

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**DEAF STUDENTS ACCESS TO COUNSELLING SERVICES AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

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**JULY, 2023**

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I, **TITUS KPIERO-ZUOMEH DERY**, hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work, and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: .....

Date: .....



### Supervisors' Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on the supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name: Dr. Adam Awini

Supervisor's Signature: .....

Date: .....

## **DEDICATION**

To the relentless pursuit of knowledge, the burning curiosity that fuels my mind, the sleepless nights and countless hours of research, the mentors and guides who illuminated my path, the unsung heroes who provided unwavering support, the friends and family who believed in my stubborn spirit driving me against all odds towards this dream, this thesis is dedicated.



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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study sought to explore deaf students access to counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba. The study was underpinned by Murray's system of needs theory, phenomenological research was adopted as the design and a purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve deaf students and two counsellors for the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically via verbatim transcriptions, coding, drawing of themes and discussions of findings. The findings of the study indicated that deaf students have unique counselling needs such as educational needs, financial, health and personal needs that are often not adequately addressed by the existing counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba. The findings again revealed that deaf students often perceived counselling as mere advise-giving, not relevant for the needs and is meant for the hearing students only. Deaf students however, as revealed by the students resort to accessing counselling services from lecturers, church leaders, peers and sign language interpreters who are most times closer to them and who again can communicate with them through sign language. Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that the University of Education, Winneba develop a specialized counselling service tailored towards identifying and meeting the needs of the deaf student.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Every human at a point in time need counselling and deaf students are no exception. Access to counselling services is a critical component of students' well-being, and academic success, but for deaf students, barriers to accessing these services can be significant. Counselling services are essential for individuals who may be experiencing a wide range of mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health concerns. According to Eshun, (2016), counselling needs can be explained as certain issues an individual may be faced with that would require assistance to overcome and manage the situation. These needs for deaf students are the various life situations confronting them in their pursuit towards academic excellence; which include language barriers, difficulties in adjusting the educational curricula, financial difficulties, poor social skills, and poor health care (Alutu, 2012). Deaf students' counselling needs cannot be solved successfully without the use of effective counselling intervention programmes (Eshun, 2016).

In the context of this study, access to counselling has been conceptualized as the availability and ability of deaf students to seek for and find counselling services to enhance their academic, personal and social performance so as to adjust to the University community. Deaf students have unique experiences and needs that may influence their mental health, and thus, their need for counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). For instance, they may feel disconnected from their hearing peers, face discrimination or stigma, and have communication barriers that make it difficult to express their needs and feelings freely (Hintermair & Kienle, 2017). As such, it is essential to understand their counselling needs to provide appropriate support for their academic and personal success in the University community. According to Elzouki,

et al (2011), deafness is the total inability to hear; this may be caused by factors like ageing, exposure to noise, illness, chemicals and physical trauma. Some people may be born deaf whilst others acquired deafness after birth due to many factors. Sheridan (2008), defines deafness as a hearing impairment that is so severe that the person is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.

Generally, University life exposes deaf students to transitional challenges in personal autonomy, social relationships, and compatibility among roommates, feeding, hostels and landlords/ladies' issues, adjustments to academic programmes, all of which could affect their performance and stay in the University (Matemilola, 1991). Individuals may seek counselling for various reasons, however, whatever the reason may be, clients seek counselling to be able to address certain issues they may be faced with in their lives. Some situations that may cause individuals to seek counselling are bereavement, illness, abuse, relationship and family issues among others (Abubakar, 2020). In these cases, people may be sympathetic and empathetic towards the individual because they are events that may happen to every individual at a point in their lives.

The University of Education, Winneba, admits qualified students into their various collections of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes irrespective of their health conditions, different abilities, or social or physical status. The University again, has professional sign language interpreters at the Department of Special Education, Faculty of Educational Studies who help in translating lectures, taking notes for persons with deafness. Two students who are deaf first gained admission into the University of Education, Winneba in the year 2006, this number has increased over the years, currently, deaf students are found in eight different departments within the University of Education, Winneba. These increasing numbers come with varying counselling needs, for example, some needs counselling on maintaining healthy lifestyles on campus, some

needs counselling on improving their personal studies, building positive relationship to facilitates effective academic experiences.

Researchers on deaf students' access to counselling services have conceptualized their studies in several different ways. For instance, a study conducted by Eshun (2016) on assessing counselling needs and services of hearing-impaired children of the Cape Coast School for the deaf revealed that deaf students have educational needs which include learning difficulty and difficulty in making academic choices and needed counselling to improve their study skills and academic performance. Abubakar (2020) conducted a study on determining the counselling needs of Polytechnic students. He conceptualized counselling needs and services into themes, which are; counselling needs of Polytechnic students, perceptions of Polytechnic students about counselling and ways students solve their personal and academic problems.

A study by Takirambudde et al. (2013) explored the counselling needs of deaf students in India, where they faced similar challenges as their Ghanaian counterparts. The researchers used a survey design to collect data from 83 deaf students, and the results showed that deaf students in India required counselling services to address academic and socio-emotional issues. Academic issues included understanding academic content and managing academic deadlines, while socio-emotional issues included managing emotions, dealing with negative experiences, and developing positive relationships. These studies show that deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) may have similar needs as deaf students in other countries. As such, it is crucial to provide counselling services that address these needs to promote their academic and personal success.

Legters and Mcdill (1994) argued that all students in University similarly face the challenge of dealing with peer pressure. As peer pressure is most powerful on a University campus, it is also a common problem which pressured deaf students into

drinking alcohol, having illicit sex, and trying drugs to get their peers' approval. The timely interventions of a counsellor would create an awareness of these abusive substances and illicit activities in students. For instance, they may be pressured to send and watch pornographic materials online, and a host of other items. On the academic front, deaf students are challenged by new learning, teaching and assessment, they experience anxiety about course work and get disappointed by a drop-in grade after the first set of exams (Eshun, 2016). All these are some of the needs deaf students have that call for counselling intervention to ameliorate the situation which may have a heavy weight on their academic performance. To provide effective counselling services to deaf students at UEW, it is essential to understand their perceptions of the services available to them. Positive perceptions may encourage more deaf students to use counselling services, leading to improved academic and personal outcomes. Conversely, negative perceptions may discourage deaf students from seeking counselling or lead to dropout from counselling services prematurely.

The recent past has seen Ghanaian University students continually overlooking their institutional counselling services, despite their severe need for support some of which are stated above, which has increased to a worrying extent (Reis & Colbert, 2004). Cultural factors generally underpin deaf students' access to counselling services, promoting their preference for prayer camp services, and traditional healing centers, relying on their peers for advice instead (Osafo et al., 2015). Fear of social stigma and rejection also deter students from participating in counselling center activities on various Ghanaian University campuses, deaf students in Ghanaian schools seem not to appreciate and access counselling services despite their severe need for support, their lack of access could be a result of fear of social stigma, communication barriers, and lack of awareness of the services (Abubakar, 2020).

Despite the counselling needs of deaf students at University of Education, Winneba, their perception can serve as a barrier that may hinder their access to counselling services. For instance, when deaf students perceive a communication barrier because most counsellors are hearing, this can prevent them from accessing counselling services. Additionally, deaf students may lack awareness or knowledge of the counselling services available to them (Wilson et al., 2019).

Despite the availability of counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba, deaf students face several challenges seeking services. These barriers may contribute to negative perceptions regarding counselling services or lead to inadequate support for their mental health problems (Kay, 2008). Additionally, when interpreters are used, they may not be qualified in mental health fields or may not fully understand the deaf community and culture to enable them effectively assist deaf students to access counselling services. The commonest of the factors confronting deaf students' access to counselling services is the language barrier and their inability to orally express themselves freely. For instance, if a counsellor who is hearing and does not understand and use sign language has to communicate with a deaf person, there may be little or no progress thereby limiting the deaf student's ability to express freely their concerns and challenges, which distort the access to the services since it will be difficult for them to understand each other; therefore, the needs and expectations of the deaf person will not be explored and met (Reis & Colbert, 2004).

Though, the University community has professional counsellors at the counselling unit to help and support all students irrespective of their different abilities to address their personal and academic challenges, however, are the counselling needs of deaf students identified? How do they access these counselling services? Therefore, this study was carried out to investigate access to counselling services by deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba. These challenges, when not appropriately



addressed, may lead to more severe mental health problems, delayed or inadequate support, negative perceptions of counselling services, and reduced academic and support from counsellors or their community members, leading to feelings of personal outcomes.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The University of Education, Winneba admits qualified students from different backgrounds and with different conditions to pursue various programmes, some of whom are students with deafness. Students who enroll in the University should excel academically and complete their studies within the scheduled time. Deaf students often encounter many challenges that could interfere with their performance and ability to function effectively to complete their studies within the stipulated time (Eshun, 2016). Deafness comes with communication challenges that the society within which deaf individuals find themselves are not able to adequately accommodate. This has generated many misconceptions by the hearing community about deaf individuals because they are often not understood due to the language barrier. Some non-disabled societies may assume that deaf people are handicapped and are therefore labelled as having a damaged life (Kirk, et al., 2003). Persons with deafness in Ghana can therefore be marginalized to some extent from mainstream society with their unique needs not clearly identified or properly addressed. The fact that deaf students deviate from what is considered normal concerning hearing abilities suggests that they have some specific needs such as information dissemination, counselling, guidance, placement, moral needs and appraisal services that ought to be met through counselling support. These needs may include identity formation, moral decision-making, and coping with societal stigma and discrimination (Allen & Hall, 2011). For example, deaf students may experience feelings of isolation and marginalization from mainstream society, and may struggle with issues related to their Deaf identity.

According to Harris and Rees (2017), deaf students have counselling needs as a result of being educated in an inclusive public institution such as health needs, academic needs, oppression, abuse among others that are not met which could be attributed to a lack of effective counselling services which make them feel unaccepted by society. Counselling needs for deaf people when properly identified and effective services delivered by a professional counsellor are expected to transform the perception of clients, modify their maladjusted behaviours. It will further help them understand their personality and special competence, re-direct their passion and energy to profitable avenues. According to Ocansey (2018) counselling will enable deaf people discover their abilities and capabilities, help deal with their emotional problems and ways to cope and adjust to the mainstream society. Access to counselling services are very crucial to all students including those with deafness, however, my observation at UEW revealed some interesting ways deaf students access counselling services such as, asking their hearing peers for assistance, going to lecturers for counselling, relaying on their religious members for counselling.

An anecdotal record has it that, deaf students often express concerns about their struggle to cope academically, health, oppression, verbal abuse and social acceptance from peers which makes them feel segregated though in an inclusive educational setting. These students appeared to have an ineffective study skills or motivation towards learning, contributing during lectures, and always ready to accept what their hearing mates say during lecture. Again, during my first-year study as a voluntary interpreter at the University of Education, Winneba campus from February 2022 to September 2022, some deaf students used to come for further explanations of the content being taught during lectures, admitted in such encounters that they have a lot of struggles which they wish to see a counsellor, however, they would not want to go for counselling with an interpreter, since it is confidential. The availability and competence

of interpreters may vary, which can affect the quality of communication and the overall experience of counseling (Adebayo, 2007). It is however, not clear what the counselling needs of students who are deaf are, how deaf students access counselling services and the challenges they encounter in seeking counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba. These, when found out would ensure some modalities are put in place to enable counsellors to meet the counselling needs of students who are deaf through the organization of the appropriate guidance and counselling programmes that will directly be beneficial to deaf students in the University of Education, Winneba.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to examine deaf students access to counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

The following research objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. To find out the counselling needs of deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba
2. To examine the perception of deaf students regarding counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba
3. To find out how deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba access counselling services
4. To find out the challenges deaf students encounter in seeking counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba

### **1.5 Questions of the study**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are some of the counselling needs of deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba?

2. What are deaf students' perceptions of counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba?
3. How do deaf students access counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba?
4. What challenges do students who are deaf encounter in seeking counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The results of the study would help in revealing the various counselling needs of deaf at the University of Education, Winneba. This would enable authorities of the counselling unit to develop appropriate approaches to meeting their counseling needs. The study would bring to light how deaf students access counselling services at the University. This will inform authorities on barriers to accessing services for their needs and develop strategies that can improve the availability and accessibility of counselling services to these students. This research will additionally help in identifying areas where the University management can devote resources in making these services more accessible and complete for deaf students.

The results of the study would reveal how deaf student perceive counselling services at the University. Perception of deaf students on counselling services is an essential area of study to understand their views and experiences on counseling, this research will give an insight into the perception of deaf students on counselling services. That would help in improving and educating deaf students on the needs to access counselling for their needs. The results of the study would again highlight the challenges of deaf students in accessing counseling services and ways to overcome these challenges. This would draw the attention of the counselling unit authorities to the specific challenges that deaf students face while accessing counseling services so that appropriate remedies are put in place to address these challenges. Finally, it will

form a part of the existing literature for future researchers in the same or similar area of study.

### **1.7 Delimitations**

There are many needs of students in the Universities of Education, Winneba, this study focused only on identifying deaf students access and needs for counselling services for their needs at the University of Education, Winneba. The study was delimited geographically to the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana because the institution admits and trains qualified students with deafness together with hearing students. The study again, was delimited to only deaf students who have counselling needs and have accessed it before at the University of Education, Winneba, who can better tell of their experiences. The study was further delimited to the research questions raised; counselling needs of deaf students, deaf students access to counselling services, perception of deaf students and the challenges deaf students encounter in seeking counselling services because these variables are key for deaf seeking counselling service.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

A key limitation of this study was established by the poor cooperation I received from the research participants. This affected the sample size for the study which was intended to be fifteen deaf students but was later changed to twelve as a result of poor participant turn up on the scheduled interview date. Again, the level 400 deaf students who have more experiences to share were on internship as at the time of data collection, they were therefore excluded from the participants. These could possibly affect the generalization of the study findings.

### **1.9 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Access:** To be able to find and get what one needs.

**Counselling:** The process of helping an individual to be capable of solving his problems.

**Counselling needs:** The assistance an individual requires to self-actualize.

**Counselling service:** This is a service rendered to individuals who require special assistance in dealing with specific concerns and also to help them make informed decisions.

**Deaf:** The inability of an individual to hear or make use of the auditory nerves.

**Deaf students:** Students whose hearing loss prevents them from perceiving sound and understanding speech and whose mode of communication is sign language.

### **1.10 Organization of the study**

This thesis was organized into six chapters. Chapter one comprised the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations and limitations of the study, operational definition of key terminologies used in the study. Chapter two focused on the literature review considering the research objectives and the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter three dealt with the study methodology which were; philosophical underpinning, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling technique, an instrument used in data collection and analysis, and description, trustworthiness and ethical consideration. Chapter four presented and analyses the data collected, chapter five interpreted and discussed the various results gathered, whereas chapter six provided the summary, conclusions, recommendations of the study and suggestion for further studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the literature reviewed for the study. The literature was reviewed from relevant sources such as research articles, refereed journals, and books. The literature reviewed first covered the theoretical framework and the review of the key themes raised in the research questions. The areas covered were:

- **Theoretical Framework**

Murray's System of Need Theory

- **Conceptual Review**

Concept of Counselling

- **Empirical Review**

1. Counselling Needs of the Deaf Students
2. Deaf Students' Perceptions of Counselling Services
3. Deaf Student's Access to Counselling Service
4. Challenges Deaf Students Encounter Seeking Counselling Services
5. Summary of Literature Review

#### **2.2 Theoretical Review**

##### **Murray's (1938) System of Need**

Henry Murray, an American psychologist 1938 developed a system that described personality in terms of needs. This system organized personality in terms of motives, presses and needs. Murray (1938) defined a need as a potentiality or readiness to respond in a certain way under certain given circumstances. He further explains a need as a "construct representing a force in the brain that organizes our perception, understanding, and behaviour in such a way as to change an unsatisfying situation and increase our satisfaction. A need may be aroused by an internal state, such as hunger or by an external

stimulus, such as food” (Engler, 2003, p. 290). Murray provided a different approach to understanding the orientation towards the future in people’s behaviour. He internalized goals, calling them ‘needs’, and although he assumed that a finite set of needs could characterize all people, he felt that individual differences would lie in the extent to which each person could be described as being motivated by one or another need (Pervin, 1990). According to Flett (2008), Murray said everyone has the same basic set of needs but individuals differ in their priority of those needs, while some needs are temporary and transient, others are deeply seated in our nature. Murray believed that the study of personality should look at a person’s personality over the course of their lifespan. Murray pointed out that even though each need is unique, there are some similarities between them.





**Table 1****Murray's List of Needs and their Description**

NEED DESCRIPTION	MURRAY'S LIST OF NEEDS
Abasement	To succeed at a hard task
Achievement	To relate to others
Affiliation	To attack and fight
Aggression	To behave independently
Autonomy	To succeed at a hard task
Blame avoidance	To avoid blame and obey the rules
Construction	To build or create
Contrarians	To be unique
Counteraction	To face failure with continued effort
Deference	To respect and conform
Dominance	To govern and direct
Exhibition	To show off and attract attention
Exposition	To provide information, educate
Nurturance	To stay away from danger
Order	To guard against embarrassment
Rejection	To give help
Sentience	To organize things
Sex	To exclude others
Understand	To be erotic
Dominance	To seek help
Exhibition	To seek comprehension

**Source: Adapted from Engler (2003, p.291)**

According to Cherry (2015), Murray's human psychogenic needs function on an unconscious level, but they can play a major role in an individual's personality, however, not all of the needs are present in everyone, and they vary in their strength and intensity. Murray also believed that there is a hierarchy of needs therefore where two or more needs conflict, the most important needs will be met first. Some needs are also prepotent, that is to say, they become very urgent if they are not satisfied, these include the need for food and the need to eliminate waste. Characterizing an individual's

behaviour simply based on needs is incomplete therefore, Murray introduced the concept of the press which may be referred to as forces from objects or persons within the environment that help or hinder an individual in reaching goals. Stimuli that arouse needs, motivate the individual to look for or avoid certain kinds of press such as cultural discord, poverty, encouragement, friendship, sexual abuse and illness (Engler, 2003).

### **2.2.1 Implication of the Theory to the Study**

Henry Murray's system of needs is of relevance to the study because it addresses the needs that all individuals, disabled or not should desire. These needs like the need for achievement, affiliation, dominance and harm avoidance are very real in the sense that every individual desire them at one point in their lives. Even though most of the needs are positive, there are a few negative ones and as much as the deaf individuals desire the positive needs, they may also experience the negative ones especially due to frustrations or anxiety relating to their special condition. These negative needs include; the need for aggression, counteraction, dominance, rejection and sex. The deaf are generally quite aggressive. This is because they find themselves in a world that is dominated by the 'hearing' and due to the language barrier between these two groups, the deaf is always misunderstood and this causes them to be aggressive. As students within a discourse environment, aggressiveness is not needed to secure their well-being and academic progress. Therefore, if deaf students are counselled appropriately, they will realize that they do not need to flare up at the least provocation over a need or a desire that there are unable to meet.

Again, because deaf students feel the need to be respected by others, dominating others may not be the best. Their views ought to be respected and they must not try to control each other. As an adult individual, the need for rejection is not acceptable because it involves being snobbish and proud which is not acceptable, especially for students. This may also be a common need found among the deaf, this is because they often feel rejected by society because of their disability, the deaf students tend to reject, snob or be proud towards other hearing individuals around them who may not necessarily reject them. Effective counselling will help deaf students to develop positive feelings about themselves, and ensure high self-esteem, self-acceptance, positivity and confidence. An individual with high self-worth shall be able to face challenges in life, accept failure and is open with people (Rogers, 1959). However, if an individual's view is negative, it is known as low self-esteem and may lead to lack of confidence and pessimism. The ideal self is what a person is what they would like to be. Individuals like the deaf must believe in themselves. If their self-image is positive, that is to say that, if he sees himself in a positive manner, he is able to avoid depression and other problems that may come up as a result of his low self-esteem. If they lack self-confidence, optimism and positivity, it could go a long way to affect their academic and educational life, their personal/social and their vocational life. With the help of a counsellor and the provision of appropriate counselling services, the deaf student will develop a positive self-concept of himself/herself, which will boost his/her confidence and assist him/her in his/her everyday life at the University.

## **2.3 Conceptual Review**

### **2.3.1 The Concept of Counselling**

The term counselling, according to Surbhi (2016), is defined as talking therapy, in which a person (client) discusses freely his/her problems and shares feelings, with the counsellor, who advises or helps the client in dealing with the problems. It aims at discussing those problems which are related to personal or socio- psychological issues, causing emotional pain or mental instability that makes you feel uneasy. The counsellor listens to the problems of the client with empathy and discusses it, in a confidential environment. It is not a one-day process, but is a process that involves many sessions.

Counseling is not about giving advice or making a judgement, but helping the client to see clearly the root of problems and identify the potential solutions to the issues. The counsellor also changes the viewpoint of the client, to help him take the right decision or choose a course of action. It also helps the client to remain intuitive and positive in the future. Counseling emphasizes the aspects of increasing client's responsibility for their own lives (Regis, 2006).

The aim of counselling according to Egbo (2015) is always to assist the client in better understand him/herself in relation to the present and future problems. Counselling is an in-depth interaction between the professional counsellor and the counsellee that focus basically on areas of nurturing and healing emotionally, problem management, decision making, crises management, support and life skills training. Egbochuwku (2008) defined counselling as a facilitative two-way collaborative exchange of ideas with a supportive relationship that enables clients to explore their problems. According to Kinai (2006), counselling is a face-to-face human encounter whose outcome is greatly dependent on the quality of counseling relationship. To Kinai (2006), counselling is a dynamic relationship between the counselor and the counsellee where the counselor establishes rapport but maintains a psychological distance to avoid an overlay emotional

involvement. It is a teaching-learning process where the client learns new behaviour and attitudes through cognitive reasoning and behaviour modification (Kinai, 2006). Teachers in charge of guidance and counseling are to coordinate student counseling and handle cases referred to them from peer counselors and other teachers (Kanga, 2017). According to Oviogbodun (2015) counselling can be the procedures in assisting an individual to solve his problems. Counselling is an interaction or relationship between two or few individuals, the client counsellor relationship is of building trust. Guidance in schools is that area of the school's provision that is specifically directed towards helping pupils realize their full potential in preparing for adult and working life (O'Concubhair, 2011). Counseling is a learning process in which a counselor helps an individual or individuals learn, understand themselves and their environment and be in a position to choose the right type of behaviors that will help them develop, grow, progress, ascend, mature and step up, educationally, vocationally and socio personally (Egbo, 2013)

According to Surbhi (2016), is defined as a talking therapy, in which a person (client) discusses freely his/her problems and shares feelings, with the counsellor, who advises or helps the client in dealing with the problems. It aims at discussing those problems which are related to personal or socio- psychological issues, causing emotional pain or mental instability which makes one feel uneasy. The counsellor listens to the problems of the client with empathy and discusses it, in a confidential environment. It is not a one-day process, but is a process that involves many sessions.

According to Britannica (2018), the concept of counselling is essentially democratic in that the assumptions underlying its theory and practice are, first, that each individual (hearing or deaf) alike has the right to shape his own destiny and, second, that the relatively mature and experienced members of the community are responsible for ensuring that each person's choice shall serve both his own interests and those of society. It is implicit in the philosophy of counselling that these objectives are

complementary rather than conflicting. The function of those who guide children and young people is not to affect a compromise between the requirements of individuals on the one hand and the demands of the community on the other. Counselling emphasizes the aspects of increasing clients' personal responsibility for their own lives (Regis, 2006). The aim of counselling according to Egbo (2015) is always to assist the client in better understanding him/herself in relation to present and future problems. Counselling is an in-depth interaction between the professional counsellor and the counselee that focus basically on areas of nurturing and healing emotionally, problem management, decision making, crises management, support and life skills training. Egbochuwku (2008) defined counselling as a facilitative two-way collaborative exchange of ideas with a supportive relationship that enables clients to explore their problems. To Kinai (2006), counselling is a dynamic relationship between the counselor and the counselee where the counselor establishes rapport but maintains a psychological distance to avoid an overlay emotional involvement. It is a teaching learning process where the client learns new behaviour and attitudes through cognitive reasoning and behaviour modification (Kinai, 2006). Students who are deaf should identify their individual counselling need and should seek the services of a counsellor whom they can trust in order to help them take a good decision regarding that particular issue. Counselling in the University is that area of the institution's provision that is specifically directed towards helping students realized their full potential in preparing for working life (O'Concubhair, 2018).

#### **2.4 Counselling Needs of Deaf Students**

Studying at the University level is associated with experiencing significant stressors in including stress experienced by new students especially deaf students after transiting to a university life (Julal, 2013). Triggers to this stress can be linked to increased academic demands, constrained finances, lack of employment and personal relationships (Julal,

2013). Entry into educational institutions for first generation learners expose learners to psychological problems that are personal, vocational and social and hence a need for counselling. In retrospect, Frank and Karyn (2005) argue that university undergraduate students are young adults in need of counselling services. Counselling services aim at assisting and supporting students that experience psycho-sociological problems especially as they transit into University life. Arguably, providing counselling services is important in increasing the likelihood of students continuing and completing their studies (Commission for University Education, 2015; Wango, 2015). Consequently, universities have a responsibility and obligation to offer counselling services to all students. In is this regard, Kenyan universities offer social support to students in the form of counselling, financial assistance, health and academic intervention. The Kenyan Commission for University Education (2013) stipulates that counselling is an essential service that must be available to students in institutions of higher education before they are accredited. The purpose of counselling services in learning institutions is to offer psychological support to students (International Association of Students Affairs and Services Professionals, 2001).

However, despite the availability of counselling services in universities, it has been documented that only a minority of university students who experience psychological distress seek professional counselling (Khan & Williams, 2003; Raunic & Xenos, 2008). A study by Raunic and Xenos (2008) found out that only a very small percentage of between 2% to 4% of university students seek counselling services with females being more likely to use them than males. In the process of growth and development, human beings experience many needs that need to be met in order to have optimal growth and development (Berk, 2005). Mutie and Ndambuki (2004) add that in the process of growing up many young people globally are faced with numerous personal problems. Theorists who have contributed idea son human growth and development such as

Erickson, Piaget and Freud have viewed human life span to occur in stages and thus the needs that face a growing person changes from one stage to another.

For instance, in Psychosexual theory, Freud's second stage of development is Anal stage (1-3yrs), and the major need is toilet training, the care giver has the responsibility of training the child at the most appropriate time and manner to avoid fixation which results to a very messy and disorderly person (Berk, 2005; Santrock, 2005). In Erickson's psychosocial theory, each developmental stage has its own developmental task, for instance, at adolescent stage the developmental task is identity versus role confusion (Berk, 2005; Santrock, 2005). The adolescents are faced with deciding who they are, what they are all about and where they are going in life, they confront many new roles from vocational to romantic, as they try to get their real selves (Berk, 2005).

As they adapt to the university life, they may face various challenges ranging from career issues, relationship issues, coping with academic loads, financial issues, negative emotions and challenges of identity. The enormous changes that are taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is as a result of the advent of formal education, technological development and foreign cultures. Education has brought about new needs such as career choices, transitions from one academic level to another, job placements, economic hardships, technological issues mental health issues, and social and personal developmental issues (De Villiers, 2014). When students join universities and colleges for the first time, they are exposed to problems related to transition, orientation, career choice, adjustment and disciplinary restrictions (Muola & Migosi, 2012). Rapid change in work world and labour force, violence in the homes, schools and community, divorce, teenage suicide, sexual experimentation are all challenges that that have great negative effects on the personal, social, career and academic development of all learners (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Okumu, (n.d) concurs with this by saying that the changes are leaving the young people in a state of confusion, uncertain of what to do and alienated.



According to Nayak (2007), the areas that university students seek counselling include; public speaking anxiety, improvement in their study skills, career uncertainty, self-confidence problems, lack of motivation, fear of failure, depression, lack of purpose in life, anxiety and nervousness, love and relationships, physical health problems, alcohol and drug abuse, weight, eating problems, time management, overcoming fear about taking exams, meeting career and educational needs; psychological issues such as suicidal and homicidal thoughts, mood changes, phobias, problem solving, marital issues, traumatic life events and life transitions.

In their study to assess and compare the counselling needs of several sub groups of students at middle East Technical University in Turkey and to investigate the perspectives of the counselling staff about counselling needs of the students and the counselling services, Guneri, Aydin and Skovholt (2003) found in their study that managing ones time, was rated highest in the list of student needs, identifying and planning goals for one's life and concentrating on studies followed next, followed by ending a relationship which took a share of 51% while, getting a job after college took a 50% portion. Knowing self-better came lowest in the listing with 35%. The problem of time management among students may be a contributing factor to the increasing incidents of student unrest in the universities. In a study of the profile of students attending University of Granada in Spain Fernandez (2019) revealed that students rated academic needs; getting easily distracted, need to improve their study skills, problem of time management and problem of test taking anxiety as the areas desiring significant attention. This study sought to determine the counselling needs of students in Kenyan universities.

#### **2.4.1 Educational Needs of Deaf Students**

If one closely examines the problems of deaf students in schools and Universities, one would exactly realize the need for educational counselling. Educational counselling is

related to every aspect of education Schools/ Universities, the curriculum, the methods of instruction, other curricular activities, disciplines, lecturer-deaf-student relationship among others. A study by Couzos et al., (2003) revealed that, deaf students attend school less frequently than other students. They also demonstrated that deaf students have poorer educational outcomes than the wider student population. They suggested that the impairment affects the school performance of deaf students. A study by Akinade (2012) revealed that learning within the school environment relies on language and communication skills. This study also found that students who are deaf or have experienced hearing loss early in life are likely to struggle with most aspects of schooling, and may as a result become disinterested in learning and attend classes less regularly. Ultimately, the impairment may lead to school failure, absenteeism, early school dropout, and reduced employment opportunities. Kyere (2009) revealed that in Ghana, because of their special disability problem, deaf students are enrolled in special tertiary institutions like the University of Education, Winneba, Presbyterian College of Education, Akropong and other tertiary institutions with professional sign language interpreters and specialized courses to meet their needs. These special schools are institutions that are organized to provide for the unique educational needs of special or exceptional students through special methods of communication (Kyere, 2009). However, Meyen's (1978) research on the educational needs of the deaf students states that regardless of the method of communication used, individuals with deafness have developmental problems. He further points out that this affects learning in all academic areas especially in reading skills and language concepts, many of these students will have educational needs of some kind during their education.

Another important aspect of achieving favorable educational outcomes is the study habits of deaf students. Researchers and writers have revealed that students have study habit needs. According to Osa-Edoh and Alutu (2012), most students do not know how

to study, probably because they are not aware of what techniques to apply in the study situation or they study at odd times and in odd places. They revealed that where an individual's studies have an important effect on his/her efficiency because the location and all of its characteristics are stimuli which affect one's studies. They, therefore, believed that good study habits could be developed if the student learnt the right study techniques, appropriate environment, effectively planned time, note-taking and comprehension.

A study by Okoye, Adejumo and Achebe (1990) showed that the study habit needs of deaf students at the University are concerns related to time given to study, concentration during study, reading, assignments and examinations. This means that for a deaf student to acquire a healthy study habit, he must be able to allocate a specific amount of time to his studies and find an area where there will be a higher concentration during studies in order to read effectively, work on assignments and prepare adequately for examinations and since the students who is deaf may not know these techniques they would acquire guidance and counselling services on how to effectively go by the various studies tactics. Eshun (2016) has also found that it is necessary for deaf students to develop very good study habits in order to be able to study effectively. Also, in a study conducted by Ahia and Bradley (1984) on deaf student's needs, found that the ability to concentrate is another factor that hinders the achievement of favourable educational outcomes. One of the most frequently encountered problems of students who are deaf is their inability to concentrate and maintain focus. Robinson (2000) outlined five major conditions that affect concentrations. These include distractions, (internal and external situations) associated with other activities, study materials not convenient and physiological conditions. Oladele (2000) also suggested that in order to avoid external distractions, deaf students should choose a place of study which can stimulate them to study. The essence of this is

that once they are in the school environment associated only with study, distractions such as anxiety and indecision, daydreaming, and mental and physical fatigue that impair the ability to concentrate will be avoided. A study by Wong (2015) revealed that students can fight distraction and maintain concentration by:

- Setting learning goals for each study session, and creating a clear plan for addressing the specific tasks they want to complete during the time they've allotted for studying.
- Maintaining an active-learning mentality and remaining engaged in their studies through such practices as taking notes on their assigned reading, creating study tools (such as diagrams and flashcards), and asking themselves questions about what they have read.
- Breaking down larger assignments into smaller steps or "chunks," so that the process of completing that projects seems less overwhelming.

However, for a deaf student, this may be more tiring than for the hearing students.

This is due to the fact that they need to constantly concentrate and in order to watch an interpreter and understand what is being communicated, the deaf need to maintain concentration and avoid distraction which may be a little difficult

A study by Unachukwu and Igborgbor (1991) revealed that one of the greatest needs of a deaf student is the appropriate programmes or courses to choose and study on the basis of interest, ability and aim in life. It is therefore necessary for students to obtain information through the Universities guidance and counsellors on registrations requirements, chosen a course of study, curriculum content and conditions for studying in the University, fees payment. However, Hadderman (2002) revealed that choice of tertiary institutions' programme is shaped by the wealth, ethnicity and social status of parents and their neighborhoods. Parents normally select courses for their deaf students to offer due to various reasons which include academic, religious or

moral environment and convenience. Due to the fact that institutions for the deaf in the country and in the world at large are limited, it is very important that they are educated on issues related to these institutions to aid in their moving to the next level on the academic ladder. Bratti and Staffolani (2002) observed that the measurement of a deaf student's educational outcomes are the most important indicators of students' future achievement and choice of career. However, Reddy and Talcott (2006) disagree with the assumption that better academic performance leads future gains for the deaf student by stating that the deaf themselves must be well prepared for the future in all aspects not academic performance.

Reddy and Talcott (2006) identified and analysed a number of factors that affect the academic performance of deaf students at university level. These factors include students' effort, previous schooling, parent's educational background, family income, self-motivation of students, age of student, learning preferences and entry qualification of students. They went on to say that anxiety can also have an effect on academic performance therefore, moderate anxiety can facilitate maximum performance by leading to increased motivation, heightened alertness and greater concentration. The choice of programme of study will also aid in the realization of favourable educational outcomes (Staffolani & Bratti, 2002). Deaf students generally make wrong subject choices out of peer pressure, parental influence and teacher influence. They, therefore, need counselling on various courses before they choose to study them at the University level.

#### **2.4.2 Personal and Social Counselling Needs of the Deaf Student**

According to Myers (2005), many deaf have unique personal/social needs in addition to academic issues related to their disability. Current studies suggest a number of personal and social difficulties that come with a diagnosis of a physical disability, emotional disorder, or learning disability which include higher levels of stress and

anxiety, poor social skills, low self-esteem and other behavioural problems. Students with disabilities such as those who have deafness often have negative school experiences, and often demonstrate the lack of anger management strategies, relationship management, and hygienic (Baker, 2000). There is also an increased risk of suffering from depression, conduct disorders, and substance abuse, due to their disability (Rodis & Garrod, 2001). Kish (1991) maintained that students with deafness become more handicapped by their lack of personal and social skills than by their academic skill deficits; and research indicates that strong personal and social skills are necessary for future success as an adult and that these skills can be learned (Schumaker, 1992).

According to Levin (2009), research over the last 40 years has increased understanding about mental health issues among deaf individuals, but communication barriers still frequently lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretation between them and health care professionals. The general personal and social needs are self-esteem, finance, health, interpersonal relationship and sexual information. Calderon and Greenberg (2012) found that a healthy personal and social development is invaluable to success in life, but there are challenges to this goal specific to deaf individuals.

### **2.4.3 Moral Counselling**

Moral values occupy an important place in our life. Sometimes due to influence of diverse factors, students tell lies and indulge in undesirable practices. Moral counselling will help in bringing deaf students on to proper track and helps their all-round development (Levin, 2009). The philosophical and ideological thinking will strengthen the self-confidence and individuality of the students at this critical age of intellectual and social development. According to Boscardin (2001), the peer group formation at the University level is clearly on the basis of their moral development.

Hence, they will be provided with socially desirable and culturally valuable moral support, proper guidance and counselling at any cost.

#### **2.4.4 Health Counselling**

Health is regarded as wealth. Total health such as preventive and curative is the goal of health counselling. The health guidance may be a cooperative effort of the principals, doctors, counsellors/psychologists, teachers, students and parents. For promoting preventive care, the conditions of University hostels, the canteen needs to be checked (Staffolani & Bratti, 2002). Similarly, health education through formal classes and information is essential in school education stages. In the present day, the concern of health counselling also pertains to HIV/AIDs patience. Habits of cleanliness, healthy food habits, awareness of nutrition, prevention of communicable diseases, measures and practices for the prevention of pollution, maintenance of body fitness, and importance of physical exercises among others should be practiced compulsorily at this age level. (Ramakrishnan & Jalajakumari, 2013).

#### **2.4.5 Personal Needs**

These needs are critical in keeping relationships and maintaining friendships with other people. Nyutu (2006) states that personal needs involves students learning about themselves and others: it includes learning to understand, accept and respect self, developing positive attitudes through identifying, prioritizing and evaluating values, understanding and making appropriate decisions regarding drug and alcohol abuse, tobacco and abuse of other harmful substances, developing respect for cultural diversity, learning how to behave responsibly in the family, school and community at large, develop relationship skills to resolve conflicts in a safe and responsible manner and develop effective ways to cope with violence in order to ensure personal safety (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). Personal needs are diverse and therefore, impact on the student as an individual, the students and the immediate community in which

he/she lives (the family, peers, college and the place of work). This study sought to determine the personal needs of students in the Kenyan universities.

## **2.5 Deaf Students' Perceptions of Counselling Services**

Deaf students often have negative perceptions of counseling services based on their prior experiences or assumptions about counseling practices that may not be suitable for their unique needs. Research has shown that deaf students who receive counseling services typically report higher levels of satisfaction when providers are culturally sensitive, provide appropriate communication adaptations, and are knowledgeable about the unique experiences of deaf people (Hintermair, 2017). Deaf students have for long been marginalized in societies across the world, and the limited access they have to education and support services means that they are at a significant disadvantage concerning their mental well-being. Globally, many deaf students have been found to face unique challenges when it comes to seeking mental health services such as counseling. Many studies have focused on understanding how deaf students perceive counseling services in different countries, including Africa. Deaf students in different parts of the world have highlighted that seeking counseling services can be challenging due to several factors. According to a study by Tohoku University in Japan, deaf students face significant communication barriers when seeking mental health services (Morisako et al., 2018).

The lack of competent sign language interpreters in counseling sessions can lead to miscommunication or the inability to conceptualize complex emotions, which can negatively impact their outcomes. Similarly, a study conducted by Montclair State University in the United States found that many deaf students reported that their counselors did not have the necessary skills and training to work with them adequately. The students felt as though their counselors did not understand their unique needs and could not address their concerns appropriately. According to the



researchers, there is a need for specialized training for mental health professionals to provide effective counseling services to deaf students. In contrast, some studies have shown that deaf students can benefit from counseling services when provided by professionals with specialized training and experience (Chi & Dingus, 2015). A study by Southern Illinois University highlighted that deaf students who received counseling services reported better mental health outcomes compared to those who did not receive any services (Harrigan et al., 2016). The study suggests that when deaf students receive appropriate counseling services, they can have better mental health outcomes than their peers who do not receive any assistance. In Africa, deaf students also face unique challenges when seeking mental health services. Many African countries lack adequate infrastructure and resources to support people with disabilities, including deaf individuals (Murray et al., 2020). In a study conducted in Malawi, for example, it was noted that even when the students had access to counseling services, they were hesitant to use them due to cultural stigmatization (Clark et al., 2017). They feared that seeking mental health support would negatively impact their reputation in the deaf community, leading to isolation and further marginalization.

Similarly, a study conducted in Kenya found that deaf students were reluctant to seek counseling services due to the lack of specialized services and the limited resources available (Elias et al., 2021). The study highlighted the need for more resources and specialized training for mental health professionals to provide services to deaf students effectively. Despite the challenges faced by deaf students seeking counseling services, some initiatives have been put in place to promote better mental health outcomes. For instance, in Malawi, the government has collaborated with international organizations to establish programme that support mental health and well-being for people with disabilities, including deaf students (Groningen Declaration Network, 2017). In Kenya, a

non-profit organization called Sema Box has been established to provide counseling services and support for deaf students (Elias et al., 2021). Students' experiences with the academic counselling service also predicted their service perceptions that in turn affected their academic counselling participation. Overall, cited studies in Africa and around the world reflected mixed perceptions regarding counselling.

A study conducted in Kenya by K'ohul, (2010) on students' perceptions of guidance and counselling in both public and two private institutions were quite revealing. The Universities of Nairobi and Kenyatta represented the public institutions and the United States International University as well as the Daystar University represented the private engaged institutions. The sample comprised three hundred and fifty-eight students and counsellors while study instruments comprised questionnaires, focus group discussions and personal observation. Students generally perceived guidance and counselling services as useful in stemming their numerous rioting incidents in Kenya. They also proposed adopting peer counselling services to allay the fears of unenthusiastic students. Effective counselling services were suggested for implementation prior to students' examinations, in order to ease their stress and anxiety symptoms. Results on the private institutions presented equally favourable perceptions of counselling. Among them were students' suggestions to integrate guidance and counselling in the institution's curriculum, adopting purposive counselling for radical students, the introduction of support group counselling services and the provision of counselling through club activities Elzouki, et al. (2011). Students further requested for group counselling talk programmes and seminars to enable them to discuss pertinent issues with institutional and governmental authorities. More also, students' perceptions at the Al Qassim University in Saudi Arabia were found to vary considerably in relation to their understanding of the counselling center's activities.

A study explored students' opinions on the functions of the counselling centre at the Al-Qassin University (Al-Bahadel, 2012). Students' views were discovered to be inconsistent with the actual role expectations of the counselling centre. Their poor understanding of approved counsellor roles and functions of the counselling centre further hampered their efficient use of the counselling service. Their wrong counselling perceptions were however attributed to counsellors' engagement in unapproved roles within the institution.

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

### **2.5.1 Deaf Students Misperceptions of Counselling Services**

In another development, Afshar, (2009) also reported mixed perceptions of 156 undergraduate deaf students, regarding academic counselling in a private urban university. A fifteen-item structured questionnaire and an open-ended questionnaire were adopted for data collection. In phase one, students rated their advisors based on their satisfaction with counsellors' work on a four-point scale. In phase two, students commented on advising processes, discussed issues, their expectations of advisors and how well these expectations were met. The survey was designed and conducted by the University's counselling centre. Students were mostly content with items on social

and personal needs, as well as advisors' attitudinal skills (Chireshe, 2011). They were however dissatisfied with the advisor's lack of knowledge and information on general issues. Additional concerns were raised about poor counsellor information and attitudes but the study offered nothing regarding the role played by advisors' interpersonal skills on campus. Students also perceived advisor effectiveness to include being able to share appropriate information and providing care, love and understanding to students.

Street children and the homeless also form a unique category of young people who stand to benefit tremendously from counselling. Yet little is known about the homeless youth's perceptions of counselling. The research reported by Cormack, (2009) engaged 16-21- year-old street children in two separate focus group sessions, of three and five. Audio and video recordings were employed to capture the youth's expressed views about counselling. The sessions were also held in the usual terrain of the participants to ensure their free expression. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were assured of confidentiality. The grounded theory backed by Strauss and Corbin's (1998) method was adopted for data analysis. Participants' understanding of counselling was found to be poor especially since they misconstrued counselling as a service for crazy people. The prevalent low students' perception of counselling services on University campuses was promoted by the counselling Centre's low emphasis on students' concerns regarding sex related issues. Issues regarding sexual relationships have always been a key area of concern among young people, including university students. College students are undeniably sexually active; hence they often remain keenly interested in sex-related issues. This stressed the significance of sex education and suggested the subject as a vital focus for counselling centers on university campuses.

Reporting on the issue, Hattori and Greene (2010) stressed the element of trust as a major contributory factor to the prevalent sexual promiscuity among young people in recent times. Young people's understanding of trust was deeply compromised, where sexual relationships were concerned thus the increased incidence of unprotected sexual activities among students. The two-phased study centered on a Behaviour Change Communication campaign, as a control measure to the increased HIV infections via heterosexual contact in the targeted vicinities. The initial survey centered on 15-24-year old selected from Lesotho, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia. The second phase engaged youth from eight sub-Saharan Africa countries in focus group discussions regarding condom use. The focus groups suggested that increased partner awareness heightened sexual trust that resulted in reduced risk of HIV infection among sexual partners. Young sexual partners accordingly discontinued their use of condoms following their increased trust in their partners. The high admission of youth on university campuses in recent times, demanded the focus of institutional counselling centers to spearhead the campaign for safe sex practices on campuses. University counselling centres were perceived as the most appropriate to address the campaign for safer sex practices among higher education students in recent times (Brown & Venable, 2007).

A study by Tammang (2009) on extremely low levels of sex education accordingly prevailed in Kathmandu, thus increasing the incidence of high immorality among college students in the environs. The research adopted a mixed methods approach and was conducted in the year 2006. The study sought in-depth insight into the causal factors promoting promiscuity among male students in Kathmandu. Five hundred and seventy-three students were randomly sampled from twelve colleges for the study. Two rounds of the random sampling method generated the selected colleges and engaged classes in the study. The questionnaire and interview methods were the main

data collection instruments while the chi square statistic was adopted to determine the relationship between the forbidden sexual act and its prevailing factors. Unprotected sexual activities were found to be equally prevalent among study participants and age was a strong factor in determining male students' attitude towards the menace.

### **2.5.2 Deaf Students Negative Perception of Counselling Services**

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

Emphasis on the Student Orientation, Advisement and Registration programme (SOAR), at the Missouri State University also highlighted students' high perceptions of the academic advising service. Teasley and Buchanan (2013) involved 96 undergraduate students, including 48 first years in the study. The adopted advising satisfaction scale assessed student's perceptions of the advising services. Students' overall confidence in advising facilitated their high service patronage where many of

them showed continued advising interest though they no longer required it. The few who students who showed early disinterest in their advising meetings reported encountering frustrations in meeting their advisors.

In Malaysia Mini's (2016) study explored clients' experiences with counselling offered by trainee counsellors. The study that engaged seventeen young clients, adopted interview sessions for data collection. Findings revealed poor counselling perceptions among clients but their initial lack of confidence in counselling and wrong assumptions about the service were all eradicated after their counselling experiences. Clients also gained in-depth insight into their capabilities and subsequently adopted a better outlook on life, after their counselling experiences. Other clients also improved their perceptions about life via their counselling experiences as they came to the realization that confronting several life challenges in fact enhances one's life outlook, rather than presenting him as a failure in life. This study delves into studying the perception deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba on the experiences with counseling services which has not been done before.

## **2.6 Deaf Students' Access to Counselling Services**

Deaf students face numerous barriers to accessing counseling services, including limited availability of qualified providers, communication barriers, and stigma within the deaf community. Research suggests that deaf students are more likely to experience mental health issues than their hearing peers (Hintermair, 2017) and yet they continue to be under-served in the provision of counseling services. This lack of access to counseling services may result in lower academic achievement, a higher rate of dropouts, and increased mental distress. In Canada, a study investigating why University students seek counselling found that most students irrespective of the abilities or conditions present reasons such as relationship concerns, anxiety, distress, grief, depression, academic and career issues (Cairns & Deeth, 2010). The above

study does not address the aspect of how deaf students have access to counselling, which equips students with skills and abilities such as positive attitude and problem-solving skills to help them gain knowledge and learn how to cope with issues affecting them.

Counselling can act as an early intervention strategy that create awareness in students to look at their problems from different angles and manage their academic, emotional and behavioural difficulties and be more successfully both in school and at home (Atta-Frimpong, 2013). Early referral can prevent problems in attitudes, behaviour and promote mental health to help them develop a clearer focus or sense of direction. A self-reported increase in coping by students from 10% before counselling to over 50% after counselling in the Brunel University Evaluation study. This improvement from 10% to 50% indicates that a student is able to cope with whatever difficulty he/she may be faced with through counselling. School counselling service has also been reported successful in helping deaf students reduce anxiety and stress (Cheek & Bradley, 2002). Effectiveness counselling can thus be influenced by the type of sound in the counselling room as these sounds may keep external noises from interfering with the counselling process. However, there is limited empirical data to explain whether these aspects are considered crucial in university counseling. The above mentioned was a gap that this study sought to address. According to a study conducted by DuFrene and Noe-Way (2015), deaf students face significant barriers in accessing counselling services such as communication difficulties, lack of deaf-friendly professionals, and limited resources. The study further revealed limited awareness of the availability of counselling services for deaf students, leading to underutilization of the available resources.

In a study by McKee and Barnett (2018), it was reported that students who are deaf or hard of hearing benefit significantly from video counselling as it offers accessibility



solutions. In particular, the study suggested that video counselling could be the most appropriate form of intervention for deaf students who live in remote areas or areas with limited resources. The study further recommended the integration of technology with counselling services to improve access for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. In another study by Kantambu and Mazana (2017), it was suggested that the use of sign language interpreters is essential to ensure effective communication in counseling sessions to facilitate deaf students access to the services. The study recommended that counsellors should engage the services of professional interpreters who are familiar with the specific cultural and linguistic background of the deaf student. Interventions are needed for effective access to counselling services for deaf students. Therefore, the provision of appropriate communication, availability of resources, and connecting with qualified professionals are some critical measures to improve the deaf student's access to counseling services. There should be systematic efforts aimed at improving awareness among counsellors on how to work effectively with this specific group to eliminate the hindrances to access counselling services by deaf student's in school and other public places.

A study by Wood et al. (2017) found that deaf students who receive counseling services report higher levels of self-esteem, lower levels of depression, and better academic performance. Another study by Oates and colleagues (2018) found that deaf students who receive counselling services have higher levels of academic engagement and better overall life satisfaction. Furthermore, Glenn et al (2019) found that deaf students who received counselling services show reduced levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. The literature also highlights different types of counselling services that are effective for deaf students. Similarly, Steinberg (2019) suggest that group counseling sessions may be beneficial for deaf students, as they provide an

opportunity for students to share their experiences and connect with others who have similar experiences.

Despite the importance of counseling services for deaf students, there are still significant barriers that prevent these students from accessing these services. Communication barriers are the most significant obstacle for deaf students seeking counseling services, as they often require sign language interpreters or other visual aids to communicate with counselors. However, these resources are often scarce, making it difficult for deaf students to access counseling services (Ivanko, 2018). Another barrier to counseling services is the lack of awareness and education surrounding deafness and sign language among counselors. Many counsellors are not trained to work with deaf students or to use sign language, making it difficult for them to provide effective counseling services to these students (Danniels & Schumacher, 2019). Furthermore, stigma and discrimination against deaf individuals are still prevalent in many communities in Ghana and Africa. This stigma can prevent deaf students from seeking counseling services, as they may fear judgment or mistreatment from counselors or others in their community (Echegollen, 2018). Arguably, all these factors are essential in facilitating counselling. The literature reviewed herein has demonstrated scarcity in counselling needs and services for the deaf in Ghanaian universities and how it affects deaf students' academic performance and progress.

## **2.7 Challenges Deaf Students Encounter in Seeking Counselling Services**

Deaf students face numerous challenges in seeking counseling services, including limited availability of qualified providers, lack of accessible resources, and stigma within the deaf community. Accessibility is also a major concern, as interpreters or accommodations may not be provided, and online counseling services may not be accessible for some deaf students (Fernandez & Steinberg, 2019). In a study investigating coping strategies employed by deaf students to address stress emanating

from social, economic, and academic challenges in Zimbabwe, Soda and Bondai (2015) found out that counselling in University is severely compounded by students' challenges such as lack of school fees, inadequate stationery, and sexual harassment. Counsellors have consequently faced challenges in handling students' psychological problems due to students' issues taking a complex dimension. This study shows that some personal issues with the deaf are beyond the counsellor's intervention and pose a challenge to the delivery of counselling services.

Another study sought to explain challenges confronting deaf students' accessing counselling services such challenges include; inadequate counselling staff, fear, lack of information about the counselling services, lack of sign language interpreters, and counsellor's inability to communicate with deaf students directly. In a related study in Zimbabwe, Musika, and Bukaliya (2015) reported in their study which involved 100 University students on the effectiveness of counselling on deaf students that inadequate counselling services provider by counselors, inadequate counselling skills and poor counsellor characteristics curtail students' motivation to seek counselling services. Below are some identified obstacles that confront all students with deaf included in seeking counselling services.

### **2.7.1 Lack of Immediate Solutions**

Lack of immediate solutions for some problems such financial needs, personal, emotional needs was cited in previous studies is one of the reasons why some deaf students do not seek counselling services. Consequently, this made them either to look for alternative ways of solving their problems or they kept those issues to themselves. In retrospect, King and Wheeler (1999) indicate that when timely, a brief period of counselling is often sufficient to get students "back on track". However, if they have to wait long for help, they will give up and withdraw. Thus Rana (2000) emphasizes

that counselling services that are accessible when students want and need them are much likely to be effective than that which is available weeks later.

### **2.7.2 Lack of Confidence in Counsellors**

Confidentiality is essential since it helps the client to trust the privacy of their revelations to the counsellor and it enhances the counselling relationship. Studies explained that some of the counsellors occasionally make students' issues public and thus those who are affected feel disillusioned since confidentiality as a cardinal skill in counselling is not adhered to by such counsellors (American Counselling Association, 2014; Bond, 2009). Students expressed fear of being labelled in a negative way. As a result, students with counselling issues feared being used as 'examples' by lecturers when teaching.

### **2.7.3 Gender of Counsellor**

Male students do not seek help for masculine related issues from female counsellors lest they are seen as 'weak' or 'unable to cope' with issues. This can be attributed to their socialization process where males are socialized to believe that they are strong (O'neil, 2006). This study noted that there was a gender difference in attitude toward seeking counselling services among deaf University students in which the female student is more positive than the male student and which corroborated with findings from. This finding concluded that the counselling process is not effective in changing the behaviour of students who seek the services. The mentioned studies identify low self- esteem, negative attitude, and cultural affiliation as restraining factors in the delivery of effective counselling in universities, whereas other factors were not considered. A negative attitude may be attributed as a factor of not seeking counselling help. Therefore, students continue to register poor academic grades and fail to graduate within the stipulated period. The reviewed literature did not touch on

the challenges preventing deaf students from seeking counselling services, among them: a shortage of enough counselling materials, lack of enough counselling staff, increased student enrolment, the influence of peers to seek counselling help. Therefore, this study endeavored to bridge this gap.

## **2.8 Summary of Literature Review**

Through a keen review of the related literature around the topic under study, this chapter has brought insight into the study since the key elements of concern have been revisited. The literature reviewed showed that there are many gaps in research and knowledge pertaining to counselling needs of deaf students and access to counselling services for their pressing needs. Most of the studies reviewed were done in other countries like Kenya, Nigeria, USA and Canada and other tertiary institutions in Ghana like, Wa Technical University, Tamale Technical University, Cape Coast school for the deaf and University for Development studies, Wa campus, this therefore necessitated a more expansive study on the University of Education, Winneba, which is a tertiary institution in Ghana responsible for training both hearing and deaf students.

Again, related literature review employs quantitative research approach to explore the counselling needs students, this current study employed the use of qualitative approach which enabled more interactions with the deaf students needs and how they access counselling services at the University. Additionally, there was a lot of literature about the challenges facing counselling services in universities and other tertiary institutions worldwide. Still, the literature reviewed did not present challenges faced by deaf students in accessing counselling services in the University of Education, Winneba. In effect, this study investigated the challenges deaf student at the University of Education, Winneba encounter in accessing counselling services for their in the University.

This study sought to add knowledge on these counselling need of deaf students which especially affect their academic performance, the perception of deaf students regarding counselling services, these perception influences their desire to seek counselling services for the various needs, the study again add to literature the means through which deaf students access counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba together with the challenges they encounter in an attempt to access counselling services.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods and procedures used to collect and analyse data for the study. The areas covered were; philosophical positioning, research approach, research design, population, sample size, sampling techniques, instrumentation, dependability, confirmability, credibility, transferability, the procedure for data collection, methods for data analysis, and ethical considerations.

#### 3.1 Philosophical Positioning

The study was underpinned by interpretivist paradigm, following its focus on the meanings of lived experiences of research participants (Taylor et al., 2015). Interpretivism emerged out of Husserl's philosophy of phenomenology (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) that sought to understand the meaning 'lived experience' of study participants (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 131). Interpretivism accordingly embraced a personal view of the social phenomenon as perceived by the Mertens (2010). These personal or internal ideas about social phenomena represent the individual's belief system or theory about that phenomenon (Sefotho, 2015).

Fobi (2023) further posits that the interpretivism paradigm focuses more on the interpretation of human experience, consciousness, sense-making, and worldviews based on the pursuit of comprehension. He adds that the social world in which we live is not easily perceivable because it is constructed differently by different people. The paradigm's profound emphasis on the perceiver's internal ideas, feelings and motives also demanded an unbiased, intrusive and sensitive researcher attitude (De Villiers, 2005). This attitude aligned well with my aim in the current study, to understand the hidden needs of deaf students and their experiences accessing counselling service, motivated me to stick religiously to its use. I consequently, determined to be truthful,

inquisitive and probing, during data collection to access the candid and detailed responses of study participants from their accounts. Though achieving this purpose proved quite laborious and demanding, I followed Hennink et al. (2010) steps to be unbiased and intrusive beneficial, as it enabled me reach the data depth I so much desired. Interpretivist relies on a dialogue between the researcher and their subjects to negotiate, collaborate, and develop a meaningful understanding of reality through interviews, observation and contextual analysis (Antwi & Hamza, 2015), since my mode of data collection was interview to understand the phenomenon, this paradigm was deemed fit.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

I employed a qualitative research approach to explore participants' understanding of their needs, experiences, access to counselling service and its impact on their study outcomes during this inquiry. The approach adopts a probing method to gain insight into a situation of interest by penetrating the human understandings and constructions about the phenomenon under study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The descriptive goal of qualitative research in general, stresses its comprehensive approach to the inquiry process (Ocansey, 2018). I further adopted the qualitative approach to emphasize the socially constructed multiple realities deaf participants presented regarding their unique needs, experiences with the counselling services rendered by the University. The focus of the qualitative approach lies on the personal experiences and subsequent perceptions of study participants with the phenomenon of interest.

Qualitative researchers thus employ appropriate methodologies, to understand the intricacies of the life worlds of their study participants (Hennink, & Bailey, 2010; Taylor et al., 2015). The suitability of the applied research methods propels the mobilisation of meaningful study findings (Ocansey, 2018). This implies the existence of several research methodologies to derive meaningful findings (Tuli, 2010; Wahyuni, 2012). Tuli



(2010) stresses the non-existence of an ideal methodology given that each comes with exclusive benefits and shortcomings. All the methodologies are however interrelated, considering their common goal in efficiently mobilizing significant data regarding social events (Tuli, 2010). Additionally, qualitative research methodologies often progress inductively, highlighting profound research details towards data depth (Ritchie et al., 2013) and a lesser emphasis on generalization. Ritchie et al., (2013) refer to this as generative research that captures emergent concepts for the creation of novel knowledge.

### **3.2.1 Justification of the Research Approach**

The research approach was qualitative because, this approach often views human behaviours as being fluid, dynamic, and changing over time and place, and they usually are not interested in generalizing beyond the particular people who are studied (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In qualitative research, different groups are said to construct their different realities or perspectives, and these social constructions, reciprocally, influence how they see or understand their worlds, what they see as normal and abnormal, and how they should act. Antwi et al. (2015), argues it is important for the researcher to get close to the objects of study through interviews or participants observation so that they can experience for themselves the subjective dimensions of the phenomena the study. The approach therefore afforded me the opportunity to conduct the study through one-on-one interaction. This allowed the students to narrate their own experiences with respect to their understanding of access to counselling services by deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba.

### **3.3 Research Design**

My aim to explore the meanings and interpretations of participants' counselling needs, lived experiences on access to counselling services at the University underscored the choice of design. The design was hermeneutic phenomenology in nature, phenomenology reflects a person's perception of meaning of an event (Leedy &

Ormrod, 2001). According to Lewis (2015), health practitioners including counsellors often adopt phenomenological studies to enable them to recognize, validate and better appreciate the depths of the entire person they are working with (clients and patients). On their part, Lopez and Willis (2004) suggest that phenomenology offers ‘a good fit’ for nurses and clinicians, given their goal to understand ‘unique individuals and their meanings’ regarding their interactions with environmental elements (p. 726). The focus of phenomenological studies further ensures the professionals’ deeper understanding of the values and experiences of their work mates (in this case, clients) (Lewis, 2015) to facilitate their assistive services for them. Like nursing, counselling service is concerned with human responses to actual and potential mental and health problems, that necessitate specialized knowledge to ‘reflect the lived, contextual realities and concerns of the clients’ they attend to (p. 726). For this reason, counsellors require culturally relevant knowledge that is related to the social realities of those living within the situation. This highlights the knowledge-based focus of phenomenological studies regarding people’s perceptions and perspectives of a specific event, to attach meaning to it (Kafle, 2011). Accordingly, Kafle (2011) emphasizes key elements like intentionality, real personal encounters and profound meanings as significant to phenomenological studies. By implication, this complex world can only be understood either from our personal perspectives or those of others (Sefotho, 2015). This design is popularly used to study lived experience, gain a deeper understanding of how human beings think, and expand a researcher’s knowledge about a phenomenon.

Phenomenology therefore implies that people are only sure of things from how they experience them, and the certainty of the impact of counselling services in the current study, only exists in the consciousness of the deaf students at the University who have ever experienced it (Eagleton, 1983; Fouche, 1993). As a phenomenological researcher, I thus focused on describing deaf students needs and access to counselling services from

the experiencers' (study participants') perspective. Fobi (2023), further explained that the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the general essence, thus a grasp of the very nature of the things. This agreed with my study aim to explore participants' lived experiences and consequently confirmed the phenomenological multiple case study design as appropriate for this inquiry. Study participants in an interpretative phenomenological study are usually considered as 'self-interpreting beings' (Taylor, 1985), given that they are often actively engaged in interpreting or making sense of the events, objects and people in their lives (Smith & Eatough, 2017). Smith and Eatough (2017) concur with the observation that interpretative phenomenological studies focus on human experiences to explicate their daily concerns.

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

### **3.4 Population**

The population for this study consisted of deaf students and counsellors in the University of Education, Winneba. Cohen et al. (2010) explained a research population as a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects or events, that conform to specific criteria and to who the researcher intends to generalize the study. The targeted population for this study was 28 deaf students in level 100, level 200, level 300, and two

counsellors (current director and former director) of counselling unit at the University of Education, Winneba. The final year deaf students were excluded since they were not on campus at the time of data collection. The target population was 30 members from the group under investigation to which the results of the investigation can be applied (Yaya, 2014).

### 3.5 Sample size

The sample size for the study was 14. Out of the total sample, twelve were deaf students and two counsellors from the University of Education, Winneba.

**Table 1: Sample Size of deaf participants**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age group</b>		
21 – 25	7	58.33
26 – 30	3	25.00
30 – 35	2	16.67
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	8	66.67
Female	4	33.33
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	3	25.00
Single	9	75.00
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	6	50.00
Muslim	4	33.33
Others	2	16.67
<b>Level</b>		
Level 100	5	41.67
Level 200	2	16.67
Level 300	5	41.66
<b>Department</b>		
Special Education	8	66.67
Basic Education	1	8.33
Art Education	3	25.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Author's Computations from the field, 2023**

Table 1 shows the age distribution, gender, marital status, religious affiliations, levels and departments of participants of the study. The results indicated that, out of the 12 deaf participants, 7 of participants were between the age range of 21-25, and 2 participants were in the age range of 31-35. This means majority of the deaf students in the University are between the age brackets of 21 to 25.

Again, the table presented the gender distribution of the participants. It was evident from the table that, out of the 12 deaf participants interviewed, 8 of them representing were males while 4 participants were females. This indicates that there were more male deaf students in the University than female deaf students. Three participants as indicated on the table were reported to have been married, and nine participants of the participants were single. This means that most of the deaf participants in this study were not married.

Furthermore, the results indicate that, out of the 12 deaf participants, 5 of them were in level 100, 2 participants were in level 200, and 5 participants were in level 300. The table again indicated the Departments of participants, out of the 12 deaf participants, 1 of participants was from the Basic Education Department, and 3 of the participants were from Art Education Department, whereas 8 participants were in special Education Department. The results from the table indicate that Special Education Department has the larger population of deaf students in the University of Education, Winneba.

### **3.6 Sampling techniques**

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the most fitting participants in this qualitative research method (Saunders et al., 2015). Purposive sampling as an arbitrary selection of a sample based on the features of the subject and those thought to be significant for the investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). Homogeneous purposive sampling adopted in the study therefore allowed the researcher to base on personal judgement to contact participants who can give exact information needed for the study

as per study objectives. According to Palinkas et al. (2015), the rationale for using purposive sampling technique had to do with availability and willingness to participate, the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner but with regards to study objectives. I adopted the purposive sampling technique in selecting both the deaf students and the counsellor because of the perceived knowledge and experiences deaf students have on the needs and access to counselling services and the counsellor's experiences in offering counselling services to students.

### **3.7 Instrumentation**

The instrument used for the data collection was semi structured interview guide (see appendix B). The semi structured interview guide was adopted to facilitate further probing through follow up questions to delve deeper into participants' personal lived experiences on access to counselling services and services rendered to students.

#### **3.7.1 Interview**

Arthur et al. (2012) described interview as the interaction, conscious and carefully planned spontaneous activity. According to Guion et al. (2001), interviews promote a thorough preparation and appraisal purposes following their openness to exploratory discoveries regarding the feelings and opinions of participants over a concern. The use of this tool further facilitated my perception that the world cannot be understood through the eyes of the participant by interaction with the participants through interviews (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 87). During the sessions, I encouraged study participants to communicate freely (Watt, 2007) by which means I was able to unearth participants, exclusive meanings of their needs and counselling service offer them, as they experienced it (Guion et al., 2001). Via the interviews, I successfully established rapport with each participant, for a highly interactive session. I relied on my in-depth subject matter knowledge, flexibility and critical attitude during the interviews to raise meaningful questions during my interaction with participants (Daymon & Holloway,

2002). I further whipped up participants' interest in our interactions by maintaining healthy eye contact with them (Kasunics, 2010), while ensuring a spontaneous mental flow of questions, rather than reading and communicating through sign language from the interview guide for the deaf participants. I allowed a day's minimum interval before undertaking the second session for each participant's interview sessions. This enabled me to identify ambiguities and unexplored issues of interest for further clarification in the subsequent interview session.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

According to Speziale and Carpenter, (2011), a qualitative research is trustworthy when it accurately represents the experiences of the study participants. The trustworthiness of a research depends on factors such as credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985).

#### **3.8.1 Credibility**

Credibility simply means building confidence in the study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It ascertains how sincere the study findings are (Bryman, 2012). Patton (2002) asserts that the researcher's role, regarding the research instrument in qualitative research, facilitates the credibility of the study. In this study, I achieved credibility through frequent and extended interactions with study participants via semi-structured interviews and discussions. My efforts at establishing credibility facilitated my foremost decision to concentrate on only the deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba. As the main data collection study area in the current study (Watt, 2007), my stay in southern Ghana, specially Winneba implied closer proximity to study sites (University of Education, Winneba) to ensure frequent and easy access to study participants (deaf students). This proximity further provided a more relaxed, unhurried and open-ended data collection process (Williams, 2007). Interview items were constructed through a thorough exploration of the phenomenon during the interview

sessions. I complimented this schedule with good questioning skills to access in-depth data and accurate sign language communication (Labuschagne, 2003).

I occasionally clarified participants' views by re-framing my questions at specific stages. This enabled me to ascertain the consistency of participants' responses. I additionally ascertained interview data credibility with a confirmation of responses through social media sources like WhatsApp, text messaging and in a few cases, to clarify the ideas captured in the transcripts. A few corrections were subsequently made to the transcripts eventually. At the end of data collection and analysis, I realized the research aims I set out was achieved.

### **3.8.2 Transferability**

The essence of transferability lies in appropriateness and efficiency in deriving meaningful research findings (Rolfe, 2006). I achieved transferability in this study via a thorough presentation of the various steps, processes and methods adopted in the study (Bekelmans & Oost, 2008). This comprised presenting study details like the purpose, research methodology and findings or conclusions (Shenton, 2004). Transferability aims at convincing readers about the study's credibility and further enables them to transfer the methodology to their personal contexts (Morse et al., 2002). Having followed the approved and laid down protocols in conducting qualitative research, I developed deep confidence in my applied research methodology in this current study, the emphasis of the study on deaf students access to counselling services in the University of Education, Winneba. My reliance on semi-structure interviews discussion in the study settings, engendered suitable information from my exploration of the deaf students needs and access to counselling service (Gasson, 2004). The applied data collection methods, meaningfully complemented each other to generate credible data. Meanwhile, my orientation from deaf education background with the ability to communicate through sign language endorsed my interest in the current study and the interpretative



phenomenological analysis facilitated my data interpretation process to generate the credible study findings I finally derived.

### **3.8.3 Dependability**

Dependability also refers to valuable qualitative research. It simply implies consistency in the results of a study over time (Shenton, 2004). The dependability of a study, or the ‘inquiry audit’ highlights the replicability of the study and the confirmation of its results (Ocansey, 2018). By implication, only consistent study findings are confirmable and thus credible (Golafshani, 2003). The dependability of a study in turn has implications for the value of the study as it enhances the accuracy of the population quality being measured. My efforts to achieve dependability in the current study were demonstrated by my presentation of a detailed account of the entire research process (Bryman, 2012). According to Bryman (2012), a detailed presentation of the research process expels doubts about the study. I accordingly placed emphasis on every detail I indulged in during this research study. The process ensured that other researchers could easily replicate the study in different locations and at different given times (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Despite limiting the study focus to only deaf students counselling needs at the University of Education, Winneba- southern Ghana, I was confident the study could be replicated in other institutions and within other regions, besides the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

### **3.8.4 Confirmability**

Given the fact that I tried to play a neutral role both in conducting the study and presenting the findings, I established the confirmability of the study. Confirmability emphasizes the genuineness or fairness in which the researcher shaped the study findings with participants’ accounts. In presenting my results, I was determined to prevent my subjective thoughts, values and interests from colouring the facts (Bryman,

2012). By this means, I demonstrated that the study findings are not my personal perceptions, but rather, those developed from the data (Shenton, 2003).

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

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

### **3.9 Procedure for Data Collection**

I observed ethical requirements and received permission from my department gatekeeper prior to data collection for this research. After permission was granted, participants were contacted and informed about the study in a way to get their consent. The participants were told the purpose of the study and their role in the study explained. Also, the participants were assured that the data collected will be used for academic purposes only, and will be strictly confidential. The most appropriate methods I adopted in my

data collection was semi-structure interviews. I intended to hold the interview and discussion for each participant for 30- 35 minutes but eventually had one interview session lasted for 40 minutes or more due to the fact that Ghanaian Sign Language was use as a medium of communication, some larger population were individuals with deafness, this delay the interview session because some of the questions needed more explanation and concepts which has no direct sign was “figure spelled” for the deaf to understand before responding, I employed the services of Research Assistants who helped to videotape, I also audio taped for the counsellors in the interview sessions at the University of Education, Winneba which was later transcribed to word. A pre-constructed interview guide based on the themes on the various research questions. The sessions were mainly conversational, flexible and full of open-ended questions that granted participants the liberty to express themselves. Where necessary, I employed probing questions and clarifications for further details in my interactions with study participants. The video recording enabled me to secure the authenticity of participants’ views from their unique diction. This required closer collaboration with study participants to enhance my data collection process (Patton, 2002). I accordingly established useful rapport with my participants and successfully accessed comprehensive data for my purpose. I was additionally attentive and alert, both in my questioning during data collection in order to capture the signs, facial expressing, gestures, and communication cues as I interacted with participants. At some points in my data collection process, I was challenged by reserved participants who suddenly went “off” due to discomfort in expressing negative thoughts about their institutions (Ocansey, 2018). I often helped such situations by rephrasing the question and reminding them of the sole academic purpose of the research. I also sometimes added humour to our interactions by cracking simple jokes to liven the discussion.

To ensure dependability, the researcher took note of any changes to the interview format while asking the question to each participant. At the end of each interaction with study participants, I appreciated them for their time and contributions towards the study. I finally ended each fieldwork day with transcriptions of recorded interviews for future data analysis.

### **3.10 Data analysis process**

Thematic approach was used to analyse the data collected. Data for the study was analysed based on each theme drawn from the research question raised. The process drew from my perceptual and descriptive skills in identifying contrasts, ambiguities and harmonious thoughts within the data to derive broad-based themes from the study. Via this method, I was able to focus directly, on the participants' perceptions, thoughts, involvements and understandings regarding their access to counselling services (Reid et al., 2005). I applied this method with the aim of thoroughly exploring the meaning making process of participants regarding deaf students experiences with the University counselling service (Smith et al., 2009). I commenced with a one-by-one engagement of interview transcripts through an iterative process (Smith, 2007) and progressed to identify truthful themes from the data. By this means, I achieved order and clarity in my data analysis process (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

#### **3.10.1 Stage 1: First encounter with the data**

I commenced data analysis with a verbatim transcription of the raw data (Smith, 2007). Each of the 12 video recordings with deaf students' sample and two (2) audio tapes for the counsellors were transcribed into words. The method enabled me to capture both sign concepts, gestures, and facial expressions in my interactions with participants. Both communicative skills are replete with meaning (Pettinari & Jessopp, 2001) though sign language often complemented the gestures. The interpretive nature of the study emphasized an understanding of the world through authentic experiences and candid

reporting of conversations from an insider's perspective (Merriam, 1998). I was also convinced that 'participants best presented their experiences when allowed to express themselves in their own words' through Ghanaian Sign Language (Henning, 2004 p. 37). Ultimately, I maintained the originality of participants' expressions, thoughts and perceptions, on their access to counselling service at the University of Education, Winneba through verbatim transcription (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). I additionally gained an opportunity to familiarize myself with the data via the verbatim transcription, hence my determination to accomplish the mission personally. I gained further opportunity via the personal accomplishment of the transcription, to spot mistakes and ambiguities in the video-recordings for subsequent clarification and correction. All other errors, including typographical inaccuracies, spelling mistakes and omissions were subsequently corrected. Then I printed out the completed transcript copies and placed each hard copy in neatly labelled folders to ensure easy identification. My next move was to read and re-read each printed transcript to the end while making notes on relevant thoughts, expressed by participants (Larkin et al., 2006). I caught a glimpse of the general picture of the data from the series of readings (Henning, 2004), and created an imaginary picture of participants' perception of the counselling service at the university. I found this equally revealing the similarities and differences in participants' expressed thoughts, their language use, gestures and personal observations.

### **3.10.2 Stage 2: Identification of preliminary themes**

I subsequently engaged in further re-readings of the transcripts but this time focused more on identify themes. I read and transformed the notes into brief phrases that reflected key elements in the transcript. I ensured that the phrases I couched at this stage reflected participants' expressed thoughts and re-phrased them (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith et al, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). I focused more on the meaning's participants presented in my reading at this stage. Husserl (1999) referred to

this as “bracketing”. Bracketing prevented me from inputting my personal prejudices into the transcript reports and further kept me from doing any pre-mature critical analysis of the presentations. In this way, I maintained participants’ views in the captured phrases. I then continued with the theme creation process, noting the same theme caption wherever I encountered a similar idea and used various colours and font styles to mark the texts reflecting the captured themes.

### **3.10.3 Stage 3: Re-grouping and clustering of themes**

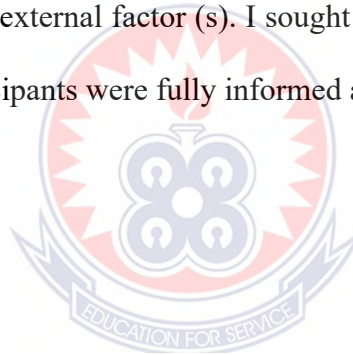
I re-produced the themes according to the means by which they appeared from the transcript but a subsequent closer observation revealed a natural clustering pattern that led me to re-organize the themes into more meaningful sentences. I also capitalized on the more advanced themes to further re-group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

### **3.10.4 Stage 4: Creating the summary table of themes**

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

### 3.11 Ethical consideration

Research ethics educate and monitor researchers conducting research to ensure a high ethical standard. Ethics are very paramount in research because they guard against possible harmful effects of the research (Resnik, 2010). The researcher among others assured the participants of anonymity and confidentiality. Creswell (2010) noted that ethical issues are integral to the research process and therefore need to be carefully considered before executing the research process. This is done to make sure that their privacy and integrity of respondents are highly respected and protected. The information given to the researcher was used solely for the purposes of this study. The researcher throughout the study avoided the use of enticement (giving out money or gift). This was done to ensure that the responses that come out of the respondents are genuine and were not influenced by action external factor (s). I sought consent from all participants before collecting the data, participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study.

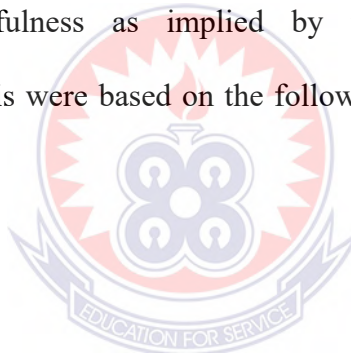


## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and analyses of the findings from the study. The analysis reflected on the themes that emerged from the interviews conducted. Sadala and Adorno, (2002) contend that it is the duty of the qualitative researcher to transform study participants' expressions into meaningfully appropriate interpretations, based on their alignment with the research purpose. Peshkin, (2000) additionally maintains that interpretation is an 'act of imagination and logic', that involves 'selection, ordering, associating and meaning making' to derive universal knowledge (p. 9). My interpretations of study results in the current chapter were thus established by the integration of thoughtfulness as implied by the term phenomenology. The presentations and analysis were based on the following research questions (see p.9 & 10)





**Table 2: Data Presentation**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>Research Question One:</b> What are the counselling needs of deaf students in University of Education, Winneba?	Academic counselling needs	12
	Health counselling needs	11
	Financial counselling needs	12
	Personal counselling needs	12
<b>Research Question Two:</b> What are the perceptions of deaf students on counselling Service in the University of Education, Winneba?	Counselling as relevant for the deaf students	12
	Counselling Services as Accessible	9
	Counselling Services as Effective	10
	Counselling as merely advise giving	12
<b>Research Question Three:</b> How to do deaf students access counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba?	From lecturers	12
	Form University's counsellors	
	From religious leaders	10
	From resource persons	11
<b>Research Question Four:</b> What challenges do deaf students encounter in seeking counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba?	From sign language interpreters	9
	Communication barriers	11
	Lack of information about Counselling Service	9
	Attitudes of counsellors towards deaf students	12
	Lack of confidentiality	11
	Gender of counsellor	11

## 4.2 Interview Results

All fourteen participants were successfully interviewed in the data collection process.

The data gathered during interviews and video-recording were later transcribed using a verbatim transcriptions approach and interviews were presented below;

### 4.2.1 Research Question 1

#### **What are the Counselling Needs of Deaf Students at the University of Education, Winneba?**

The deaf participants were asked to describe their counselling needs as students in the University of Education, Winneba which affects their mental well-being and academic performance on campus. Four themes emerged from this research question, they were; academic counselling needs, health counselling needs, financial counselling needs and personal counselling needs. From the responses, it was noted that deaf students have

several needs which could affect their positive adjustment and academic performance in the University. Every student at a particular point in time has needs and when these needs are not met could lead to underperformance of the individual especially deaf students.

### **Theme One: Academic Counselling Needs of Deaf Students**

This theme was to help answer research question one, data gathered revealed that deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba have academic counselling needs, out of the 12 deaf participants that were interviewed, all of them agreed to have counselling needs regarding their studies. These needs were explained to be emanating from poor study habits, style of some sign language interpreter service, deaf students' difficulty in selecting their desired courses, inability to participate in radio lectures and lack of concern by some lecturers. These they indicated to have been causing them much stress and an unstable mind which needs counselling to remediate the situation. Some of the participants interviewed had these to share;

*“When lecturers are teaching, it is not everything that I understand; sometimes, I have to seek further explanations from friends. Also, the interpreters at the University are good but it is not everything that they sign to me that I understand. This is because the interpreters always want to follow the communication of the lecturer so as not to miss out on some information hence they are fast in interpreting, I sometimes get confused with some of the information given” (P, 1)*

Participant two commented that;

*“I find it difficult to understand when studying. When I pick my book to read, I read anywhere I wish to read but after reading for a long time, I will be realized that I cannot remember anything I learned before. Some of the terms used in the books, I don't always understand them” (P, 2)*

Another participant said;

*“I do not benefit from radio lectures because I am deaf. That often makes it difficult for me to understand the ongoing lectures when the lecturer continues from where he stopped during the radio lecture” (P, 3)*

Participant 12 shared the same views as P 4, he said;

*“Sometimes, in the University here, there is a radio lecture, and after the radio lecture, the lecturer sometimes does not teach that topic in the face-*

*to-face meeting. Because I did not listen to the radio lecture due to my hearing inability, it is a disadvantage to me a deaf student” (P, 4)*

Another participant says;

*“I will say some of the interpreters assigned to my classes sometimes report to lectures late and by then the lecturer has given some information in the lecture hall earlier in the absence of the interpreter, it makes me feel excluded from the class” (P, 5)*

Participant six has this to say;

*“Many of the lecturers do not understand the deaf way of learning. They do not meet the needs of the deaf, when i go for our second area courses, sometimes without the interpreter the lecturer will still lecture without considering our needs. Even in the presence of the interpreter, some will focus on their teaching and whatever the interpreter is doing, they will not ask me whether I understand the concept or not” (P, 6)*

The comments above show that deaf students in the University are facing some form of stress regarding their studies. The University system also gives them many problems and discomfort in terms of the use of radio lectures. Participants interviewed had concerns to share as they commented not benefiting from their personal studies, or radio lectures as a result of their inability to hear. On the part of selecting second area courses, participants again shared their needs regarding that.

A participant added that;

*“When it comes to the selection of second area courses, I have a concern regarding that, I feel we the deaf are not treated well. Everyone has a different aim and strength. When I came to the University, I wanted to choose ICT as my second area course but was told that if I choose ICT, I will not get an interpreter” (P, 7)*

Also, a participant added that;

*“I find it difficult to select a good second area course to study, last semester, I chose a course to study but it was later difficult for me because I wasn't understanding the lectures. This is because I didn't really understand and have more information about the course before selecting it” (P, 8)*

Participant 9 shared similar thoughts with Participant 8 said;

*“I sometimes find it difficult to choose a liberal course because I don’t understand why deaf students in Special Education should be learning outside the Department at the University. Because different department people don’t understand deaf students’ needs, hence selecting a second area course from such departments gives us a challenge” (P, 9)*

Selecting second-area courses are based on the interest of the student and their strength, but participants reported having difficulty studying courses in their second area as a result of inadequate information before choosing the course, and their lack of interest in the course being studied. This often accounted for their poor performance in such courses and hence led them to sadness. In addition to these, participants stated that lack of information regarding the lectures they need to attend coupled with the outcome of the results causes them emotional stress for which they often seek counselling, here are the statements;

*“We, deaf students usually have problems attending lectures when the venue is changed because many of our mates don’t understand sign language to inform us. Sometimes I will go and sit there alone before getting to know the class was cancelled or the venue was changed” (P, 10)*

Another participant said;

*“I was marked down in a quiz by a lecturer because deafs write broken English which makes the lecturers who don’t understand it always marks them down, I was sad, it makes me feel like my effort is not appreciated” (P, 11)*

Again, participants recounted discomfort when the venue for their lectures was changed or even cancelled without prior notice, being used to the set time and date for each lecture, deaf students will still get their way to the venue due to lack of prior information. They again reported having poor language construction “broken English” which may be due to their lack of exposure to grammar syntax, this often lands them scoring poorly in exams or quizzes.

## **Theme Two: Health Counselling Needs**

Some health practitioners' inability to communicate through sign language with the deaf causes them emotional stress, and their communication with health workers is reported to be merely demonstrations and gestures. This can lead to misdiagnosis, misunderstandings, and this, mostly lead them to self-medication, the following are the comments made by participants on this theme concerning their health needs;

*“My complaint was misinterpreted at the hospital in my first year when I visited the University clinic. There was no interpreter so I wrote my problem on paper, but because my English is not very good, there was a misinterpretation of information. It pains me but I went home like that” (P, 1)*

Another participant indicated;

*“Because I am deaf and cannot speak, I don't like going to clinics or hospitals. I know it will be difficult for me to get the needed treatment without support from anyone even though my sickness may be serious” (P, 2)*

One participant has this to say;

*“Some of the workers at the health facilities don't respect or care for us maybe because we are deaf. When the deaf goes to the hospital, we are usually treated as not important, how to see the doctor or nurse to explain your problem is always hard for me. Deaf people will have to spend so much to see the doctor attend to you and sometimes even without getting to the doctor. All these things stress me as a deaf student so much that I feel sad for my situation” (P, 4)*

Again, a participant added that;

*“I usually prefer to go home whenever I am sick to my parents, they understand me, my father will send me to the hospital, I know with my parents present, the health workers will at least respect me and act in treating me” (P, 5)*

Participant six 6 said;

*“When I go to the hospital with a problem, because I cannot speak, I will present a paper where my problem is written the nurse will look at me differently and will be talking but I cannot hear which makes me shy from going to hospital again” (P,6)*

Another participant responded;

*“Whenever I am not well, I just go to the pharmacy to buy drugs, because I cannot speak, I write the name of the medicine on a piece of paper. But I could see the pharmacist talking to me but I cannot understand to follow strictly whatever he was saying” (P, 7)*

One participant remarked;

*“Whenever I am sick, I will send a text message to my parents at home describing my condition, and they will tell me what to do. I know this is a long process considering that there are health facilities around to attend to my needs, however, because my needs will end up not being catered for at the health facility, I rely on my parents at home” (P, 8)*

One participant stated that;

*“I rely on my friends who understand sign language, whenever any part of my body is paining, I also call for their help to assist me to the clinic or buy medicine for me” (P, 11)*

From the responses gathered, it would be realized that, deaf students encounter a lot of difficulties and emotional trauma in having access to quality health care from the health practitioners. They reported being shown no respect or recognition at the health facilities, resulting in them resorting to self-medication, and calling family members and friends for assistance. It is important for healthcare systems to provide accessible facilities and accommodations, such as video remote interpreting services or written communication, develop positive attitudes towards the deaf populace and provision of a professional sign language interpreter at the various facilities to ensure that deaf individuals have equal access to healthcare services.

### **Theme Three: Financial Counselling Needs**

Deaf students' access to financial resources, such as loans and grants, was another key issue noted in the study in answering research question one. In response to this theme, most participants reported having less support in terms of taking care of their finances such as paying school fees, buying reading materials, feeding and accommodation, to ensure their peaceful and stable stay on campus. Participants lamented that their inability to meet some basic financial obligations stressed them making it unstable to

concentrate on academics. This would attribute to the poor performance of such individuals. They face these challenges due to a lack of accessible information or inadequate support from families and relatives. Participants had this to say regarding their financial needs;

*“In terms of finances, it is difficult for my parents to pay my school fees in full, I mostly rely on a scholarship, and when I applied, it takes long before I get it and sometimes it does not even come in full. I mostly have problems with my landlord when I am unable to pay in full” (P, 1)*

A participant reported;

*“I had difficulty feeding myself on campus here, I mostly rely on my friends to invite me to eat. This is because my parents are not financially sound to help me get all the needs I want for my stay comfortable” (P, 2)*

Another participant added that;

*“It is hard for me to get funds to support my study in the University because the expenses here are much and much money will be needed. This is because my parents are not able to cater for my University needs to make me feel accommodated at all times. I come from low family as a result they find it hard to get and pay for their University fees, when I ask friends for money, they will say I am lazy, I should go and work” (P, 3)*

Another participant added that;

*“He called home for financial support of GH¢ 500.00 and only GH¢ 100 was given to him which wasn't enough for the things he wanted to buy. Prices of things in this town are very high, so I am always struggling to end the semester and go home” (P, 4)*

On the contrary, participant 7 commented that;

*“I always get money from my family whenever I call home, however the money given me is always small for my many needs in the university” (P, 7)*

It was evident from these participants that, though some had support from their families, it still was not enough to meet the basic needs, which could cause them emotional instability for which they need counselling to help them be content with the little they had. The data gathered on this theme indicated that, deaf students are stressed financially, such as getting money to pay for their school fees and accommodation, this is due to lack of information regarding available grants and

scholarships, and families' and relatives' support for their education. A student who is hungry certainly cannot concentrate and learn, if their needs are not met in terms of buying handouts, or paying for utility bills, it would cause them unhappy to be stable. Some, however, may be misusing the monies gotten from the house for betting and drinking, there is therefore the need to offer deaf students access to receive mental transformation counselling, it is capable of transforming their minds

#### **Theme Four: Personal Counselling Needs**

There are many things around a person's life capable of limiting the performance of that individual. Personal counselling needs are issues that can happen to a person which they may need counselling to overcome. In soliciting information from the participants on this theme, they agreed to have had a lot of personal needs which some hesitated to talk about but upon probing further. The following were some responses given by participants in the study;

*“I have difficulty in making friends in the University here, the few friends I have are always complaining about me as being lazy to learn, and when I write, they will tell me that my English is bad and they don't understand, this makes my association of the hearing peers difficult” (P, 2)*

A participant has this to say;

*“There was miscommunication between me and my roommate, and it was difficult to express myself, I was only sending text messages. He made me feel like I am not part of the room since I'm deaf and he can hear. This is not making me happy to stay in that room but because I have paid the rent already, I don't have any money to go out and rent again” (P, 3)*

One participant said:

*“When I go into some offices for help, they will not mind because they don't understand the sign and I cannot also speak, it makes it difficult for my needs to be met. I will stand there a for long time and when I am not getting any attention, I will finally leave” (P, 4)*



Another participant opined;

*“When I came to the University first, it was not easy; the system was not easy at all. I had to change courses many times until I became stable. Because the department hasn’t provided any person to provide us guidance and counselling service, I was mentally disturbed” (P, 5)*

One participant opined:

*“The university system is not friendly to newcomers. When I first came to the University, we always walk to and fro to get information and to register for our courses. In fact, it is not easy when you are entering new into the University, at that time I need counselling to be able to cope with the changing situation” (P, 6)*

Participant seven has this to say;

*“I sometimes feel bad after the results are being released after examination and my performance is bad, I am always sad” (P, 7)*

A participant has this to say;

*“I want to date and marry a lady who is hearing but all the ladies are running away from him since he can’t talk and the lady cannot sign which makes communication difficult” (P, 8)*

One participant has this to say;

*“Making friends in the University was not easy for me. This is because back at SHS we were all deaf and so communication was easy. Here in the University, we are mixed with the hearing and it makes friendship and communication very difficult. However, as time passed by, I began to adjust little by little and now I am used to the system of communication in the University” (P, 11)*

Considering the remarks given by the deaf students who participated in the study pertaining to this theme, it is revealed that deaf students face many difficulties in making friends, expressing themselves fully in seeking for help, joining associations and clubs in the institution and adjusting positively to academic activities in the University. The causes of these needs are due to a variety of factors which include, indifferent attitudes of peers especially hearing peers who have little or no knowledge regarding deaf culture. Social isolation will cause the deaf student more hurt and stress but with respect for diversity, inclusivity and proper accommodation, deaf students will feel welcomed to fully participate in every activity within the school.

#### 4.2.2 Research Question 2

##### **What are the Perceptions of Deaf Students Regarding Counselling Services at the University of Education, Winneba?**

Responses were gathered from participants to answer this research question. Four themes emerged for this research question; Accessibility, effectiveness, counselling not relevant to the needs of deaf students, counselling perceived to be for the hearing only, and counselling as merely advice-giving.

##### **Theme One: Deaf Students Perceived Counselling Services as Accessible**

This theme examines the extent to which counselling services are accessible to deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba. The accessibility and quality of counselling services to deaf students is crucial to their academic success in higher education. It is not enough for the deaf students to have the desire to access counselling services, how available and possible are the services to them? The lack of proper communication channels can lead to misunderstanding between the students and the counsellor, eventually affecting their emotional and mental health. The data gathered revealed that deaf students access some form of counselling, due to proximity and availability. The following responses were given by the students who are deaf who participated in the study:

Participant One;

*“I think counselling that I received from lecturers at the University had made efforts to accommodate their specific communicated needs during counselling sessions., because the counsellor was a lecturer who communicate in deaf language. To this, I could say counselling services are accessible to me as deaf student for we do not have to struggle before accessing the service” (P, 1)*

Another participant added that;

*"I will say that counselling is more accessible when you inform the person you are to seek help from earlier. some of my counselling schedule conflicts with my lectures schedule, making it difficult for me to attend sessions" (P, 5)*

One participant commented that;

*"I have encountered delays in accessing counselling services, which has significantly affected my timely intervention in mediating my problem. The person to offer me the counselling was not station at a place due to work schedules" (P, 11)*

Another participant remarked that;

*"The availability of sign language interpreters during counselling sessions has significantly eased my communication challenges, this made counselling more accessible to me as a deaf" (P, 7)*

Participant three has this to share;

*"I mostly seek counselling from lecturers but due to their different lectures timing and activities, they are sometimes not available to schedule sessions at flexible times that will not also conflict with my classes or professional activities schedule" (P, 3)*

Participant four added that;

*"Due to the busy schedule of the sign language interpreters and resource persons from whom I seek counselling, it makes accessibility difficult for me especially when I do not pre-inform them" (P, 4)*

From the above, it was noted that counselling services are accessible to deaf students.

This is because they do not seek counselling from the professional counselling unit, but rather rely heavily on their lecturers at their department due to communication difficulties. Whereas the counselling unit would have booked an appointed time and date for counselling, their lecturers and resource persons due to their already plan schedules finds it hard to be available at the time needed by the deaf for counselling

### **Theme Two: Deaf Students Perceived Counselling Services as Effective**

Effective counselling services are an essential aspect of a University's commitment to the overall health and wellbeing of her students. For deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba, access to effective counselling services can be a significant advantage. Even though participants reported not to have access to counselling from

the counselling unit before, this theme seems to find out how effective the various counselling they reported to have access from lecturers, church leaders, and some sign language interpreters. Effective counselling can help deaf students address these challenges and equip them with the necessary tools to cope with stress and improve their mental health. The following responses were given by the deaf students who participated in the study;

Participant said;

*"As a deaf student, I have found the counselling services provided at UEW to be quite effective, even though those who offer me counselling are not professional counsellors their contribution towards my well-being has helped me a lot" (P, 1)*

Another participant added that;

*"The Lecturers I seek counselling from are skilled in communicating with me through sign language and has been able to provide me with the necessary support and guidance I need in navigating university life" (P, 4)*

Participant seven commended that

*"While I appreciate the effort put into providing counselling services for deaf students at UEW, I do feel that they could be improved. It would be helpful if there are more deaf counsellors available who can fully understand the unique experience of being deaf in a hearing world" (P, 7)*

Participant eleven stated that;

*"I have not yet utilized the counselling services here at the University of Education, Winneba, but I appreciate that they exist and are available to me. It's good to know that counselling services are here to support students" (P, 11)*

One participant added that;

*"I've tried accessing the counselling services before, but I didn't find them helpful. The counselling provider didn't know how to communicate with me effectively, and I felt like they didn't really understand my situation" (P, 12)*

Another participant remarked;

*"I have had mixed experiences with the counselling services at UEW. Some counsellors have been incredibly helpful in addressing my concerns and providing me with strategies to manage my mental health, while others have struggled to communicate effectively with me. I think there is room for improvement in terms of training for counsellors working with deaf students" (P, 2)*

The data presented above on this theme indicates that deaf students appreciate the availability of the counselling services at the University, irrespective of the fact that they do not access it from the professional counselling unit. The services offer by their peers, lecturers, church members are helpful to some extent. However counselling services for the deaf would be more effective if professional counselling is offered to them from the counselling unit.

### **Theme Three: Counselling is not Relevant to the Needs of Deaf Students**

Participants were asked based on this theme to share their thought on how relevant counselling services are to them. All deaf participants agreed that counselling services are important for the mental well-being of deaf students, however, they again perceived the services as not able in mitigating the academic and social needs irrespective of their relevance. It was evident from the data that, due to the fact that deaf students cannot communicate with hearing in a counselling session to unearth their worries and concerns, they perceived counselling services to be for the hearing only. One of the participants commented that;

*“The counselling services cannot meet the need of students with deafness. I for example cannot hear, and the counsellors in the University are hearing who do not understand sign language, so I think counselling is not for the deaf students. Counselling services are important but for we the deaf, I think it does not benefit us much” (P, 7)*

One participant has this to say;

*“Going for counselling cannot meet my needs, because the interpreter who interpreted for me the last time I went to one lecturer for advice did not help me. I don't think the interpreter was telling all my problems to the lecturer due to the fact that I couldn't explain myself because of communication barriers” (P, 2)*

From the data gathered above, it is clear that counselling does not benefits deaf students so much possibly because of the perception towards it. They see it as not relevant and so they lack the interest to always seek it in terms of troubles

#### **Theme Four: Deaf students Perceived Counselling Services as Merely Advise-giving**

Counselling aims at helping the individual who seeks the service to better their stands through a series of alternatives, and suggestions. However, deaf students' responses based on this theme perceived counselling as merely advise giving instead of helping them overcome their life challenges, this perception of deaf students about counselling services greatly influenced their interest in seeking help, irrespective of their undeniable academic and social challenges on campus. Some of the participants has this to say;

*“Counselling to me is advice-giving, someone talking to me about University life and the various activities available on campus” (P, 2)*

A participant said;

*“As for me I think counselling is needed only when someone lost a relative in the school, the lecturers will call the person to their office and counsel the person to stop crying and focus on his/her studies” (P, 6)*

Another participant added;

*“counselling is given to students who struggle in learning or paying attention in class, the interpreters, lecturers or friends will call such individuals and offer them or solution to help the problem, for me, I perceived counselling as giving help to the helpless” (P, 7)*

Participant Seven added that;

*“During my level 100 days, we were giving oriented, which I considered as a form of counselling because University authorities advised us on life on campus, the various programmes on campus and where to seek help in time of need” (P, 8)*

Participant 9 said;

*“I perceived counselling as advice giving, so when I need to take a decision, I always call on my friend or any of the interpreters around advise me before I take that particular decision” (P, 9)*

From the responses presented above, it could be noted that deaf students do not value the counselling service in the University due to their different perceptions about it. When counselling is perceived as merely advise-giving, deaf students would not see the need to seek the services because they have friends and, family and church members around who are capable of advising them when the need be. This perception is attributing to low patronage of the counselling services in the University by the deaf populace.

#### **4.2.3 Research Question 3**

**How deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba access counselling services?**

This research question three seeks to find out how deaf students access counselling in the University irrespective of their hearing disability. To answer this research question, data was collected by interviewing participants who have accessed counselling at the University before. Four themes were generated in response to this research question; these were; accessing counselling from lecturers who understand sign language, accessing counselling from religious leaders, accessing counselling from the University counsellors, and accessing counselling from interpreters. Comments gathered points to the fact they, deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba do not seek counselling from the professional counsellors. In an interaction with director of the counselling unit and other counsellors, confirmed that, most students do not patronized counselling especially the continuing students of which deaf students are not excluded

## **Theme One: Accessing Counselling from Lecturers who Understand Sign Language**

Based on this theme, deaf students reported in this study that, due to the communication challenges they often face communicating with the hearing society, whenever they encounter an issue which worries their well-being and peaceful stay in the University, they will mostly resort to lectures in the Department of Special Education who understand and can communicate with them through sign language and church members

Here are some responses from participants;

*“The last time I had some problem, I went to my lecturer for counselling because he can communicate through sign language to advise and motivate me very well to carry on with life issues” (P, 1)*

A participant reported that;

*“I mostly seek guidance and counselling through one lecturer who understands my communication though he is not in my department” (P, 2)*

One participant commented

*“The lecturers in my department are able to offer me counselling because they are teachers of the deaf and by experience understand the needs and culture of the deaf students, so they are able to offer me good counselling which is capable of meeting my academic and personal needs” (P, 4)*

Another participant remarked;

*“I feel confident seeking to counselling from a lecturer, preferably the one who can sign, this is because, I don't need to bring in an interpreter, when the interpreter is there fine, and without an interpreter I can still express myself” (P, 5)*

Participant six said;

*“Counselling is confidential, and no other person should hear the issues being discussed, for this reason, I prefer going to a lecturer with knowledge of sign language so that no third party will hear our communication” (P, 6)*



Participant seven said;

*“I usually get counselling from my friends whenever I complain to them about the trouble I encounter. I understand that he is not professional to give me the very best of counselling, however, his counsel has always helped me through” (P, 7)*

Participant twelve had this to add;

*“Without sign language interpreters, much of what we deaf people do here would be very difficult. I have never gone to the counselling section to access their services. But if I should go, I will require the assistance of an interpreter to help in translating my ideas and give me feedback from the counsellor” (P, 12)*

From the data presented above on this theme, it is clear that most deaf students access counselling from their lecturers due to communication accommodation and familiarity. Since these lecturers have been teaching deaf students and understand their cultures, the students find it easier going to them for counselling.

### **Theme Two: Counselling from Religious Leaders**

Religious leaders offer counselling for our spiritual growth and nourishment of the soul to keep the faith alive and strong in our maker. Responding to this theme, deaf students reported having access to counselling services from their churches and Mosques. However, where ever an individual may seek counselling, the ultimate aim is to be able to solve certain situations when the counselling is offered. Participants have this to say regarding accessing counselling services from religious leaders;

*“My church welcomes and offers me the needed counselling and advice I needed to succeed in my academic and spiritual life. Every Sunday, my church leaders will ask me through an interpreter if I have any needs or challenges that may be confronting me” (P, 1)*

One participant has this to say;

*“In my church, we have interpreters, who always lead me to seek counselling from our pastor” (P, 3)*

Participant four stated that;

*“I am part of an association in my church, so the leaders in the association are helpful enough towards all my needs regarding my educational and mental well-being. When I have any concern, they will lead me to our pastor for help” (P, 4)*

Participant six said this;

*“When I reported to campus in level 100, my parents introduced me to a pastor in our church, who serves as my spiritual director, so any issue confronting me, I always go to him for counselling and solution. I feel comfortable going to him because I trust him with my secrets” (P, 6)*

Another participant commended

*“The interpreters in my church are really helpful and instrumental, so anytime they see that I am stress up and that something is wrong with me, they will just lead me to my pastor and interpret to him for me, be it financial, academic or personal. Since they are in my church I am not afraid telling them my problems or asking for help” (P, 7)*

Another participant remarked;

*“The preaching from my priest at church and all the pieces of advice given is usually so powerful to keep me going on. My church really counsels me more than any other person and I trust them too” (P, 10)*

From the response gathered above, it was clear that deaf students seek to counsel from religious leaders, members, from association members. Their response proves beneficial to their mental stability, not only for their spiritual growth and development but also for their academic success and progress. Even though some of the religious members may not be professional and competent in giving professional counselling, due to communicational barriers and understanding of deaf culture, participants indicated that they are conformable seeking help from the church leaders rather than any other place. Church leaders, therefore, need to provide a diverse solution which will meet the needs of students with deafness

### **Theme Three: Form University’s Counsellors**

The University’s counsellors are specialized in helping students overcome academic, personal, or career-related challenges which could have a negative effect on their life. These services are availability and fresh students during their orientation in level 100 are

usually expose to these and other services at the University, however, deaf students based on this theme seem not to have been benefitting from such important services rendered by the University, some Counsellors responded to have not counselled deaf students before because they do not show up at the facility. Below are responses by some deaf students and counsellors;

*“I have never gone to the counselling unit for professional counselling”*  
**(P, 4)**

Another participant said;

*“I have asked people to assist me in taking decision especially my friends, but i have never gone for professional counselling before at the counselling unit”* **(P, 10)**

Participant seven has this to say;

*“I am not aware of the professional counselling unit at the University, so I have never access counselling from there”* **(P,7)**

Two directors for the counselling unit at the University also commented that;

*“The counselling unit had not encountered any deaf student seeking counselling since my regime as the director”* **(Current Director)**

*“Yes, I have counselled students before, but they were not deaf, they don't even come to the facility, maybe because they don't need counselling because of the communication barrier”* **(Former Director)**

The comments from the counsellors above confirmed that of the deaf students that they do not access counselling services at the University's counselling unit.

#### **Theme Four: Deaf Students Access Counselling from sign language Interpreters**

Sign language interpreters are mostly close to deaf students due to their communication needs, these persons help them in all aspects in their academic pursuits, though they are not professional counsellors, participants in this study reported to have been receiving some form of counselling from them. It is an undeniable fact that friends and the people around us offer some form of counselling in the absence of a licensed counsellor, whatever their form of counselling may be, it is aimed towards helping the person in need to understand life situations and take a

good decision for a purposeful living. Data gathered on the themes speak to the facts;

here are some comments made by the study participants;

*“I live and work with friends every day, whom I can trust, so whenever life situations hit me, I usually resorted to the counsel of some trusted friends around me. I know though they are not professionals but they are always helpful. I don’t have to wait till I come to campus to talk to a lecturer or go with an interpreter to seek counselling from the counselling unit” (P, 2)*

A participant has this to say;

*“My friends offer me counselling something in the past, I was hurt and almost going to stop school, but friends who understand sign language came to my aid with their opinions, suggestions and advice which really help me. So, to me, my friends give me the best of counselling in handling my life problems” (P, 11)*

Another participant commended;

*“Whenever I go for lectures before the lecturer will start teaching, the sign language interpreters who are in to sign for them will be asking me questions about my well-being while staying on campus, I usually take that opportunity to tell me my problem and they will counsel me on the best option or way to go” (P,12)*

One Participant further added;

*“I received many counselling through many sign language interpreters, those interpreters are really good, they are my friends so I always feel comfortable discussing my issues with them. All the advice and help in taking decision they have given me has proven good” (P, 4)*

Participant five added that;

*“One of my friends is really helpful, maybe because he is hearing, he understands a lot of things I do not know about life and his advice is always good. Many of the challenges I encountered, he will help me with the best possible option to guide me through” (P, 5)*

Responses based on this theme above indicated, proximity to deaf students seems to be a factor contributing to counselling services. Sign language interpreters who are always around are reported to have been offering them counselling, though they are not professionals with experience, they are able to give some form of relief to any grieving students who call for their services.

#### **4.2.4 Research Question 4**

**What Challenges do Deaf Students Encounter in Seeking Counselling Services at the University of Education, Winneba?**

Nothing good comes without drawbacks, and in the same way, seeking counselling services by deaf students capable of transforming them like any other human endeavour can be not without challenges. The fact that counselling services are made available for all students in the University is not enough to adequately meet their needs, especially that of deaf students. The research question sought to ascertain the challenges deaf students face in accessing counselling services. In response to this research question, participants were interviewed to elicit their opinions on the challenges they mostly encounter seeking counselling. Five themes emerged, these were; communication barriers, lack of information about counselling services at the university, confidentiality, attitudes of counselors, and the gender of the counsellor. Deaf students appreciate the benefits of counselling services to their psychological well-being and academic performance, however, accessing the service possess a challenge for them. Out of the twelve deaf participants, five attributed the changes in accessing counselling to an inability of the counsellors to communicate with them through sign language, two participants also believe that difficulty going for counselling has to do with unawareness of the services being provided at the University, four participants further iterated that, unenviability of sign language interpreters at the counselling unit possess a great challenge for the deaf who seek the service, whereas one attributed the challenges deaf students encounter seeking counselling service to be the gender of the counsellor which makes them uncomfortable to discuss sensitive matters pertaining to their well-being and academic performance.

### **Theme One: Communication Barriers**

The inability of the deaf to communicate with the hearing society and be understood was one of the themes captured under research question one. For a client to receive successful counselling for their needs, the person offering the counselling needs to

understand their situation in full before giving any possible suggestions or solution.

The following responses were given by deaf students who participated in the study:

*“I find it difficult in explaining to myself when I am stressed due to my academic work. Some of the people whom I wish to seek help from do not understand my language and culture, to appreciate my concerns, it makes impossible for me to ask of help from them” (P, 12)*

Participant Seven said;

*“Without an interpreter, communication with counsellors will be very difficult for me because I cannot express my problems fully. Because I cannot communicate by speaking, I find it difficult seeking counselling my department and family because the society around me will not understand me and give me a positive solution (P, 7)*

A participant commented;

*“I went to one of my church members for discussion and due to communication challenges the whole process was writing, writing, writing, so I could express myself fully through the writing. When it happens like this, it makes the counselling session not effective and productive” (P, 3)*

Another participant said;

*“It was mostly the use of gestures and writing, the sheet given to me to write my problems did not allow me to write all my problems because it was small. I find it difficult to express myself in writing, but I don't do, no one will understand me” (P, 1)*

Participant ten shares;

*“I once visited a lecturer who is our academic counsellor, and that lecturer invited a sign language interpreter, the presence of the interpreter makes me shy and I ended up not discussing with him the exact issue for which I came. Because of the confidentiality of issues, I would not seek counselling in the presence of an interpreter, if the counsellor cannot communicate with me, then I better stay and manage my problem myself” (P, 10)*

Communication plays a major role in facilitating meaning and exchange of ideas, especially for a deeper understanding. Most times, counsellors made provision for the services of an interpreters to help facilitate meaning between them, counselling is mostly confidential, and the presence of a third party (sign language interpreter) disconnects the deaf from fully expressing their feelings and thoughts. It would have been much more interactive seeing the deaf narrating their own understanding,

situation, pain and whatsoever to their chosen counsellor with any involvement of a mediator

### **Theme Two: Lack of Information about Counselling Services at the University**

Despite the availability of counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba, the level of knowledge and awareness of its presence, appears inadequate among the deaf students. The access to the service will definitely be low if the awareness level of beneficiaries is reported to be low. The participants interviewed based on this theme reported ignorance of the counselling unit, some do not even know where the counselling centre is located despite their enormous needs and life challenges issues that confront them each day. Here are some of the responses from participants;

*“I have no idea about the counselling unit at the University of Education, Winneba. Counselling unit was mentioned to me sometime in the past, during my L100 orientation but I have never sought counselling from the unit because I don't even know where it is located” (P, 9)*

A participant said;

*“I don't know that there is a place called counselling centre in the University here, though I have some needs my lack of information about it will not allow me to search for it and go for counselling” (P, 2)*

Another participant added that;

*“During our orientation in level 100, we were told that there is a counselling unit here in the University for students and works with any personal issues, however, I have never heard about it since then” (P, 3)*

Another participant said;

*“We the deaf mostly lack information about some things, for example, the counselling unit you are talking about. I am only hearing it from you today, I have never access counselling from that unit before” (P, 4)*

Based on the feedback gathered from the participants, it was evident that ignorance of the existence of a counselling centre at the University of Education, Winneba influences deaf students lack of interest in the service. It appears the information about the counselling services given during orientation in level 100 days is not enough to motivate students to seek the service thereafter

### **Theme Three: Lack of Confidentiality**

Data presented on this theme indicates that, participants seek counselling from church leaders, peers, sign language interpreters and peers who are not bounded by confidentiality, considering this, some deaf students hesitate to ask some peers and lecturers for counselling because they do not trust their confidential level, they would have preferred seeking counselling for the ‘Counselling Unit’ from a professionally trained and licensed counsellor however due to communication barriers, they resort to their inexperience and “not so much” confidential people. Participants have this to say regarding confidentiality as a challenge for deaf students encountered seeking counselling.

Participant 11 says;

*“Some challenges confronting my life are personal and I am afraid to share my problem with someone. So, when I am even seeking counselling from friends, or church members I reserve some deep part because of confidentiality reasons” (P, 11)*

Another participant said;

*“Something, after telling your problem to a hearing person, instead of helping me with solution and ways to improve my challenges, the person will go around telling other people. This stopped me from going for counselling. But sometimes I will just ignore all these challenges and go for counselling from my friends” (P, 9)*

One participant remarked;

*“For me, I am scared to even involved an interpreter when I am discussing my issues with someone, so I prefer seeking to counselling alone because I can’t trust all the people around me” (P, 2)*

Another participant said;

*“I believe if there is a deaf counsellor or lecturers, the secret of deaf can be kept our properly, the hearing peers and resource persons who equally deal with many students after me may speak of my issues to another people, so I don’t feel confident when seeking counselling” (P, 5)*

Confidentiality is key in counselling session, client who seeks counselling would not want their problems to be known or heard by other people except the counsellor they trust, here is the case many were people who offered counselling services to deaf

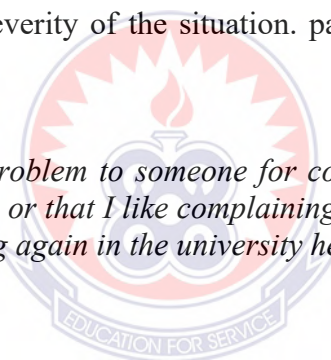


students have little or no knowledge of offering professional counselling and adhering to all the counselling protocol of which confidentiality is held in high esteem. Where one is confident, he/she can pour out all his/her hidden secret and seek solutions, in the absence of confidentiality, the client may keep vital information from the person he/she seeks counselling from and this may not yield the needed end as desired

#### **Theme Four: Attitudes of the Counsellors Towards Deaf Students**

Responses from this theme revealed that the attitudes of some people they access counselling from do not encourage deaf students to seek counselling services at the University, despite their readiness and willingness to help students. A positive rapport to client has the tendency of increasing the chances of the person coming back when in needs, but where deaf students are not treated well, they would hesitate going for help irrespective of the severity of the situation. participants reported the following based on the stated theme;

*“When I tell my problem to someone for counselling, the person usually takes me to be lazy or that I like complaining. This attitude deters me from seeking counselling again in the university here” (P, 1)*



A participant added;

*“Some of the people we consult for counselling do not take us seriously, even though our problems are real, this makes it look like counselling for only the hearing since they can better express themselves in words” (P, 2)*

One participant has this to add;

*“whenever I need counselling, people I consult to give me help see me as a trouble causer, who is always coming to worry them, they will tell me they are busy, go and come later” (P, 3)*

Another participant remarked;

*“Due to the way some of the hearing people communicate with us, whenever we have a problem and need help does not encourage us at all, I usually feel perceived negative attitudes towards us the deaf” (P, 4)*

Positive attitudes towards the deaf will encourage them to seek academic counselling for a productive stay and success in the University, but when deaf students who are already sometimes discriminated against are shown negative attitudes whenever they need help in term of counselling, this will further derail their emotions and stop them from ever seeking help again. Most of the negative attitudes reported by the participants could be attributed to the fact that the persons they access counselling from are not professional in offering the service and do not have the patience, listening ear to the plight of deaf students.

#### **Theme Five: The Gender of the Counsellor Giving Counselling to Deaf Students**

Participants reported finding it difficult to seek counselling from the opposite gender.

This report could be attributed to fear, shyness or discomfort when discussing issues with the opposite gender especially when the problem is very sensitive. Below are some of their expressing;

*“I am a man and would prefer a male counsellor, when I meet a female counsellor, I will not be comfortable expressing myself because I think some issues should not be shared with a female” (P, 1)*

Another participant said;

*“I know the counselling is highly confidential, however, I will just not be comfortable seeking counselling from a woman” (P, 2)*

Another participant said;

*“I find it difficult to discuss confidential issues with the opposite genders. Depending on the situation, some of the problem is ok for everyone to hear, while others are gender specific related issues. If the problem is about relationship, I will not be comfortable discussing it with a gender different from mine” (P, 8)*

From the above statement, deaf students appear to be very careful when seeking counselling services. Although both genders tend to provide lasting solutions and alternatives to choose from, some deaf students will not be comfortable considering their family and belief systems. The presence of the “same gender” will encourage the client to likely discuss everything concerning them with confidence knowing that they both share similar characteristics, on the other hand when the client and counselor are from opposite gender, this may hinder the clients from discussing some sensitive matters with counselors irrespective of the professionalism and confidentiality assurances.



## CHAPTER FIVE

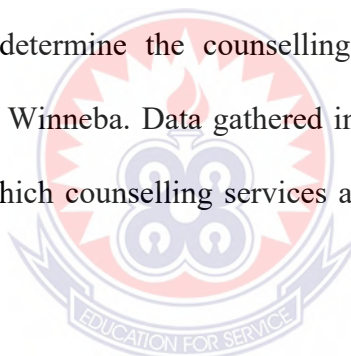
### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings based on the research objectives, with the support of existing and relevant literature. The discussions were based on the objectives of the study analysis of data. The results of the findings are discussed according to the research objectives which dwell on deaf students' counselling needs, perception of deaf students on counselling services, access to counselling services, and challenges faced by deaf students in accessing counselling services.

#### 5.1 Research Question One: Counselling Needs of Deaf Students at the University of Education, Winneba.

This objective was to determine the counselling needs of deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba. Data gathered indicates that deaf students have a spectrum of needs for which counselling services are required, some of those needs were;



##### 5.1.1 Academic Counselling Needs

The study revealed that deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba needed counselling in terms of poor study habits, time management, issues with sign language interpreters, difficulty in selecting their desired courses, inability to participate fully in radio lectures, coping with workload issues and challenges in meeting deadlines of academic activities among others. The findings confirm Tuchili's (2008) study in the Lusaka district of Zambia which found that deaf students were faced with educational challenges, concerning academic needs which causes them to eventually drop out of school at the University level. The studies revealed that their needs were enormous, and could overwhelm deaf students if measures are not put in place to control them. Mwape further confirmed this in his

study on the counselling needs of students, 60% of the respondent's sampled for the study indicated that deaf students are faced with challenges like study skills, coping with academic pressure, difficulty meeting deadlines and fear of tests and examinations (Mwape, 2015). Although the revelations are inevitable in tertiary institutions in Ghana, it calls for concern and appropriate steps to manage the academic situation before it degenerates into psychopathology among the students most especially with deafness.

The findings of this study, was again in line with a study conducted in Malaysia on factors that contribute to students graduating on time in technical universities by Othman et al (2015). According to these authors, support from counsellors is an important factor that moderates retention and helps University students to gain study skills such as time management, which enables them to finish their courses in time. Similarly, Thamrin (2012), while studying factors that influence completion of a PhD programme in Australian universities, found that study skills such as time management, problem solving skills are important in enhancing completion rate. The implication is that a deficit of such skills compromise or delay completion.

However, through counselling programmes such as psycho-education, instilling these skills can help deaf students focus on their studies. According to Kader and Eissa (2015), time management intervention enhances such skills as goal setting, scheduling, prioritizing tasks, self- monitoring and problem-solving techniques, among others. These are important aspects that make the student remain focused to complete their studies on time. Further effectiveness study skills enable students to work on their assignments and complete them on time. It also means that the students get enough time to study, therefore improving their academic performance, which boosts their self-esteem motivating them to work hard and complete on time. Well

managed time, for instance, could allow students some reaction activities that would help revitalize their energy levels, making them concentrate on their studies.

Academic engagement of deaf students in distance education and students without hearing loss in some distant education; revealed that students with deafness performed lower than students without hearing loss in learning (Richardson et al, 2009) The poor performance of the students with hearing loss in their study supports the findings of this present study that deaf students are plagued with numerous educational needs that require guidance and counselling services for appropriate adjustment to enhance their academic performance.

### **5.1.2 Health Counselling Needs**

The findings revealed that deaf students faced a significant challenge in accessing health care, effective communication is essential, both for the patient who needs to express themselves in terms of symptoms, and complaints and for the health care provider who must be able to explain treatment protocols, preventative options and make a diagnosis in treating any condition that may be affecting the patient's physical, emotional or social well-being. Several challenges pose stress to deaf students in accessing health care in terms of their inability to communicate well with healthcare providers and the negative attitudes of some workers at the health facilities. Deaf students who visit health facilities feel less comfortable and would have more difficulties accessing health care than those who are hearing, especially in the absence of support services and technologies (Kesson, 2013). The Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD) confirmed the difficulty students with deafness encounter when accessing health care because of communication barriers with health professionals. Most health professionals are not familiar with sign language and usually have no education or knowledge about deafness. Further to this, healthcare

providers who recognize deaf patients' preference for sign language fail to use qualified interpreter services regularly due to the extra cost involved. Deaf students mentioned the difficulty of obtaining sign language interpreters for medical visits on short notice and gaps in understanding caused by provider attempts at written communication, this could lead to misdiagnosis which tends causing further complications.

### **5.1.3 Financial Counselling Needs**

Deaf students issue with financial resources are key to academic achievement and active participation in lectures, the study reported being stressed up due to their inability to settle some financial obligations in the University. The findings indicated that the only support they get for their stay and upkeep in the University is the insufficient monies they receive from their families which are not usually enough considering their many needs. Some had to work on their own in order to raise money to support their stay and learning. This means that deaf students are challenged in meeting basic needs, which therefore make them uncomfortable enough to concentrate on their education. Murray (2014) confirmed that financial problems are one of the factors that contribute to stress among University students and when not managed well affects the academic performance of the individual. Sabri, et al. (2008) suggest that counselling is important towards helping students get information on financial management. Counselling services can impart deaf students with skills in financial management to help students understand the importance of living within their means instead of comparing themselves with others.

### **5.1.4 Personal Counselling Needs**

The results of the study further indicated that deaf students have some personal needs capable of affecting their academic performance. Some of those personal needs

revealed in the study included, difficulty to relate well with course mates, accepting constructive criticism from fellow students, have low self-esteem, have difficulty making friends and relate freely with lecturers. Literature indicated that some other personal needs of deaf students were shyness among their hearing mates due to the hearing inabilities, express anger appropriately without becoming violent or destructive, control their temper and appropriately cope with peers in group activities or situations irrespective of their hearing disabilities (Yu et al., 2017). A study conducted in the USA by Weaver (2018) suggests that problem-solving helps students identify, understand and be specific about the problem they have. Consequently, they get to know how to be logical, analytical, act and select the best alternatives using critical and creative thinking about their issues and making proper decisions.

The findings of this study are in harmony with the findings of Akinpelu (2015) on the personal needs of deaf students in a regular University setting. Students with deafness exhibited inquisitiveness, isolation, difficulty setting goals, feeling cheated, aggressiveness and they easily get annoyed. Also confirming the personal needs of deaf students by Kluwin et al. (2002) reported that deaf students restricts their interaction with their fellow deaf students while hearing students extend their interaction to both hearing and deaf students alike. Deaf students are challenged in terms of personal needs such as their inability to easily make friends, unable to understand themselves, having problems with dating as well as struggling to meet family expectations. The findings were not surprising as the personal aspect of life is a prominent component of every human being in any environment. Similarly, Legters and McDill's (1994) study confirmed the finding of the current study that deaf students were faced with challenges of dealing with peer pressure, acceptance by friends, and communication with roommates. This argument suggests that deaf



students in Universities need to avail themselves for counselling services so that they can make informed choices on issues relating to their lives. Thus, the need for guidance and counselling is eminent in addressing these personal problems, especially in the universities to cater for the educational, and socio-personal needs of deaf students. Further concerns of first-year deaf students separating from their families for the first time, in addition to the numerous social adjustments concerns and the rigorous demands of the university academic system equally underscore personal challenges in university life (Brown & Halloway, 2008).

## **5.2 Research Question Two: Perceptions of Deaf Students on Counselling Services at the University of Education, Winneba.**

Research question two sought to assess the perception of deaf students on counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba. This was essential because the perception of an individual on a particular issue is likely to influence his or her preparedness to access the benefits from it. According to Dulebohn and Ferris (2010), the seriousness a deaf student would attach to the counselling service depends on the students believes and perceptions of the counselling service. Deaf students' perceptions could lead to their underutilization of the University's counselling services; some of the perceptions revealed in the findings includes; accessibility of counselling services, the effectiveness of the counselling services, counselling not relevant for the deaf, counselling benefits only the hearing and counselling as advise-giving. On the other hand, some deaf students' perceptions may be influenced by their unwillingness to discuss personal problems and lack of knowledge about counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba. Ruto et al. (2017) also attributed their failure to seek counselling services to 'shyness', the service as irrelevant, and therefore unable to disclose to counsellors some very personal issues. In addition, tight academic schedules for deaf students means that students have little or no time

left for counselling even though they may have a serious life issue. Students consistently state privacy concerns are a barrier to seeking counseling services to fully address their needs. Students who perceived they needed but did not use counseling services spend more time working than students who did not perceive the need for counselling (Nash et al., 2017).

### **5.2.1 Counselling Services as Accessible**

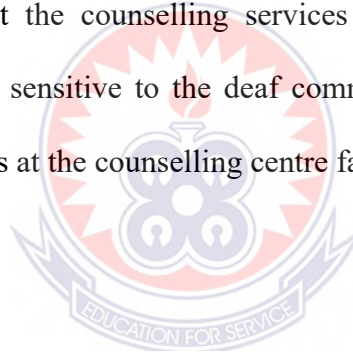
The accessibility of counselling services plays a critical role in promoting the well-being and academic success of all students, including those with disabilities. Studies have shown that counsellors who are not proficient in sign language struggle to effectively communicate with deaf students, leading to misunderstandings and reduced effectiveness of counselling sessions (Smith, 2017). This lack of linguistic and cultural understanding can hinder the development of a strong therapeutic relationship, limiting the support available to deaf students (Steinberg et al., 2010). The availability of sign language interpreters is crucial for ensuring effective communication between deaf students and counsellors. However, research suggests that the presence of qualified interpreters during counselling sessions is often limited or inconsistent (Glickman et al., 2019). This lack of accessibility creates barriers to accessing counselling services promptly, potentially exacerbating mental health concerns and hindering academic progress for deaf students. In addition to sign language interpreters, providing appropriate accommodations and promoting sensitivity towards the needs of deaf students are vital for improving accessibility. Research indicates that accommodations such as visual aids, written communication alternatives, and inclusive counselling techniques can enhance the counselling experience for deaf students (Chen et al., 2018). Counselling staff needs to undergo training on deaf culture, communication strategies, and understanding the unique needs of deaf students to provide tailored support (Freire et al., 2021). Based on the

findings and challenges discussed, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance the accessibility of counselling services for deaf students at UEW. Increase the number of qualified sign language interpreters available to ensure their consistent presence during counselling sessions. Develop and implement training programme for counsellors and counselling staff that focus on deaf culture, communication strategies, and understanding the unique needs of deaf students. Establish clear guidelines and policies for providing accommodations, including visual aids and written communication alternatives, to enhance the counselling experience for deaf students.

### **5.2.2 Counselling Services as Effective to Deaf Students**

This theme discusses the effectiveness of the counselling services for the deaf population and provides evidence-based recommendations for improving their quality and accessibility. While there is limited research specifically on counselling services for deaf students at UEW, some studies have examined the general effectiveness of counselling services for deaf individuals in other settings. For example, a meta-analysis of 13 studies on counselling and therapy for deaf clients found that these interventions had moderate to large effect sizes on various outcomes, such as reducing anxiety, depression, and stress, improving self-esteem and coping skills, and increasing satisfaction with life (Rozanski & Handley-McMath, 2014). The authors noted that the quality of counselling services depended on several factors, such as the therapist's competence in sign language and deaf culture, the availability of appropriate assessment materials, and the client's motivation and engagement. Another study on psychological therapies for deaf children and adolescents found similar positive effects on mental health outcomes but also highlighted the need for more research on the specific needs and experiences of this population (Koester & Weisman, 2019).

At the University of Education, Winneba, the counselling services for deaf students are mostly provided by lecturers, sign language interpreters and resource persons who are fluent in sign language and have experience working with deaf clients even though their knowledge in professional counselling may be significantly low. However, some challenges may affect the accessibility and effectiveness of these services, such as the lack of dedicated space for counselling sessions, the limited availability of interpreters or notetakers, and the potential stigma or discrimination that may discouraged deaf individuals from seeking help (Napier et al., 2019). The effectiveness of counselling services for deaf individuals at UEW and similar institutions can be enhanced by adopting evidence-based practices that account for the communication barriers, cultural diversity, and unique experiences of the deaf population. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the counselling services are adequately advertised, well-equipped, and culturally sensitive to the deaf community's needs and that proficient sign language interpreters at the counselling centre facilitate communication.



### 5.2.3 Counselling Perceived as not Relevant for Deaf Students

The study revealed that some deaf students have limited knowledge or understanding of mental health concerns and the impact it has on academic performance and well-being in the University. This lack of awareness leads to a belief that deaf students do not experience significant mental health issues, therefore making counselling seem unnecessary for them. In some cultures, seeking professional help for mental health issues is stigmatized or considered a sign of weakness. These attitudes can influence the perception of counselling among deaf students and their communities.

Communication barriers between deaf students and counsellors who are not proficient in sign language or familiar with alternative communication methods can hinder the effectiveness of counselling sessions. If counselling providers are not equipped to facilitate effective communication, some individuals may view counselling as impractical or ineffective for helping deaf students take decisions regarding their academic and social life. This confirms a study conducted by Montclair State University in the United States which indicates that, deaf students reported that their counsellors did not have the necessary skills and training to work with them adequately (D'Andrea & Brick, 1994). The students felt as though their counsellors did not understand their unique needs and could not address their concerns appropriately.

This misconception is rooted in the belief that hearing is a prerequisite for accessing counselling and that the ability to hear makes them inherently disadvantaged.

This misconception has led to a lack of understanding about the abilities of deaf students and has resulted in a range of negative outcomes on academic achievement, a higher drop-out rate, and decreased socialization opportunities. It is essential to challenge and debunk these misconceptions to promote a more inclusive and equitable counselling system for all learners. According to the researchers, there is a need for specialized training for mental health professionals to provide effective counselling

services to deaf students' misconceptions because it emphasizes pessimism among participants and hinders their attendance to counselling. Participants mostly reacted negatively towards the above-mentioned misconception. The feelings included worries, discomfort and anxiety. In the case of participant two, for instance, the strong feelings of uncertainty and fear prevented him from entering the counselling room but rather made him return home without seeing the counsellor.

This study also confirmed that a lack of appropriate accommodations, and a lack of deaf-friendly counsellors contributed to negative perceptions (Singleton et al., 2020). The reported wrong perception of counsellor functions promoted confusion among students and ultimately hampered their use of the facility. Counsellor role conflicts are also attributable to the prevalent wrong counselling perceptions in recent times (Lieberman, 2004). Clients in the mentioned studies may have encountered some disappointing experiences and thus jumped to wrongful conclusions.

#### **5.2.4 Counselling Perceived as Advise-giving**

Deaf students have limited exposure to counselling services from professionals counselling practitioners and do not fully understand the range of support and interventions that counselling can offer. Several individuals opined a similarity in the concepts of counselling and advise-giving and thus used them interchangeably. However, though both facilities shared similar goals, they adopted different approaches. Advice-giving implies pinpointing a specific intervention to a client as a remedy for his difficulty. A key difference between the two is that, while counselling empowers the client to choose a remedy following an insightful discussion on the situation at hand, advice-giving heavily relies on the advisor for a proposal to overcome the difficulty (Zavale et al., 2017). Deaf students' understanding of counseling is based on limited information or stereotypes, they viewed it as a service that primarily provides advice or guidance, rather than a holistic approach to

addressing mental health concerns. Due to the limited exchange of information and the perception that counselling sessions as indicated by deaf students revolve mainly around advice-giving rather than deeper therapeutic work. These perceptions would be resolved by educating deaf students about the breadth of services provided by counseling, emphasizing the therapeutic aspect, and highlighting the importance of a collaborative and personalized approach. Sharing success stories and testimonials from deaf individuals who have benefited from counselling can also help dispel the notion that counselling services are limited to advice-giving.

### **5.3 Research Question Three: How deaf students access counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba.**

Research question 3 was to identify how deaf students access counselling services to facilitate their positive adjustment to the University community, personal life issues and improved academic performance. The analysis of the comments from the participants revealed that deaf students have various ways of seeking counselling for whatever situation they find themselves in. From the study, the most used media by deaf students for accessing counselling services 'fix' their problems from significant others, mostly from lecturers, religious leaders, resource persons and peers, some simply trust in their strength to pass through the challenges alone. Regarding the counselling unit services at the university, participants reported not having access to professional counselling services in the University before due to what they described a bridge in communication. This fact was confirmed by the director of the counselling unit that deaf students do not come to the facility for counselling. She added that, inability of the counsellors at the facility to communicate through sign language and possibly lack of information about the unit to deaf students could be a contributory factor.

### 5.3.1 Through Lecturers who Understand Sign Language

The study revealed that lecturers and academic advisors are those deaf students usually confer with about their problems. The revelation supports Mendieta, et al. (2012) study that revealed that students get support (emotional, personal, and socially) from teachers, and in the absence of professional counsellors. This finding is understandable as lecturers seem to be the immediate and easiest point of contact to every student in school, hence sharing of information becomes so smooth and easier. From the analysis of the comments, it was revealed that a support system is to enhance access to academic and social information. Having lecturers who understand sign language would provide an opportunity to bridge the communication gap between deaf students and mental health services. This approach has various advantages compared to using sign language interpreters in the counselling session where the counsellor does not understand and can communicate through sign language him or herself. This allows for more flexibility in scheduling sessions, and students can request counselling services spontaneously, avoid the need to involve an interpreter every time a student requires counselling services.

Accessing counselling from lecturers who understand sign language can better comprehend the unique challenges that deaf students face and adjust their counselling approach accordingly. For instance, deaf students may encounter discrimination and social isolation, which may be challenging for them to express in writing. Therefore, having a counsellor who understands sign language allows for a better understanding of these issues and helps to provide adequate support specific to individual needs. While some studies support the idea of deaf students accessing counseling services through lecturers who understand sign language, other studies criticize it. For instance, Al-Haris (2017) argued that lecturers who understand sign language may not necessarily have the skills or training to provide counselling services effectively. In



this case, deaf students may end up receiving inadequate counselling services, which may affect their mental health. Deaf students need information from the lecturers and other instructors to follow group discussions and to know when to participate (Saur et al., 1987).

### **5.3.2 Though Religious Leaders**

One way that deaf students access counselling services is through religious leaders, who serve as intermediaries between the deaf and hearing communities. Religious leaders often hold a position of authority and respect within the deaf community, which makes it easier for them to discuss sensitive issues such as counseling services. Research studies conducted by Delap et al. (2016), showed that using religious leaders as intermediaries for deaf students to access counseling services made it easier for the students to open up about their mental and emotional state. The majority of the study participants reported that the counselling services provided by their religious leaders and other church groups are very impactful for both their spiritual growth and mental well-being. This confirms with the biblical saying that “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13) God has given the church pastors and teachers, and part of the work of pastoring includes counselling as well as teaching the members of a church to counsel one another (see also 1 Thes. 5:14). Deaf students who understand their theological teaching and are close to faith seek various forms of counselling considering that their secret will not be a leak (Cheek & Bradley, 2002). Religious leaders possess an understanding of the cultural and religious background of their congregants, including deaf students allowing them to provide counselling services that are tailored to their

specific needs. Religious communities, such as churches, provide a supportive environment for individuals to discuss and seek help for their mental health concerns (Sullivan & al, 2008). Religious leaders are also viewed as being more compassionate and empathetic towards deaf individuals (Nkwocha, 2012). However, there are concerns about the accessibility and effectiveness of counselling services provided by religious leaders.

A study by Steinberg affirms that individuals often feel more comfortable seeking counselling from their religious leaders due to pre-existing relationships and trust. Confidentiality is often a vital component of religious counselling, allowing individuals to open up and share their concerns without fear of judgment. Religious leaders can incorporate spiritual and faith-based practices into counselling sessions, providing holistic support that integrates religious beliefs and practices (Steinberg, 2010). Despite the potential benefits, there are also several barriers that may prevent deaf individuals from accessing counselling services through religious leaders. One of the main barriers is the shortage of religious leaders who are proficient in sign language, the language of the deaf community (Kozak & Kayes, 2018). This can result in a communication barrier that may discourage deaf individuals from seeking counselling services through religious leaders, who may not have the training or qualifications needed to provide professional counselling services, which can lead to poor outcomes for deaf individuals seeking support (Akintunde et al., 2012). These concerns arise because the majority of religious leaders lack the knowledge and training required to work with deaf individuals (Akintunde & Nkwocha, 2012). This lack of training can prevent religious leaders from identifying the root cause of the emotional challenges facing deaf individuals. Another challenge is the lack of understanding of the language and culture of the deaf community by some religious leaders. This may affect the quality of counselling services that they provide to deaf

individuals (Blake, 2019). Some deaf individuals also reported feeling isolated and unsupported after being turned away by religious leaders who could not communicate with them effectively.

According to research by Klassen and Glickman (2019), many religious leaders have different beliefs and values about people who are deaf in their congregations. These differences in belief systems may make it difficult for religious leaders to provide unbiased counselling services that are appropriate for the deaf student's needs. Another drawback is the limited scope of counselling services that can be accessed through religious leaders. Counselling services accessed through religious leaders may not be as comprehensive as those provided by professional counsellors. Religious leaders have the potential to provide counselling services to deaf individuals. However, creating a supportive environment that recognizes and meets the unique needs of deaf individuals is essential. This includes providing sign language interpreters, training religious leaders in providing culturally competent counselling services to the deaf community and ensuring that the services provided by religious leaders are culturally sensitive and appropriate to the needs of the deaf community.

### **5.3.3 From University's Counsellors**

The study revealed that deaf students do not access counselling services from the University's counselling unit. The findings on this theme was supported by a Journal of Hearing Impairment and Deaf Education in Africa, that deaf students encounter difficulties in communication with counsellors, which can affect their socialization skills and lead to self-esteem issues (Ampiah & Tachie, 2019). The authors argue that counselling for deaf students may not be effective unless they use sign language to communicate. This argument suggests that counselling should only be provided by counselors who know sign language, which may limit the availability of suitable

counselors and result in long waiting times for the students. Also, the cost of hiring sign language experts may be high, and this may increase the cost of the counselling services that the University provides.

According to research by Hanzek and Bielinski (2015), deaf students prefer to access counselling services from professionals who have sufficient training in sign language and deaf culture. Another study found that deaf students with mental health issues experienced obstacles in their access to counselling services due to a lack of recognition of their unique challenges by mental health practitioners (Kushalnagar et al., 2017). On the other hand, detractors of the provision of counselling services for deaf students believe that it may encroach on deaf culture and the language that deaf individuals use, such as sign language. Some deaf individuals believe that mental health issues are often associated with negative attitudes and judgments, making counselling services seem like a medical model that seeks to label and pathologize deafness (Gerner de Garcia & Kaiser, 2015). The most reason for deaf students not accessing counselling from the University's counsellors was attributed to counsellor's inability to communicate with the deaf directly, lack of information about the unit and the counselling having no sign language interpreter to facilitate communication, this was reported by the director for the counselling unit at the University of Education, Winneba

#### **5.3.4 Through Sign Language Interpreters**

Sign language interpreters and individuals who understand sign language have a vital role in facilitating communication between deaf individuals and those who can hear. However, their involvement goes beyond communication assistance and extends to providing valuable counseling support directly to deaf students while being sensitive to the cultural aspects of the deaf community. Incorporating deaf culture into the

counseling approach is essential for establishing a more effective counseling relationship with deaf students. Acknowledging and incorporating deaf culture into counseling allows interpreters to build trust and rapport with the students, creating an environment conducive to counseling sessions. This approach recognizes the unique experiences, perspectives, and challenges faced by deaf individuals, affirming the value of their cultural identity. Research studies consistently support the idea that deaf students benefit from accessing counseling services through individuals and peers who understand sign language. For example, a study conducted by Wang et al. (2020) revealed that deaf students feel more comfortable seeking counseling from individuals who understand their culture and language. This finding suggests that deaf students may turn to unprofessional sources, such as unqualified sign language interpreters, peers, or resources with some understanding of the deaf community but lacking proper counseling training. To effectively meet the counseling needs of deaf students, it is crucial to ensure that professionals and resources possess both linguistic competency in sign language and the necessary counseling skills. A collaborative effort among educational institutions, counseling services, and the deaf community is necessary to provide appropriate training and support for sign language interpreters and peers engaged in counseling activities. By offering deaf students counseling support from individuals proficient in sign language and knowledgeable about deaf culture, we can enhance the accessibility and quality of mental health services available to this population. It is important to recognize and value the expertise and unique contributions that sign language interpreters and peers can bring to the counseling process for deaf students. Through their specialized understanding of the deaf community, they can serve as effective allies and advocates, empowering deaf students to navigate their personal and academic challenges more effectively. By integrating sign language interpreters and individuals who understand sign language into the

counseling framework, we can ensure that the needs of deaf students are met with cultural competence and sensitivity (Botha, 2005). The role of the sign language interpreter is complex and crucial for supporting interaction in the classroom and offering several advices and help to deaf students due to the close relationship with them (Antia, 2011). On practice of the interpreters that may facilitate participation of students is to indicate the speakers and break the message into chunks that correspond to those speakers.

#### **5.4 Research Question Four: Challenges deaf students encounter in seeking counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba.**

Seeking counselling services by deaf students capable of transforming them like any other human endeavour cannot be without challenges. The fact that counselling services are made available for all students in the University is not enough to adequately meet their needs, especially deaf students. This research question sought to ascertain the challenges deaf students face in accessing counselling services for their pressing need to optimize their potential. Participants were interviewed and the challenges they mostly encounter seeking counselling were elicited from them. Four themes emerged, these were; communication barriers, lack of information about counselling services at the university, confidentiality, and fear of stigmatization. Deaf students appreciate the benefits of counselling services to their psychological well-being and academic performance, however, accessing counselling services poses a challenge for them. Out of the 12 deaf participants, five attributed the challenges in accessing counselling to inability of the counsellors to communicate with them through sign language, two participants also believe that difficulty going for counselling has to do with unawareness of the services being provided at the University, four participants further iterated that, unenviability of sign language interpreters at the counselling unit possess a great challenge for the deaf who seek the service, whereas one attributed the

challenges deaf students encounter seeking counselling service to be the gender of the counsellor which makes can make them uncomfortable to discuss sensitive matters pertaining their well-being and academic performance.

#### **5.4.1 Communication Barriers**

Communication plays a major role in facilitating meaning and exchange of ideas, especially for a deep understanding. Without understanding the situation of deaf students due to their inability to express themselves, the client seeking counselling leaves without any help (Appau, 2021). Most times, counsellors made provision for the services of interpreters to help facilitate meaning between them, counselling is mostly confidential, and the presence of a third party (sign language interpreter) disconnects the deaf from fully expressing their feelings and thoughts. It would have been much more interactive seeing the deaf narrating their own understanding, situation, pain and whatsoever to their chosen counsellor with any involvement of a mediator. The inability of the deaf to communicate with the hearing society and be understood was one of the themes captured under research question one. For a client to receive successful counselling for their needs, the person offering the counselling needs to understand their situation in full before giving any possible suggestions or solution.

#### **5.4.2 Lack of Information about Counselling Services**

This theme revealed deaf students' awareness of counselling services at the University. Inadequate information about counselling services can serve as a barrier for deaf students accessing counselling services at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). The study revealed that deaf students have inadequate information about the availability of counselling services at the University. This lack of awareness can prevent them from seeking help or accessing the support they may need for their mental health and well-being. If deaf students are unaware of counselling services, they may assume that such services are not available or accessible to them. This can

lead to a perception that counselling is not an option, and they may not actively seek out the support they require. Deaf students need to know the communication methods available for counselling services, their lack knowledge about the counselling process itself, including what to expect during sessions, the duration of counselling, and how to access ongoing support. This lack of information can create uncertainty and barriers to seeking help. To address these barriers, it is crucial for UEW to improve the dissemination of information about counselling services to deaf students. This can be done through involving the resource persons who work with the information to continually remind and assist them to seek counselling from the counselling unit, collaborating with disability support services, and using multiple communication channels, including visual materials, sign language videos, and accessible websites. This finding by Renuka et al. (2013) that providing clear and comprehensive information about counselling services, including communication methods, confidentiality policies, and the counselling process, will help deaf students make informed decisions and access the support they need. Additionally, actively engaging with the deaf community and seeking their input and feedback can further enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of counselling services for deaf students at the University.

#### **5.4.3 Lack of Confidence in the Counsellor**

The study realized that counselling sessions were not confidential, this is because from interactions with the students, they referred to the persons who served as counsellors, other teachers were sometimes present which made it a little difficult for them to open up. This is mainly because those individuals are not professional counsellors. The results could be realistic as lecturers and friends seem to be the immediate contact to every student in school, hence sharing of information become so smooth and easy. However, academic advisers, peers and family members may seem to be untrusted



because in most cases, familiarity in families may supersede realities presented by members while the bond between students and academic advisors may be weak because they may not be having any direct contact established between them (Kochhar & Bagaya, 2013). In connection with whether counselling sessions were confidential, majority of the participants disagreed that counselling sessions are confidential in agreement with a study by Mandera (2013) that teachers who served as counsellors lacked the skills and techniques to counsel students and also were not conversant with the ethics of counselling and professionalism.

Again, a study by American Counselling Association (2014), confirmed that confidentiality is essential since it helps the client to trust the privacy of their revelations to the counsellor and it enhances the counselling relationship. Students explained that some of the counsellors occasionally make students' issues public and thus those who are affected feel disillusioned since confidentiality as a cardinal skill in counselling is not adhered to by such counsellors (American Counselling Association, 2014; Bond, 2009). Deaf students from this current study expressed fear of being labelled in a negative or being used as 'examples' by lecturers when teaching.

#### **5.4.4 Attitudes of Counselling Providers Towards Deaf Students**

The attitudes of counselling providers towards deaf students can present significant challenges for deaf students accessing counselling services. If counselling providers lack knowledge and understanding about deafness, they may underestimate the impact it can have on an individual's mental health and communication. This can result in a dismissive attitude towards deaf students' concerns or difficulties, leading to a lack of appropriate support and interventions. If counselling providers are not trained in sign language or are familiar with alternative communication methods, they may struggle to effectively communicate with deaf students. This can hinder the therapeutic process, making it challenging for deaf students to express their thoughts, emotions, and

concerns (Ocansey, 2018). Negative attitudes, stereotypes, and biases held by counselling providers towards deaf individuals can be detrimental to the counselling experience. If counsellors have preconceived notions about the capabilities or limitations of deaf students, they may unintentionally undermine their concerns or discount their experiences. This can create an environment that is unwelcoming and unsupportive for deaf students. Counselling providers may not always ensure that their services are accessible to deaf students. This could include not providing accommodations such as qualified sign language interpreters or assistive technology that facilitate effective communication. Without these accommodations, deaf students may face significant barriers to accessing and fully benefiting from counselling services. Attitudes that are dismissive, unsupportive, or discriminatory can have a profound negative impact on the emotional well-being of deaf students seeking counselling. It can lead to feelings of isolation, frustration, and discouragement, further exacerbating existing mental health concerns. To address these challenges, counselling providers must receive proper training and education on deaf culture, communication methods, and the unique needs of deaf students. They should foster an inclusive and respectful environment that values diversity and actively works to eliminate biases and stereotypes. Additionally, ensuring accessibility through accommodations, such as sign language interpreters or assistive technology, is essential for creating an environment where deaf students can access counselling services on an equal basis

#### **5.4.5 The Gender of Counsellor**

The study participants were gender sensitive in terms of the counsellors they wish to be associated with. Such deaf students are likely not to open up, be embarrassed, or feel shameful about sharing their emotions and thoughts with counsellors from particular sex groups. This confirms the assertion of Holtfreter and Morash (2003) that counselling administration should be of gender-responsive. Seeking help especially

counselling from a different gender may not be too pleasing to some people, this may prevent the client from speaking of all the issues worrying them. Deaf students expressed fear of being labelled in a negatively, for instance, male students do not seek help for masculine-related issues from female counsellors lest they are seen as ‘weak’ or ‘unable to cope’ with issues (O’Looney, 2015). It is common for individuals to feel more comfortable discussing certain issues with a counsellor of the same gender due to shared experiences or cultural expectations (O’neil, 2006).

The study participants mentioned that, despite the knowledge and capability of people from whom they seek counselling, deaf students reported that their preference for same-gender counsellors serves as a hindrance to accessing counselling services. Personal issues would best be discussed with personnel who are well vest to offer help in an attempt to bring change to the client’s life. However, it will be difficult discussing issues with people we do not share similarity with. Again, in some cultures, or religious contexts, there may be specific expectations or restrictions regarding interactions between individuals of different genders. Deaf students from these backgrounds may face additional challenges in seeking counseling from a counselor of a different gender due to these cultural or religious norms, which can limit their access to appropriate mental health support. Some deaf students again feel that a counselor of a particular gender might better understand their experiences, concerns, or challenges associated with their gender identity or sexual orientation.

This preference for a specific gender may be driven by a desire to have a counselor who can relate to their lived experiences more closely, leading to potential difficulties in finding a suitable counselor. It is important to recognize Counselling services and the challenges confronting deaf students to ensure equal access to effective counselling support irrespective of the person offering the service. This can be achieved through increasing counsellors’ awareness and training on deaf culture and communication

methods, as well as ensuring a diverse and inclusive pool of lecturers, resources persons and sign language interpreters to accommodate different gender preferences.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary and conclusion of the study's findings in line with the objectives. Additionally, recommendations have also been made based on the findings as well as suggestions on areas for further research.

#### **6.1 Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine access to counselling services by deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba.

The objectives of the study were four (See p.9 & 10)

The study adopted Murray's system of needs theory with a phenomenology research design. Twelve undergraduate deaf students and two directors for the counselling unit at the University of Education, Winneba were purposively selected from the population of 30 participants for the study. Data was gathered using a semi-structured interview guide, it was further coded and analyzed using a thematic approach. The driving force behind this research was to facilitate recommendations that would improve access to counseling services that are rendered for deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba. Research of other writers in the same area of study on published and unpublished literature were reviewed, compared, and contrasted to facilitate a meaningful finding.

#### **6.2 Summary of Major Findings**

The research findings were summarized based on the stated objectives for the study.

##### **6.2.1 Counselling Needs of Deaf Students**

Research question one was to find out the needs deaf students have which requires counselling services, findings based on this research question revealed that, deaf students like any other students within the University community needed counselling services for their daily academic and social activities. These needs were; academic needs, health needs, financial needs, personal needs. Deaf participants were emphatical about these pressing needs which affects their academic progress as students in the University Education, Winneba.

### **6.2.2 Perception of Deaf Students on Counseling Services**

The study highlighted the perception of deaf students regarding counseling services, despites the numerous importance counselling have on all persons especially students and their academic achievement, based on accessibility. The study revealed counselling to be accessible since deaf students seek counselling mostly from their friends, resource persons and lecturers. The study further revealed that deaf students perceives counselling services as not relevant for the them because they had to pass through another person to access it thereby breaking their privacy. Some of the counsellors (lecturers who understand sign language) as reported by the deaf students seems to be advise-givers rather than a counselling service because they are not licensed counselors

### **6.2.3 Access to Counseling Services by Deaf Students**

The study reported that deaf students depended on their colleagues, resources persons, sign language interpreters, consultation with lecturers, church leaders and trusted friends to access counselling service needed for their academic and personal needs at University of Education, Winneba. The study found that deaf students mostly consider proximity; the study revealed that since these people are mostly around, they tend to access counselling services from them. Participants however, reported that, they never sought professional counselling before from the University's Counselling Unit, this was confirmed through my interactions with the current director for the Counselling Unit.

#### **6.2.4 Challenges Deaf Students Encounter in Seeking Counseling Services**

Based on the research objective which was to explore the challenges deaf students encounter in seeking counselling services, the study revealed that some challenges deaf student encounter seeking counselling were; Communication barriers, lack of information about counselling, mistrust of the counsellor, attitudes of counsellors towards deaf students and gender of the counsellor. These barriers not only hindered the utilization of counseling services but also created additional emotional and psychological burdens for deaf students.

#### **6.3 Conclusion**

It was concluded from the major findings that, deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba had needs as a fundamental part of their existence and stay on campus and these needs should be identified and addressed to improve their performance in academic activities and personal progress in the University community. Participants (deaf students) perceived counselling as not very effective in meeting their needs. This perception is a major factor contributing to the desire to seek counselling help. Perceiving counselling to merely advise often leads deaf students to rely on their inexperienced friends who are unable to provide them with a lasting solution to their problems.

Again, since deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba mostly do not access professional counselling but rely on lecturers and interpreters, some of their needs will not be met due to the inability of these service providers to clearly understand the root cause of their problem and to offer professional help.

Furthermore, deaf students often encountered several challenges in seeking counselling, these obstacles sometimes hinder their needs from being met through counselling. Counselling is undeniably essential for all students in the University and its access will

be deeply beneficial to students especially deaf students irrespective of the challenges in accessing the services.

#### **6.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the study, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations:

1. From the first research question which sought to find out the needs of deaf students, it is recommended that, the Counselling Unit should develop a specialized counselling service tailored to the needs of the deaf student populace. This service should include employing the services of counsellors who are fluent in sign language, and who have received specialized training in working with deaf individuals to facilitate constant interaction with the deaf students in identifying their most pressing needs and providing solutions amicably.
2. From the second research question which sought to explore the perceptions of deaf students regarding counselling services, it is recommended that the Counselling Unit authorities should ensure the availability of qualified sign language interpreters during counselling sessions. These interpreters can facilitate effective communication between deaf students and counsellors, ensuring that information is accurately conveyed and understood and training to counselors and other staff members to increase their awareness and understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by deaf students. This training should cover topics such as deaf culture, deaf behaviours and deaf communication modes.
3. It is recommended based on the third research objective that, the Counselling Unit should collaborate with lecturers who offer counselling services to deaf students. Lecturers should be aware of their role as facilitators and the limits of their counselling capabilities. They should be encouraged to work closely with the university's



counselling professionals, seeking guidance and referring deaf students to them when necessary. This collaborative approach would ensure that deaf students receive comprehensive and specialized support from both academic and counseling perspectives.

4. From the fourth research objective which sought to investigate the challenges deaf students encounter in seeking counselling, it is recommended that, the University authorities should develop targeted interventions to address the identified challenges and improve the overall experience for deaf students seeking counselling at the University. This may involve implementing awareness campaigns, providing accessible information about counseling services, and offering specialized support to overcome communication barriers

### **6.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

This study examines access to counselling services by deaf students at the University of Education, Winneba. A similar study could be replicated in other Public Universities and Colleges where deaf students are taught within the country to find out what persists there.

Again, the use of an interview guide served as the only instrument for data collection where only deaf students being interviewed and only the directors for counselling unit were contacted, future studies may incorporate both questionnaires and interview guides in the study, involving University counsellors should in the study to make it more interactive and comprehensive.

Furthermore, an exploration of counsellor experiences during service provision in Ghanaian higher education will also be instructive to the entire counselling profession. The research would for instance would reveal the inherent challenges confronting

counsellors and provide a meaningful platform to redress these challenges towards enhanced future counselling programmes in Ghanaian higher education.



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## APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

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5<sup>th</sup> June, 2023

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR. TITUS K. DERY**

I write to introduce to you, **Mr. Titus K. Dery** an M.Phil. student of the Department of Special Education with index number 220013858.

He is currently working on his thesis on the topic: **"Access to Counselling Services by Deaf Students at the University of Education Winneba."** He needs to conduct interview in your Institution.

I would be grateful if you could give him the needed assistance.

Thank you for the consideration and assistance.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'F. Mensah', written over a faint circular watermark of the University of Education, Winneba.

**MRS. FLORENCE AKUA MENSAH**  
(Ag. Head of Department)



## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DEAF STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

This interview schedule is intended to explore the counselling needs of deaf students in the University of Education, Winneba. I would be grateful if you could respond to the following questions to facilitate my study. Your responses would be used for this research only. You are assured of absolute confidentiality.

#### SECTION A (BACKGROUND INFORMATION)

Please tick the appropriate responds below.

1. Gender: Male [  ] Female [  ]
2. What is your age range? 20 years and below [  ] 20 – 25 years [  ] 25 – 30 years [  ] 30 years above [  ]
3. Which department are you?
4. What is your current level? L100 [  ] L200 [  ] L300 [  ] L400 [  ]

#### SECTION B: COUNSELLING NEEDS OF DEAF STUDENTS

5. What needs do you have as a deaf student in the University which require counselling in the University?

Probes

- i. Academic needs
- ii. Health needs
- iii. Financial needs
- iv. Personal needs

## **SECTION D: PERCEPTIONS OF DEAF STUDENTS ABOUT COUNSELLING SERVICES**

6. What view do you have about the counselling services in the University?

Probes

- i. Counselling services unable to meet your needs
- ii. Counselling is not relevant for the deaf students
- iii. Counselling is merely advise giving
- iv. Effectiveness of the counselling services to deaf students
- v. Accessibility of counselling to services to deaf students

## **SECTION C: ACCESS TO COUNSELLING NEEDS OF DEAF STUDENTS**

3. What knowledge do you have on counselling services that are provided by the

Counselling Unit in the University?

4. How do you access counselling services in the University?

Probes

- i. Through lecturers
- ii. Through counsellors
- iii. Church leaders
- iv. Through sign language interpreters
- v. Through peers

5. How do you access counselling services without an interpreter's assistance?

## SECTION E: CHALLENGES ACCESSING COUNSELLING SERVICES

6. What challenges do you encounter in accessing counselling services in the University?

Probes

- i. Communication barrier
  - ii. Lack of confidentiality
  - iii. Gender of the counsellor
  - iv. Attitudes of some counselling providers
  - v. Unawareness and availability of counselling services
7. What suggestion(s) would you give to improve access to counselling services in the University?



## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COUNSELLORS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

This interview schedule is intended to explore the counselling needs of deaf students in the University of Education, Winneba. I would be grateful if you could respond to the following questions to facilitate my study. Your responses would be used for this research only. You are assured of absolute confidentiality.

#### SECTION A (BACKGROUND INFORMATION)

Please tick the appropriate responds below.

1. Gender: Male [  ] Female [  ]
2. How long have you been a counsellor? 1 – 5 years [  ] 5 – 10 years [  ] 10 years above [  ]

#### SECTION C: ACCESS TO COUNSELLING SERVICES BY DEAF STUDENTS AT THE COUNSELLING UNIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA.

3. How many deaf students access the counselling Unit since your regime as the director for the counselling Unit?
4. How do deaf students access counselling services in the counselling Unit?
5. How you have a sign language interpreter at the counselling Unit to facilitate communication with the deaf?
6. Do counsellors at the Unit able to communicate with the deaf directly?