to consider how you function in relation to others and if you are keen to invest in long term personal development.
 - d. Self-help resources – helpful if you want to find out more about your issues and seek strategies to help yourself; accessible 24/7 and with links to a range of resources.
 - e. Specific issue workshop – suitable if you want to learn about specific issues in a supportive learning environment with a small group of others who are interested in developing strategies to help manage similar concerns.
- Oxford Students (2015) outlines the following guidance and counselling services provided by the University:
- a. Individual counselling – working individually with a counsellor in a meaningfully focused and brief way.
 - b. Workshops – a range of workshops are available to help you build skills to respond to the demands of university.
 - c. Group counselling – explore how you relate to others and benefit from their support and experience.
 - d. Supportive resources – access resources which are used to support students at Oxford.
 - e. Advice for staff – for those with concerns about the mental welfare of a student to ensure support is provided early.
 - f. Advice for parents – advice on supporting your child and the support available at the University.
2. The workload of the lecturers must be such as to enable them have ample time to counsel students since effective counselling requires ample time. The researcher suggests a maximum of eight hours a week per lecturer.
 3. Professional counsellors must be employed by the polytechnic to man the counselling centre. The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (2013) has stated that counselling is a professional activity that utilizes an interpersonal relationship to enable people to develop self-understanding and to make changes in their lives. Like the minister or physician or any other educated professional, the counsellor must learn specialized procedures and be responsible for their application in the light of a broad knowledge of his/her field. Thus, besides personal qualities, the counsellor should be very knowledgeable in a wide range of disciplines, some of which are psychology, appraisal methods, counselling theory, and vocational development theory. Parson (cited in ZeePedia.com, 2015) believes that the vocational counsellor should have the following traits: (a) a practical working knowledge of psychology; (b) an experience involving human contact; (c) an ability to deal with young people; (d) a knowledge of requirements and conditions of success; (e) information about courses and means of preparation; (d) scientific method analysis.
 4. Lecturers, the rector, liaison officers and the polytechnic nurses are all crucial for the achievement of guidance goals. The development of a team approach to guidance programme is strongly advocated by the researcher.
 5. More lecturers should be trained in counselling techniques, skills and attitudes. They should be sponsored to attend formal counselling conferences to update their knowledge.
 6. The counselling programme should be comprehensive, collaborative and developmental (Paisley, 2001). They should be able to (a) serve all pupils and their caregivers, (b) encourage the attainment of the prescribed student competencies, (c) offer an assortment of services, and (d) provide a remediation and prevention (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000, 2001). Continued collaboration should be facilitated by the administrative staff (Sink, 2003). There is the need for ongoing evaluation to ensure that the programme is fostering relevant outcomes (Lapan, 2001). For students to do well at school, comprehensive counselling programmes must support collaboration and partnership among school personnel and leading stakeholders (e.g., parents, community agency representatives (Littrell & Peterson, 2001). The school counsellor should design, implement and further refine the comprehensive programme so as to serve all children adequately (Sink, 2003).
 7. Counsellors should regularly conduct need assessment surveys to determine students' current problems. The findings will help them to determine objectives of the guidance and counselling programmes for the year and also redirect the programme for the better.
 8. Guidance and Counselling must not be carried out without adequate financial reward for all involved if the programme is to succeed.

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