

Influence of Peer Counselling on Academic Achievement and Social Adjustment of Students in the University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), Ghana

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Abstract:- This study investigated the influence of peer counselling on social adjustment and academic achievement of students of University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), Tarkwa in the Western Region of Ghana. Two hundred and forty (240) peer counselled and non-peer counselled respondents were sampled randomly for the study. Related literature on peer counselling, social adjustment and academic achievement were reviewed. The research designs used for the study were ex-post facto and correlation research designs. Data collection instruments were self-developed questionnaires on the influence of peer counselling on social adjustment and academic achievement. Instruments' reliability co-efficient was 0.92. Data were analysed by Pearson's product moment correlation statistics and independent sample T-test. Documentary analyses on students' academic records were also conducted. The findings of the study were that peer counselling; improves social adjustment and academic achievement of students', peer counselled students had increased academic achievement than their non-peer counselled counterparts. Finally, there was no significant statistical difference in the social adjustment of students in terms of gender. It was therefore recommended that university management and Counsellors should intensify peer-counselling programmes in universities.

Keywords: peer counselling, academic achievement, social adjustment.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

University is a place of transition academically and is socially associated with significant lifestyle changes, making students inevitably adapt to changes in different ways (Maunder, 2013). The academic and social pressures endured also vary among students. While some students may easily seek counselling support from adult counsellors, Ackumey, (2003) asserts that students are also likely to perceive individual sessions with adult-counsellors as inappropriate, uncomfortable and to some extent intimidating. The peer counsellor however, is not seen as 'contaminated' by authority or separated by age or social position Therefore, the barriers

which impede counselling with some students do not exist hence, most students feel more comfortable when counselled by their colleague peer counsellors.

Traditionally, counselling is a one-to-one activity that encourages clients to talk about the most intimate aspects of their lives. However, it is mostly not easy for university students to disclose personal matters that cause pain and discomfort to their adult-counsellors (Idowu, 2004).

Peer counselling is popularly being accepted as an important contributor of behaviour change among learners in learning institutions. It utilizes role- playing and modelling to change behaviour. Peer counselling owes its beginnings to the paraprofessional movement of the 1960s. During the last fifteen years, there has been a growing acceptance of peer counselling, particularly on university campuses. The students in order to help, advice, and counsel other students, must develop and use active listening and problem-solving skills together with knowledge about growth and development by. The peer counsellor assists other students by clarifying thoughts and feelings, exploring options, or providing needed information (Bururia, Marangu, & Nyaga, 2014).

In UMaT, peer counselling takes the form of coaching, peer education, modelling, mentoring, and behaviour modification. It typically involves the use of members of the same age group to affect change among other members of the same group. Peer counselling addresses change both at the personal and social levels. It attempts to modify a person's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, behaviour, group norms and stimulating collective action that leads to changes in programmes and policies. Peer counsellors are exposed to communication, listening, assertiveness and basic counselling skills. Peer counsellors are therefore understand the importance of a positive self-concept, team building and conflict resolution skills as well as ethical expectations in counselling. Peer counsellors' training includes referral issues such as how, when and where to refer challenging cases, thus enabling

them to feel more confident in supporting their peers and directing them to the help available in the university.

The Counselling and Student Support Unit of UMaT practices peer counselling as a way of helping to enhance the social adjustment of students and to improve their academic performance. The component of peer counselling as well as other guidance services are provided by the University Counsellors to help them shape the social behaviour and the academic achievement of the students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Undergraduate University students in Ghana today are mostly between ages seventeen (18) to twenty-one (21). They are in the late adolescent and/or entering early adulthood stages of life. The beliefs that adolescent stage characterized by problems of depression, school behaviour problems, fighting, academic problems, social conflicts, suicide, examination malpractices and youth violence (Andoh-Robertson, Kwofie, Yeboah, Edonu, 2019). These problems are a threat to the adolescent's social adjustment and academic achievement. Research has shown that peer counselling, which involves group activity with known acquaintances would be a more preferred context for counselling activity for the adolescent student (Tyndall, 1995).

With excessive pressure of academic work, university students hardly find time to visit the counselling centres and especially when adolescents are often suspicious of adults who want to offer help, they hardly disclose some distressing personal information to their adult counsellors. Besides, peer counselling uses peoples' natural trust in one another as a way of helping them to cope with the pressures of life. For these reasons, most university counselling centres adopt peer counselling to help meet students' counselling needs (Corey, 2009).

In UMaT, peer counselling introduced in the year 2016 on the basis that peers play essential role of supporting and encouraging each other on a day – to – day basis. The focus was to use the peer counselling as a means to improve students' academic achievements and social adjustment to the university's conditions, curbing indiscipline, improving academic performance, solving students' socio-personal problems as well as making guidance and counselling more accessible to students.

In spite of the fact that peer counselling has been established in UMaT, its contribution to academic and social adjustment has not been documented nor assessed through research. This study therefore sought to assess the influence of peer counselling to students' academic and social adjustment in the university. It is for these reasons that the researchers sought to conduct the study and to provide appropriate recommendations.

1.3 Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of peer counselling on social adjustment and academic achievement of students focusing on the students of University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, in the Western Region of Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

- i. assess the influence of peer counselling on the academic achievement of UMaT students.
- ii. investigate the relationship between peer counselled and non-peer counselled students on social adjustment and academic achievement in UMaT.
- iii. examine the differences in the levels of social adjustment for male and female students in UMaT.

1.5 Research Questions

To unravel the problem at stake and achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers sought answers to the following research questions:

- i. What extent do peer counselling affect the academic achievement of UMaT students?
- ii. Do students receiving peer counselling socially adjusted better than their peers who never received peer counselling.
- iii. What extent do male and female university students differ in social adjustment in UMaT?

1.5 Hypotheses

- H.1. there would be no significant statistical difference between academic achievement of peer counselled and non-peer counselled students;
- H.2. peer counselled students would not be socially better adjusted than their non-peer counselled counterparts in UMaT;
- H.3. there would be no significant statistical difference in the social adjustment of male and female university students in UMaT.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The results of the study would be significant and beneficial to some areas and agencies in these regard:

- i. the findings would inform students on the relevance of peer counselling and its impact on their academic work and social life (e.g. learning relevant skills, academic work and life in general). This would help students to choose their peers with caution and to join positive peer counselling groups.
- It would enlighten counsellors, parents, lecturers and other stakeholders on the impact of positive peer counselling on academic and social adjustment of students. Parents would then encourage positive peer association among their wards.

- ii. it would provide comprehensive information for counsellors, educators, and parents on how they can assist adolescents to deal with peer pressure. In addition, it would encourage the Counselling Units to prioritise the peer counselling activities in the University.
- iii. it would bring to light the importance of peer counselling in schools/universities as well as other organizations such as churches, mosques, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) etc.
- iv. it would expose management to the importance and impact of peer counselling on academic and social adjustment of students and support its implementation for success. This would help the university management in making effective decisions on students, on matters of discipline and academic achievement.
- v. the University stands to benefit from the outcome of the study in that, indiscipline cases caused by maladjusted students would be minimized.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

Although, peer-counselling programmes exist in some universities in Ghana, most of the studies assessing their effectiveness have been conducted in Western countries. This study perhaps is one of the pioneer-research on peer counselling in the country. It is however limited to the students of UMaT despite the fact that its outcome could be replicated in other parts of the country.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

The related literature on study was reviewed as follows:

2.1 The Concept of Peer Counselling

Peer counselling according to Bururia, Marangu & Nyaga (2014) is a process where students are trained in helping skills to offer supervision, listening, support, and alternatives to other students, to educate and influence their peers by modifying their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviour. The Peer Counsellors are recruited through a rigorous screening and selection process. Some of the key competencies for selection include; ability and experience in working with peers, assertiveness, confidence level, communication and interpersonal skills. They are mostly sensitive listeners who use communication skills to facilitate self-exploration and decision making. In addition they are selected from all the levels or years of study so that there is a Peer Counsellor from each level of study.

To Ackumey (2003), the principle of peer counselling is simply directing the peer pressure in a very positive way towards the offering of help by the young to their peers who have all kinds of concerns and interests, be it emotional, academic, social, or disciplinary. Peer counselling uses people's natural trust in one another as a way of helping them

to cope with the pressures of life. The adolescent have their own culture and for that matter language. They are often suspicious of adults who want to offer help. They are tired of adults always telling them what to do and are more willing to accept help from one another to live happier lives. Peers often succeed where adults fail. The adolescent can express their feelings to their peers without the risk of being made to feel stupid.

Traditionally, counselling is a one-to-one activity that encourages clients to talk about the most intimate aspects of their lives (Idowu, 2004). Idowu added that it is however, not easy or common for students to disclose personal matters that cause pain and discomfort to their teacher-counsellors. Students are also likely to perceive individual sessions as inappropriate, uncomfortable and to some extent intimidating. The peer counsellor is not seen as contaminated by authority or separated by age or social position; therefore the barriers which impede counselling with some students do not exist. Peer counselling addresses change both at the individual level by attempting to modify a person's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviour and at the group or societal level by modifying norms and stimulating collective action that leads to changes in programmes and policies.

2.1.1 Purpose of the peer counselling program

The purpose of peer counselling program according to Baker and Gerler (2001) is to promote the health, well-being and safety of young people through peer education and referral. This programme trains a selected cross-section of students to act as helpers and active listeners for their fellow students. The core of peer counselling programme is a strong academic curriculum which addresses skill building in communication, problem solving and decision making. It also addresses a multitude of social, individual, school and family concerns. Through careful selection and training, peer counsellors increase the likelihood that appropriate help can be received by requesting persons. The focus of the programme is preventative. A variety of intervention strategies are employed to educate and motivate students and where necessary to involve trained professionals, when needed. The results can be a more positive and safer campus climate, healthier students and staff with lower stress levels, and a better utilization of university and community resources.

Santrock (2001), indicated that through classroom instruction, role-playing and skill building activities, peer counsellors are trained to help their fellow students. They act as conflict mediators and peer tutors, assist special groups or classes within the school and the zone, provide classroom presentations, welcome new students and promote special projects.

2.2 Peer counselling and academic achievement

Many studies indicate that peer counselling has considerable significant positive influence on academic achievement of students. Studies by Disiye, Koderu, and Ongeti (2011); Bauer, Sapp and Johnson (2000); Sink and Stroh (2003)

reported a positive influence of peer counselling on students' academic achievement and higher test scores. They added that, in school peer helping relationships diversify and redefine the role of the classroom, facilitating learning through the influence of peer relationships. They assert that students who experience a sense of belonging and peer acceptance in schools are more prone to like school, be engaged academically, participate in school activities and to persist toward graduation than those who feel excluded from others in school. Children learn better when they discuss their work with peers in peer-supportive environments.

A study by Varkey, (1997) showed that there was a significantly statistical relationship between peer counselling and academic performance. This finding perhaps relates to three factors: First, those students who are peer-counselled are able to deal successfully with their personal problems and therefore are able to focus on their studies. Many times students are unable to concentrate on their studies because they are preoccupied with other problematic issues in their lives. For instance, when students' problems remain unsolved, they end up with a lot of stress resulting in indiscipline and poor academic performance. Therefore, peer counselling by minimizing indiscipline problems can improve academic performance in schools. Peer counsellors also serve as role models that influence other students' achievement, motivation and educational aspirations.

2.3 Peer counselling and social adjustment

Research has shown that peer counselling, which involves group activity with known acquaintances would be a more preferred context for counselling activity for students. Peer-led interventions are useful in helping young people adjust in society (Tyndall, 1995). Tyndall reported that trained Peer Counsellors facilitate social adjustment among students in schools. Burhmester and Canbery (1992) found that adolescents spent most of their time with peers. They added that peer counselling improves students' adjustment in schools. They concluded that optimal condition for growth is that of friends; here they are happy, active and inspired.

Peer counselling programs have been found to have significant influence on discipline problems. Baker and Gerler (2001) found that students who participated in a peer counselling program had significantly less inappropriate behaviours and more positive attitudes toward school than those students who did not participate in the program.

The findings of the study conducted by Disiye, *et al* (2011) in Edoret, Kenya, showed a significant relationship between peer counselling and social adjustment. Thus, peer counselling was found to be important in improving social adjustment of students. It can be deduced from this finding that when Peer Counsellors are offered guidance and counselling programmes they become more effective in helping students in social development. Thus, peer led interventions are better in helping young people adjust in society.

2.4 Gender and students' social adjustment

Cook (1995) posits that female students often have more difficult time adjusting to school environment. This could be due to the differences in their developmental process. Female students tend to rely on relation and socialization experiences to aid in adjusting to school more than their male counterparts. Arthur (1998) asserts that the way in which male and female students cope with social adjustment differ. He further remarked that, males tend to suppress stress via isolation and escape while female tends to engage in self-blame. This difficulty in adjustment for female students may also be due to the lack of social connections in the environment. The degree to which a female is able to adjust may be directly linked to her level of confidence and general self-esteem.

Since studies (Cook, 1995; Arthur, 1998) have indicated that female students face unique problems and have more difficulties in adjusting to school environment than their male counterparts, it is of great importance to assist these students in order to cope with life challenges at the university.

2.5 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Adjustment, as a process, involves the variation of an individual's behaviour for more harmonious functioning in a changed circumstance. Behaviour is learned through interaction with others in an environment and can be explained through various theories (Andoh-Robertson, *et al*. 2019). Hence, the framework of this study is provided by the behaviouristic approach to behaviour modification.

Therefore, originating from the aforementioned concepts, discussions and preliminary findings from the review of related literature, this study is mainly conceived within the Social Learning Theory of Bandura, Classical Conditioning as advocated by Pavlov, and B.F Skinner's theory of learning as the framework for understanding the influence of peer counselling to guide the research design and most importantly the identification of the study's variables. The theories describe and explain the influence of peer counselling on student's social adjustment and academic achievement.

2.5.1 Social learning theory

The social learning theory of Bandura (1994) forms the theoretical basis of this study. The social learning theory argues that, the behaviour of an individual or a group acts as stimulus for similar thoughts, attitude and behaviour on the parts of the observers. According to Bandura (1994) there are three core concepts at the heart of social learning theory. First, is the idea that people can learn through observation. Next, is the idea that internal mental states are an essential part of this process. Finally, this theory recognises that just because something has been learned does not mean that it will result in a change in behaviour. These basic concepts are the bedrock on which this study rests. The basic concepts of Bandura's social learning theory are the Modelling Process, Attention, Retention, Motor Reproduction and Motivation.

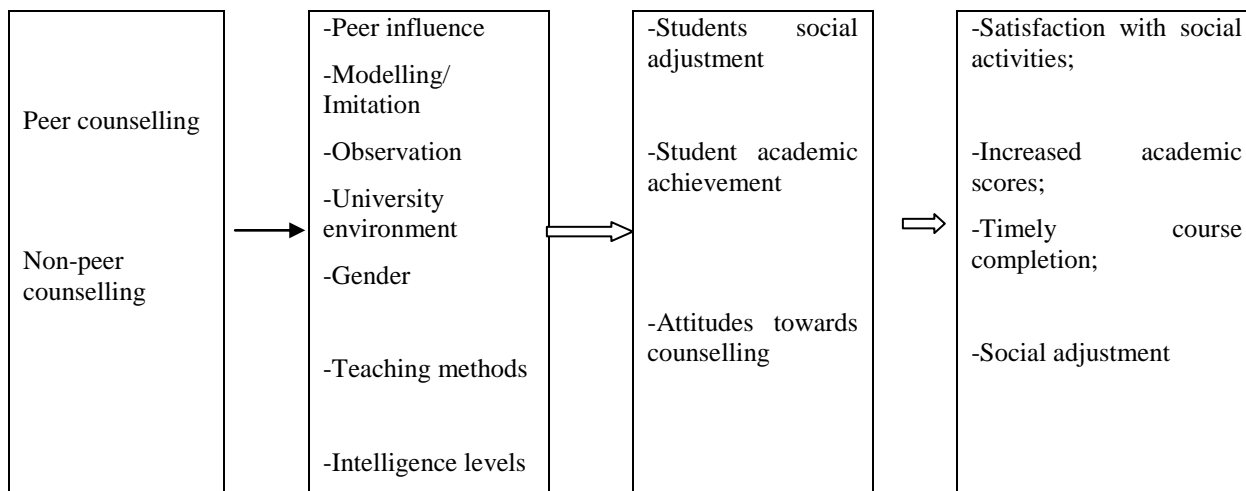
The implication of the theory is that people learn by observing the behaviour of others and also that some serve as models that are capable of eliciting behaviour change in other individuals or their peers. Thus, peer-counselling uses observation, imitation/modelling and the mental states of students to influence their academic and social behaviour.

2.6 Working Model of the Study

In this study, the influencing factors were the independent variables; i.e. peer counselled and non-peer counselled

students and the dependent variable were students’ social and academic adjustment. The influencing factors were - measured using descriptive and inferential statistics. These factors were expected to influence social and academic adjustment of university students. The dependent variables were measured by studying the frequencies and means. The intervening variables were held constant. From the title, objectives and related literature, the study has been modelled in figure 1.

Figure 1: ANDBERTS’ working model of the influence of peer counselling on Academic and Social Adjustment of Students



The model in Figure 1 indicates that when students are peer counselled, they socially adjust better which in turn leads to improved academic achievement. However, the intervening variables are assumed not to interfere with the independent and dependent variables.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted both ex-post facto and correlation research designs. The ex-post facto design was used to answer the research questions while the correlation was used to pursue the hypothesis of the study. The ex-post facto research design is a systematic empirical inquiry in which a researcher has no ability to control the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred and therefore cannot be manipulated by the researcher (Kerlinger, 2000). It was found appropriate because it allowed the researchers to investigate the possibility of the causal relationship between variables which in this study constituted the selected factor (peer counselling) as the independent variable and the students’ social adjustment and academic achievement as the dependent variables.

The correlation method of analysis lends itself more to the analysis from cross-sectional survey designs that investigated the relationship between two or more naturally occurring, non-manipulative and measurable variables than those from experimental designs (Ofori & Dampson, 2011). Both designs are particularly suitable in social, educational and psychological contexts where independent variables lie outside the researchers’ control.

3.2 Population

The population of the study comprised all students in UMaT. The total population was 2034.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample for the study was 30% of the sample population which was 240. To obtain a representative sample, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques were used in the selection of respondents for the study. The stratified sampling involved dividing the population into a number of groups called strata where they shared common characteristics. There was then a random sampling within each stratum (Ofori & Dampson, 2011). Stratified sampling was used in this study because it assisted the researchers to isolate groups of peer-counselled and non-peer-counselled participants to compare on social adjustment and academic achievement. This ensured

that the resulting sample is distributed in the same way as the population in terms of the stratifying criterion. The students from the two strata were selected based on gender and from each stratum 30% of 3rd and 4th year students were selected randomly to participate in the study. The 3rd and 4th year students were chosen for the study because they have been in the university for at least two years hence, might have experienced the peer counselling services offered in the university.

3.4 Research Instruments and Procedure

Questionnaires and documentary analysis were used to collect data from the respondents for the study. In the first place, a self-developed social adjustment, academic achievement and peer counselling questionnaires were administered on the students. It had two parts; 'I' and 'II'. Part 'I' was a biographical form with items to collect participants' personal data such as age, sex and year of study. Whereas part 'II' was self-report instruments composed of sections 'A' and 'B'. Each section composed of 10 Likert's scale items to measure participants' social adjustment, academic achievement and peer counselling experience. The questionnaires were preferred because it was time saving and allowed for collection of data from a larger sample of individuals as in the case of the study. Each instrument targeted specific information from the respondents. The students' questionnaires sought to obtain information on the influence of peer counselling on social adjustment and academic achievement.

In addition to the questionnaires, documentary analysis was used to collect data on academic achievement of the participants. Documentary analysis is a form of qualitative research method in which documents are examined and interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Payne and Payne 2004). This was preferred because it was useful in gaining insight into the study; examining trends, patterns, and consistency in the social and academic achievement of students as well as its cost effectiveness.

3.5 Pilot-Testing

The questionnaire was administered to 30 students comprising 15 females and 15 males from Tarkwa Midwifery Training college; a tertiary institution with similar characteristics. The college was considered relevant for this study for the purposes of obtaining an independent group of respondents who would not take part in the main study. The test was divided into two halves and the results were correlated.

3.6 Reliability Analysis

In assessing the reliability of the instruments, pre-test was conducted, and Cronbach's coefficient alpha reliability was ran for students 'peer counselling and social adjustment questionnaires separately. The results indicated that the questionnaires were fairly reliable. The tables below show the reliability test for each of the instruments using the

Cronbach's coefficient alpha. According to Ofori and Dampson (2011), Cronbach's alpha of .60 and above are indicative of reliable instruments with .90 and above suggesting that the instrument is highly reliable.

Table 3.1: Test of Reliability for Social Adjustment Subscale

The first subscale that was tested for reliability was students' social adjustment subscale

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.922	.918	10

As table 1.1 shows, the reliability test results produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .922 suggesting that students' social adjustment subscale of the questionnaire was highly reliable.

Table 3.2: Test of Reliability for Academic Achievement Subscale

The next subscale that was assessed for its internal consistency was students' academic achievement constructs which consisted ten items.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.714	.691	10

From table 1.2, a Cronbach's Alpha of .714 suggested that the instrument had an acceptable reliability.

3.7 Data Collection and Analysis

The instruments were administered in person by the researchers. It was, however, collected the same day with the help of the Guidance Co-ordinators after respondents had finished answering them. The completed questionnaires were coded and the participants' responses were scored and keyed into a computer data file. All statistical analyses were made using the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS) computer programme. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the data analyses.

Independent sample t-test was used in hypotheses one, two and three in analysing the significant differences between peer counselled and non-peer counselled students on academic achievement, gender and students' social adjustment. All tests were conducted at .01 level of significance.

IV. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS /FINDINGS

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The tables and figure below provide the characteristics of respondents involved in the study. The issues discussed include gender and age.

4.1.2 Gender of respondents

Table 4.1 presents the data on the gender of respondents involved in the study.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Gender of Respondents

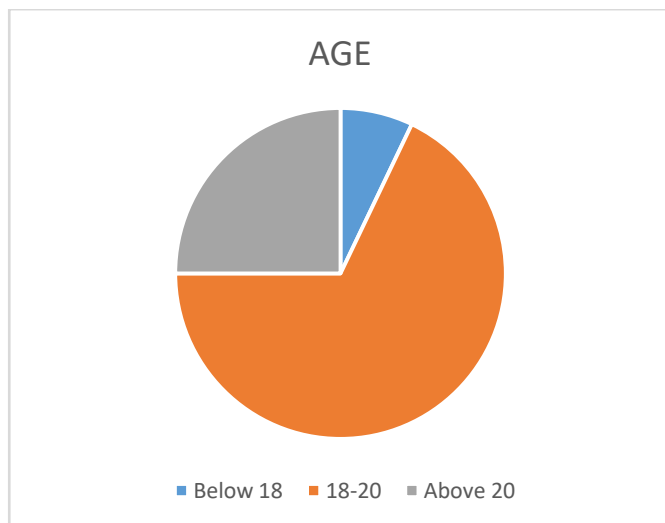
	Gender	Frequency	Percentages (%)
	Male	123	51.2
	Female	117	48.8
	Total	240	100.0

The data shows that 123 (51.2%) of the respondents were males while 117 (48.8%) were females.

4.1.3 Age distribution of respondents

Data on the distribution of students by age is presented in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: A Pie Chart Showing Age Distribution of Respondents



The Figure 4.1 shows that majority of students (67.9%) were between 18-20 years. This means most students were within the late adolescent stages of life. Seven point one percent (7.1%) of the respondents were below 18 years. However, 25.0% of respondents were above 20 years and these were mostly in the fourth year of their study. The average age of a student can be located from the age group 18 - 20. The sample as a whole was relatively older than 18 (M = 2.0, SD = 0.36).

Section B

4.2 Presentation of Findings

This section presents the main findings of the study. The findings are presented in the tables below:

4.2.1 Peer counselling and academic achievement

The first hypothesis was to test the significance of peer counselling on academic achievement of students. To test this, peer counselled students and non-peer counselled students were asked to complete academic achievement questionnaire.

The results were later triangulated using documentary analysis to give further meaning. The responses and mean scores respectively for peer counselled and non-peer counselled students were computed. The mean scores of the two groups of students are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Academic Achievement of Peer Counsellled and Non-Peer Counsellled Students.

(a) Summary of group statistics

Peer counselling	Academic achievement		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer-counselled students	120	26.00	2.24
Non peer-counselled students	120	19.05	4.82

(b) Summary of independent t-test statistics

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Academic achievement	Equal variances assumed	2.01	.16	14.11	238	.000	6.85	.49
	Equal variances not assumed			14.11	168.19	.000	6.85	.49

A t-test for independent samples was performed to test whether or not there was a significant difference between mean scores in academic achievement obtained by peer counselled and non-peer-counselled UMaT students. The mean scores of the peer counselled students (M = 26.00; SD = 2.24) and non-peer counselled students (M = 19.05; SD = 4.82) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in their academic achievements. Besides, comparing the standard deviation of the two groups would suggest that the peer counselled students were more consistent with their academic achievement around the mean than their non-peer counselled counterparts. The results of the t-test shows that peer counselled students have improved academic achievement than their non-peer counselled counterparts; (Df = 238, t = 14.1; n=240; p < 0.05). Thus, it was concluded that peer-counselled students have better academic achievement than non-peer counselled students. This is because at 'P' statistical value of less than 0.05 (p < 0.05), t value is significant at 18.2 (t = 14.1). Hence, the hypothesis which

states that peer counselled students will not perform better academically than non-peer counselled students is rejected.

4.2.1.1 Peer counselling and academic achievement

The result of the first hypothesis was triangulated using documentary analysis to give further meaning to the finding. This was done by sampling the academic records of both peer counselled and non-peer counselled students to assess their academic achievements. To do this appropriately, frequencies were used to determine the relationship between these two groups of respondents. The relationship between peer counselled and non-peer counselled students in their academic achievement is reported in Table 4.2.1.

Table 4.2.1: Academic Achievement of Peer Counselled and Non-Peer Counselled Students

Respondents	Academic achievement					
	2 nd Class & above (%)		Below 2 nd Class (%)		Total (%)	
Peer counselled students	85	70.1	35	29.9	120	100
Non-peer counselled students	45	37.5	75	62.5	120	100

Note: average = 60-100%, below average = below 60%. N = 240

The documentary analysis result confirms that peer counselled students perform significantly better than non-peer counselled students. Out of 120 peer counselled students 85 (70.1%) achieved at least 2nd class division, 35 participants (29.9%) achieved below 2nd class division. On the contrary, only 45 (37.5%) of the non-peer counselled students achieved 2nd class division and above, while 75 (62.5%) achieved below 2nd class division. The implication of this result is that there is a positive linear association between peer counselling and academic achievement of university students. This is consistent with the findings in table 4.2 that peer counselled students achieved better academically than their non-peer counselled counterparts. Therefore, the hypothesis states that there would be no statistical significant difference between academic achievement of peer counselled and non-peer counselled students is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant relationship between peer counselling and academic achievement of university students.

4.3. Peer Counselling and Social Adjustment

The second hypothesis was to test whether peer counselled students would not be better socially adjusted than non-peer counselled students. To test this hypothesis, students who were peer counselled and those who were not peer counselled were asked to complete a social adjustment questionnaire. Their responses were scored and means computed. The mean scores of peer-counselled and non-peer counselled students are reported in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Social Adjustment of Peer Counselled and Non-Peer Counselled Students

(a) Summary of group statistics

Peer counselling	Social adjustment		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer-counselled	120	26.99	1.97
Non peer-counselled	120	18.54	2.87

(b) Summary of independent sample t-test statistics

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Student Social Adjustment	Equal variances assumed	4.75	.030	26.57	238	.000	8.45	.32
	Equal variances not assumed			26.57	210.97	.000	8.45	.32

Table 4.3, presents the summary of results of the independent samples t-test performed on the social adjustment of peer counselled and non-peer counselled students. As can be seen in the table, comparison of the mean scores from the two independent groups would suggest that peer counselled students were socially well adjusted than non-peer counselled students; peer counselled students (M = 27.0, SD = 1.97) and non-peer counselled students (M = 14.5, SD = 2.87). Besides, comparing the standard deviation of the two groups suggests that the peer counselled students were more consistent with their social adjustment around the mean than their non-peer counselled counterparts. The results of the t-test statistics table revealed that there is statistical significant difference in the mean scores of social adjustment between the peer counselled and non-peer counselled students (df= 238, t= 26.6, n=240, p < 0.05). Since the 't' value of 26.6 is above the 'P' statistical value (P < .05), it indicates that peer counselled students socially adjust better than their non-peer counselled counterparts. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that students who receive peer counselling will not be more socially adjusted than non-peer counselled students is rejected. Consequently, there is a significant relationship between peer counselling and social adjustment.

4.4 Gender and social adjustment of students

The third hypothesis was to test whether female students will be more socially adjusted than their male counterparts. To achieve this objective, both male and female students were asked to complete social adjustment questionnaire. The responses and mean scores respectively for both male and

female students were computed with a t-test. The mean scores of the two groups of students are presented in Table 4.4.

Table: 4.4: Social Adjustment of Male and Female UMaT Students.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' Social Adjustment	Male	123	22.63	4.85
	Female	117	22.91	4.96

The test was performed to test whether or not there was a significant difference between mean scores in social adjustment obtained by both male and female UMaT students. The mean score of male students was ($M = 22.63$; $SD = 4.85$) and female students was ($M = 22.91$; $SD = 4.96$). The mean difference of 0.11 between the male and female students of the test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in their social adjustment, ($df = 238$, $t = -.43$; $n=240$; $p < 0.05$). This is likely to be as a result of the fact that both male and female students are exposed to the same campus conditions, same forms of peer influence or counselling, and so on. Thus, it was concluded that both male and female university students have almost the same levels of social adjustment. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that female students would not be more socially adjusted than their male counterparts is accepted.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

The study sought to assess the influence of peer counselling on social adjustment and academic achievement of students of UMaT. This broad objective was guided by the following specific objectives to:

- i. assess the influence of peer counselling on the academic achievement of UMaT students.
- ii. investigate the relationship between peer counselled and non-peer counselled students on social adjustment and academic achievement in UMaT.
- iii. examine the differences in the levels of social adjustment for male and female students in UMaT.

To achieve the set objectives, both primary and secondary data were used to verify and assess the influence of peer counselling on social adjustment and academic achievement of students. Primary data was collected using document analysis and structured questionnaire for peer counselled and non-peer counselled students. A sample of 240 students were selected and involved in the study.

Discussion of Finding

- i. The first finding of this study was on the hypothesis that there will be no significant statistical difference between academic achievement of peer counselled and non-peer counselled students. The results showed that there was a significant statistically

relationship between the academic achievements of peer counselled and non-peer counselled UMaT students; thus the study hypothesis is rejected. This means peer counselled students have higher academic achievement than their non-peer counselled counterparts.

It is also consistent with several researchers that reported a positive influence of peer counselling on students' academic performance and higher test scores. Peer counselling was found to diversify and redefine the role of the classroom, facilitating learning through powerful influence of peer relationships (Bauer, *et al.* 2000; Disiye, *et. al.* 2011; Sink and Stroh, 2003). It is therefore clear that university students in UMaT achieve academically better when they are peer-counselled.

- ii. The second finding of the study indicated that there was significant statistical difference in the mean scores of social adjustment of peer counselled and non-peer counselled students in UMaT. In this study, it was hypothesized that students who received peer counselling will not be socially better adjusted than their non-peer counselled counterparts. This hypothesis was rejected. Thus, peer counselled students were found to be more socially adjusted than their non-peer counselled counterparts. This finding supported what Tyndall (1995) reported, that peer-led interventions are useful in helping young people adjust in society. This could be because students admire and respect the opinions of their peers and they can positively influence each other.

The finding is also congruent with the findings of the study conducted by Disiye *et al.* (2011) which showed a significant relationship between peer counselling and social adjustment. Thus, peer counselling was found to be important in improving social adjustment of university students. It can be deduced from this finding that when peer counsellors are offered guidance and counselling programmes they become more effective in helping students in social development. Additionally, several studies (Tyndall, 1995; Carty *et al.*, 2000; Baker & Gerler, 2001) have shown that peer counselling improves students' adjustment in schools. This implied that peer counselled students had significantly less inappropriate behaviours and more positive attitudes toward school than the non-peer counselled students.

- iii. The third finding of this study was that there is no significant statistical difference in the social adjustment of both male and female university students in UMaT. The study hypothesis which stated that there was no statistical significance difference in the social adjustment of both male and female university students is therefore accepted.

Interestingly, the finding contradicted several researchers when they found statistical significant difference in the social adjustment of both male and female students. For instance, (Cook, 1995; Arthur, 1998) posit that female students often have more difficult time adjusting to school environment. This according to them could be due to the differences in their developmental process. They concluded that female students tend to rely on relation and socialization experiences to aid in adjusting to school more than their male counterparts.

Though, studies (Cook, 1995; Arthur, 1998) have indicated that female students face unique problems and have more difficulties in adjusting to school environment than their male counterparts, on the other hand, the study concluded that both male and female students in UMaT have similar levels of social adjustment.

5.2 Summary of Main Findings

Based on the study objectives, the tested hypotheses and data analyses, the following major research findings are presented:

- i. Peer-counselled students had better academic achievement than non-peer counselled university students. Consequently, there is a significant relationship between peer counselling and academic achievement.
- ii. Peer counselled students are better adjusted to social life than the non-peer counselled students. This implies that peer counselled students had significantly less inappropriate behaviours and more positive attitudes towards school than the non-peer counselled students. In other words peer counselled students are more disciplined and more adjusted socially.
- iii. It was observed that both male and female university students in UMaT have similar levels of social adjustment. This could be due to the fact that they are exposed to the same university environmental conditions.

5.3 Conclusions

The study sought to assess the influence of peer counselling on social adjustment and academic achievement of students of UMaT. Such an assessment was considered useful in analysing whether students were academically and socially adjusting. Based on the summary of findings, the study concludes that peer counselling as a component of guidance and counselling leads to increased social adjustment and academic achievement of students. Also, male and female students in UMaT have similar levels of social adjustment. Therefore, should most students join the peer counselling groups, it is hoped that students maladjustment and poor academic achievement would be a thing of the past.

5.4 Recommendations

In view of the above conclusions, this study makes the following recommendations about peer counselling, academic achievement and social adjustment of students in universities.

There is the need for universities to encourage peer counselling programmes that could facilitate effective social adjustment among students. This is because peer counselling have been found to have a positive influence on students' academic and social adjustment.

Stakeholders in education such as the counsellors, lecturers, university management, *etc.* should ensure that peer counsellors are well trained and supported to offer counselling in universities. Effective peer counselling training is likely to result in good outcome and vice versa. The training could be offered by the Counselling and Student Support Unit of the university and given at regular intervals.

University Counsellors should try to intensify counselling activities and make it very attractive to students. In many cases, Counsellors are burdened with other responsibilities which makes them devote less attention to the core business of guidance and counselling and do not make guidance and counselling activities attractive to students. In the opinion of the researchers, if Counsellors could roll out more peer counselling activities and also exhume confidentiality in their work, students would develop likeness and trust to seek counselling services.

Students should be guided to choose their peers with caution to enhance their social and academic adjustment. This should be a function of all the major stakeholders of the development of the adolescent such as parents, lecturers and counsellors, just to mention a few. The study identified that, peers have greater influence on each other. Besides they would want to share their most distressing problems with their friends than adults. Hence, being in the company of well-behaved students or peers is likely to have a positive impact on one's life and vice versa.

UMaT Management should make peer counselling a core aspect of guidance and counselling services in the University.

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