

## **Provision of Guidance Services: Insights into Dynamics of cultural beliefs and values influence**

### **Abstract**

*The study explores the impact of cultural beliefs and values on the provision of guidance services in Ghana. Using a purposive sampling technique, the study recruited 8 participants. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings suggest that cultural beliefs and values play a significant role in the help-seeking behaviours of people with mental health issues. Traditional healing practices, including herbal remedies and spiritual interventions, are often preferred to Western Counselling approaches, and there is a strong emphasis on the importance of family and community support. Additionally, gender roles and family dynamics can act as cultural barriers to seeking counselling services. To address these cultural barriers, the study recommends the development of culturally sensitive and relevant counselling services that incorporate traditional healing practices and are delivered in locations that are accessible and acceptable to members of the community. There is also a need for increased education and awareness about the benefits of counselling services and efforts to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues.*

**Keywords:** Behaviour, Beliefs, Counselling, Cultural, Guidance Services, and Values.

### **Introduction**

Guidance services are essential in promoting the mental health and well-being of individuals, especially in a diverse cultural setting such as Ghana (Agyapong et al. 2019). However, the providing counselling services can be significantly influenced by cultural beliefs and values. Cultural beliefs and values shape the attitudes and perceptions of individuals towards seeking help for psychological and emotional problems, as well as influence the counselling process itself (Adomako & Yidana, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the impact of cultural beliefs and values on the provision of guidance services.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental illness is a significant public health concern in Ghana, with an estimated 2.5 million people living with a mental disorder in the country (WHO, 2019). However, there is still a considerable stigma attached to mental illness, and many individuals may not seek help due to cultural beliefs and values (Owusu-Ansah et al., 2017). Additionally, guidance services available may not be culturally appropriate, as they may not address the cultural beliefs and values of the clients (Prah, 2017; Tummala-Narra & Deshpande, 2019).

Culture plays a crucial role in shaping the beliefs and values of individuals, and as a result, it has a significant impact on the provision of guidance services. According to Ngubane and Mahlomaholo (2018), cultural beliefs and values shape individuals' perceptions of their abilities and their expectations for the future, which can have a profound impact on their career aspirations and educational goals. This means that cultural beliefs and values can affect how individuals view guidance services and how they utilize them.

The cultural beliefs and values of individuals can influence how they perceive the role of guidance counsellors and the types of guidance services they seek. For example, some cultures place a high value on collectivism, which can influence how individuals approach decision-making and seek guidance. In these cultures, individuals may seek guidance from family members or community leaders rather than professional guidance counsellors (Choi et al., 2019; Leong & Chou, 2015). On the other hand, cultures that value individualism may be more likely to seek guidance from professional counsellors (Ngubane & Mahlomaholo, 2018; Sue & Sue, 2016).

The provision of guidance services must take into account the cultural beliefs and values of the individuals being served. Counsellors must be aware of the cultural nuances and expectations of the individuals they are working with to provide culturally sensitive guidance services (Choi et al., 2019). This requires counsellors to have a deep understanding of the cultural beliefs and values of the individuals they serve, as well as an appreciation for diversity and cultural differences (Ngubane & Mahlomaholo, 2018; Atweh & Rizk, 2017).

In effect, culture plays a significant role in the provision of guidance services. The cultural beliefs and values of individuals can influence how they view and utilize guidance services, and counsellors must be aware of these cultural nuances to provide effective and culturally sensitive guidance services. As such, it is important to consider cultural factors when designing and implementing guidance services to ensure that they are accessible and effective for all individuals.

Guidance in West Africa is influenced by cultural beliefs and values, which shape the way individuals perceive and address issues related to mental health and well-being. According to Yendork and Eshun (2018), cultural beliefs and practices play a significant role in shaping the attitudes of people towards mental health and guidance programmes. For instance, many people view mental health problems as spiritual issues rather than medical conditions, leading them to seek help from traditional healers instead of professional guidance practitioners.

Moreover, cultural beliefs regarding gender roles and family dynamics impact the provision of guidance and services. As noted by Boateng and Asante (2019), Ghanaians often prioritize the needs of the family over individual needs, which can hinder individuals from seeking guidance services for fear of being stigmatized. Additionally, gender roles often dictate the expectations and behaviours of men and women, which may influence the type of counselling services sought and the perceived effectiveness of those services.

Despite the influence of cultural beliefs and values, efforts are being made to integrate cultural values into Guidance services. As indicated by Yendork and Eshun (2018), incorporating cultural practices such as storytelling, drumming, and dance into counselling sessions can help to build trust between clients and guidance practitioners (counsellors), and create a more culturally sensitive environment. Additionally, the use of community-based guidance services which are often run by community members and incorporate traditional healing practices, has been successful in addressing mental health issues of the people (Boateng & Asante, 2019).

Therefore, understanding the influence of cultural beliefs and values on the provision and use of Guidance services is crucial in developing effective guidance interventions that address the unique cultural needs of individuals. This paper aims to explore the impact of cultural beliefs and values on the provision of Guidance services, as well as highlight the need for culturally appropriate interventions by guidance experts.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do cultural beliefs and values impact the help-seeking behaviours of people with mental health issues?
2. What are the traditional healing practices utilized for mental health concerns, and how do these practices intersect with western guidance approaches?
3. How do gender roles and family dynamics influence the willingness to seek guidance and what are some strategies for addressing these cultural barriers?
4. What are some effective strategies for incorporating cultural values and practices into guidance services, and how do these strategies impact the efficacy of guidance services?

### **Theoretical Model**

#### **Cultural Humility Model**

One theoretical framework that could be useful in exploring the impact of cultural beliefs and values on the provision of guidance services in Ghana is the cultural humility model. Cultural humility is a concept that emphasizes the importance of self-reflection, openness to learning from others, and an ongoing commitment to cultural competency in working with diverse populations (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). According to Mensah's (2019) study conducted in Ghana, several cultural contextual factors, namely self-construe, silence, communication styles,

common grounding, interruption, and turn-taking, were identified as dominant elements that influence and contribute to successful counselling interactions within public universities. These concerns may be more comprehensively comprehended and effectively tackled by adopting the perspective of cultural humility.

The cultural humility model recognizes the importance of acknowledging and respecting the cultural beliefs and values of individuals, while also challenging biases and assumptions that may arise in the therapeutic relationship. This framework may be particularly useful in developing culturally sensitive approaches to guidance services, as it emphasizes the importance of humility, respect, and ongoing learning in working with diverse populations.

Another theoretical framework that could be useful in exploring the impact of cultural beliefs and values on guidance services is the intersectionality theory. This theory recognizes that individuals have multiple intersecting identities, such as race, gender, and social class that may impact their experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989). In the context of guidance services, intersectionality theory could be useful in understanding how cultural beliefs and values intersect with other identities, such as gender and social class, to impact help-seeking behaviours and perceptions of Guidance services. By taking an intersectional approach, guidance practitioners can better understand the unique experiences of each individual and tailor their counselling approach accordingly.

### **Methodology**

The grounded theory approach is a well-established qualitative research methodology that is particularly suited to exploring complex, subjective phenomena such as the impact of cultural beliefs and values on the provision of guidance services. Grounded theory emphasizes the importance of collecting and analysing data in an iterative, cyclical manner, and focuses on developing a theory that is grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2014). This approach is particularly useful in situations where existing theories may not fully capture the complexity of the phenomenon being studied.

In this study, the grounded theory approach was utilized to generate a theory that could inform the development of culturally sensitive approaches to guidance services. The study aimed to explore the impact of cultural beliefs and values on the provision of guidance services, with a focus on understanding the unique experiences and perspectives of people who have experience with mental health issues or guidance services, as well as mental health professionals and guidance coordinators.

The qualitative research design was chosen for this study because it allows for a more in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of participants, and provides a more nuanced

understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is particularly suited to exploring complex, subjective phenomena such as the impact of cultural beliefs and values on guidance services, as it allows for a more holistic and nuanced understanding of the study.

Guidance practitioners who have experience with mental health issues, as well as mental health professionals and guidance coordinators were used for the study. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in terms of gender, age, socio-economic status, and ethnicity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that explored the impact of cultural beliefs and values on the provision of guidance services.

The purposive sampling was used to select the participants, which were made up of 3 professional counsellors, one traditional healer, two mental health professionals, and two individuals with lived experiences of mental health issues. There were made up of four males and four females. (50% males and 50% females). The professional counsellors consisted of two females and one male (66.66% female and 33.34% male). Among the community members, there was a male traditional healer, a male and a female mental health practitioner, and one male and one female individual with lived experience of mental health issues.

They all have a mean age of 55.78, with varied years of experience in their respective areas (ranging from 5 to 23 years). Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Field notes were also taken during and after the interviews to capture contextual information and observations. A constant comparative method was used to analyse the data. Data was coded and categorized based on emerging themes and patterns based on the research questions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researchers engaged in a process of reflective note writing, where emerging themes were recorded and analysed to develop and refine the theory.

## **Results**

### ***RQ1: How do cultural beliefs and values impact the help-seeking behaviours of people with mental health issues?***

Cultural beliefs and values have a significant impact on the help-seeking behaviours of people with mental health issues. Participants in the study reported that traditional beliefs about mental illness often led to stigma and discrimination, which can prevent individuals from seeking professional help. Family and community support, as well as the belief that mental illness is caused by supernatural or spiritual factors, can also impact help-seeking behaviours.

*“Our, cultural beliefs and values have a significant impact on the help-seeking behaviours of those with mental health issues. Many people and some of us hold traditional beliefs about mental illness, which can lead to stigma and discrimination towards individuals with mental health issues. For example, some people may believe that mental illness is caused by spiritual or supernatural factors, rather than biological or psychological factors” (Respondent A).*

*“For me, these beliefs can make individuals hesitant to seek professional help, as they may fear being ostracized or labelled as "crazy". Additionally, there is a cultural emphasis on communalism and family support, which can also impact help-seeking behaviours. Some people may feel that seeking help for mental health issues is a sign of weakness, and may prefer to rely on the support of their family and community” (Respondent B).*

*“To me, there is a lack of awareness and education about mental health issues, which can exacerbate the impact of cultural beliefs and values on help-seeking behaviours. Many may not know how to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health issues, or may not be aware of the availability of mental health services” (Respondent E).*

Overall, it can be inferred that cultural beliefs and values can significantly impact the help-seeking behaviours of those with mental health issues. To address this issue, there is a need for outstanding education and awareness about mental health issues, as well as the provision of culturally sensitive and appropriate mental health services.

***RQ2: What are the traditional healing practices utilized by people for mental health concerns, and how do these practices intersect with western guidance approaches?***

The study found that traditional healing practices are widely utilized by people for mental health concerns, often in conjunction with western guidance approaches. Participants in the study reported that traditional healers, such as herbalists and spiritualists, are often seen as more accessible and culturally appropriate than western-trained mental health professionals. However, there is a need for greater collaboration and communication between traditional healers and Western-trained mental health professionals to ensure the safety and efficacy of mental health treatments.

*“In our society, traditional healing practices are widely used for mental health concerns, and they often intersect with western counselling approaches or methods. Some of the most common traditional healing practices available include herbalism, spiritual healing, and divination” (Respondent C).*

*“Herbalism is a widely used traditional healing practice for mental health concerns. Traditional herbalists are highly respected and trusted, and they often use medicinal plants and herbs to treat various physical and mental health conditions. While foreign approaches may not incorporate the use of medicinal herbs, mental health professionals may recognize the benefits of herbalism and may work with traditional herbalists to provide a holistic approach to treatment” (Respondent H).*

*“Spiritual healing is another traditional healing practice that is widely utilized in most communities. Spiritual healers may use prayer, meditation, or other spiritual practices to address mental health concerns. While western counselling approaches may not focus on spirituality in the same way, mental health professionals may acknowledge the role of spirituality in mental health and may work with spiritual healers to provide culturally sensitive care” (Respondent).*

*“Divination is also a traditional healing practice in our local settings, and it involves the use of tools such as bones, shells, or cards to gain insight into an individual's mental health concerns. While western counselling approaches may not use divination practices, mental health professionals may recognize the role of cultural beliefs and practices in shaping an individual's mental health concerns and treatment preferences” (Respondent H).*

Overall, traditional healing practices often intersect with western counselling approaches in various ways. Mental health professionals may acknowledge the benefits of traditional healing practices and may work with traditional healers to provide culturally sensitive and appropriate care for their patients. By integrating traditional healing practices into western counselling approaches, mental health professionals can provide more comprehensive and holistic care for individuals with mental health concerns.

**RQ3: How do gender roles and family dynamics influence the willingness of people to seek Counselling services, and what are some strategies for addressing these cultural barriers?**

Gender roles and family dynamics were found to be significant cultural barriers to the willingness of Ghanaians to seek guidance services. Participants reported that men are often reluctant to seek help for mental health issues due to traditional beliefs about masculinity and stoicism. Women, on the other hand, may be more willing to seek help but face familial pressure to prioritize caregiving roles over their own mental health needs. Strategies for addressing these cultural barriers include community education campaigns and the involvement of family members in counselling sessions.

*“Gender roles and family dynamics play a significant role in influencing the willingness of members of the local society to seek guidance services. Over here, in our culture, there is a strong emphasis on collectivism, where individuals prioritize the needs of the family and community over their own needs. This cultural value often leads to a reluctance to seek counselling services, as individuals may feel that their mental health concerns will be seen as a personal weakness that reflects poorly on their family and community”*  
**(Respondent A).**

*“Gender roles also impact the willingness to seek guidance services. In our culture and customs, men are expected to be strong and independent, which may make it challenging for them to seek help for mental health concerns. On the other hand, women are expected to be nurturing and caring, and seeking help for mental health concerns may be seen as a sign of weakness or inability to fulfill their traditional gender roles”*

*“For me, to address these cultural barriers, mental health professionals can employ a variety of strategies. For instance, they can emphasize the importance of mental health as an essential component of overall health and well-being. Mental health professionals can also work with community leaders to raise awareness about mental health and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health concerns”*  
**(Respondent E).**

*“In my view, I believe that mental health professionals can work with families to develop a more supportive and open environment that encourages individuals to seek Guidance services. This can be done by emphasizing the importance of mental health within the family, and encouraging family*

*members to openly communicate about their mental health concerns” (Respondent D).*

*“Finally, mental health professionals can work to provide culturally sensitive Guidance services that are tailored to the unique needs and values of our cultural heritage. By providing counselling services that are respectful of cultural values and beliefs, mental health professionals can help individuals feel more comfortable seeking help and increase their willingness to engage in counselling services” ((Respondent G).*

***RQ4: What are some effective strategies for incorporating cultural values and practices into guidance services, and how do these strategies impact the efficacy of guidance services?***

The study found that effective strategies for incorporating cultural values and practices into guidance services available include the use of culturally appropriate language, the incorporation of traditional healing practices, and the involvement of family members in the counselling process. These strategies were found to increase the cultural competence of mental health professionals and improve the efficacy of guidance services. However, there is a need for further research to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of these strategies and their impact on the overall mental health outcomes of the populace.

*“Incorporating cultural values and practices into guidance services is crucial for providing effective mental health services. One effective strategy is to ensure that mental health professionals receive training on cultural competence, which includes an understanding of the unique values, beliefs, and practices of the culture. This training can help mental health professionals to provide more culturally sensitive care that is respectful of the client's cultural background and experiences” (Respondent G).*

*“Another strategy is to involve community members in the development and implementation of mental health programs. This approach helps to ensure that mental health services are designed to meet the unique needs of the community and that community members feel more comfortable seeking help from mental health professionals. Mental health professionals can work with community leaders and stakeholders to identify culturally appropriate*

*interventions and strategies that can be used to address mental health concerns. (Respondent H).*

*“Incorporating traditional healing practices into guidance services can also be effective in promoting mental health. Mental health professionals can work with traditional healers to develop integrated treatment plans that incorporate both traditional healing practices and western counselling approaches. This approach can help to address mental health concerns while respecting the cultural beliefs and values of Ghanaian culture” (Respondent C).*

*“I also suggest that mental health professionals can also use storytelling and other culturally relevant methods to help clients express their experiences and emotions. This approach helps to build trust and rapport with clients and can facilitate the therapeutic process. By incorporating cultural values and practices into counselling services, mental health professionals can improve the efficacy of counselling services and promote positive mental health outcomes for clients” (Respondent D).*

## **Discussion**

The provision of guidance services has been a topic of discussion in recent years, as it is recognized as an essential aspect of education. Guidance services encompass a wide range of activities that assist students in making decisions about their academic and personal lives. However, the dynamics of cultural beliefs and values have been identified as factors that influence the effectiveness of guidance services. Furthermore, out of the research questions, four main themes evolved and are discussed in the following paragraphs.

**Theme: Cultural Beliefs.** The findings of this study suggest that cultural beliefs and values have a significant impact on the provision of guidance and utilisation of guidance services in available to the locals. Specifically, cultural beliefs and values affect help-seeking behaviours, traditional healing practices, gender roles and family dynamics, and the incorporation of cultural values into guidance services. These findings are consistent with previous research that has highlighted the importance of cultural competence in the provision of mental health services (Hall, 2001; Betancourt et al., 2003; Fawzy & Fahmy, 2018).

A study by Abdullah and Bakar (2016) investigated the influence of cultural beliefs and values on guidance and counselling services in Malaysia. The study found that cultural beliefs and values affected the way guidance services were provided, and some students were reluctant to seek guidance services due to the stigma attached to seeking help. The authors recommended that counsellors should be trained to be culturally sensitive and aware to ensure that they provide guidance services that are respectful and effective.

Similarly, a study by Adeleke (2020) examined the impact of cultural beliefs and values on guidance and counselling services in Nigeria. The study found that cultural beliefs and values played a significant role in students' decision-making processes, and counsellors needed to be aware of these cultural factors to provide appropriate guidance services. The author suggested that guidance counsellors should be trained to understand cultural differences to provide effective counselling services.

**Theme: Cultural Values.** Furthermore, a study by Kim and Kim (2021) explored the impact of cultural values on school counselling in South Korea. The study found that cultural values, such as collectivism, influenced the way counselling services were provided in schools. The authors suggested that counsellors should be trained to understand the cultural values of their students to provide effective counselling services.

**Theme: Stigma** One of the main cultural barriers to seeking guidance services is the stigma associated with mental illness. This stigma is often rooted in cultural beliefs that mental illness is a result of spiritual or moral failure (Bhugra, 2004). As a result, many people may be reluctant to seek guidance services for fear of being ostracized by their community (Fernandez et al., 2008). To address this barrier, mental health professionals must work to build trust and rapport with clients and their families, and to provide culturally sensitive care that is respectful of the client's cultural background and experiences (Betancourt et al., 2003).

**Theme: Traditional healing.** Another cultural barrier to seeking guidance services is the reliance on traditional healing practices. Most people prefer to seek treatment from traditional healers, who use a combination of herbal remedies, spiritual practices, and other traditional methods to address mental health concerns (Owusu-Ansah, 2017). While these traditional healing practices can be effective in addressing mental health concerns, they may not always be consistent with western counselling approaches. To address this barrier, mental health professionals must work to develop integrated treatment plans that incorporate both traditional healing practices and western counselling approaches. This approach can help to address mental health concerns while respecting the cultural beliefs and values of Ghanaian culture.

**Theme: Willingness to seek guidance and strategies.** Gender roles and family dynamics also play a significant role in the willingness of people to seek Guidance services. Women, in particular, may be reluctant to seek guidance services due to traditional gender roles that prioritize the needs of the family over the individual (Agbemenu & Akindele, 2014). To address this barrier, mental health professionals must work to involve the family in the therapeutic process and to provide support and resources that can help to address the underlying social and economic factors that may be contributing to mental health concerns.

**Theme: Strategies for incorporating cultural values and practices into guidance services.** Incorporating cultural values and practices into guidance services is another effective strategy for improving the provision of mental health services. This approach can help to build trust and rapport with clients and can facilitate the therapeutic process. Mental health professionals can use storytelling and other culturally relevant methods to help clients express their experiences and emotions (Betancourt et al., 2003). Additionally, mental health professionals can work with traditional healers and community leaders to identify culturally appropriate interventions and strategies that can be used to address mental health concerns.

In effect, it can be inferred that, cultural beliefs and values have a significant impact on the provision of guidance services. Mental health professionals must work to develop culturally sensitive care that is respectful of the client's cultural background and experiences. They must also work to address cultural barriers to seeking guidance services and to incorporate cultural values and practices into guidance services. By doing so, mental health professionals can improve the efficacy of guidance services and promote positive mental health outcomes for clients.

The cultural humility approach entails a dedication to introspection, rectifying disparities in power, and cultivating mutually respectful collaborations to foster a more inclusive society. According to Chávez (2021), this model is characterised by its embodiment, since it aims to combat hierarchical structures, question organisational policies, and enhance community capacity.

Within the scope of guidance services in Ghana, the cultural humility has the potential to yield various effects. Specifically, it promotes the practice of ongoing self-reflection and self-criticism among counsellors and guidance professionals. It also facilitates the development of an awareness regarding their own cultural biases and the potential influence these biases may exert on their interactions with students. Humility advocates for the mitigation of power disparities that exist between counsellors and students. This has the potential to foster fairer relationships and enhance communication. The model has the potential to foster stronger

relationships between counsellors and students, thereby augmenting the efficacy of guidance services through the promotion of mutual respect. The concept poses a challenge to established hierarchies and rules, potentially resulting in institutional modifications that enhance the cultural sensitivity of advisory services. Chávez, 2021.

Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge that the implementation of the cultural humility model must be customised to suit the particular cultural milieu of Ghana, considering the varied cultural beliefs and values of its populace. This may entail providing training to counsellors on the cultural factors specific to various ethnic groups in Ghana. Mensah (2019).

In sum, the cultural humility model has the potential to exert a substantial influence on the delivery of guidance services in Ghana through its facilitation of self-reflection, mitigation of power imbalances, and cultivation of mutually respectful collaborations. Nevertheless, the execution of this approach must be attuned to the particular cultural setting of Ghana (Chávez, 2021; Mensah 2019).

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that cultural beliefs and values have a significant impact on the provision and utilization of guidance services. Traditional healing practices are deeply ingrained in Ghanaian culture and are often utilized in conjunction with western counselling approaches. However, there are still cultural barriers to seeking guidance services, particularly related to gender roles and family dynamics. Effective strategies for incorporating cultural values and practices into guidance services include the use of culturally sensitive and relevant language, the incorporation of traditional healing practices into counselling sessions, and the use of community outreach programs to promote awareness of the benefits of guidance services.

### **Recommendations**

In light of the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve the provision and utilization of guidance services:

1. Education and awareness programs should be developed to educate local people on the benefits of guidance services and to reduce stigma associated with mental health issues.
2. Guidance services should be tailored to the cultural values and beliefs of the local people. This includes the incorporation of traditional healing practices and the use of culturally sensitive language.
3. Strategies should be developed to address the cultural barriers to seeking guidance services, particularly those related to gender roles and family dynamics.

4. Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of culturally tailored guidance services to identify additional strategies for improving the provision and utilization of guidance services.

### **Implication for Guidance Practice**

1. Firstly, it is clear that there is a need for the development of culturally sensitive and relevant Guidance services. This requires guidance experts to have a good understanding of the local culture, including traditional healing practices, gender roles, and family dynamics. Guidance coordinators should also be able to incorporate these cultural values and practices into their counselling sessions to provide more effective and relevant support to their clients.
2. Secondly, there is a need for increased education and awareness of the benefits of guidance services. This includes efforts to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues and to promote a more positive view of guidance services.
3. Thirdly, there is a need for the development of strategies to address the cultural barriers to seeking guidance services. This may include community outreach programs, partnerships with traditional healers, and the provision of guidance services in locations that are more accessible to individuals who may be reluctant to seek support.

### **Informed Consent**

Participants were adults who provided verbal informed consent for their participation in the study.

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