An investigation into the perceptions of school counsellors in relation to providing counselling for students with Special Needs in Saudi Arabia schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia with regard to the provision of counselling for students with special educational needs (SEN) and to determine the contribution of counsellors to the development of such students in the context of mainstream secondary boys' schools in Saudi Arabia.

Accordingly, the study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the perceptions of school counsellors in the country. Quantitative insights are obtained from 138 counsellors working in secondary boys' schools using a questionnaire designed for the study. Subsequently, qualitative insights are obtained from 12 counsellors who are currently working with students with SEN and 12 counsellors who have never worked with students with SEN using semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data is statistically analysed, whereas the qualitative data is analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Overall, it is found that the qualitative and quantitative findings support each other and indicate that the provision of school counselling in Saudi Arabia for students with SEN requires attention. Salient findings include the existence of systemic issues such as the absence of minimum standards for counsellor recruitment, irregular recruitment practices, and inadequate dissemination of information associated with the purpose, role and function of school counsellors. Moreover, it is found that inadequate training provision and supervision and support mechanisms for counsellors exist, along with a lack of collaboration between departments of the Ministry of Education. Additionally, the findings indicate that the

sociocultural environment of Saudi Arabia prohibitively influences the provision of school counselling services, in general, as the Islamic collectivist values with regard to family, hierarchy, secrecy, shame and stigma, are revealed to hinder the provision of counselling in schools. Moreover, counsellors find their work in the schools hampered by their involvement in non-counselling tasks, negative perceptions with regard to the usefulness of their role, lack of awareness about the needs of students with SEN. It is evident that the counselling profession in Saudi Arabia is yet to obtain full professional recognition and status as the country does not have a statutory body to provide support and guidance regarding the professional and ethical practice of counsellors, and to engage with the Ministry on behalf of counsellors.

The findings of the study contribute to understanding the current status of the provision of school counselling services to students with SEN in boys' secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. Suggestions based on the study's findings are offered to the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, to counsellors working with children with SEN, and to the administration and personnel in schools. Suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Key words: *School counselling, Inclusion, students with SEN, Inclusive counselling, Disability, Saudi Arabia*

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis in loving memory of my beloved father and mother.

You have orchestrated my success story and made me the person I have always wanted to be.

You will always be remembered

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First and foremost, I cannot thank, praise, and glorify enough the Almighty Allah for His guidance and divine direction that He bestowed upon me. He has provided me with health and eased my path towards achieving my goals; and thanks to Him, obstacles have been turned into opportunities. The completion of this thesis would have never been a reality had He chosen otherwise.

Words almost fail me as I come to the mention of my father and mother who passed away during the writing-up of this thesis. I am shouting it loud as you rest peacefully in your final abode: My life without the pair of you is painful. I cannot express how sad I am to see you go. But will I will highlight these few sentences in your memory: Your efforts to raise me since birth have not been to no avail. I have made you proud and will continue to do so even though you are not here in flesh to witness it. I miss you so much. Your love, encouragement and support will always be second to none.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The aim of the present study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia with regard to the provision of counselling for students with special educational needs and to determine the contribution of counsellors to the development of such students in mainstream secondary boys' schools in Saudi Arabia. The purpose is to facilitate awareness about the present provision of counselling services to students with special educational needs in Saudi Arabia.

The purpose of this chapter is to present background information concerning the current study, the researcher's personal position statement, the rationale, purpose, aims and significance of the study, and the associated research questions.

1.1 Research background

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) states that "*Everyone has the right to education*". Extending this, Article 2 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) emphasises that children must not be discriminated against in any manner regardless of "*the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status*."

One outcome of such declarations and the acceptance of these by governments across the globe was the advent of inclusive education,

a manner of education in which schools must make provision for all students to be included in the normal course of education. UNESCO (2005, p. 12) views inclusion in education as "*a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning*". Furthermore, it defines inclusion as:

… a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (p. 13).

One specific aspect of inclusion in education is the inclusion of students with disabilities in the classroom along with other students (Gilhool, 1989). Students with disabilities are also referred to as students with special educational needs, or SEN, in the context of education (e.g., Pijl et al., 2008). Apart from physical deficits, if any, they may also experience difficulties with learning. Also, as highlighted in the Ethical Standards published by the American School Counselling Association (ASCA, 2016), it is possible that the degree of emotional, mental and physiological maturity (i.e., developmental age) of a student with SEN might not correspond to the typical behaviour and features of students of the same chronological age. For

instance, students with SEN may lag behind their counterparts from an academic perspective. Moreover, the different features of their disability may require special physical or emotional support. For example, Clements (1966) recognised ten characteristics that could be associated with students with special needs: hyperactivity, general coordination defects, perceptual-motor impairments, emotional disturbance, disorders of attention (e.g., short attention span, distractibility), disorders of memory and thinking, disorders of speech and hearing, impulsivity, specific learning disabilities (e.g., reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling), and equivocal neurological signs and electroencephalographic (EEG) irregularities. Relatedly, Lerner (2000) drew attention to nine behavioural and learning characteristics of individuals with special needs: attention disorders, poor motor abilities, difficulties with written and oral language, reading difficulties, deficits in social skills and psychological processes, quantitative disorders, and problems with information processing. However, as observed by Gargiulo (2010), these characteristics may not be exhibited by all students with learning disabilities, and many pupils who exhibit these behaviours achieve success in the classroom. Thus, it can be inferred that it is the extent, concentration, and duration of the behaviours that may cause issues in school and elsewhere (Smith, 1979).

Keeping these diverse requirements of students with SEN in mind, governments across the globe which support inclusion have

instructed school authorities to offer specialised educational and other services to such students. Indeed, rights for individuals with disability have increased over the past twenty years. In the United States, for example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 outlines support services provided by specialised resources such as speech therapists and school counsellors (Milsom et al., 2007). Similarly, UK legislation, such as the Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination Act 2001, acknowledges the rights of individuals with disabilities and calls for equal opportunities that will promote a more inclusive society (DfES, 2001). However, while such students may now participate in inclusive educational settings, they may not believe that they are being truly 'included'. Along with other personnel in school, counsellors can also play a significant role in developing polices to enable the inclusion, in mainstream education, of students with SEN; for example, implementing programmes to establish a safe school environment for students with SEN (Erhard & Umanksy, 2005). Moreover, guidance published by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2001) indicates that additional responsibilities could be accepted by school counsellors to improve not only communication within the school but also the mental well-being of all students, in general, and those with special educational needs, in particular.

The inclusion of students with SEN into mainstream educational settings is, in many countries, a complex undertaking that

necessitates transformation across various levels of the educational system: ethical, administrative, societal, physical, academic, and moral (e.g., Greer et al., 1995; Tralli et al., 1996). This manner of change is widespread and challenging and thus necessitates the complete support and participation of all stakeholders in the educational process such as teachers, school principals, parents, school psychologists, school counsellors, and others. In particular, it is anticipated that school counsellors will help in the successful implementation of inclusion largely due to the recent revolutionary changes in the school counselling profession in various countries such as Australia, Hong Kong, Israel; New Zealand, Scotland; Singapore, South Africa, the UK, and the US (Arnott, 1994; Bor et al., 2002; Cobia & Henderson, 2003; Erford, 2014; Erhard & Klingman, 2004; Ganie, 1997; Howieson & Sempel, 2000; Hui, 2000; Martin, 1994; Salim & Chua, 1994). In other words, school counselling can no longer be understood to be a peripheral, supplementary or add-on service but rather is a service that is foundational to the overall education programme in an inclusive school setting (Erhard & Umanksy, 2005).

The outlook of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with regard to individuals with disabilities is influenced by Quranic principles which direct people to assume responsibility for such persons. Accordingly, free services are provided in the country to persons with disabilities. Hence, it can be understood that all members of Saudi society benefit

equally from the State's provision of educational and medical care. Moreover, the participation of persons with disabilities in the societal and financial dynamics of their communities is facilitated. In other words, it can be seen that, in principle, individuals with disabilities are considered to be part of Saudi society along with their typically developing peers. As a result, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Saudi Arabia and other associated ministries stipulate that children with disabilities, irrespective of the nature or severity of their disability, must receive the full rights available to a person in Saudi society (Maajeeny, 1990).

For much of the previous century, the educational system in Saudi Arabia placed children with disabilities in separate schools (Alkhateeb et al., 2016). However, in the 1980s, Saudi Arabia implemented several educational initiatives, making it the first Arab country to scientifically effect mainstreaming in its schools. Trials of mainstreaming were successfully performed in 1984 in the Eastern city of Hufuf. Five years later, children with special educational needs were admitted into the kindergarten at the King Saud University in Riyadh. Following this, the MoE implemented mainstreaming on a small scale in its schools. 1996 was a milestone year in the history of mainstreaming in Saudi Arabia when the Ministry submitted an educational strategy which, among other items, triggered the integration of students with special needs into public schools (Al-Mousa, 2008). Approval for general schools as the accepted setting

for students with SEN was provided through the Document of Rules and Regulations for Special Education Institutes and Programmes (RSEIP) which draws inspiration from the US Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Hughes & Talbott, 2017). More details about Special Education in Saudi Arabia are provided in Chapter Two (Overview of the Saudi context).

In Saudi Arabia, school guidance and counselling services reflect a trajectory similar to the mainstreaming of students with special educational needs in the country. The provision of guidance and counselling services in schools commenced in 1961 with the employment of educational social workers in schools whose roles encompassed organising and implementing various educational and social activities. Over time, these roles evolved to place emphasis on aiding students develop their academic competencies and to resolve or manage their personal and academic problems. The Administration of Education and Social Activities provided and supervised these services and functions (MoE, 1982).

However, Saudi schools have always provided counselling services, albeit in an inexpert and informal manner, since the commencement of educational provision in the country in 1925. Formal programmes for school counselling were established much later, in 1981. Around the same time, the Administration of Education and Social Activities was extended and transformed by the MoE into the General Administration of Guidance and Counselling. Thus, the formal launch

of professional counselling services for students in Saudi schools could be said to follow from the establishment of this new administrative body (MoE, 1982). More details about the provision of counselling services in the Saudi education setting are provided in Chapter Two (Overview of the Saudi context).

Studies conducted in the last two decades have investigated perceptions and attitudes towards the school counsellors' role in Saudi Arabia and found that there is some confusion about the role of school counsellors and an overall lack of information about the nature of school counselling (Al-ghamdi, 1999). Moreover, other research in the Saudi context suggests that the slow development of school counselling is attributable to the dearth of professional counsellors and lack of training programmes (Alghamdi & Riddick, 2011). It could be seen therefore that, while the MoE has made significant effort to provide school counselling in Saudi Arabia, the counselling provision in schools appears to be in its infancy. Consequently, the effectiveness of the counselling provision in Saudi schools is a matter for scrutiny.

A challenge encountered by school counsellors across the globe is the definition of their role (Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Sears & Granello, 2002). This is particularly evident in a country like Saudi Arabia where the guidance and counselling in educational settings is still an evolving service. As a result, the counselling profession in Saudi Arabia could be inferred to be facing numerous challenges associated

with the policies of the Ministry of Education, personnel in school, parents and even the counsellors themselves (Alghamdi, 2010). Researchers in Saudi Arabia have recognised that the lack of a clear definition of the school counsellor's role and function was a significant problem in the provision of counselling services in schools. Counsellors were found to be unclear about their roles as were students, teachers, administrators, and parents (Al-Ahmady, 1983; Al-Ghamdi, 1999). Therefore, counsellors undertook to perform activities unassociated with their role, such as administrative duties in the school. Other obstacles were reported with regard to the evolution and progress of counselling in Saudi Arabia such as: a discouraging environment; indistinct working associations between counsellors and teachers; inadequate understanding of the association between counsellor and school principals. Moreover, counsellors were reported to have insufficient time for counselling tasks due to the demands of administrative responsibilities (Al-Shinawi, 1990; Al-Zahrani, 1990), and unregulated assignment of students for counselling (Al-Shinawi, 1990). Furthermore, as reported by Al-Ghamdi (1999), professional counsellors were scarce and training courses for counsellors were inadequate and unsatisfactory in many ways. Accordingly, teachers with no training or experience in the field often undertook counselling duties (Al-Ghamdi, 1999). Thus, it could be seen that the role of school counsellors was a frequently debated matter and even later studies (e.g., Alghamdi, 2010)

reported that role conflict and ambiguity with regard to counsellors' roles continued to pervade the school environment and consequently affected the delivery of services.

However, it is notable that Saudi scholars who reviewed counselling provision neglected provision for students with SEN. While such students are integrated into mainstream schools, many remain at a high risk of exposure to mental health problems, as witnessed by the researcher during his tenure as teacher from 2006 until 2008 in a mainstream school in Saudi Arabia. Also, they can fall victim to bullying and sexual abuse. According to Martlew and Hodson (1991) and Mishna (2003), students with SEN are more likely to be vulnerable to physical, sexual and psychological abuse. They are also at high risk of being victims of bullying. A recent study shows that students with SEN are three to four times more likely to be victim of violence than their non-disabled peers (Jones et al., 2012). If disabled children are constantly exposed to violence, abuse, rejection and neglect, it is likely that they will have mental health problems as well as behavioural problems in childhood and in later life (UNICEF, 2002). Fink et al. (2015) found that SEN status is a predictor of victimisation and also of a proclivity to be bullied, leading the researchers to conclude that there is a need to tailor interventions to tackle this problem. Therefore, to ensure a better quality of life for students with SEN, it is important that people around them, including school counsellors, give various kinds of support. These issues make

it imperative that counselling services for students with SEN in Saudi schools be studied.

1.2 Personal position statement

In this section, I briefly describe my personal background before proceeding with an explanation of how I envisage school counselling for students with special educational needs in a Saudi context. It is important for me to make my preconceived ideas, beliefs, biases and assumptions as transparent as possible so that readers can better understand my personal position in this research. This also acts as a starting point for reflexivity in considering how my own beliefs, values and perspectives might guide the research process (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Researcher positioning is an important issue due to the postmodernist contention that subjective processes interfere with objectivity (Ratner, 2002). Subjective processes are thought to be shaped by the researcher's epistemological beliefs, theoretical standing, personal history, gender, socio-economic class, race and ethnicity. Because researchers are the primary instrument in collecting and analysing data (Glesne, 2011;; Russell & Kelly, 2002) and interpreting the data to create meaning, it is important to be as explicit as possible about researcher positioning so that readers can better understand how the researcher's beliefs and assumptions are guiding their arguments and interpretations. Based on the premise that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower, researchers are reflexive when they are

aware of their effect on the process and outcomes of research (Steedman, 1991). Reflexivity enables the researcher to understand the phenomenon under study as well as the research itself through the process of becoming aware of what allows them to see and what may inhibit their seeing (Russell & Kelly, 2002). Because researchers in the 'fourth moment' ask self-reflexive questions about their assumptions and interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), it is crucial for me as a researcher to keep a research journal and provide personal narratives to better understand the subjectivity that I bring to the research setting.

Auto-ethnography is a form of self-reflection and writing that enables the researcher to describe and analyse (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) rather than, or in interaction with, the beliefs and practices of others, in order to connect this autobiographical story to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings (*ethno*) (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones, 2005; Maréchal, 2010). Auto-ethnographies are therefore "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). In the following section, I narrate my relevant personal experience and professional development using the auto-ethnographic method in order to understand my positionality with a view to including a questioning researcher voice in my text (Hertz, 1996). Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 734) advocate auto-ethnography as a style of writing that "make[s] the researcher's own

experience a topic of investigation in its own right." It is "an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (p. 739). My purpose in writing my auto-ethnography is to consider the personal and cultural motivators that underpin my work with students with SEN, and to examine how, in my personal experience and professional development, I have dealt with the questions that have arisen about ethics, culture, and success in life.

My auto-ethnography includes a single participant, a member of my family who has special needs, since his story was instrumental in my decision to study special needs. An important consideration for auto-ethnographers is the privacy and safety of others which needs to be protected by altering identifying characteristics such as gender, name, place or appearance (Ellis et al., 2011) without damaging the integrity of their research and how the work is interpreted and understood. In addition, in order to be able to continue living in the world of relationships in which my research is embedded, after the research is completed (Ellis et al., 2011), I have obtained the approval of my participant to mention his story in this research, as well as the consent of my family, after explaining my research goals.

Born and brought up in Saudi Arabia, I am a member of a family that has a young person with SEN, namely my cousin. As his cousin, I witnessed the many ways in which children and young people with

special needs are disadvantaged, two key areas being educational provision and social life (UNICEF, 2013). His access to the school was a struggle due to the lack of support within the school. He was sometimes sent home owing to the lack of support. In the social context, there was some evidence of peer discrimination against my cousin in that he tended to be bullied, both physically and verbally, and students tended to avoid communication with him, meaning that he suffered from social neglect (Jones et al., 2012; Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Mishna, 2003).

Apart from exposure to my cousin's special-need-related experiences, my motivation to study children with SEN stems from the genuine empathy that I feel for children and young people. I am motivated to develop my understanding of their needs and difficulties with a view to working with such special educational needs students as a school teacher or a full-time researcher of special needs. My increasing awareness of the high frequency of violence and abuse towards children in Saudi societies (e.g., Almuneef et al., 2016; Alsehaimi & Alanazi, 2017) has further encouraged me to understand more about children's circumstances and find ways to support them.

My involvement with students with SEN began in 2006 when I decided to become a school teacher. Working as a teacher for two years in a mainstream secondary school, I was given the responsibility of teaching students with SEN. This proved to be the starting point of my

interest in developing my understanding of their learning and socialising difficulties. As their teacher, I felt responsible for their self-empowerment and well-being.

Dealing with students with SEN posed numerous challenges. My experience was that they had little confidence to voice their opinions, they were not able to show their academic skills, and they were not able to mix with other students (Clements, 1966; Lerner, 2000; MacBeath et al., 2005). While I did not methodically investigate the causes of all these problems, I believe that they were related to the sense of inferiority that these students experience. Throughout the two years, I strived to be a good teacher, not only to ensure that the different needs of my students were catered for but also to improve their level of confidence so that they could participate more actively in class and befriend their peers. To ensure that I catered for the diverse needs of my students, I was mindful of the activities that I carried out in the classroom. In an effort to build their self-confidence and improve their engagement in classroom activities, I presented myself as a brother rather than a teacher so that they would feel less anxious. I found that it is important for a teacher of students with SEN to design classroom activities carefully to cater for the diverse needs of the students and to develop the students' willingness to participate in classroom activities, so that schooling becomes a meaningful experience for them (UNESCO, 2001). Because the needs of

mainstream and SEN students in an integrated environment need to be carefully balanced, it is essential to have teaching support.

I realised that I would not be able to help these students with SEN by working alone. This is largely because, besides the heavy workload imposed on me, I did not have much experience in handling such students. I was in need of support from other school staff to empower them so that they could transform psychologically and not see themselves as inferior to others. It was at this point that the role of counsellors came to my mind. I believe that counsellors should pay special attention to students with SEN and offer various forms of support, including moral, social and psychological (Erhard & Umanksy, 2005; Milsom et al., 2007). Counsellors are among the stakeholders who can play a major role in achieving positive results regarding the inclusion or integration of students with SEN in regular schools (Erhard & Umanksy, 2005). Once these students are assisted to find alternative bases on which to build their self-esteem, I am convinced that they will gradually develop their self-confidence to socialise with others, thereby improving their chances of being accepted and included in the social setting.

Cultural values, beliefs and traditions can significantly affect the education of students with SEN in the Saudi context. As Saudi Arabia is considered to be a developing country, it does not necessarily perceive disability in the same way that developed countries perceive

it (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). This was seen in the fact that Saudi studies about the counselling function in schools omit to mention SEN students. It is necessary to critically consider the role of Saudi culture in shaping how people with special educational needs are perceived, and how this society understands and deals with those people. Individuals with SEN living in rural areas are at particular risk of discrimination because these communities tend not to believe that they have the ability to be educated, to work and to enhance their social skills (UNESCO, 2016). Such individuals are therefore unlikely to receive much education. This explanation further supports the idea of Goodey (1996) that children and young people with learning disabilities are a group of people who for centuries have been excluded, rejected, ridiculed and often feared.

Social stigma and negative parental attitudes towards disability in Saudi communities are the most likely reasons for the discrimination. Social exclusion is often compounded when, for example, parents who have a child with special educational needs avoid sending their child to school to avoid the social stigma of having a disability (UNICEF, 2017), despite the fact that this contravenes Islamic principles promoting respect for the rights of all society members, both with and without special needs, to receive a proper education. These cultural barriers should be challenged in order to provide a more welcoming and collaborative community that will result in the social inclusion of people with disabilities. I would moreover argue that social inclusion and inclusive education might complement each other, insofar as inclusive

education can help to reduce prejudice against individuals with special educational needs and provide them with the necessary skills to become a more productive and positive member of society. Relatedly, Jones et al. (1984) found that the more years one stays in school, the more one is likely to be exposed to a tolerant peer culture. Conversely, enhancing awareness of the rights and abilities of those with SEN is likely to enhance the quality of the education being provided for all. It is crucial for Saudi communities to take these issues into account for a better understating of students with special needs.

Unfortunately, throughout my two years at the school, I did not see these students with SEN benefit from the counselling service offered. This is because students did not choose to go to the counsellors and the counsellors themselves did not seek out these students. I surmise that this problem was caused, on the one hand, by a lack of awareness among students regarding the counselling service provided (Onyekuru & Ibegbunam, 2015), and, on the other hand, by a lack of motivation on the part of the counsellors to deal with SEN students (Milsom & Akos, 2003; Studer & Quigney, 2005). To some extent, I felt that the school principal, as the leader of the school community, failed to encourage counsellors to approach students with SEN and moreover failed to assist teachers in dealing with the students (Zalaquett, 2005).

The literature has identified the lack of provision of counselling to meet the social and needs of young people with learning difficulties (Pattison,

2006). It is possible that the lack of counselling provision for special needs within mainstream or special schools is representative of the lack of equality accorded to special educational needs students. However, many professionals claim that students with SEN cannot benefit from counselling services. They assume that students with SEN will not be able to make enough sense of counselling in order for it to be useful (Moulster, 1998). This claim could be an important obstacle to developing the provision of school counselling services for students with SEN.

Students with SEN in Saudi Arabia remain a neglected group and are not given a proper place alongside other students in mainstream schools. In fact, many teachers, including myself, were unaware of the role of counsellors in helping us to mitigate the sense of inferiority in such students. We had little idea of how our students could be helped by the school counsellors. Thus, this research is the outcome of a concern to bring counsellors and students with SEN closer together by raising counsellors' awareness of what they could do to help these students.

In this research, I position myself as a researcher who wishes to listen to the voices of counsellors, and examine their perceptions and understandings of their role in mainstream schools in relation to the needs of students with SEN. My main research question ('What is the perception of school counsellors regarding the provision of counselling

for students with special needs in mainstream secondary schools for boys in Saudi Arabia?') and four subsidiary questions, detailed below, have guided my selection of the relevant research paradigms which will guide my research design, methodology, data collection and analysis (Crotty, 1998). This process requires me to be reflexive since I am the primary 'instrument' in the research process (Russell & Kelly, 2002; Watt, 2007).

In addition, I am aware of my position, being a former teacher of students with SEN in Saudi Arabia, a factor which facilitated my familiarity with the culture and context of this study research. Subsequently, during the course of this research some counsellors may have regarded me as an insider. Contrarily, some other counsellors may have considered me to be an outsider because of my education and present role as a researcher. This aspect would prove to be both beneficial and challenging for the study (Merriam et al., 2001). Further, my position influenced the construction of my subjective lens that is, my perspective of the whole study in general, and the data I obtained from the different methods of data collection during the course of the research, in particular.

1.3 Rationale and purpose of this study

Students may need to be guided in the relationship between education, health and the environment, learning skills, knowledge, and attitudes that lead to a good quality of life. The provision of

counselling service in schools plays an important role in providing support for all students, whether mainstream or with SEN, in developing their well-being with regard to their social, emotional, behavioural and academic aspects. According to the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2001), counselling in schools can promote a high level of communication within schools, as well as promote the emotional well-being of children and young people including students with special needs. The BACP also supports schools in implementing inclusion and the National Curriculum. In many countries, such as the USA, UK, Australia, Hong Kong, Israel and Singapore, it is expected that counsellors play an integral role in fostering the process of inclusion (ASCA, 2010; Erhard & Umanksy, 2005; Pattison, 2006). In light of these role expectations, counsellors are asked to enhance polices towards successful inclusion through providing beneficial programmes to students with SEN, creating a safe climate in schools, and interacting and collaborating with students, teachers, school staff and parents (Erhard & Umanksy, 2005). In the UK, the role of counsellors has been expanded based on the Children Act 2004 to include students with special educational needs as one of their responsibilities in the school along with other students without special educational needs (DoES, 2007).

The international disability rights movement advocates that all countries increase their efforts towards the inclusion of all

individuals with SEN in schools and in society. This helps to provide impetus for this study on the provision of school counselling for students with SEN. For example, in realising and expressing the right to education, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (1996, Article 24.2) states that it is important to ensure that:

- Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;

- Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;

- Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion (p. 17).

The above Article might include school counselling services as the support required which can facilitate the effective education for students with SEN and maximise their academic and social development.

The high incidence of mental health problems in students with SEN is one of the main arguments for including those students in counselling services. Therefore, school counselling can be an effective way to include students with SEN as there is a growing evidence-base for the

effectiveness of counselling as an intervention for young people who suffer from a range of problems, including depression, anxiety, behavioural difficulties, sexual abuse, school-related problems, self-harming practices and medical issues (Harris & Pattison, 2004). School counsellors may be encouraged to offer their services to those students in order to meet this demand. The literature has, however, identified a lack of provision of school counselling services for students with SEN to meet their needs (Pattison, 2006). It is possible that the lack of the provision of counselling with SEN in mainstream or special schools is a reflection of the lack of equality for students with SEN.

The dearth of studies on the provision of school counselling for students with SEN in the Saudi context is apparent. Therefore, an important question has arisen for the current study: Do students with SEN access and receive school counselling services as their peers in the school do? This study includes the hypothesis that school counsellors might not provide school counselling for students with SEN in their schools. Accordingly, this study addresses the nature of school counselling services for students with SEN.

In particular, the study will highlight the potential relevance and value of counselling for students with SEN in mainstream secondary schools for boys, based on evidence from other countries. This will highlight the factors and conditions deemed necessary for counselling to play a key role in supporting the full inclusion of students and

support professionals (teachers and counsellors) in pursuit of this overarching goal. To this end, this study investigates the perceptions of two groups of school counsellors towards working with students with SEN: those with experience and those without. The purpose of the present study is therefore to gain an in-depth understanding of the counsellor's experiences, attitudes and beliefs towards the provision of school counselling services for students with SEN in mainstream Saudi schools.

1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

The overall aim of the study is to investigate the perceptions of school counsellors in relation to providing counselling for students with SEN and determining the contribution of counsellors to the development of students with SEN in mainstream secondary schools for boys in Saudi Arabia. In order to fulfil the aim of the study, the following objectives of the current study were designed:

1. To conceptualise the school counsellors' understanding of their role as a counsellor in Saudi schools with relation to special needs students.
2. To interpret counsellors' experiences of providing support.
3. To understand the ways of assessing the counsellor's own ability to provide counselling to students with special needs.

4. To identify the barriers experienced by the counsellor in the development of student-centred counselling services in Saudi schools.

1.5 Research questions

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following main question and four sub-questions were identified:

What are the perceptions of school counsellors regarding the provision of counselling for students with special educational needs in mainstream secondary schools for boys in Saudi Arabia?

1. How do counsellors in Saudi schools conceptualise their role in relation to special needs students?
2. What are school counsellors' experiences of providing support for special needs children?
3. How do counsellors rate their ability to provide counselling to students with special needs?
4. What barriers do counsellors experience in the development of student-centred counselling services in Saudi schools?

1.6 Significance of this study

The majority of studies in Saudi Arabia (Alghamdi, 1999; Al-Rebdi, 2000; Al-Rebdi, 2004; Alghamdi & Riddick, 2011) have focused on counselling in general education with no reference to students with special educational needs, whether the counselling of students with special educational needs or the role of counsellors in developing

those students in Saudi schools. The contribution that this study seeks to make to the literature is the perception of school counsellors in relation to their function, experience, and attitudes as far as offering counselling for students with special educational needs is concerned. This includes an exploration and understanding of the obstacles faced by counsellors in Saudi schools in meeting the needs of all children. It is hoped that the present study's findings will help counsellors to gain a better understanding of whether school counselling can contribute to the development of students with special educational needs in mainstream education. Moreover, the findings of this study could help universities and colleges to take into account the counselling of students with SEN in planning and designing professional training programmes for school counsellors. Finally, it is hoped that the participants in the present study will offer significant suggestions for the development of counsellors' roles and improvement of the counselling service within schools in KSA.

1.7 Structure of thesis

This thesis is organised into eight chapters to reflect the manner in which the research questions have been answered. The present chapter presented the problem, the researcher's personal position statement, and the research questions designed to fulfil the aims of this study. Chapter Two provides a critical overview of the Saudi history and context related to counselling in educational provision.

Chapters Three and Four review the relevant literature in two parts: the first part offers a critical account of the literature associated with students with SEN whereas the second offers insights into the key issues and practices involved in school-based counselling. Chapter Five describes the methodology employed and a justification for the use of a mixed- methods approach. Chapter Six presents and discusses the findings from the quantitative study. Chapters Seven and Eight present and discuss the findings from the qualitative phase of the study, with Chapter Seven addressing school counsellors who have worked with students with SEN and Chapter Eight addressing those who have not. Chapter Nine summarises the key findings from the study in the light of the research questions. It also provides the conclusions and the potential implications for future policy and research relating to school counselling, in general, and for students with SEN, in particular, in the context of Saudi Arabia. This chapter also describes the limitations of the study and provides directions for future research.

1.8 Summary

This chapter introduced the topic under investigation, namely, counselling provision for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia schools. The researcher's personal position statement, rationale, purpose, aims, and significance of the study were described along with the associated research questions. The structure of the thesis was also presented. The following chapter describes the Saudi context,

outlining the Saudi education systems, a history of Special Education in Saudi Arabia, the education of students with SEN, and the provision of counselling in the Saudi educational system.

Chapter Two: Overview of the Saudi context

2.1 Contextualisation

Education plays an important role in helping young people to maximise their skills so as to contribute to the development of their country. The responsibility for educating students is allocated to school communities, which have to equip students with various skills to enable them to meet the demands of the society in which they live. However, many schools face difficulties in educating students. This might be due to large numbers of students in schools or the inability of teachers to help all students (Alhageel, 1993). Also, schools might involve students from different cultures.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, education for special needs students demands great effort from school communities to provide suitable education programmes (Al-Mousa, 2007). The presence of counsellors in schools may help the school community to cope with problems that might arise, such as social isolation, bullying and other abuse. As the demands on and expectations of counselling services in schools increase, counsellors are an obvious resource to identify for providing support for special needs students, so that they can benefit from the schooling experience. The aim of this chapter is to review education policy in the Saudi context in order to provide a clear picture of the nature of its education processes and various levels of education. It also aims to identify the nature of current education of students with special needs in the Saudi education system. Finally, it describes the

provision of counselling in Saudi schools and analyses the nature of school counselling policies. A brief background of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is first provided.

2.2 Culture and religion

Founded in 1932 by Abdulaziz bin Saud (Ibn Saud), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is the large country in the Arabian Peninsula (Alhageel, 1993). It is an influential country, not merely in the Middle East, for two primary reasons: its vast oil reserves and its distinctive identity as the birthplace of Islam. Mecca and Medina, the locations of Islam's two holiest shrines, are in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic nation and accordingly, its government policies are founded on Islamic law (the Sharia). Consequently, all facets of the existence of the Saudi people including education are governed by the Sharia (CIA World Factbook, 2012).

The official language in the KSA is Arabic. Saudi Arabia is constitutionally a monarchy headed by a King and governed by his Council of Ministers. The constitution of the country is founded on the sources of the Sharia, chiefly the Holy Quran and the Sunnah (sayings and traditions of the Prophet Mohammed) (Alghamdi & Abdulgwad, 2002). The culture of Saudi Arabia is strongly influenced by Islamic principles, with religious values determining individual associations with family and tribal and societal principles, all of which are interwoven in an intricate web of commitments indicated in the Quran.

Saudi Arabia is one of the Muslim countries where segregation of the genders is strictly enforced: women may only mix socially with men if they are related to them, whether in places of education or the workplace. Women have a male guardian (typically, father, brother or husband) and are expected to submit to their protection. In general, the fundamental role of women in Saudi society is believed to be to support the care and nurture of their families, and consequently society (Alireza, 1987; Hamdan, 2005). One consequence of the strict guidelines regarding gender segregation is the existence of single-sex schools in the country.

The next section describes the educational policy context in Saudi Arabia.

2.3 Educational policy context in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

Education in Saudi Arabia – including education policy, goals and curricula – is designed to be strongly linked to Islamic values and concepts and the Arabic language (Alhageel, 1993). Students are expected to gain appropriate and essential knowledge of Islamic culture to enable them to live as a Muslim citizen and develop society economically, socially and culturally (cited in Al-ghamdi, 2010). Accordingly, the education system focuses on understanding Islam, strengthening the faith and providing beneficial knowledge to develop Saudi society.

Education in Saudi Arabia began officially in 1925 with the creation of the General Directorate of Education by the government. Beginning with only four elementary schools, it was expanded in 1932 when King Abdulaziz extended the responsibilities of this Directorate to involve all Saudi regions at the time. Three main obligatory phases constituted the educational ladder system. The first phase refers to the elementary stage which admits children from the age of 6-7 years old and continues for a six-year period. The second stage is the intermediate level for pupils aged 12-13 years, with a duration of three years. The third stage is the secondary/tertiary level which admits 15-16-year-olds and similarly lasts for three years, during which students choose their major from the start to include any one of the scientific, literature, and vocational subjects.

In the wake of the oil discoveries in the western part of the Kingdom in the late 1930s and 1940s, the government announced that a Ministry of Education should be founded, which duly took place in 1953. Based on this decision, a systematic state education was established in Saudi Arabia with compulsory public education for all pupils (Ministry of Education, 1982). Education is provided free from primary school to higher education. The Ministry of Education determines the national curriculum, and supervises delivery to both boys and girls under a gender-segregated system, including students with special needs (Alghamdi & Abdulgwad, 2002; Alhageel, 1993).

The next section describes the authorities responsible for the planning and organisation of education in Saudi Arabia.

2.4 Authorities responsible for the planning and organisation of education in Saudi Arabia

The first body responsible for the supervision and constitution of boys' education was the Ministry of Knowledge, set up in 1953. Five decades later, in 2003, this Ministry was renamed as the Ministry of Education. A separate entity, the General Presidency for Girls Education set up in 1960, providing oversight for the education of girls. However, this was not integrated into the Ministry of Education until 2003 (Alhaqeel, 2003; Ibn Dohaish 2005). Consequently, education in Saudi Arabia is under the centralised control of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry has set up several education directorates across the country to decrease the administrative burden of its personnel (Alsharari, 2010).

Education in Saudi Arabia implements gender segregation, with three distinctly administered systems: general education for boys, general education for girls, and traditional Islamic education for boys and girls. Education for boys (general and Islamic) is administered by the Education Directorate for boys while education for girls (general and Islamic) is administered by the Education Directorate for girls (Alsharari, 2010).

All matters related to educational policy and provision in Saudi Arabia are overseen of the Ministry of Education, from eradicating illiteracy to conducting research to promote advancements in education. Due to the centralised authority in Saudi Arabia, any new educational initiatives – from the engagement of teachers and other personnel to the creation of syllabi and textbooks – risk being delayed by lengthy decision-making processes.

2.4.1 Power dynamic in Saudi schools

Within the specific context of schools, head teachers (principals) are directly accountable to the Ministry of Education (Alsalahi, 2014). As a result, head teachers view themselves as having the most responsibility in the school, with authority flowing in a top-down fashion to their subordinates, including teachers (Drummond & Al-Anazi, 1997) and other personnel in the school such as the deputy head teachers and school counsellors.

The next section describes the Islamic perspectives on education in Saudi Arabia.

2.5 Islamic perspectives on Education in Saudi Arabia

Education in Saudi Arabia is characterised by separate schools for boys and girls, including separate school buildings and school personnel (Al-Kahtani, 2015). Under Islamic (Sharia) law, this situation is not seen to be unusual or discriminatory towards women and has the primary objective of avoiding enticement and immorality (Al-Aqeel, 2005). However, it was argued by El-Sanabary (1994) that

the design of the Saudi education system was intended to promote and support gender segregation and power dynamics through the twin systems of male and female education with different curricula for male and female students and emphasis on the domestic function of women. Even two decades later, it is apparent that this situation persists in Saudi Arabia (e.g., Alsuwaida, 2016).

The advantages and disadvantages of single sex education have been researched in other countries that use a separated educational infrastructure, discussed next.

2.5.1 Single-sex schools

Guarisco (2010) found that boys benefit the most from single-sex schools, although girls may benefit as well. Moreover, single-sex schools have been found to improve student achievement because teachers can focus on differences in learning styles. Sax (2007, 2016) contended that single sex schooling can offset the various differences between girls and boys and cater to the needs of boys without disregarding the girls' needs (Sax, 2008). In coeducational classrooms, it has been suggested that learning outcomes may be unfavourably influenced (Thorne, 1993) by the confrontational and antagonistic associations that typically take place between genders (Millard, 2002). Moreover, learning outcomes may also be adversely affected by the prevalent attitudes at home and in society as these can overflow into the classroom (Ogden, 2011).

On the other hand, Guarisco (2010) observes the single sex schools may fail to adequately equip students for existence in the real world. Vail (2002) in fact suggests that segregation by gender is akin to separation on the grounds of race. Moreover, single-sex schools have been opposed by the National Organization for Women (NOW) on the grounds that "so-called 'separate but equal' policies rarely treat girls equally, often relying on outdated sex-stereotypes about girls' and boys' interests and abilities" (Guarisco, 2010, p. 7). It was also feared by NOW that "all-boys schools increase sexism and exacerbate feelings of superiority toward women" (Guarisco, 2010, p. 8). Hughes (2006) suggested that the motive behind single-sex education is to advance greater levels of accomplishment in the sexes. However, there is no evidence that single sex education is better than co-education (Protheroe, 2009). Nevertheless, while there is some proof that some students benefit from single-sex education in some settings, researchers are unable to determine whether these benefits are due to the unique aspects of single-sex programmes or whether these aspects exist or can be replicated in co-educational environments (Protheroe, 2009).

A review of single sex education in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the US, and the UK by Smithers and Robinson (2006) did not find consistent outcomes. They observed that competence, social background and ethnicity overshadowed the influences of gender and concluded that, in general, the success of co-educational or single sex

schools does not depend on whether the sexes were separated or brought together for education.

On the other hand, a study of the effects of single-sex classes in a co-educational school by Younger et al. (2005) found that single-sex education has some favourable outcomes. For instance, girls and boys can feel more comfortable in single-sex classes, experience greater ease in learning and allow themselves to demonstrate genuine interest without reserve. Protheroe (2009) further suggested that boys may demonstrate greater accomplishment in English and modern languages while girls may benefit with regard to scientific and mathematical studies.

It can be inferred that in the context of Saudi Arabia, also, any favourable or unfavourable outcomes that may be derived from single-sex schools may not be the consequence of the legal and religious imperative to separate the sexes.

The next section describes the history of special education in Saudi Arabia.

2.6 A history of Special Education in Saudi Arabia

The MoE first began accommodating the needs of students with learning disabilities in 1967. Located in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, the first official institute was established as a special school for the blind with the name of 'Al-Noor Institute for Training and Education of the Blind'. To train Saudi educators working at this special school, an Iraqi professional in Arabic Braille language was

recruited. Two years later, in 1962, the Ministry set up a supervisory committee for the education of children with special needs (Al-Mousa, 1999). The purpose was to offer a formal education dedicated to blind and deaf pupils and those with learning disabilities (also known at the time as 'mental retardation' or 'cognitive delay'). In addition, in 1962, the earliest special school with accommodation amenities for deaf pupils was established under the name 'Al-Amal Institute', also in Riyadh. Various lessons and activities were delivered in the Arabic Sign Language for these learners.

It was not until 1971, with the official inauguration of the 'Al-Riaih Institute', that concrete services for pupils with learning disabilities were properly launched. Within a year, it was decided that the government committee of The Directorate General of Special Education or 'DGSE' would be introduced as an upgrade to the MoE's Special Education administration. The number of departments of the upgraded administration was limited to provide aid to only three types of special needs children: the blind, the deaf, and children with learning disabilities. Duties of this committee included: providing training to teachers, initiating new programmes, undertaking inspection procedures, offering teaching aids and technologies, introducing up-to-date and improved curricula, as well as committing to educational supervision and developments (Al-Mousa, 1999). Significant improvements have been made to the DGSE over the last two decades with respect to the number of newly opened

departments, including the Department for Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties (Autistic), the Department for Learning Difficulties, and the Department for Physical and Multiple Disabilities.

In seeking to meet special educational needs in Saudi Arabia, five governmental bodies have been established. To start with, the DGSE offers educational services all over the Kingdom through its dedicated departments within all thirteen local education authorities (LEAs). The second body is the General Presidency of Youth Welfare, which caters for the sporting side, including equipment and competitions, in the form of the Saudi Union of Special Needs. The third body is the Ministry of Health which offers people with SEN physical and mental therapy programmes. The fourth is the Prince Sultan Centre for Artificial Limbs and Compensatory Equipment which provides people with motor or physical disability aids and certain types of artificial limbs. The fifth body are centres managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, encompassing a number of inclusive rehabilitation centres for the visiting disabled. Among the services provided by these centres are vocational training and rehabilitation, which are specifically designed to assist people to overcome acute special needs (Ministry of Education, 2002).

The next section describes Saudi legislation regarding persons with disabilities.

2.7 Saudi legislation regarding persons with disabilities

Three main laws govern persons with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. The first, Legislation of Disability (LD), was passed in 1987 for persons with disabilities. This law ensures that persons with disabilities have rights on a par with other people in society. Public agencies are required by LD to offer rehabilitation services and training programmes that facilitate independent living (Ministry of Health Care, 2010). Passed in 2000, the second law was the Disability code, designed to ensure that persons with disabilities can receive free and appropriate medical, psychological, social, educational, and rehabilitation services through public agencies (Prince Salman Centre for Disability Research, 2004). The third regulation is the Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI). The outcome of an initiative from the Ministry of Education to supplement the policy of special education for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, this is the first regulation for such students in Saudi Arabia. Work on this regulation commenced in 1990, when a representative from the Ministry of Education's Directorate General of Special Education in Saudi Arabia scrutinised various special education policies of the United States in collaboration with experts in special education from the Department of Special Education at King Saud University. Rolled out in 2001, it outlines the rights and regulations of students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia who require special educational services. The principal categories of students with

disabilities include mental retardation, learning disability, deafness, blindness, and multiple disabilities. Apart from defining tasks for professionals who work with these students, it also defines individual education programmes (IEPs) and procedures for appraising and assessing students for special education services. Under the RSEPI, all children with disabilities are entitled to free and suitable education, IEPs, early intervention programmes, and associated and transition services. Finally, RSEPI advocates the quality of special education services in Saudi Arabia (Alquraini, 2011).

These three policies further the equal rights of individuals with disabilities with regard to receiving free and suitable education. Although these laws have been in existence for at least a decade, they are not effectively implemented, causing some students with disabilities to receive inadequate special education services (Alquraini, 2011).

The next section describes special educational needs and mainstreaming in Saudi Arabia.

2.8 Special Educational Needs and mainstreaming in Saudi Arabia

2.8.1 Integration

Reviewing the DGSE policy, it can be said that one of its strategic purposes lies in its provision of dedicated educational programmes for SEN pupils, no matter where they are. Through such programmes, it seeks to assist them to achieve their potential and to be useful

members of their respective communities. In the early 1990s, the Ministry of Education authorised a ruling pledging that no pupil would be kept without suitable care and education, even if they kept repeating the same level of schooling (Ministry of Education, 2002). As described by Al-Mousa (1999), the five steps by which DGSE would accomplish these strategic targets include the following. First, for a SEN pupil to be admitted to the closest mainstream school, it is pivotal that they be recognised as pupils requiring education, as a starting point. Al-Mousa (1999) then highlighted the significance of helping SEN students to reach their potential by providing all pertinent educational materials, such as software, hearing aids, wheelchairs, and teaching equipment. The third element stressed was the pressing need for resource rooms where high quality services should offer medical, psychological, social and individualised assistance within a SEN-friendly setting. The fourth aspect is related to the vital role of holding school gatherings with the family of SEN pupils so that the entire school community and other parents are made aware of various types of disabilities, in addition to preparing SEN pupils to engage with the wider society and to gain relevant life experience. Fifth, Al-Mousa (1999) suggests that the DGSE needs to assume the additional role of mediator of SEN research groups, symposia, meetings, and workshops. It is important to note that this final role is critical for Saudi Arabia as an emerging developing country with a wide range of potential. As such, it needs to put more

effort into encouraging and supporting issues related to SEN and disabilities (Al-Mousa, 1999).

In 1994, the DGSE developed further to equal the fast-paced rise of mainstream programmes offered within regular education environments. This was shown in the increase from only two kinds of educational contexts to five, and to ten administrations instead of five, which points to the diversified role of the DGSE in pursuit of inclusion of virtually all SEN and disabled pupils. According to Al-Mousa (1999), the DGSE now has ten dedicated departments under its wing, namely: Blindness, Deafness, Learning Disability, Learning Difficulties, Autism and Multiple Disability, Gifted and Talented, Development and Educational Studies, the Financial and Administrative Department, Residential Administration, and Braille Press and Audio Library.

Over the last few decades, the way in which SEN students have been taught in Saudi Arabia, including the establishment of special needs schools, has remained unchanged. Nevertheless, there has been a noteworthy development in terms of the school environment and alternative support units, such as resource rooms and speech therapy units, which denote a change with respect to improving access, but no major shifts can be noted in terms of reconstructing the conceptualisation of what 'full' and 'inclusive' education really entails. Figure 1 below depicts the levels of SEN integration in Saudi Arabia, not all of which have been fulfilled.

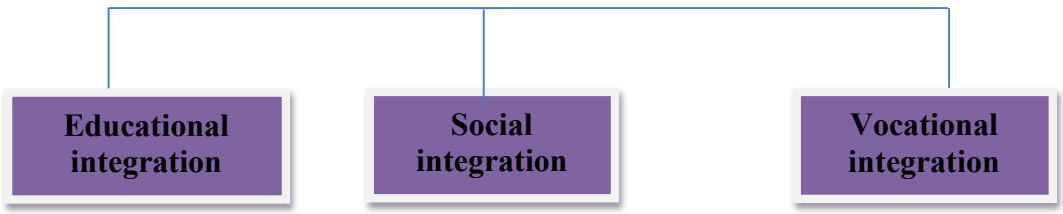


Figure 1: Description of levels of SEN integration in the Saudi context.

2.8.2 Saudi SEN children in general

According to Al-Mousa (2005), more than 90% of males and about 65% of females are amongst Saudi students with SEN who are integrated, although not inclusively, into different programmes within the context of mainstreaming schools; more specifically, in the form of independent classrooms. To a large extent, Saudi Arabia has been playing a significant role in the Arab region in terms of supporting the need to integrate students with SEN into mainstream educational institutions. As early as 1962, the Saudi Ministry of Education adopted a policy to create the Department of Special Education as a Directorate General (DGSE) to cater for the needs of the deaf, the blind, and those with cognitive delay (55 to 75 IQ on the Wechsler scales). As stated by Al-Zahrani (2005), this policy approved the launch of residential institutions (special schools). Additionally, by 1997, there seemed to be a key moment in the ways in which special educational needs students had come to be perceived and in perceptions of how they should receive their education. One year previously, in 1996, only 67 teachers were responsible for teaching

9,424 students, an average of some 140 students each (Al-Mousa, 2005); whereas three years later, Saudi Arabia boasted 13,914 children distributed over 226 programmes. The settings of these programmes varied from special schools with residential services to mainstream schools with the necessary supporting units, including clinical psychology and speech therapy.

By 2001, the number of programmes had risen sharply to 901, and a wide range of schools had become active players in the mainstream schooling (Al-Mousa, 2005). Several reasons may be identified behind this rapid surge. For instance, the media had a major role to play in this new shift and in raising public awareness of disability access rights to mainstream education. Furthermore, there was a large number of keen students who, upon graduating from Saudi, American, and British universities, have become strong believers in inclusion policies. In addition, there were increasing calls from families to modify or expand the role of special units to move from merely serving regular SEN students to a fresh outlook of encouraging and teaching pupils with two or more disabilities, emotional and behavioural issues, autism, and Asperger syndrome, in addition to combined motor and physical disabilities. Similarly, the development of mainstream programmes soared significantly within a period of ten years (1996-2006) from 66 to an impressive 2,577 programmes.

In addition to residential institutes and day schools, there was also an improvement in terms of the quality of content in mainstream programmes, which can be described in terms of three aspects. The first feature refers to the shift identified when providing new educational services, including resource rooms, clinical psychology and speech therapy, specialists and itinerant educators. Second, these recently adopted educational services were meant to encompass more SEN students who were not covered before 1997, including those dwelling in mountainous and coastal areas, as well as in the city or countryside. The third aspect is related to the scope of SEN pupils in receipt of educational services, which had been extended to take account of some additional types not served before, including those with autism; those with motor, physical and/or multiple disabilities; those who are hard of hearing and/or partially sighted; and developmentally or emotionally perturbed children.

It can be concluded that LEAs in Saudi Arabia are seeking to extend their mainstreaming policies to include all SEN students in each region of its thirteen local authorities. The DGSE has made a strong pledge to uphold the trend towards more inclusive education, which highlights the leading position maintained by Saudi Arabia compared to other countries in the Arab region (Al-Mousa, 2007). In addition, it seems that a major shift has been occurring away from the conventional style of teaching children with learning disabilities in

special schools towards their slow but eventual integration into the mainstream school system using a number of support units.

The history of the twentieth century for disabled people has been one of exclusion. The twenty-first century will see the struggle of disabled people for inclusion go from strength to strength. In such a struggle, special segregated education has no role to play (Oliver, 1996, p. 94).

Since 1997, there has been a considerable shift not only in the quality of services and educational policies provided but also in the practices, including the addition of further supporting units, wide-ranging integrated educational settings, and educational supervision policies. One could ascribe this shift to the pressing need for developing and enhancing teaching methods so that students with SEN can achieve a high quality educational level. Another likely reason behind this shift is the constant pressure applied by teachers in pursuit of improved quality of in-service training and professional development courses for improved and polished teaching skills. Further, it is also possible to attribute the shift to the emergence of a new generation of experts, including newly graduated doctors and professionals with SEN and inclusive education qualifications. Another reason behind the Saudi shift to inclusive education is the fact that families and students from rural areas and small villages do now support this expansion as they would no longer have to emigrate from their hometown. Instead,

the new, itinerant special education educator would now travel to teach in their native setting (Al-Mousa, 2005).

The next section describes the educational settings for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia.

2.9 Educational settings for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia

Different educational settings are provided for students with varying levels of disability (Al-Mousa, 2008). For instance, students with mild and moderate disabilities receive education in a different setting from those with severe disabilities. These groups are discussed in turn.

Students with mild and moderate disabilities. Such students receive education in general classrooms with special support from resource rooms. In addition, these students participate fully in the general education curriculum with modifications and accommodations, where appropriate. Such students attend elementary schools from ages 6 to 13 or 14 years. They then attend middle school until age 18.

Students with severe disabilities. Such students are frequently educated in segregated settings that do not permit interaction with typically developing peers. Hence, unlike inclusive settings they do not have the opportunity to improve social, communication, and academic skills, in close interactions with typically developing peers. Accommodation, food, financial aid, and assistance are provided in these institutes to students with moderate, severe, or profound

intellectual disabilities and multiple impairments. As these institutes are residential, the students reside in the school during the week and return home for the weekends.

The next section discusses Islam and special educational needs.

2.10 Islam and Special Educational Needs

Policy, practices and societal attitudes to disability in Islamic countries are formed by religious and cultural beliefs (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012), and this is certainly true in Saudi Arabia. In the Qur'an people with a disability are referred to as 'disadvantaged'. Al-Aoufi et al. (2012) argue that, on a philosophical level, Islam has a positive perspective on disadvantage. They refer to both the Qur'an and the Hadith (the reports of the actions, habits and sayings of the prophet Mohammed) as evidence that humanity and human nature include the existence of disabilities and that there are both principles and practical guidance on how to look after the disadvantaged in Islamic society. Further support for this is given through the actions of historical Muslim figures whose acts demonstrated a concern for those with disabilities (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012).

One key verse referring to the equality between the disadvantaged and the rest of society reads as follows:

There is not upon the blind any guilt or upon the lame any guilt or upon the ill any guilt. And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger – He will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow: but whoever

turns away – He will punish him with a painful punishment (Qur'an 48: 17).

Therefore, it can be seen that the holy texts not only recognise the equality of the disadvantaged and their rights in society, they also place a duty on society to care for this group. The rights bestowed upon the disadvantage include: the right to have their honour protected and not to be abused; the right to a share of societal wealth through charity; and the right not to be marginalised by society. Most pertinent to the current study, however, is the right to education which Aoufi and colleagues (2012) assert based on the following verse from the Holy Book.

He [the Prophet] frowned and turned away because there came to him a blind man, But what would make you perceive, [O Mohammed], that perhaps he might be purified, or be reminded and the remembrance would benefit him? (Qur'an 80: 1–3).

Their analysis suggests that the disadvantaged have a right to inclusive education and not to be underestimated or to underestimate themselves. Similarly, Guvercin (2008) cites examples as evidence that Islam supports inclusion and opposes the exclusion of any group. She points to a clear statement of the principle of equality:

O mankind, We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other [not that you may despise each other]. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is [he who is] the most righteous

of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted [with all things] (Qur'an 49:13)

We can conclude that Islam supports special needs students and that the approach taken is one of inclusion rather than separation. From the holy texts we can also consider the contemporary reality in Saudi Arabia. Special education in Saudi Arabia dates back to 1958, beginning with the use of Braille to help the blind read (Al-Kheraigi, 1989). However, the early decades of special education in Saudi Arabia as with other countries around the world, had not yet applied the principle of inclusion. Instead special educational needs were met outside the mainstream (Alkhateeb et al., 2016). This gradually began to change in the 1990s, as it did outside the Arab region, perhaps motivated by the series of international agreements, conventions and declarations on the subject, including the 1990 UNESCO World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), and the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Despite this reappraisal and greater acceptance of the principle of inclusion, Alkhateeb et al. (2016, p. 61) still conclude that "the majority of public schools in Arab countries remain unwilling and poorly prepared to provide educational services to children with disabilities."

In 2001, the Ministry of Education introduced the Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI). The regulations categorise SEN students and sets out their rights as well as the

responsibilities of educational institutions. However, and importantly, there is a significant gap between the regulatory framework and what actually happens in practice in Saudi Arabia. This failure of implementation has left many of the needs of SEN students unmet (Alquraini, 2011).

In conclusion, there is nothing in Islam to discourage inclusive education for students with SEN and much to advance it. After delivering support for SEN students outside the mainstream, there have been more recent moves towards inclusion. Challenges and barriers to successful inclusion of SEN students do exist in Saudi Arabia and many of these would be familiar in contrasting contexts, such as the need for professional training, the availability of resources and the reliance on positively motivated staff to implement the policy. Specifically, there appears to be a major policy implementation issue in the Kingdom which is affecting SEN students. The next section discusses attitudes towards inclusion in Saudi Arabia.

2.11 Attitudes to inclusion in Saudi Arabia

The environment in an inclusive school setting is primarily influenced by the views and outlooks of all associated stakeholders, such as teachers and parents. The viewpoints of these different stakeholders with regard to inclusion are briefly reviewed in this section.

2.11.1 Teachers and principals

In general, it can be seen that the views of teachers greatly shape their attitudes towards inclusion and hence to their practice of teaching in an inclusive setting (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Teachers who are inclined to undertake responsibility for instructing a broad variety of students and are assured of their capabilities in teaching and administration can effectively participate in inclusive programmes. Studies (e.g., Bradshaw & Mundia, 2006; Forlin et al., 1996) have contended that the favourable outlooks of teachers, in particular, are essential for the effective inclusion of students with SEN.

In Saudi Arabia, a study in Riyadh by Alsaratawy et al. (1988) scrutinised the attitudes of head-teachers and teachers towards the inclusion of children with SEN in regular schools. They found that most participants had unfavourable outlooks towards including students with intellectual disabilities, which could be ascribed to their belief that these students' low IQ would prohibit their comprehension of the complex curriculum in regular schools. However, slightly more favourable outlooks were reported towards the inclusion of students with visual, hearing, or physical disabilities. Moreover, male participants were found to display less favourable attitudes than the female participants. Overall, this study showed that the manner and probably the degree of disability influenced the attitudes of teachers and head-teachers in Saudi Arabia.

In another study, Alsaratwy (1995) scrutinised the outlooks of teachers and trainee teachers and found that general education teachers were likely to have unfavourable views on inclusion, in contrast to special education teachers and trainee teachers whose views were favourable. The study attributed the favourable outlooks of special education teachers to their training about SEN and/or their actual familiarity with students with SEN. The optimistic outlooks of the trainee teachers could be ascribed to their lack of experience with actual teaching. This study also found that the attitudes of the teachers were influenced by the type of disability. For example, the inclusion of students with mild disabilities, such as limited visual or hearing impairments, was supported by teachers whereas they were resistant to the inclusion of students with more severe impairments. The outlooks of teachers also differed based on their experience of the education system, awareness of SEN, and optimism about their profession.

Abduljabbar and Masoud (2000) studied the attitudes and teachers towards inclusive education and found that the variances of opinion towards inclusion were significant. Moreover, these variances were ascribed to position, level of education, manner of disability, and type of inclusion programme. Thus, it could be seen that the manner of disability was again found to influence outlooks with teachers revealing misgivings about the inclusion of children with severe learning difficulties and behavioural disorders. Favourable outlooks to

inclusive programmes were related to specialist training and credentials associated with SEN.

The attitudes of teachers to the inclusion of students on the autistic spectrum were examined in Saudi Arabia (Al-Faiz, 2006). The study reports that teachers had generally had a favourable view. This change in outlook from the past studies seen in this section could indicate that some of the early apprehensions regarding inclusive education could have been dispelled with experience, thereby confirming the findings from studies (e.g., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; El-Ashry, 2009) which recognise the significance of experience in shaping the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion.

A recent doctoral study by Alanazi (2012) of the attitudes of teachers and parents towards inclusive education found that the perceptions and operation of inclusive education in Saudi Arabia was chiefly informed by Islamic principles, specifically those with regard to fairness and diversity. Another influence was the country's cultural traditions. In general, the outlooks towards inclusion were favourable except in the case of children with cognitive impairments. Another doctoral study by Alothman (2014), which focused on the inclusion of deaf students, found that principles of inclusive schools lacked awareness and understanding of inclusive education. Consequently, this shaped their outlook and negatively affected their outlook towards including deaf students in their schools. Although this study found that most teachers of deaf children had adequate knowledge

and the requisite favourable perspectives concerning their inclusive education, and had attempted to modify classroom materials and activities to assist deaf students, they were constrained by the lack of support from principals.

Overall, it could be seen that various factors affected the attitudes of teachers and principals in schools in Saudi Arabia. These included: lack of training with regard to SEN, insufficient experience, manner and degree of disability, and the overall sociocultural context of Saudi Arabia.

2.11.2 Parents

Chmiliar (2009) highlighted the significance of the experiences and perceptions of parents with regard to inclusion. Parents may have differing perspectives of inclusion. For example, some may favour and promote inclusive placement for their children while others may be in favour of segregated settings for their children with special needs (Elkins et al., 2003; Grove & Fisher, 1999). Concerns expressed by parents included their child's access to support services or the extent to which a child's IEP really attended to the child's needs in an inclusive setting (Daniel & King, 1997). Moreover, parents may find it difficult to locate schools for their child which have staff who possess adequate awareness regarding inclusive educational objectives to be able to offer suitable services (Grove & Fisher, 1999).

Other studies (e.g., Elkins et al., 2003; Palmer et al., 1998) have reported that parents may demonstrate favourable attitudes towards

inclusion due to the smaller classes that exist with teaching assistants, advice and services of specialists, and sufficient consultation time (Elkins et al., 2003). In particular, the favourable attitudes of teachers and the head-teacher were reported as significant factors.

In the Saudi context, Alanazi (2012) reported that parents' attitudes are influenced by: societal values and structures; the existence of an inclusive setting for a child with SEN that met the specific needs of the child; and awareness about disability and SEN. Also in the Saudi context, Alothman (2014) reported that parents seemed to lack awareness about inclusion and its potential for their children. Moreover, they were excluded from influencing educational policy and in general do not play any role in inclusive schools to support their children. Thus, it could be seen that the parents of students with SEN in Saudi Arabia had mixed attitudes about inclusive education and these attitudes were primarily driven by a lack of awareness of inclusion and SEN and the influence of the sociocultural environment. It is important to note that all Saudi studies to date of attitudes towards inclusion have omitted the attitudes of school counsellors with regard to inclusion. The next section describes the position of guidance and counselling in educational provision in Saudi Arabia.

2.12 Position of guidance and counselling in educational provision

2.12.1 Counselling and guidance services in the education setting

Provided and supervised by the Administration of Education and Social Activities (Ministry of Education, 1982), school guidance and counselling services started in 1961 when educational social workers were employed in schools. Their roles were defined as organising and implementing various educational and social activities. These roles evolved over time to focus on helping students develop their study skills and resolve or manage their personal and academic issues. Counselling services have been provided in Saudi schools in a non-professional and undeveloped way since the beginning of the provision of education in Saudi schools (1925). However, formal school counselling programmes in the Saudi education system started only in 1981. The Ministry of Education developed and transformed the Administration of Education and Social Activities into the General Administration of Guidance and Counselling. The inception of the modern administration can therefore be marked from the official launch of professional counselling services for students in schools (Ministry of Education, 1982). According to the Ministry of Education (2001), the responsibilities of this administration are as follows:

- To plan and supervise the implementation of counselling programmes in schools as well as following up these services within schools.
- To evaluate the performance of school counsellors.
- To prepare an annual plan for counselling programmes in schools and arrange for meetings with counsellors.
- To supervise and provide counsellors with various training programmes, workshops and seminars, and provide incentives for counsellors to increase their effort.
- To enhance the relationship between home and school through meeting parents regularly and discussing any issues within the school community, with participation from teachers and principals.
- To prepare reports on counselling programmes in all schools and examine counsellors' advice for improving counselling status in schools (Ministry of Education, 2001).

These suggest that the Ministry of Education has made sufficient provision in the responsibilities of the General Administration of Guidance and Counselling for the implementation and overseeing of counselling services in schools in Saudi Arabia. However, the effectiveness of this provision requires further consideration.

2.12.2 The objectives of guidance and counselling in Saudi Arabia

The Ministry of Education (2001) defined the term counselling as an interactive process that arises from the professional relationship between the counsellor and the student (client) through which counsellors can help students to understand themselves and resolve or manage their problems in order to accomplish an appropriate degree of social, psychological, personal, vocational and educational adjustment. The objectives of counselling in the Saudi education system are enumerated below, according to the Ministry of Education (2001).

- To guide students mentally, morally, socially, educationally and vocationally in a manner compatible with Islamic principles in order to become a viable member of the community and live a stable and satisfied life.
- To discuss the problems faced by students, whether personal, social or educational, and to work to provide appropriate solutions to these issues, to enable them to better progress in their studies and their mental health.
- To strengthen and promote a complementary and cooperative relationship between home and school to create an encouraging atmosphere for students to continue their studies.

- To attempt to discover the talents and abilities of students in order to promote and invest in these abilities for their own personal interest and for society in general; to identify underachievers' abilities in order to help them to achieve.
- To help students to adjust to the school atmosphere and engage positively in the school in order to benefit from the various educational programmes that guide them to evolve their study habits.
- To help students to choose the type of study and career that is commensurate with their talents, abilities, interests and the needs of the community as well as raising their awareness of the educational and vocational opportunities that are available to them; this will enable students to determine their own future while taking into consideration their parents' views in making such decisions.
- To contribute to research and studies on educational issues in schools such as frequent absence, dropout rates, poor academic achievement, and poor study habits.
- To improve awareness among the school community (students, teachers and principals) and society about the objectives and functions of guidance and counselling and its role in education.

It can be noted that these goals are general objectives derived from the general goals of education in the Saudi education system. Also, there are some overlaps between some of the objectives as well as

between teachers' and principals' roles. Therefore, these goals are intended to be directed specifically to counsellors, although these objectives might be achievable without clarifying counsellors' capabilities in achieving them. Another pertinent matter is that these goals do not take into account the new trend of educating students with special needs within the integrated context of general education schools. Consequently, additional objectives should be established specifically to support this integration and the education of students with special needs in general.

In addition, many aspects of counsellors' roles (see Appendix 3) tend to be neglected because counsellors are unaware of them. This statement is made after I visited a number of schools that include students with SEN in Jeddah city in September 2012 and conducted a few informal interviews with some of the counsellors. A major reason for counsellors' not implementing SEN-related roles in the visited school was found to reside in the head-teacher's requirement that the counsellors perform many different tasks within the school. This suggests that head-teachers too do not fully understand the function of school counsellors.

Despite the availability of policies and specific objectives for counselling in Saudi schools provided by the Ministry of Education, some studies that have examined the roles of counsellors in the Saudi context have indicated that there is some ambiguity surrounding these policies. Alghamdi (1999), for example, examined the

perceptions of school staff (principals, teachers, counsellors and students) regarding the role of secondary school counsellors, and found that there were positive attitudes towards the counselling service and also great support from principals and teachers. He also identified counselling in schools as an important matter within the educational process. However, the counselling service in schools seemed to be unable to meet the needs of all students, mainly because the definition of counsellors' roles is not clear to the whole school community.

Similarly, Al-Rebdi (2000; 2004) identified that the counsellors involved themselves in other duties, such as administrative matters, and this meant that the school body as a whole were not clear as to what their role and duties are. School counsellors are concerned about the lack of adequate support and cooperation from teachers and other parties involved in the counselling programme, particularly parents, who do not necessarily understand the function and role of the school counsellor and the importance of the relationship between counsellors and the whole school community (Al-Rebdi 2000; 2004).

Furthermore, Al-trairy and Al-saeigh (1990), in carrying out an evaluation of school counselling programmes in Riyadh city, reported that there are some weaknesses regarding academic and social skills in the students and many counsellors are not well qualified help them. All these shortcomings may be due to a lack of practical

training, which is negatively impacting on the implementation of counselling programmes in schools.

Interestingly, a more recent study, by Alghamdi and Riddick (2011), found widespread support for providing counselling service. There is a growing awareness of the need and importance of counselling programmes to meet the needs of students. However, they found that there are deficiencies in counsellors' functions owing to the lack of clarity about counsellors' roles as well as a lack of professional training provision.

However, it can be noted that the majority of studies conducted in the Saudi context address counselling in school without any reference to students with SEN. These studies investigated areas related to counselling in public schools other than those pertaining to special educational needs. Several significant conclusions can be drawn from these previous studies. First, the role of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia is not yet clear. Second, school staff did not understand the role of the counsellor, and as a result, teachers did not co-operate enough with school counsellors. Moreover, there is a lack of provision of professional training for both counsellors and school staff to deal with and understand the counselling function. Finally, families seem to be unsupportive of counsellors and reluctant to work with them. The next section describes the role of the school counsellor in Saudi Arabia.

2.12.3 The role of the school counsellor in Saudi Arabia

The RSEPI specifies the following responsibilities for school counsellors in Saudi Arabia:

- Preparing annual plans for guidance and counselling programmes for students with SEN in the framework of the general policy for student guidance and counselling.
- Implementing guidance and counselling programmes, along with the appropriate developmental, preventative and therapeutic service; monitoring children's learning and behavioural cases, and providing the most appropriate counselling service.
- Following up students' academic and behavioural achievement and providing counselling services for them.
- Studying individual cases of learners showing negative behavioural signs and appreciating their concerns.
- Working to establish closer ties between the school and parents, and informing parents about the progress of their children (Ministry of Education, 2002).

It could be seen that, apart from supporting children's academic and behavioural progress, the role of the counsellor is to interface between the school and the parents. This would imply that counsellors are required to be able to collaborate and cooperate with both personnel in the school and parents to achieve their objectives.

2.12.4 Perceptions of school counselling in Saudi Arabia

As can be seen from the preceding sections, school counselling is a fairly recent profession in Saudi Arabia. In 1983, Al-Ahmady studied in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the perceptions of principals, vice-principals, teachers and counsellors with regard to the role of counsellors in secondary schools. The findings of study revealed that five functions were perceived to be most significant in the role of school counsellors: to help new students adjust the school atmosphere and expectations; to assist students with social issues; to assist students in selecting and modifying their programmes to meet their personal requirements; to participate in teachers' meetings; and to meet students when in trouble before being sent to the vice-principal. The least significant functions of the counsellors were: 1) performing follow-up studies on students who have left school; 2) performing tests and interpreting and communicating test outcomes to students and parents; 3) conducting standardised testing; and 4) offering information to teachers about behaviour modification, classroom discipline and other helpful suggestions. It could be seen that different personnel in the school had different perceptions of the role of the counsellor and this could influence the effectiveness of the counsellor's functioning in the school.

Also in Riyadh, Al-Trairy and Al-Saeigh (1990) found that the student counsellors performed most of the tasks expected of them, but that there was a deficit of certain academic, social and ethical

programmes or services. Moreover, some counsellors were not adequately qualified and also lacked practical training which resulted in deficits in the implementation of counselling programmes in the school. Studying school counsellors in the Altaif Province of Saudi Arabia, Al-Zahrani (1990) found that most of the educational, preventive, ethical and religious services for students were effectively performed by the counsellors, but their execution of vocational counselling and services was inadequate. Al-Zahrani (1990) attributed this to the counsellors' lack of skills and training, as it was evident that the counsellors could not recognise the real abilities of students. Moreover, he pointed out that the association between the school and the parents was still unsuccessful, chiefly because some parents lacked awareness of the counsellors' role. In the same decade, Bar and Khan (1992) studied the perceptions of students with regard to the ideal and the actual role of counselling and guidance programmes in several Saudi cities. They found that educational services received most attention from student counsellors, followed by preventive services, and then the social and psychological programmes. In other words, vocational services received low priority.

A government study in 1996 by the Department of Guidance and Counselling in the General Educational Administration of the Western Province in Saudi Arabia (1996) attempted to evaluate the actual role of school counsellors in Jeddah. The findings showed that two-thirds

of the counsellors emphasised administrative and clerical tasks, such as writing reports, preparing files, and registering new students, followed by school meetings with parents and teachers. Challenges in the execution of their role included the negative attitudes of teachers, a lack of parental interest in student achievement, and the lack of a relationship between home and school. Administrative tasks and lack of role clarity or awareness were cited as hindering their provision of counselling services in the schools the most.

Al-Ghamdi (1999) studied the practice and importance of the role of secondary school counsellors using the perspectives of counsellors, teachers, principals, and students from five cities in Saudi Arabia: Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Dhahran, and Khubar. This study revealed that the perceptions of counsellors, principals, teachers, and students significantly differed with regard to the significance and performance of the counselling role. The number of the counsellor's functions contributed to one of the most significant differences. Furthermore, while counsellors believed that counselling activities should take priority, they perceived that their time was being filled up by educational activities. In contrast, principals and teachers believed that educational activities should take priority over counselling activities. Counselling and educational functions were both given importance by students. Al-Ghamdi (1999) concluded that counselling provision in schools in Saudi Arabia was unsatisfactory and failed to meet the needs of students although great support has been lent to

guidance and counselling services in schools. A later study by Al-Danish (2003) supported these findings when it found that counsellors lacked training. Additionally, some of the counsellors lacked qualification in the field of counselling and all had experienced difficulties due to an increase in the number of students requiring counselling.

A study by Al-Rebdi (2004) performed in the Al-Qasim province addressed counselling and guidance in intermediate schools for boys, and found that providing educational counselling for students was the most important function of the student counsellor. However, the study also found counsellors were not always able to provide adequate individual counselling as the number of students exceeded the capacity of the counsellors. Moreover, the counsellors did not receive cooperation from teachers and parents, chiefly because they did not understand the counsellors' role.

Alghamdi (2010) also reported that role conflict and ambiguity surrounded the school counsellor's role in the KSA, and found that counsellors were constrained in their provision of services due to lack of suitable training, lack of definite professional standards, absence of proper qualifications, disproportionate counsellor-student ratios, and lack of awareness among stakeholders, especially parents.

The findings from the various studies about school counselling in Saudi Arabia indicate that it continues to be a nascent field in the country. It is also evident that studies over the past few decades

reported similar issues, thereby revealing a significant gap between policy and actual implementation.

The next section briefly describes the current issues affecting adolescent male students in Saudi Arabia.

2.13 Current issues affecting adolescent male students in KSA

As the current study is set in secondary schools for boys in Saudi Arabia, it is necessary to address the current issues affecting adolescent male students as this will indicate the situations that the school counsellors are likely to encounter.

Koenig et al. (2013) suggest that Saudi youth who live in closed-minded communities commonly display symptoms of mental distress. Moreover, studies of adolescents in secondary schools reveal that significant symptoms of depression exist in 14%-38% of the population, anxiety was detected in 14%-49%, and 36% showed high psychological stress (Al-Gelban, 2009; Al-Johani & Al-Qahtani, 2016; Alotaibi, 2015). Other studies have also found that adolescents struggle with social anxiety disorder (SAD) (e.g., Ghazwani et al., 2016).

Overall, it could be seen that many adolescent boys in Saudi Arabia, like their counterparts across the world, demonstrated mental distress. Accordingly, there was a need for a counsellor in schools to support their needs.

2.14 Summary

In order to familiarise the reader with the education system is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this chapter provided a brief overview of the culture and religious background of Saudi Arabia before reviewing education policy by providing historical and background information about the education system and its levels. In addition, it reviewed Special Education in Saudi education and the deep influence of Islam on the education system in the country. Furthermore, the attitudes to inclusion in Saudi Arabia were described. The latter part of this chapter explained the development of school counselling in the Saudi education system and identified the objectives of school counselling. Moreover, the perceptions of various stakeholders with regard to school counselling in Saudi Arabia were briefly described. The current issues affecting adolescent boys in Saudi Arabia were also introduced. The following chapter reviews the relevant literature relating to this study.

Chapter Three: Literature review – Part 1 – Students with SEN

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to establish the present state of understanding of a series of related areas pertinent to the current study. Doing so will assist me by providing clarity in connection with existing empirical evidence and the main academic discourses concerning school-based counselling and students with special educational needs (SEN). The theories, concepts and contrasting arguments can then be considered in the context of Saudi Arabia.

My literature review is divided into two parts. Part One, in this first part, provides insights into disability and the different models of disability. Additionally, the concepts of special educational needs (SEN) and inclusive education are introduced. The remaining two points focus on significant entities for providing effective inclusive support practices and the reasons why SEN students need school-based counselling. Part Two, in the next chapter, reviews the objectives of counselling and school-based counselling. Additionally, the evolution of school-based counselling and the provision of school counselling in other countries are described. The search strategy used by the study – for both Part One and Part Two of the literature review – will first be described.

3.2 Search strategy

Access to journal articles was obtained using online databases such as ERIC and PsycINFO. Search engines such as Google and Google Scholar were also employed to search for general and open-source resources on the Internet. Research publications of public organisations, such as the United Nations (UNESCO, UNICEF, etc.), the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP), the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA), were also utilised. Other significant sources of information were the websites and publications of various governments (e.g., the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia, the Departments for Education (Dfe) and for Education and Skills (Dfes) of the United Kingdom, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), the House of Commons, etc.).

The record titles and abstracts (where available) were screened to make sure that the search results were relevant for the context of the current study. Moreover, hand searches were performed to identify studies that had been cited by other authors in the relevant literature.

The following search terms/phrases were used in the searches for Part One: disability; models of disability; special educational needs; students with disabilities; needs of students with SEN; inclusion; inclusive education; inclusive education; special education; barriers to inclusion; attitudes to inclusion; need for school-based counselling for students

with SEN; etc. The following search terms/phrases were used in the searches for Part Two: disability; counselling; counsellors; school-based counselling; school counsellors; counsellor role; supervisor; supervision; referral; best practices in counselling; barriers to counselling; role identity of counsellors; competencies of counsellors; qualification of counsellors; need for school-based counselling; Islamic counselling; etc. These search phrases were first used separately and then with the addition of the term "Saudi Arabia" to recognise literature associated with the study setting.

Articles were obtained from the electronic databases that offered full-text and some were purchased using the researcher's student grant.

3.3 Understanding disability

The World Health Organisation (WHO) in its 'Summary of the World Disability Report' (WHO, 2011) avers that:

> *Disability is part of the human condition – almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life, and those who survive to old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning. Disability is complex, and the interventions to overcome the disadvantages associated with disability are multiple and systemic – varying with the context* (p. 7).

Several definitions of disability exist, each convincing in its own way and with its own intent. Accordingly, some definitions are focused and

precise while others are imprecise and ambiguous. The next section offers some common definitions of disability.

3.3.1 Definitions of disability

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) defines disability as:

> *An umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations* […] *Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers* (WHO**,** 2017).

It can be seen from this sweeping description that there is considerable uncertainty and complexity with regard to the scope of the term disability. It suggests that a wide variety of persons may be categorised as suffering from a disability. This could have contributed to more persons with disabilities being noticeable in the present day (DePauw & Gavron, 2005).

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990, p. 330) states that with respect to an individual disability means "a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities". The major life activities include not only being able to see, hear, speak, walk, dress and feed oneself but also having the capacity to work, learn, and perform other daily physical or mental activities (Dattilo, 1994). A similar definition appears in Britain's Disability Discrimination Act (Department of Constitutional Affairs, 1995, p. 1) which states that "a person has a disability for the purpose of this Act if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". The Equality Act (2010) that replaced the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) provides the following legal definition of a disability: "a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities" (Ofsted, 2010). This definition aims to prevent discrimination against disabled people and includes a wide range of impairments including autism and communication difficulties. In Saudi Arabia, disability has been defined as having a physical, psychological and/or developmental condition that affects an individual's appearance or behaviour, such as blindness, deafness, and cognitive or intellectual impairment (Al-Ahmadi, 2009). In contrast, the country's Labour and Workman Law defines a person with

disability as "any person whose capacity to achieve and continue a suitable job has diminished as a result of a physical or mental infirmity" (Al-Jadid, 2013, p. 453). Although there are some similarities between definitions researchers generally agree that the definition of disability is difficult as it "encompasses numerous conditions of mind and body and the boundary between ability and disability seems to be less clear" (Degener, 2004, p. 4).

In his doctoral dissertation, Grönvik (2007) draws attention to five different types of definitions of disability (Table 3.1) and posits that different definitions were formulated to be appropriate in varying contexts. Also, a new definition may be formulated in response to criticism of another.

Table 1 Different definitions of disability (Source: Grönvik, 2007)

Category of Definition	**Norms**	**Objective (examples)**	**Representatives (examples)**
Functional Definition (e.g. Abberley, 1991)	A person's limited capacity to function is disability.	"Head-counting" in surveys and censuses, evaluate need fo therapy, instruction, equipment, etc.	Statistical bureaus, medical professions.

Category of Definition	**Norms**	**Objective (examples)**	**Representatives (examples)**
Relative definition (e.g., Söder, 1987)	Disability emerges in the interaction between a person and his/her environment.	Perspective moves from solely depicting individuals as disabled to the relationship between individuals and surroundings.	Disability movement, policy-makers.
Social model of Disability (e.g., Oliver, 1990)	Disability is the persecution of and a barrier against people with impairments.	Turn the gaze from individuals to barriers and oppressive processes within society.	Disability movement
Administrative definition (e.g., Stone, 1985)	Persons classifie by the welfare state as needing or being entitled to particular	Classes of persons entitled to specific benefits and	Welfare authorities

Category of Definition	Norms	Objective (examples)	Representatives (examples)
	systems of support.	supports to be delimited.	
Subjective definition (Grönvik, 2007	People seeing themselves as disabled, regardless of the source of such perceptions.	Construction of identity, census and survey questions that help to categorise.	Disability movement

3.3.2 Models of disability

The various definitions of disability associate the restricted participation of a disabled individual in typical activities with the impairment instead of with barriers in the environment. Moreover, several impairments existence, ranging in severity and in associated needs (Nwanze, 2106). In addition to the definitions, various models of disability exist which can be used to gain awareness of disability, including: the moral model, individual medical model, rehabilitation model, functional model, environmental model, socio-political model, and transactional model. It must be noted that although several models exist, all the facets of the other models can be incorporated into the medical and social models in some manner or the other (Kaplan, 2000; Nwanze, 2106).

The moral disability model perceives disability to be the outcome of immorality, while the individual medical model considers disability to be a "defect or sickness which must be cured through medical intervention" (Kaplan, 2000, p. 352). Conversely, the social model views disability as "a 'social oppression' similar to that encountered by women, ethnic minorities [and so on]" (Barnes, 2011, p. 60). The rehabilitation model is derived from the medical model and views disability as a shortcoming that must be corrected with professional intervention (e.g., use of rehabilitation professionals) (Kaplan, 2000). The functional and environmental models are interactional models and can be described together as both taking an individual's functions (e.g., their aptitudes, faculties and accomplishments) and their settings into consideration (Smart & Smart, 2006). These two models acknowledge the biological aspects of disability as specified by the medical model, but also draw attention to the environment's restrictive nature when not modified for a person with a disability.

For the socio-political model, Smart and Smart (2006) observe that it extends the environmental space to suggest that disability is the outcome of society's interpretation of disability; for example, the inadequacy, stigma and prejudice associated with individuals with disability (Smart & Smart, 2006). The transactional model extends the social model by suggesting that disability is the outcome, not only of

disabling environments, but also of disabling social associations (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000). It explores the manner in which the social relationships of an individual with a disability can be a disabling influence on the individual.

In summary, the two predominant models of disability are the medical and social models, which typically influence the manner in which society perceives and describes disability. The different models draw attention to different facets of disability which serve to emphasise the complexity of disability. More detail is provided below about the two chief models of disability.

3.3.2.1 Medical model of disability

According to this model, the responsibility for participation in society lies with the person with a disability who is obliged to conform and acclimatise himself/herself to society, or remain isolated, while society remains as it is (Barnes et al., 1999). The individual's needs are not considered and the emphasis is on the impairment itself which is considered to be a defect requiring standardisation. This view consigns the person relying on others, with only medical professionals having the power to amend this state of affairs. The result is a person with a dependent, isolated and restricted existence (Barnes et. al., 1999).

3.3.2.2 Social model of disability

Here disability is viewed as a problem created by society. This model suggests that person with disabilities can successfully exist in society if the environmental barriers encountered by them are attended to and modified (Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013; Barnes et. al., 1999; Owens, 2015). This model holds that, if society is reorganised, all participants will have the opportunity to adapt to each other resulting in a society where all members understand each other and negative attitudes towards disability are eliminated (Barnes et. al., 1999). As defined by the European Day of Disabled Persons (1994):

> *A Disabled Person is an individual in their own right, placed in a disabling situation, brought about by environmental, economic and social barriers that the person, because of their impairment(s), cannot overcome in the same way as other citizens. These barriers are all too often reinforced by the marginalising attitudes of society. It is up to society to eliminate, reduce or compensate for these barriers in order to allow each individual to enjoy full citizenship, respecting the rights and duties of each individual* (p. 10).

The primary emphasis of the social model of disability is to encourage and compel society to change. The goal of the social model is to create

an independent and inclusive life for a person with a disability and to encourage their active participation in society (Barnes et. al., 1999).
A more recent outlook on disability views persons with disability as being in a culture of their own. This cultural model of disability is briefly described next.

3.4 The concept of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Students with special educational needs (SEN) are generally described as ‘‘students with various (combinations of) impairments and/or difficulties in participating in education’’ (Pijl et al., 2008, p. 389). In the United Kingdom, the term special educational needs (SEN) is frequently used to refer to differences in pupils that need to be catered for or for whom adaptations need to be made to enable them to participate in a mainstream school programme. Such adaptations might entail modifications to the curriculum, the educational programme, the provision of assistive technology, and other services provided by specialists. In the United States, this comprehensive programme is referred to as ‘Special Education’ or SPED. It can be inferred that there is a considerable overlap between disabled children and those with SEN as research suggests that around three-quarters of children with disabilities also have SEN (DfE, 2011).
Effective from 1 January 2002, the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) provides the most commonly used definition of Special

Education Needs (SEN) in the UK. According to this Code, children have a learning difficulty if they:

a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or
b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority; or
c) are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them (Ofsted, 2010, p. 15).

Thus, students have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty that calls for special educational provision. This definition provides the basis for understanding SEN and fostering awareness of the school community and its practices. The provision of special education can positively help a student who suffers from any developmental impairment, whether cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, communication- or interaction-based, and sensorial and/or physical. Intervention for students with SEN, in the UK, is offered at three levels:

- **School Action** – where some additional or divergent provision is administered to help the child learn;

- **School Action Plus** – where specialist and external services are called upon;
- **Statement** – where the child requires support beyond that which the school can provide, and the local authority arranges appropriate provision (DfE, 2011).

The rollout of a reformed provision commenced in 2014 in England. As a result, support for children and youth with SEN is currently offered at two wide levels.

- **SEN support.** This provision refers to the support given to children or youths in pre-school, school or college and replaces the earlier 'School Action' and 'School Action Plus' systems, in schools. The type of support provided for children of compulsory school age might consist of supplementary assistance from a teacher, aid in interacting with other children, or assistance with difficulties in physical or personal care.
- **Education, Health and Care Plans.** This provision indicates additional support than is available through SEN support for children and young people up to age 25. The objective of these plans is to offer extensive assistance for children and young people by means of a combined approach that encompasses education, health care, and social care needs (Long, 2016, p. 10-11).

In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education recognises two groups that can be integrated into mainstream Saudi schools. The first group is already integrated into mainstream schools and is receiving mainstream educational programmes. This group includes students who are gifted and talented, learning disabled, physically disabled, behaviourally and emotionally disturbed, visually impaired, or those with communication disorders. The second group has not traditionally been included in mainstream schools and includes children who are blind, deaf, mentally disabled, multi-disabled, or autistic, who have traditionally been educated in special education institutions. However, there is now a drive to integrate these students by educating them in a more inclusive setting (Al-Mousa, 2010), depending upon the level of need and the selection of an appropriate intervention programme, with those with more severe disabilities being more likely to be segregated from mainstream schooling.

3.5 The concept of inclusive education

The UNESCO (2003) describes inclusive education as an approach which "seeks to address the learning needs of all children, youth and adults, with a specific focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion" (p. 4). Rafferty et al. (2001), on the other hand, describe inclusion as referring to "the process of educating children with disabilities in the regular education classrooms of their neighbourhood

schools – the schools they would attend if they did not have a disability – and providing them with the necessary services and support" (p. 266). Although the origins of inclusive education can be traced back to the human right to education, following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1949, formal recognition came when the principle of inclusive education was adopted at the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) and subsequently reaffirmed at the Dakar World Education Forum (2000) (UNESCO, 2003).

In general, inclusive education signifies that

> *… schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups* (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, para 3) (UNESCO, 1994, pg. 6).

Governments were also called upon by the Salamanca Statement to "adopt as a matter of law or policy, the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise" (UNESCO, 1994, p. ix).

Another significant aspect that influenced the notion of inclusive education is the right of children not to be discriminated against, as stated in Article 2 of the United Nation's Convention on the Right of the Child (UN, 1989). Consequently, it is evident that all children enjoy the right to receive education that does not differentiate on grounds of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnicity, disability, or other status (UNESCO, 2003). Booth (1996) observed that inclusion in education can be considered to be a process of dealing with and acting in response to the diverse requirements of all students by enhancing participation in knowledge, culture and society, and decreasing rejection from and within education.

Thus, it can be seen that inclusive education or "inclusion" in education has become an important topic from the perspective of students with special educational needs. For instance, in the UK, over the last past three decades, inclusion has been implemented to reduce the number of special schools (Warnock Report, 1978). The overall target is to offer a suitable and excellent learning atmosphere and educational measures within the public schools for children with SEN (Smith, 2010).

The United States and the United Kingdom have been leaders in the integration of students with SEN into schools. In the US, special education was supported by the Education for all Handicapped Children

Act as early as 1975. This act was later amended and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (Hsu, 2007).

In the UK, these pieces of legislation were also taken into account when in 1978 the Warnock Report aimed to provide educational opportunities for all types of children (Warnock Report, 1978). Additionally, the UK is one of the signatories of the 1994 Salamanca Statement. However, as described in Chapter Two, inclusive education has not made significant progress in the Arab world as the majority of public schools in these countries remain disinclined and ill-equipped to offer educational services to students with disabilities (Alkhateeb et al., 2016).

The following sub-sections will introduce some of the common terms associated with inclusive education.

3.5.1 Inclusion, integration and mainstreaming

Any discussion of inclusive education must necessarily distinguish between the terms inclusion, integration and mainstreaming, as these are sometimes incorrectly supposed to be synonymous. These terms were introduced in the Warnock Report (1978) and have subsequently influenced the ways in which schools approach SEN and disabled children.

As described in the previous section, inclusion encourages a philosophy of acceptance and belonging of all students. As can be seen from Idol's (2006) definition of **inclusion**:

> *… in the inclusive school, all students are educated in general education programs. Inclusion is when a student with special learning and/or behavioural needs is educated full time in the general education program. Essentially, inclusion means that the student with special education needs is attending the general school program, enrolled in age-appropriate classes 100% of the school day* (p. 77).

In an inclusive environment, classes for general education are designed to fulfil all students' needs by employing educational approaches and cooperation between teachers to offer expressly devised teaching and auxiliary aids and amenities (Moore et al., 1998). On the other hand, **integration** presumes that segregation (i.e., separate classrooms) is present, and, while students spend some time with their peers without SEN, they may not be regarded to be part of the class in the true sense or occupied with the same pursuits (Moore et al., 1998). Thus, the term integration implies a student's assignment into an educational programme. **Mainstreaming** denotes the integration in whole or part of disabled students into regular education classrooms depending on the student's features, competencies, and the student's capacity to cope academically in the classroom (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Murphy, 1996; Roberts & Mather, 1995). Typically, students with SEN were brought into the general education setting in mainstreaming only when customised

instruction was not required and the student could deal with the activities in the general classroom (Moore et al., 1998).

To provide an effective system of inclusion, the community should believe in the competence of the education system to achieve SEN students' needs. Also, it is important for parents to have confidence in the ability of schools to effectively educate their SEN children. Because of the current principles and policies of inclusive education, children with SEN in, the US and UK, are more likely to be educated with their peers in regular classrooms.

Further clarity about inclusion in education is provided by the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2005) which considers that inclusion is about much more than the type of school that children attend: it is about the quality of their experience; how they are helped to learn, achieve, and participate fully in the life of the school. Crockett and Kauffman (1999) regard inclusion as a term that often describes the placement of students with SEN, regardless of their level of disability, into an age appropriate general classroom in the school. In contrast Villa and Thousand (2003) describe inclusion as the first choice for all learners to be educated in general education, which encourages all teachers and other school staff to offer the most support and significant service for all students in the classroom. It could be inferred that the concept of inclusion, although more than three decades old, is still a

matter that requires special consideration from governments and administrative authorities.

3.5.2 Types of inclusion

Two types of inclusion are generally understood to exist: full and partial. Full inclusion implies that all students with SEN are completely integrated into regular education classrooms, suitable for their ages, whatever the features or extent of their needs (D'Alonzo, 1997; Daniel & King, 1997; Roberts & Mather, 1995). Full inclusion may also denote a carefully judged permanent placement for the whole school day of individual students with disabilities in a regular education class (MacMillan et al., 1996). However, support services are a common feature within the regular education environment and are offered almost always (Murphy, 1996; Roberts & Mather, 1995). Thus, it can be inferred that a student with a disability in full inclusion can be placed in a general education classroom, where children with and without SEN are under the responsibility of a general education teacher (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003). On the other hand, in a partial inclusion classroom, "the student with a disability is placed into a general education classroom for either part of the day, or for the entire day and both the general and special education teachers are responsible for the student's learning" (Refice, 2006, p. 26).

3.6 Significant entities for providing effective inclusive support practices

Inclusive schools are designed primarily for promoting the personal development of children with SEN, which includes developing their social skills and meeting their emotional and academic needs. Previous studies show that inclusion is an effective system for students with SEN to enhance their academic achievement. Jenkinson (1997) found that those students are more likely to improve their academic skills in inclusive schools than those at special schools. They also can improve their academic performance through engaging in language programmes, group work and their participation in the classroom. Although this study provides a positive impression of the ability of students with SEN to develop their academic skills, the results cannot be generalised to all students with SEN because of the individual differences between them and the extent of their disability. Improving their academic skills is not sufficient for children with SEN within inclusive schools; they also need to be socially accepted – whether by their peers, teachers and other school staff (Farrell, 2004).

To provide effective inclusive support practices, several significant entities have been identified in the literature to aid in managing obstacles to the engagement of all children in education (Booth & Ainscow, 1998). These include school principals, teachers, and

counsellors – discussed below, although it should be noted that governments, local authorities, schools, communities are also significant entities.

First, inclusive values should be apparent throughout the whole school (Gravios, 2013). Successful inclusive practice necessitates visionary leadership at all levels. This leadership should have inclusive values and foster the optimal conditions for education. Riehl (2000) found that, because school leaders have considerable power within the school, they need to show positive attitudes about diversity, develop inclusive practices throughout in the school, and improve the connections between the school and the wider society. More importantly, school principals play a significant role in supporting school staff who do not feel equipped to meet the needs of students with SEN. They can enable such teachers to attend training courses related to intervention strategies and collaboration skills (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2004).

Aside from school principals, teachers also contribute to the effectiveness of inclusive support practices through holding favourable outlooks towards all students and through seeking to cooperate with colleagues. Moreover, they should perceive 'being different' to be a strength and as a motivation for their own learning. Additionally, teachers should assume responsibility for all students and demonstrate

awareness of their basic needs, such as feeling safe, belonging, enjoying their time in school and achieving meaningful outcomes. Moreover, teachers should respect and demonstrate commitment to sustaining a wide variety of results (e.g., social skills, emotional health and well-being, etc.) and continue to have high expectations for all students (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011). However, the contribution of teachers in fostering inclusion might be affected by teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, as students with SEN cannot receive effective support from teachers who do not support inclusion itself.

A third significant entity for ensuring the provision of effective inclusion support practices is school counsellors. Teachers may not meet all the personal, social and academic needs of students with SEN, in which case counsellors can play a positive role in enhancing the educational environment in inclusive schools. Therefore, teachers and school counsellors should collaborate if they are to create an optimal educational environment (Marlow et al., 2000). Colbert and Colbert (2003) argue that school counsellors and teachers can be more effective in implementing the frameworks for resolving the issues that arise in schools if they collaborate than if they work separately. A collaborative approach for counsellors working with school staff is also advocated by Bor et al. (2002) who suggest that counsellors need

enthusiasm in order to form effective relationships with teachers, the head teacher, and other agencies; to support parents at school; and to be involved in PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) education and staff training.

To study collaboration between school counsellors and teachers, Tatar and Bekerman (2009) administered an open-ended questionnaire to 38 senior-high-school counsellors and 38 home-room teachers, working in educational institutions representing a variety of Jewish Israeli student populations. The study revealed that counsellors were often better prepared and trained than teachers to help students to overcome psychological issues that might influence their cognitive and behavioural activities. This is because school teachers tend to be very close to their students and so may not be as alert to the existence of problems in these areas. Consequently, if efforts are made towards cooperation and positive relationship-building between teachers and counsellors, this may lead to an improved understanding of the counsellors' function among teachers. The critical question is what this collaboration could accomplish in order to help the students. Tatar and Bekerman (2009) found that the collaboration between school counsellors and teachers promotes social-emotional learning programmes in classrooms. Further, it is beneficial for the implementation of play therapy with students at risk of behavioural

problems, and it has been found to improve the facilitation of friendships of students with SEN, which in turn enhances the education of those students within schools.

3.7 Why SEN students need school-based counselling

Children with SEN are more likely to be vulnerable to mental health issues. In a national survey of disabled children in the UK, Bone and Meltzer (1989) found that a high percentage of children with physical disabilities also experienced mental and behavioural issues. They also found that the majority of children with severe disabilities had mental health problems. Among the many reasons that SEN children need special attention is that they are more likely to be vulnerable to physical, sexual and psychological abuse. They are frequently at high risk of being bullied, teased or physically abused (Martlew & Hodson, 1991; Mishna, 2003) due to the fact that they cannot defend themselves and express themselves adequately to report the abuse (UNICEF, 2007). Numerous research studies have shown that disabled children are being bullied and abused by others. Sullivan and Knutson (2000) surveyed 50,278 children and young adults aged 0-21 years who were enrolled in a variety of educational programmes in the state of Nebraska between 1994 and 1995. They found a 9% incidence rate of abuse, compared to 31% for disabled children. This shows that children with SEN are 3.4 times more likely to be abused than those without special needs.

There is a significant amount of empirical evidence that SEN students are both more likely to be bullied and more likely to engage in bullying than mainstream students (Fink et al., 2015; Dickson et al., 2005; Glumbić & Žunić-Pavlović, 2010; Schroeder et al., 2014; Wigelsworth et al., 2015). Dickson et al. (2005) showed that the percentage of bullied adolescents with intellectual disabilities is 27.6%, while the percentage of bullied adolescents without intellectual disabilities is only 9.8%. This suggests that intellectual disabilities lead to a near trebling in the rate of bullying. Fink et al. (2015) used the Bullying Behaviour and Experience Scale (BBES) to measure frequency of both victimisation and bullying among a sample of 348 pupils aged 8 to 11 of which 67 were identified as having SEN. Aligned with other studies, they found that SEN status is a predictor of victimisation and also of a proclivity to bully leading the researchers to conclude that there is a need to tailor interventions to tackle this problem.

Sexual abuse also appears more prevalent among SEN students. In New Zealand, Briggs (2006) investigated 116 students with learning disabilities (LDs) aged 11-17 (61 female; 55 male). In this study, 32% of girls reported sexual abuse, while reports from school counsellors suggested that 44% of female students were victims of abuse. Briggs does not give exact figures for boys but stresses that sexual abuse was "equally common" among boys. Moreover, a Scandinavian study by

Kvam (2004) surveyed 302 adults on the Norwegian Deaf Register and found that 44.4% of the participants had been exposed to undesirable sexual experiences during their childhood. Finally, in Israel, Reiter et al. (2007) found that adolescents with intellectual disabilities, matched for socio-economic background, were more frequently abused than non-disabled youths.

Martlew and Hodson (1991) observed and interviewed a group of children with and without learning disabilities (LDs) to compare their behaviour in the playground in both mainstream and special schools. The results showed that the children with LDs who were bullied in special schools had fewer friends than normal students in mainstream schools. The findings also showed that students with LDs were bullied more than those without LD.

Bossaert et al. (2012) conducted a study in Belgium involving 7th grade pupils with a diagnosis for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). A variety of instruments were used to measure number of friends, friendship quality, social self-concept, and loneliness. The study found that students with an ASD diagnosis were twice as likely to experience loneliness as a normally developing student. Similarly, students with moderate learning difficulties are more likely to experience sociometric rejection (Frederickson & Furnham, 2004).

SEN students may also be let down by their teachers. Qualitative case study methods were applied by Reis and Colbert (2004) to explore the counselling needs of academically gifted university students with learning disabilities. The small sample of 15 revealed universally negative reflections on their earlier school education. They recalled poor treatment from teachers who could not comprehend their abilities and had developed a lowered self-concept. In conclusion, they argued for comprehensive developmental counselling programmes to be in place from elementary school onwards with identification of these students as early as possible being a key role for professional counsellors (Reis & Colbert, 2004).

If disabled children are constantly exposed to violence, abuse, rejection and neglect, it is likely that they will have mental health problems as well as behavioural problems in childhood and in later life (UNICEF, 2002). Therefore, to ensure a better quality of life for disabled children, it is vital for the people around them, including school counsellors, to give various kinds of support. In the Saudi context, anecdotal evidence exists – based on my own teaching experience in a mainstream school from 2006 to 2008 – that Saudi children with SEN could suffer from mental health issues. Those children are more vulnerable to bullying, physical and sex abuse in mainstream schools. Hence, it can be posited that children with SEN might be at risk of experiencing mental health

problems, no less in different cultural systems such as the Islamic system of Saudi Arabia.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided insights into disability and the different models of disability. Additionally, the concepts of special educational needs (SEN) and inclusive education were introduced. Significant entities for providing effective inclusive support practices and the reasons why students with SEN require counselling in school were also described.

Chapter Four: Literature review – Part 2 – Key issues and practices involved in school-based counselling (SBC)

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to elaborate on the current state of understanding of school-based counselling as found in the literature. First, this chapter reviews the objectives of counselling and school-based counselling. Additionally, the evolution of school-based counselling and the provision of school counselling in the United States, United Kingdom and in South Korea are described. The activities and role of school counsellors are also discussed; followed by an investigation of the perceptions of the role of school counsellors. Subsequent sections describe the competencies of school counsellors including their educational qualifications. A brief overview is provided of the counselling provision for students with SEN, including the attitudes of school counsellors towards students with SEN and barriers to inclusion in school-based counselling. Finally, the role of supervision in school-based counselling is described. The search strategy used for this review was described in the previous chapter.

4.2 Objectives of counselling

One of the earliest definitions of counselling was provided by the Standing Conference for the Advancement of Counselling (1978):

> *Counselling takes place when one person accepts responsibility for helping another to decide upon a course of action or to*

> *understand or change patterns of behaviour which distress, disturb or affect his social behaviour* (cited in Aldridge, 2014, p. 2).

It can be seen that this definition assumes when counselling is required and emphasises social behaviour as the cause for this requirement. On the other hand, Chireshe (2006) suggests that counselling is the exclusive association between a client and a counsellor where the counsellor endeavours to aid the individual in the making of individually applicable decisions that he/she can live with. Similarly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2016) defines counselling as "advice and support that is given to people to help them deal with problems, make important decisions, etc." McLaughlin (1999) regarded the provision of counselling as a helping relationship, whether conducted individually or in a group, to explore and overcome a problem. This is a complex interrelationship that involves thinking, feeling and acting. The process also involves thinking of other systems. Personal skills such as self-awareness are also crucial to counselling as a holistic process. McLaughlin (1999) adds that counselling can be understood to have a tripartite function: educative, reflective, and strengthening. The educative function entails broadening the knowledge of all that are involved in this process and enhancing the ability of clients to reflect on their life experiences, thereby helping them to enhance their overall stock of knowledge. On the other hand, the reflective function refers to those

involved in making this process more profound and self-aware as individuals; exploring one's own psychology can often help individuals to become more self-aware. The third function refers to the mental health of the client: those undergoing this process need to be strengthened psychologically. This means becoming less vulnerable to psychological problems and building resilience and stamina.

A key issue in this process is the relationship between the counsellor and client. The counsellor needs to understand his or her client and their psychological and social needs with empathy and respond to these needs to enable their clients to become more resilient in managing their tasks and issues.

This discussion has described counselling in general. The following section provides specific insights into school-based counselling.

4.3 School-based counselling

The British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) defines school-based counselling as:

> *… a professional activity delivered by qualified practitioners in schools. Counsellors offer troubled and/or distressed children and young people an opportunity to talk about their difficulties, within a relationship of agreed confidentiality* (McLaughlin et al., 2013, p. 3).

Thus, it can be understood that formal counselling in the school is provided by a trained and qualified counsellor who takes into consideration a recognised ethical code in performing his or her role.

Whereas only counsellors undergo formal counselling training, counselling skills need to be present not only in school counsellors but also in school teachers, nurses, and other professionals who deal with children. It could be inferred that counselling in school is not limited to qualified counsellors but extends to all persons associated with the provision of educational and related services to children in school. ASCA (2012) suggests that counselling should be provided in the following essential areas: academic and personal, social and professional. It holds that school counsellors can be of assistance in resolving emotional troubles and can help enhance social skills and aid clients to gain a sense of direction. Effective counselling programmes can be beneficial to the school's climate so that it can facilitate student achievement. Student achievement is the aim of schools and colleges so it is important that counselling is considered to have this important economic function. It can be inferred that the purposes of counselling in schools across the world are similar.
The Government of the UK made the following statement on the aims of school counselling in February 2016:

> *The aims of counselling are to assist the child or young person to achieve a greater understanding of themselves and their relationship to their world, to create a greater awareness and utilisation of their personal resources, to build their resilience, and to support their ability to address problems and pursue meaningful goals*. (DfE, 2016, p. 6).

An examination of school-based counselling in the Saudi context revealed that this phenomenon was described using a definition from 1982 which states that school-based counselling is:

> *… a process by which students are assisted to know themselves, to understand their personalities, to use their experiences, to determine their problems, to develop their abilities and to solve the problems students face, all in keeping with Islamic teaching, which will help them to reach their aims, and be adjusted personally, socially, educationally, and vocationally, so that students will be able to contribute toward the general aims of the educational process* (cited in Al-Ghamdi, 2010).

This definition is similar to occidental definitions of counselling in that it refers to similar characteristics and domains of school counselling present in Western cultures. Although it may be argued that school counselling in Saudi schools is based on the Islamic values and principles, there is a combination of western cultural values and Islamic traditions in the Saudi definition. It is important to understand the complex relationship between these two traditions to achieve a more profound definition of this phenomenon. Some limitations can be identified within the Saudi definition. One problem with this approach is that it fails to take into account some crucial elements as mentioned by the BACP definition, namely, intervention and prevention strategies and the confidentiality in the counselling

process. Perhaps most seriously, it does not consider the importance of being trained and qualified in working within school as a counsellor. Finally, a key problem with this definition is that it does not mention children and young people who have emotional, behavioural or social difficulties, such as students with special educational needs who are more likely to have these difficulties. A significant effort is required by the Saudi Ministry of Education to update this definition, as a first step towards improving the counselling provision in Saudi schools.

As school counselling in Saudi Arabia is based on the model followed in the United States, the following sections use the US model as a basis to offer more insights into the practice of counselling in schools.

4.4 The development of school-based counselling

School-based counselling has been in existence for more than a century. It could be seen that the United Kingdom and the United States were among the pioneers in the field and thus established the norms or guidelines to inform other countries who saw merit in the field and entered into it at a later time. This section will describe the development of school counselling from the perspectives of the UK and the US. Also, insights will be provided from the point of view of Korea where school-based counselling is still in its infancy as is the case with Saudi Arabia.

4.4.1 Developments in the United States

The origins of school counselling in the US can be traced back to the commencement, in the early 1900s, of the vocational guidance movement (Beesley, 2004; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Herr, 2001), which was itself the outcome of the adverse consequences of the Industrial Revolution (Schmidt, 2003). This movement had the task of seeking to respond to the economic, educational, and social problems and was largely concerned with the entry of young people into the workplace. As such, it had a major focus in the school; namely, preparing students to enter the labour market. The counselling services were provided through teachers who received no formal training (Gysbers, 2001). Implementing vocational guidance in schools required several additional responsibilities and efforts from the teacher in the classroom.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the focus of schools had begun to shift from vocational guidance to educational guidance and the personal issues of students, with school counsellors initially finding it difficult to fulfil the dual roles of helping students to meet their academic needs and fulfilling their occupational potential (Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Whiston, 2002). These changes can be attributed to certain factors influencing education such as the development of child studies, and progressive education. As a result, the clinical model of guidance began to emerge (Gysbers, 2001).

In the 1930s, models of guidance began to include a mental health approach. Rudy (1965, cited in Gysbers, 2001) stressed this point when he stated that:

> *Up to 1930* […] *not much progress had been made in differentiating this function* [personal counselling] *from the preexisting programs of vocational and educational guidance. After that date, more and more of a separation appeared as guidance workers in the high schools became aware of increasingly large numbers of students who were troubled by personal problems involving hostility to authority, sex relationships, unfortunate home situations, and financial stringencies* (p. 25).

It was not until the mid-1960s, through the National Defence Education Act, that significant federal funding was provided and given to schools to upgrade counselling in schools through improving the knowledge and function of working counsellors and providing potential opportunities to increase the number of trained counsellors (Baker, 2000). Strong evidence of improving school counselling was found. As reported by Schmidt (2003), the number of school counsellors in the United States increased from 12,000 to 27,000 from 1958 to 1963, while considerable funds were given to more than 400 counselling institutes with more than 13,000 counsellors trained. Keys et al. (1998) notes that this change from vocational counselling represented a switch from a reactive function, addressing individual

problems as they arose, to a proactive, prevention-based approach aimed at facilitating the healthy development of all students.

Before the end of the 20th century there had been three models under development. The first model was developed by Myrick (1997) who emphasised that all students should be involved in a guidance programme with a well-planned, organised, and flexible curriculum to support the entire student body. The second model was developed by Johnson and Johnson (1991, cited in Gysbers, 2001) and is known as competency-based guidance. The aim was to advocate and encourage all students to acquire knowledge and competencies that could help them become high achievers at school and prepare them for higher education and employment. In the 1970s, Gysbers and Moore developed the third model, which was later improved and enhanced by Gysbers and Henderson (2001). The third model concentrates on the results (competencies) and stresses an organisational structure, based on human, financial, and political resources. School counsellors can allocate their time across the programme components such as the guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive service, and system support (Gysbers, 2001).

These three models, however, suffer from some serious limitations. For instance, they did not address the needs of all students in the school; only those who were top-performing students and those who were in danger of dropping out of school (Herr, 2002).

4.4.2 Developments in the United Kingdom

School counselling in the UK also dates back to the early 1900s. It originated with providing pastoral care to students in schools. In 1913, the first psychologist was appointed by London County Council to examine children and provide appropriate advice for their parents and teachers regarding methods of treatment (Milner, 1974). Pastoral care in the school helped teachers to improve and enhance students' personal and social development (Fosket & Lynch, 2001).

Traditionally, in the British school, it was common for teachers to take on a guidance role. However, in the field of pastoral care, some interventions attempted to provide teachers with important counselling skills. These studies concentrated on the enhancement of the relationship between students and teachers (McLaughlin, 1999) and supporting students to evolve their lives and study skills as well as helping them to make their own decision (Hamblin, 1984; Raymond, 1985).

School counselling in the UK began to emerge as a discipline in the 1960s, after the influences of the American school counselling model (Bor et al., 2002). This development of counselling into the UK schools was based on the humanistic approach in the US (Jenkins & Polat, 2006). The 1963 Newsom Report recommended appointing school counsellors to meet the needs of low achieving students. This report helped in the establishment of the first available counselling course at the University of Keele, in 1992, for experienced teachers

to be employed in the school. This course helped those teachers to gain understanding of a full range of guidance from vocational counselling to personal therapy (Newsom Report, 1963). As a result, school counselling services began to be provided through professional counsellors. However, some schools continued to employ teacher-counsellors instead of professional counsellors (Bor et al., 2002). Despite this significant effort toward successful implementation of counselling in the school, there was a significant decline in the 1980s in counselling services and in the number of school counsellors due to education-funding cuts (McLaughlin, 1999). Beside this lack of support in the education system, Polat and Jenkins (2005) argue that the narrowly defined role adopted by counsellors in the school resulted in the diminishment of school counselling services in the UK. This view is supported by Bor et al. (2002) who consider that teachers continue to work and play a great role in the counselling of students in the school despite the heavy workloads and the increase in social issues. Recently, they have come under greater pressure to meet their roles in the school. Because of the difficulty for teachers in taking on a pastoral care role, some schools decided to employ specialist counsellors to achieve the educational, psychological and emotional needs of students.

Established in 1997, the British Association for Counselling (BAC) highlighted the psychotherapy component in school guidance and counselling services. The Children Act 2004 and the green paper

Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) emphasised the significant benefits of school counselling. The Children Act 2004 encouraged the role of school counsellors in the emotional health and welfare of students in the school. Moreover, this policy called counsellors to focus on working with the community as well as with parents and school staff, instead of working only with school age students (Polat & Jenkins, 2005).

4.4.3 School counselling in South Korea

Another country worth reviewing is that of South Korea, where school counselling commenced in the 1950s. In contrast, to the US and the UK, South Korea was a new entrant into the school counselling field, its school counselling heavily influenced by the United States Educational Delegation which had provided an educational mission from 1952 to 1962, delivering training courses in Korea and introducing new models (Yoo, 1996, cited in Lee & Yang, 2008). This proved extremely beneficial and useful for developing countries, which came to gain so much through joint and mutual efforts to improve the concept of school counselling.

In 1963, Korean policies encouraged schools to have 'disciplinary guidance teachers'. However, the role of disciplinary guidance teachers was not clear or adequately defined. Hence, the Ministry of Education changed the title to 'career counselling teacher', although there was in fact no difference between the two roles (Lee & Yang, 2008). The ambiguity and undefined roles for counselling teachers

and the lack of preparation for counselling and guidance led to the assumption that counselling teachers were simply disciplinarians. Also, many of them moved into quasi-administrative positions (Lee & Yang, 2008). The lack of clarity of counsellors' roles in the South Korean system is still a major challenge because school counsellors work in schools in non-counselling capacities, such as working as a teacher in the classroom for 18 hours weekly. Nevertheless, the government of South Korea has invested heavily in rigorous recruitment policies, established minimum training levels, funded counsellor training in universities, and commissioned school-based research into counselling process and outcomes, in contrast to Saudi Arabia. Despite the 50-year history of school counselling in South Korea, many challenges still exist such as the lack of ethical standards and the lack of an accepted counselling model (Lee & Yang, 2008).

4.5 The roles of the school counsellor

In many countries around the world, school counsellors struggle with the confusion and conflict over their roles in the school (Perkins, 2010). ASCA has provided a national model of comprehensive school counselling, intended to serve as a standard for the profession and to assist with the delineation of school counsellors' roles, responsibilities and expectations (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA National Model is run by a state-credentialed school counsellor and has three dimensions. 1) The first dimension

contains three domains: academic, career, and personal/social development (ASCA, 2012). 2) The second dimension refers to the ASCA model, which consists of four distinct themes, namely: i) leadership, ii) advocacy, iii) collaboration and teaming, and iv) systemic change. i) Leadership is considered an important quality for school counsellors to possess for closing the achievement gap among poor and/or underachieving students and their more advantaged peers, and for making schools welcoming, learning communities. ii) Second, to become a successful proponent of school counselling, school counsellors should support each student's needs in achieving academic, career, and personal/social success. iii) Collaboration refers to the need for counsellors to use their collaboration skills with all school community members, particularly teachers and including parents. iv) The final theme of systemic change refers to the need for school counsellors to work diligently to eliminate practices that inhibit student opportunity (Romano et al., 2009). The third dimension of the ASCA National Model also consists of four components: foundation, management, delivery, and accountability (ASCA, 2012). Providing a list of appropriate and inappropriate school counselling job activities, the model recommends that 80% of school counsellors' time should be spent on direct or indirect services to students.

It is apparent that the model has a number of strengths, with both the ASCA and the National Model having major influences on school

counselling practice (Galassi & Akos, 2012). However, a limitation of this National Model is that it is still a relatively new development and it has not been universally endorsed (Galassi & Akos, 2012). Moreover, many school counsellors are not ASCA members, with the implication that they may not subscribe to all its themes and components. Having said this, there is a growing acceptance of national standards. Dahir (2004) studied the development of the ASCA National Standards for school counselling. From a survey distributed to 1,127 members of the ASCA, it was found that the vast majority of respondents (82%) strongly supported the development of ASCA National Standards, while two-thirds of those surveyed stipulated that ASCA National Standards should be based on practice rather than theory. Pertinently, a need for the role of school counselling to be clarified was expressed; 81% of the respondents indicated that ASCA National Standards could clearly describe school counsellors' roles in the educational system in the school, suggesting that school counsellors are keen to overcome the confusion surrounding their responsibilities within the school. Dahir (2004) concluded that the development of the ASCA National Standards would be essential for making school counselling programmes an integral part of the educational system, with the practice of school counselling being more highly valued than it is presently.

4.5.1 Activities for school counsellors

An interesting study was conducted by Fitch et. al. (2001) who found that appropriate school counselling roles include consultation, consultation and coordination, while inappropriate roles include scheduling, disciplinary functions, and clerical duties. The ASCA (2017c) provides a summary of the activities deemed appropriate or inappropriate for school counsellors (Table 3.2).

Table 2 Activities for school counsellors (Source: ASCA, 2017c)

Appropriate activities for school counsellors	**Inappropriate activities for school counsellors**
Individual student academic programme planning	Coordinating paperwork and data entry of all new students
Interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests	Coordinating cognitive, aptitude and achievement testing programmes
Providing counselling to students who are tardy or absent	Signing excuses for students who are tardy or absent
Providing counselling to students who have disciplinary problems	Performing disciplinary actions or assigning discipline consequences
Providing counselling to students as to appropriate school dress	Sending students home who are not appropriately dressed

Appropriate activities for school counsellors	**Inappropriate activities for school counsellors**
Collaborating with teachers to present school counselling core curriculum lessons	Teaching classes when teachers are absent
Analysing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement	Computing grade-point averages
Interpreting student records	Maintaining student records
Providing teachers with suggestions for effective classroom management	Supervising classrooms or common areas
Ensuring student records are maintained as per state and federal regulations	Keeping clerical records
Helping the school principal identify and resolve student issues, needs and problems	Assisting with duties in the principal's office
Providing individual and small-group counselling services to students	Providing therapy or long-term counselling in schools to address psychological disorders
Advocating for students at individual education plan meetings, student study teams	Coordinating school-wide individual education plans,

Appropriate activities for school counsellors	Inappropriate activities for school counsellors
and school attendance review boards	student study teams and school attendance review boards
Analysing disaggregated data	Serving as a data entry clerk

It can be seen that the role of the school counsellor is to primarily support students who require counselling support and not to serve as an additional member of the teaching or administrative staff. The role of the school counsellor had shifted from perceiving students as the problem to dealing with academic and institutional barriers within the school, which frequently obstruct the success of students (Erford, 2014). Thus, schools counsellors have a significant role to play in schools (Moore et al., 2008).

4.6 Perceptions of the role of schools counsellors

In American schools, school counsellors found it difficult to describe their roles to the principal and other school personnel (Lieberman, 2004). Clarifying the role of counsellors is a major challenge both in the school community and for the school counselling profession (Low, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). For example, school counsellors are often asked to perform clerical or administrative tasks such as scheduling, testing coordinators, and detention room and lunch supervision. The key problem with these non-counselling tasks is that they could consume counsellors' time, creating stress (Baggerly &

Osborn, 2006) and reducing the amount of time available to school counsellors for implementing school counselling programmes and meeting the needs of students. Consequently, school counsellors struggle to link school counselling programme outcomes to academic achievement (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Sink, 2005). School counsellors have not to date assumed control for defining their role in the school and have allowed principals to define their tasks at the school level (Sears & Coy, 1991). It can be inferred that principals and other school administrators have a major influence on the counsellors' tasks. Studies suggest that there is a discrepancy between what is advocated as best practice and what is actually performed in schools (Scarborough, 2005).

Studying how school counsellors spend their time, Partin (1993) sent a survey to 300 school counsellors from selected Ohio schools: elementary, middle, and secondary; 210 counsellors returned a completed questionnaire: 52, 83 and 70 from each school level respectively. Based on counsellors' perceptions, the study found that paperwork was identified as the worst time-waster in all three levels of school counselling. Counsellors in elementary schools identified teaching duties (M=2.74) as non-guidance activities that the school counsellor spent time on, whereas middle school counsellors nominated discipline issues (M=3.40) as the main duty among their daily responsibilities. In secondary school, counsellors allocated their time to scheduling (M=5.04) and administrative tasks (M=4.04)\,

which they categorised as non-guidance activities. The most striking observation from this study is that non-guidance activities are still considered part of school counsellors' responsibilities. However, these activities could be different at each of the three levels. The study recommends that it is vital for school counsellors to show and explain the impact of performing non-guidance activities on the professional school-counsellor functions. However, the author overlooks the fact that providing non-guidance activities contributes to shortcomings in the implementation of a comprehensive school counselling programme. A more systematic approach would identify how the school counsellor's role interacts with other variables that are believed to be linked to successful delivery of a comprehensive school counselling programme. However, these results are based upon data from over 20 years ago and it is unclear if these differences still persist today.

In a more recent study, Scarborough (2005) examined the implementation of various interventions provided by school counsellors at different school levels. Scarborough sent a survey to a random sample of 600 school counsellors in two south-eastern US states, 300 from each state; 60% returned the completed questionnaire with a similar number of responses from each school level: 117 from elementary; 120 from, middle, and 120 from high-school. Major differences were found between school levels with respect to the curriculum, coordination, and counselling job activities.

School counsellors in elementary level allocated more time in curriculum, coordination, counselling, consultation, and fair-share job activities, such as observing student behaviours during school duties, than did those in middle or high school. Moreover, school counsellors in middle schools focused on the curriculum, coordination, counselling, consultation, and fair-share job activities more than counsellors at high school level. These findings are inconsistent with those of Partin (1993), described above, which indicated that school counsellors spent more time on non-guidance activities at all school levels. Specifically, middle school counsellors in the Partin study nominated discipline problems as the main issue they spent time on whereas in this Scarborough study they spent more time on curriculum, coordination, counselling, consultation, and fair-share job activities.

To gain a better understanding of the counsellor's function in the school, it is important to understand how administrators and principals perceive the school counsellors' role. Amatea and Clark (2005) conducted a qualitative study using grounded theory methodology to investigate how school administrators conceptualise the school counsellor role. They interviewed 26 administrators employed in different public elementary, middle and high schools; with 11, 8 and 8 participants at each level respectively. The study found agreement among school administrators on the challenges their schools faced, the changes required, and how school counsellors can

better contribute to these changes. A minority of participants (12%) stipulated that school counsellors should take an active leadership role with school staff to improve the overall functioning of the school. However, a small number of those interviewed (3 administrators) suggested that the expertise of school counsellors should be harnessed to assist other school staff in how they work with students. Amatea and Clark (2005) also found that some participants (8 of 26 administrators) expressed the belief that the primary role of school counsellors is providing direct services to students using individual counselling or through classroom guidance; that is, a separate set of services that compliments the work of other staff. Surprisingly, of the 26 participants who were interviewed, just 6 claimed that school counsellors could be included as members of the administrative team who performed some non-guidance activities such as scheduling and testing. Finally, Amatea and Clark (2005) suggested that significant efforts should be made towards a more conscious development of counsellors' leadership skills and role expectations by both counsellors themselves and counsellor preparation programmes. Whereas Amatea and Clark (2005) studied school administrator perceptions, Beesley and Frey (2006) investigated the perceptions of school principals regarding school counsellors' role and satisfaction with counselling services. A survey questionnaire was sent to 303 principals across the US. When asked what they recognised as the major roles of the school counsellor, more than two-thirds identified

the following domains: individual counselling, career counselling, group counselling, classroom guidance, programme coordination, consultation, academic planning, programme evaluation/accountability. Beesley and Frey (2006) concluded their study with some suggestions provided by school principals about how to enhance school counselling services. Suggestions included offering suitable training and opportunities for collaborative school counsellor-principal partnerships.

Moving to the Saudi context, Alghamdi and Riddick (2011) examined principals' perceptions of the role of school counsellors in intermediate girls' schools in Jeddah city, Saudi Arabia. Adopting a mixed-methods design, the authors used a questionnaire survey complemented by semi-structured interviews. Of the 209 school principals to whom the survey was sent, 62% responded. The survey was followed by semi-structured interviews with eight principals who had participated in the survey. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents felt that helping students with academic achievement and monitoring their achievement levels are the most important functions of school counsellors. They also felt it was crucial for school counsellors to provide assistance related to students' academic, psychological and behavioural issues. The most striking observation to emerge from the data was that school counsellors spend considerable time on paperwork in the school. This is consistent with the findings of Partin (1993), discussed above, and

Tatar (1995) who found that paperwork, admission processes and referrals to other schools or institutions were identified by school counsellors as being the worst time-wasters. Relatedly, four out of eight principals in Alghamdi and Riddick's (2011) study stated that counsellors' paperwork should be reduced. It can be inferred from these findings that there is a growing awareness of the importance of school counselling programmes for meeting students' needs.

However, caution should be exercised in generalising the findings of this study to other Saudi contexts since it was conducted in only one city (Jeddah) and included only girls' schools. Future studies should examine different schools, of both genders, and different regions throughout Saudi Arabia, to gain an in-depth understanding of school counselling.

Low (2009) makes the important point that in the field of school counselling, teachers are the largest group of professionals in any school, and are significant in the formation of a counselling programme in the school community because client referrals are made through their teachers. Teachers' acceptance of the nature of school counselling programmes is therefore critical to the development of a counselling service that can benefit all students. Working in Scotland, Cooper et al. (2005) conducted two independent studies that investigated secondary-school teachers' attitudes towards, and conceptualisation of, school counselling. These two studies were based on qualitative and quantitative methods. The first

study consisted of 71 teachers while 33 teachers participated in the second. The findings were consistent with Low's (2009) argument that many teachers hold a positive attitude towards school counselling. However, the study found that some teachers considered counselling in schools to be merely advice-giving, indicating that they had either limited knowledge of what counselling could provide or did not hold counselling in high esteem.

Having discussed the perceptions of school staff, it is important to consider student views of the provision of counselling in the school. Fox and Butler (2007) assessed student perceptions of school counselling by administering a survey to 415 pupils (mean age 13.27 years) from five secondary schools in the UK. In order to explore their perceptions in more depth, a small number of those were interviewed in focus groups (n=9). This study would have been more useful if the authors had considered the views of students with SEN. The study found that the majority of participants were aware of the school counselling services and valued having school counsellors; 84% described the service as "useful", "very useful" or "extremely useful". Despite this positive finding, young people found it difficult to access counselling and to see a counsellor in the school because of the social stigma attached to counselling. This suggests that efforts need to be made to make counselling services more accessible and socially acceptable. However, this finding is contradicted by the latest review of school-based counselling in UK secondary schools, by

Cooper (2013), which reports some evidence that young people see counselling in the school as 'friendlier' rather than stigmatising. Improving the relationships of counsellors with students would make it easier for students to understand the counselling service and enable students to have someone to talk to (Cooper, 2004). The students in Cooper's (2004) study indicated that they benefited from having someone to listen. However, due to the time pressures that teachers are under and the problematic dual role of 'teacher counsellor', as identified in McLaughlin (1999), the BACP recommends that counsellors should not have a dual role in the school, such as also being a teacher. This would clarify for students the boundaries between counsellor/client associations and teacher/student associations (BACP, 2001).

4.7 The role of school counsellor in the context of Special Educational Needs

The ASCA (2010) position on providing school-based counselling for students with special educational needs is as follows:

> *School counsellors encourage and support the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students through comprehensive school counselling programs. School counsellors are committed to helping all students realize their potential and meet or exceed academic standards with consideration for both the strengths and challenges resulting from disabilities and other special needs* (p. 55).

ASCA (2010) elaborates on the role of the school counselling in the context of students with special educational needs, specifying that counselling must offer direct and indirect services to students in the least restrictive environment (as determined by each student's individualised education plan [IEP]) and in inclusive settings when possible (Tarver-Behring et al., 1998). Accordingly, the responsibilities of school counselling may include, but are not limited to:

- providing school counselling curriculum lessons, individual and/or group counselling to students with special needs within the scope of the comprehensive school counselling programme
- providing short-term, goal-focused counselling in instances where it is appropriate to include these strategies as a part of the IEP
- encouraging family involvement in the educational process
- consulting and collaborating with staff and families to understand the special needs of a student and understanding the adaptations and modifications needed to assist the student
- advocating for students with special needs in the school and in the community

- contributing to the school's multidisciplinary team within the scope and practice of the comprehensive school counselling programme to identify students who may need to be assessed to determine special education
- collaborating with other related student support professionals (e.g., school psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, special education staff, speech and language pathologists) in the delivery of services
- Providing assistance with developing academic, transition and postsecondary plans for students with IEP's as appropriate (ASCA, 2010, p. 55-56).

From the above responsibilities, it is clear that school counsellors have become important team players in supporting the inclusion of students with SEN. They play a great role in the identification of students with SEN and in participating in the development of the Individualised Educational Programmes (IEP) (Stone & Dahir, 2006). Examining the activities that school counsellors perform for students with SEN in the US, Milsom (2002) found that the provision of individual and group counselling for those students was the most prevalent activity provided. The least performed activity was providing transition services. Moreover, Milsom found that while school counsellors performed many activities with students with SEN, they had inefficient training to work with those students. It could be

inferred that this gap between counsellor training and their expectations of their job may adversely affect the ability of school counsellors to work successfully with students with SEN. Milsom suggested three changes to deal with the issues of school counsellor training and readiness to work with students with SEN. First, counsellor education programmes should provide more effective training to help students of school counselling to work with those students. Current school counsellors may be able to support this change by providing feedback to their training institutes regarding the need for training on the challenges associated with disabilities, special education legislations, and the process of an Individualised Education Plan (IEP). Second, in their own schools, school counsellors can promote disability education using means such as professional development and on-the-job activities. Finally, school counsellors could establish networks with administrators, other school personnel and other counsellors to offer support and guidance in working with students with SEN.

Another study, conducted by Erhard and Umanksy (2005), found that that the involvement of school counsellors in working with students with SEN was related to academic (e.g., designing an IEP), social-emotional and administrative issues. However, this study found that the administrative tasks received the most attention, such as conducting meetings, whereas the lowest engagement was in academic issues. School counsellors may not perceive working with

academic matters as one of their roles in the school, and the school might need a specialist counsellor in this area.

4.8 The competencies of school counsellors

In general, the competencies of a counsellor are considered to be what counsellors perform in the course of an intervention (i.e., counselling session). These include fundamental helping skills, procedural competencies, theory-based interventions, and tasks associated with issues (e.g., assessment of suicide risk) (Borders & Brown, 2006). Counselling competencies may also be more narrowly described as "the counsellor's moment-by-moment verbal and nonverbal expressions in a counselling session" (VanDerWege, 2011, p. 12).

Research has suggested that skills-based methods are successful and beneficial with regard to training counsellors (Hill et al., 2007). Different models are available for counselling skills training for novice counsellors. Some of these models offer a broad approach to recognising counselling skills whereas others place a greater emphasis on counselling skills as moment-by-moment spoken or unspoken expressions. While opinions vary as to which is the most successful method to teach counselling skills to novice counsellors, there is consensus that an essential task for novice counsellors is gaining counselling skills (Fitch et al., 2004). The various training models divide counsellor responses into more convenient segments of information to simplify the learning of trainees. However, the nature

of responses (e.g., affective behaviours or discrete counselling skills) differs in line with the objective and theoretical basis of the training method. Furthermore, each method incorporates learning through watching other counsellors, whether through watching expert presentations on video or peers' counselling sessions as they take place. Moreover, each training approach includes constant supervision of trainee counsellors' performance of the training aims in their counselling sessions. The different training models include the micro-counselling paradigm (Daniels et al., 1997), the Skilled Counsellor Training Model (SCTM) (Smaby et al., 1999), interpersonal process recall (Kagan & Kagan, 1997), and the helping skills model (Hill, 2004).

The BACP (2016) Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions refers to the personal qualities and values expected of a practicing counsellor in the UK as personal moral qualities. The understood presence or absence of these values is perceived to strongly affect the manner in which associations with clients and colleagues' progress, and whether these associations are of adequate quality and strength to sustain the work. The reliability and strength of any association are generally improved by greater degrees of compatibility between individual and professional moral characteristics. Table 3.3 lists the essential personal qualities of counsellors.

Table 3 Personal qualities of counsellors (BACP, 2016, p. 3-4)

Personal quality	**Description**
Care	Benevolent, responsible and competent attentiveness to someone's needs, wellbeing and personal agency.
Diligence	The conscientious deployment of the skills and knowledge needed to achieve a beneficial outcome.
Courage	The capacity to act in spite of known fears, risks and uncertainty.
Empathy	The ability to communicate understanding of another person's experience from that person's perspective.
Identity	Sense of self in relationship to others that forms the basis of responsibility, resilience and motivation.
Humility	The ability to assess accurately and acknowledge one's own strengths and weaknesses.

Personal quality	Description
Integrity	Commitment to being moral in dealings with others, including personal straightforwardness, honesty and coherence.
Resilience	The capacity to work with the client's concerns without being personally diminished.
Respect	Showing appropriate esteem for people and their understanding of themselves.
Sincerity	A personal commitment to consistency between what is professed and what is done.
Wisdom	Possession of sound judgement that informs practice.

ASCA provides details of the School Counsellor Competencies that school counsellors must have in order to be prepared to satisfy both the needs of the profession and the needs of students (ASCA, 2017a). In brief, these competencies encompass the following wide areas:

1. School counselling Programmes: School counsellors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to plan, organise, implement and evaluate a comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counselling programme that aligns with the ASCA National Model.

2. Foundations: School counsellors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to establish the foundations of a school counselling programme, aligned with the ASCA National Model.
3. Management: School counsellors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to manage a school counselling programme, aligned with the ASCA National Model.
4. Delivery: School counsellors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to deliver a school counselling programme, aligned with the ASCA National Model.
5. Accountability: School counsellors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to monitor and evaluate the processes and results of a school counselling programme, aligned with the ASCA National Model.

However, it is important to note that there might be some challenges encountered by school counsellors that could affect the competencies of school counsellors. Alavi et al. (2012) suggest that the most common challenges encountered by school counsellors were lack of space, tools and equipment and knowledge. Communication with colleagues, parents, and students were other common challenges. Low (2009) posited that there were four categories of challenges encountered by counsellors in schools: internal, external, system and personal. The internal domain

encompasses client groups, the outlooks of teachers, and the readiness of students to use counselling services. On the other hand, the external domain encompasses socio-economic changes beyond school, pop culture, globalisation and human movements. The system domain includes government, administration, schools and counselling bodies whereas the personal domain involves counsellor's needs and skills.

4.8.1 School counsellors' educational qualifications

Harris (2014) observed that school-based counselling across the globe is a profession where a Bachelor's degree is crucial, whether in teaching, psychology, guidance and counselling, or social work. Also, a post-graduate degree in guidance and counselling is either mandatory or advantageous. Globally, school counsellors commonly possess a teaching qualification and teaching experience. Correspondingly, qualified and experienced teachers possess a supplementary qualification in guidance and counselling (often at post-graduate level), expert training in counselling skills, or educational guidance and counselling. For example, in countries in the East and Southeast Asia Pacific region, countries such as Macau (van Schalkwyk & Sit, 2013) and Thailand (Tangdhanakanond & Lee, 2013) require counsellors to have a Bachelor's degree as the minimum qualification, whereas in other countries such as the Philippines, apart from possessing a Master's in Guidance and

Counselling, counsellors are required to obtain a government license (Vinluan, 2011). Cooper (2013) reported that school-based counsellors in the UK were typically in possession of a Master's level qualification or above and were members of a professional training body.

In the US, two bodies oversee counsellor qualification: the National Board for Certified Counsellors and Affiliates Inc. (NBCC) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The qualifications of school counsellors as required by NBCC include Master's degree (or higher) in counselling; two years of supervised counselling experience for the NCC (national certified counsellor); three years of school counselling experience for the NCSC (national certified school counsellor). Counselling supervisors are required to hold a minimum of a Master's degree in a mental health field. On the other hand, the NBPTS mandates a minimum qualification of degree for state certification (41 of 50 states require a Master's degree in school counselling) and three years as a practicing school counsellor (ASCA, 2005). It must be noted that different states may have different requirements for certification and continuing education for practicing school counsellors (ASCA, 2017b).

4.9 Counselling provision for students with SEN

Along with inclusive education, inclusive counselling aims to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN who are included in mainstream school education. Counselling services have been

recognised as one provision for students with SEN, and for those experiencing emotional, behavioural and social difficulties (DfES, 2001b). One of the main reasons for including students with SEN in counselling and psychotherapy is the growing evidence base for the effectiveness of counselling as an intervention for young people who suffer from a range of problems, including depression, anxiety, behavioural difficulties, sexual abuse, school-related problems, self-harming practices and medical issues (Harris & Pattison, 2004). Moreover, the high incidence of mental health problems in students with SEN, as discussed above, is one of the main arguments for including those students in counselling. The second argument in this matter, as suggested by Pattison (2006), is the national and international human rights movements for inclusive counselling comprising among others the following: the Disability Rights Commission Act (Department for Work and Pensions, 1999); the Human Rights Act (Her Majesty's Government, 1998); the UN Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons (United Nations [UN], 1975); the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989); and the United Nations Standard Rules in the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (UN, 1993). It may be concluded that inclusive counselling could make an important contribution towards supporting children and young people with SEN as well as those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In the US, the Education Act for All Handicapped Children (1975), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), led the evolution of the school counsellor's role toward including students with special needs. ASCA (2010) clarified a statement regarding the position of professional counsellors, and students with special educational needs. This statement emphasised that professional school counsellors are committed to helping all students to "realise their potential, and make adequate yearly progress regardless of the challenges resulting from identified disabilities and other special needs" (ASCA, 2010, p. 1). A weakness of this statement is that it fails to acknowledge the varying abilities of counsellors to help students with disabilities. It should be remembered that counsellor awareness needs to be raised about students' disabilities to provide an appropriate counselling service for such students. Also, providing proper training for counsellors to work with students with disabilities could be crucial for achieving the purpose of the ASCA statement.

In the UK, the Education Act (1996) and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) state that "counselling should be considered as a useful intervention in helping children and young people who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties." The growth of school counselling indicates that strategies may need to be put into practice in the educational process to guarantee that children and young people with learning difficulties are involved.

Pattison (2006) explores inclusive counselling for children and young people with learning disabilities (aged 13-19) in mainstream schools. Using a mixed-methods design, comprising a quantitative survey (n=396) and semi-structured interviews (n=15) with counsellors and psychotherapists, the study found that the majority of counsellors (62%) did not provide counselling services for students with learning disabilities; only 3% of participants provided counselling for this client group. These findings help us to understand why so many students with SEN have not been able to access counselling services in schools, despite schools having a duty to provide such services to this group. The findings of this study show that human rights legislation for inclusive counselling is being transgressed; counsellors are in fact required to comply with this legislation and provide counselling for children and young people with learning disabilities.

The situation in developing countries may be more challenging. Wamocho et al. (2008) argue that in Kenya, SEN students have been excluded from counselling provision despite them having the most obvious need. The result is that these students leave education ill-prepared for the work environment and often destined for a life dependent on others.

4.9.1 Counsellors' attitude towards students with SEN

Students with SEN may face several obstacles in the educational process. This can include bias with regard to their particular situation (Milsom, 2006). Although a school counsellor can be viewed as an

educator with special training who is responsible for drawing attention to situations in schools that thwart, obstruct, and hamper the academic success of students, and who possesses the leadership skills to evaluate school needs, recognise issues, and to develop solutions cooperatively with others (ASCA, 2005), school counsellors who are inexperienced with individuals with SEN might be reluctant to take part in tasks associated with academics such as individualised education plans (Milsom, 2006).

While some studies (e.g., Isaacs et al., 1998; Milsom, 2002: Milsom & Akos, 2003) have found that several school counsellors feel insufficiently equipped to meet the requirements of all students, others (e.g., Bemak & Chung, 2005; Myers, 2005) have revealed that school counsellors can employ the model published by ASCA to enhance the academic achievements of students. A study by Praisner (2003) suggested that adverse attitudes of the staff in schools are frequently the outcome of inadequate training with regard to individuals with SEN. Direct encounters with students with SEN have been thought to enhance the competence, understanding and positive attitudes of school counsellors in working with these students (Bowen & Glenn, 1998; Isaacs et al., 1998; Milsom & Akos, 2003). However, counsellor education programmes, in general, do not appear to include modules on disabilities, or encounters with students with SEN, during the course (Milsom & Akos, 2003; Studer & Quigney, 2005). It can be seen that inadequate training is perhaps a significant reason

for the negative attitudes of counsellors with regard to students with SEN. Hence, it is suggested that preparation programmes for school counsellors must involve experiences with students with SEN to enhance counsellor competency and favourable attitudes (Milsom & Akos, 2003; Studer & Quigney, 2005). Other researchers who have explored the influence of training and preparedness of school counsellors on their attitudes towards inclusion include: Erhard & Umanksy (2005); Dunn & Baker, 2002; Isaacs & colleagues (1998); Milsom (2002).

The association between the self-efficacy of school counsellors and their attitudes towards students with SEN on their opinions of readiness to offer services to such students was studied by Torrence (2012) on 116 professional school counsellors. Different scales were used in this study including the School Counsellor Preparation Survey - Revised (Milsom, 2002) to capture preparedness (completely unprepared to completely prepared); the Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (Yuker et al., 1960) to capture attitudes; and the School Counsellor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE) (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). Torrence (2012) found that counsellors with greater self-efficacy view themselves as being more equipped to deal with students with SEN. However, this study also found that no significant association between attitudes towards disability and preparedness.

Cannella (2015) studied from three perspectives 155 school counsellors who worked with students with SEN. The first perspective

explored the association between the disability competence of school counsellors and their sense of self-efficacy. The second perspective addressed the differences in the disability competence of school counsellors between counsellors whose states did or did not require their completion of pre-service disability training. The third perspective explored the impact of special education coursework/professional development, disability training, work/personal experience, on school counsellor self-efficacy. The instrument used in the study was a combination of Counselling Clients with Disabilities Survey (CCDS) (Strike, 2001) and the SCSE (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The outcomes of the study showed that a significant relationship exists between the self-efficacy and disability competence of school counsellors. Furthermore, a significant relationship to competence was not demonstrated by the required pre-service training in disability; whereas, completion of coursework where disability was the chief emphasis of training was found to be significant. With regard to the third perspective, all variables – apart from knowing an individual with a disability, years of counselling experience, and previous work with persons with disability – were found to be significant. However, since these last two studies were conducted in the US in a limited number of states (one state in the case of Torrence and two in Cannella), it can be inferred that the findings from these studies cannot be generalised.

Favourable attitudes towards disabilities have been recognised as an essential characteristic for school counsellors as these can affect the roles they assume in satisfying the requirements of students SEN (Bowen & Glenn, 1998; Durodoye et al., 2004; Milsom, 2006). Completion of projects in special education, and meeting with students with SEN in fieldwork encounters (i.e., practicum/internship), have also been recognised to nurture positive attitudes towards disabilities (Erhard & Umansky, 2005; Isaacs et al., 1998; Romano et al., 2009). However, unfavourable attitudes towards disability have been found to influence clinical judgment and efficacy of counsellors' work with individuals with SEN (Spengler & Strohmer, 1994; Walker & Spengler, 1995). Consequently, it can be seen that recognising the influence of the attitudes of counsellors towards disabilities is significant as it can enhance consciousness of the biases encountered by individuals with disabilities, and reduce stigmatisation (Thomas et al., 2011).

Age has also been found in influence the attitudes of counsellors. For instance, several studies (e.g., Barr & Bracchitta, 2012; Goreczny at al., 2011; Yazbeck et al., 2004) have found that the attitudes of younger individuals were more favourable and they had fewer misconceptions towards individuals with SEN in contrast to older individuals.

Two other significant factors that influence the perceptions of individuals towards disabilities are contact and quality of contact

(Barr & Bracchitta, 2012; McManus et al., 2011). However, the influence of gender has been inconsistent as found by several studies. For instance, both men (Barr & Bracchitta, 2012) and women (Goreczny et al., 2011; Hergenrather & Rhodes, 2007) have been found to significantly forecast favourable attitudes; whereas, other studies have found that gender has no influence at all (Tervo & Palmer, 2004).

4.9.2 Barriers to inclusion in school-based counselling

Barriers that may exist to the provision of school-based counselling for SEN exist on three levels. First, there are macro-level barriers where the conditions for successful school counselling provision are prevented by political/ socio-economic factors. Second, there are general barriers which may affect student from requesting counselling. Third, there are barriers arising within the implementation itself.

A comparative analysis of school counselling in different national contexts was undertaken by Watkins (2001). Watkins concluded that successful provision of school counselling was predicted by: (1) political, social and economic stability; (2) an adequately-funded public education system; (3) a low level of control by centralised government agencies.

Pattison (2010) identifies the following barriers: a lack of awareness of the needs of young people with learning disabilities; a lack of knowledge and experience of young people with learning disabilities;

a lack of awareness of issues related to disability; and sometimes difficulties with communication. It is important to note that these barriers are linked to systems, counsellors and carers rather than to the children and young people with learning disabilities themselves, which suggests that the social model of disability has validity (Barnes et al., 2002; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 1998) in that counsellors and carers, as part of the social system, are likely to be socialised in the prevailing individual or medical model of disability. These barriers, according to the Department of Health (2001) and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2003) may impede the building an effective therapeutic relationship, and could prevent those students from accessing the counselling service.

For counselling to be a suitable intervention for students with SEN, however, Pattison (2006) found that there are four main factors which are perceived by counsellors to be important, namely: communication, ability to process information, ability to engage with the counselling programme, and the level of learning disability. These factors could be barriers situated in the individual with disabilities because of the nature of learning disabilities. However, counsellors should facilitate effective communication for individuals to process information, and adapt the processes of counselling to include children and young adults with learning disabilities.

In identifying each barrier to be addressed, Pattison (2006) provides some helpful recommendations for achieving these goals and

enhancing the inclusion of young people with learning disabilities in education. First, she argues that an increase in the awareness, knowledge and experience of counsellors working with this group, and other agencies, such as learning support workers in schools and social workers, would help the process to work more effectively. Second, it is also essential to build a strong relationship with professionals in the school community such as care managers, teachers, social workers, voluntary agencies, community psychiatric nurses and specialist psychiatrists. This strong relationship could assist professionals in referring children and young people with learning disabilities to counselling because self-referral is the most usual gateway for accessing counselling services and yet it is the least likely to be used by individuals with disabilities, thereby being non-inclusive. Third, ensuring that counsellors are trained and qualified to carry out their role would have a positive impact; suggestions have been made that qualifications to postgraduate level would have a major positive influence on inclusion. While these are valuable recommendations, this study would have been even more useful if Pattison had considered the experiences of children and young people with learning disabilities regarding the access to counselling in their schools.

Humphrey et al. (2013) identified barriers to successful implementation of programmes for SEN students through reviewing previous studies: availability of resources, complexity of the

programme, fidelity in its delivery, the motivation and skill levels of teachers in the classroom as well as the climate in the classroom and the responsiveness of students. Other factors include the fit between any new programme and the existing school practices as well as the active support of the head teacher. For their own study, they were evaluating the effectiveness of the Achievement for All (AfA) programme. This programme was piloted between 2009 and 2011 and was aimed at facilitating SEN students to achieve their full potential. To do this, the programme aimed to encourage the involvement of this group in school life, improve attendance and behaviour, reduce exposure to bullying and develop positive relationships. The findings included variable responsiveness to interventions with certain groups experiencing better outcomes than others, something confirming earlier work on a differential gains hypothesis for school-based intervention (Humphrey et al., 2013). Perhaps most significantly for the purposes of this current review, the words counselling and counsellor do not appear in the paper suggesting that the SEN issue and school counselling are not considered as significantly overlapping. The key actor is referred to as the special educational needs co-ordinator.

The most salient issues to emerge from the above discussion are four-fold: the awareness and knowledge of counsellors about learning disabilities; the experience of counsellors of providing support for students with SEN; the relationship between counsellors and the

school community; and the ability of counsellors to provide counselling to students with SEN and the barriers they face in inclusive counselling. The current study will explore these four issues in the Saudi context. Table 3.4 summarises the barriers to the successful implementation of school-based counselling that have been identified in the course of this literature review.

Table 4 Summary of potential barriers to successful implementation of school-based counselling for SEN students

Potential barrier	**Source**
Macro-level barriers	
Instability	Watkins, 2001
Inadequately-funded public education system	Watkins, 2001
Too much centralised government control	Watkins, 2001
Client-side barriers	
Client confidentiality concerns	Fox & Butler, 2007
Counsellor as stranger	Fox & Butler, 2007
Social stigma	Fox & Butler, 2007
Lack of awareness that counselling is available	Fox & Butler, 2007

Potential barrier	Source
Macro-level barriers	
Lack of awareness of/ failure to take account of the needs of young people with learning disabilities and other SEN students.	Department of Health, 2001; British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 2003; Pattison, 2010
Implementation/ professional barriers	
Counsellors unprepared/ untrained	Milsom, 2002; Milsom & Akos, 2003; Pattison 2006; Romano et al., 2009
Counsellor not central to special needs provision	Humphrey, 2013

4.10 The role of supervision in school-based counselling

Supervision was defined by Bernard and Goodyear (1992) as follows:

> *An intervention that is provided by a senior member of a profession to a junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the junior member(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients she,*

he, or they see(s), and serving as a gatekeeper for those who are to enter the particular profession (p. 4).

From this definition it is evident that a supervisory relationship is composed of various elements. Firstly, it is an intra-professional relationship rather than an inter-professional one. Second, the significance of assessment, a vital element of supervision, is highlighted (Borders, 1991a). This implies that supervisors can facilitate more effective and ethical counselling or prevent ill-chosen counsellors from remaining in the counselling profession. Lastly, supervision plays a significant role in furthering the professional development of the supervised counsellor.

Barrett and Schmidt (1986) suggested that school counsellors should involve in several supervision sessions that deals with the administrative, developmental and clinical and facets of the job, a suggestion endorsed by several authors (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Henderson, 1994; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Henderson & Lampe, 1992; Roberts & Borders, 1994).

The administrative facet of supervision deals with the work ethic and habits of the counsellor, the reliability of his/her professional judgments, his/her efficacy in developing professional relationships with others, observance of rules and standards, and suitable use of time (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Henderson & Lampe, 1992). The objective of administrative supervision is to confirm that school counsellors are working in accordance to their roles and effectively

with their colleagues. Page et al. (2001) observed that administrative supervision is the most common form of supervision provided to school counsellors and is typically achieved through an annual assessment (Borders, 1991a; Henderson, 1994).

The developmental aspect of supervision deals with the role of the school counsellor in developing, implementing, and coordinating programmes as well as their attempts to continue to develop professionally (Roberts & Borders, 1994). The emphasis of this manner of supervision is "assisting them [to] implement their goals for program improvement and professional enhancement and monitoring their levels of goal attainment" (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998, p. 199). Hence, it can be seen that developmental supervision places emphasis on both programme and individual levels.

Clinical supervision is "a powerful and personalized means of nurturing professional development" (Henderson & Lampe, 1992, p. 151). In the school environment, clinical supervision entails observation and feedback of counselling activities with the objective of enhancing the supervisee's professional and ethical functioning (Henderson & Lampe, 1992; Henderson, 1994). The objective of clinical supervision is to assess the capabilities of the counsellor who provides guidance, counselling, consultation, and referral services (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). This manner of supervision thus involves observing the performance of the counsellor and detailed feedback as a consequence. Clinical supervision, to be effective,

should be provided by supervisors who possess both a background in school counselling as well as clinical supervision experience (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998).

Supervision is acknowledged to have many benefits. For instance, it can be an essential element in promoting counsellors' development (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Larson et al. 1992). Moreover, the huge responsibilities and activities of school counselling regularly make the school counsellor "so burdened with […] tasks that they are unable to adequately address the counselling needs of the students they serve" (Herlihy et al., 2002, p. 55). Therefore, providing supervision sessions is an opportunity for supervisees to scrutinise their tasks, and to rank them. Furthermore, supervision can offer time for counsellors to address the feelings that may arise from the wide range of tasks they are increasingly asked to undertake such as feelings of stress and overwork, and even burnout (Herlihy et al., 2002; Sutton & Page, 1994).

Other benefits of supervision include enhanced interaction with and support from colleagues (Crutchfield & Borders, 1997; Peace, 1995). Moreover, supervision offers a means for counsellors to remain up-to-date with advanced counselling practices (Portman, 2002) and as a means to further the development of counsellors (Henderson, 1994; Herlihy, et al., 2002). Furthermore, supervision has been found to enhance the self-efficacy of counsellors (Cashwell & Dooley, 2001).

Also, the feedback and evaluation provided by supervision are significant benefits (Bernard & Goodyear, 1992; Borders, 1991b).

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided insights into the objectives of counselling in general and school-based counselling. Additionally, the evolution of school-based counselling and the provision of school counselling in the US, UK and in South Korea were described. The activities and roles of school counsellors were also described. Subsequent sections discussed the competencies of school counsellors including their educational qualifications. Furthermore, the role of supervision in school-based counselling was described.

The following chapter describes the research methodology employed in the study. It begins with the explanation of theoretical framework, followed by a detailed discussion of its mixed-methods design.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The objective of the current chapter is to describe the research methods that will be employed in the present study. Therefore, I will first provide a description of the theoretical framework underlying the chosen research methods, that is, the pragmatic paradigm. Subsequent sections will describe the mixed-methods sequential explanatory design followed in the study, providing details of the two phases of the study. Details will also be provided with regard to the process of translation employed by the study, the ethical considerations undertaken, the process of data analysis and integration. The measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the research and the findings will also be described.

As described in the introduction to the thesis, the main and supplementary research questions addressed by the current study are as follows:

What is the perception of school counsellors regarding the provision of counselling for students with special needs in Saudi schools?

1. How do counsellors in Saudi schools conceptualise their role in relation to special needs students?

2. What are school counsellors' experiences of providing support for special needs children?

3. How do counsellors rate their ability to provide counselling to students with special needs?

4. What barriers do counsellors experience in the development of student-centred counselling services in Saudi schools?

5.2 Theoretical framework: A pragmatic paradigm

In general, two distinct paradigms form the basis of study in the disciplines of education and the social sciences: positivism and interpretivism. These paradigms draw attention to the philosophy guiding the adoption of qualitative and/or quantitative approaches to research (Grix, 2010). In the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher believes that the scrutiny of certain occurrences in the social sciences should be undertaken subjectively. Accordingly, research using this paradigm requires that the experiences of participants be comprehensively disclosed to the researcher. This implies that the focus of the researcher should not be limited to the perspectives of the

participants but must also encompass the conditions in which these perspectives were developed so as to comprehend, explain, and decipher societal experiences (Cohen et al., 2013; Grix, 2010). In contrast, the positivist paradigm employs approaches to methodology that have their origins in the natural sciences. These approaches use unbiased evaluations of societal experiences and occurrences, and findings are stated as "laws or law-like generalizations" (Cohen et al., 2013, p.7). Consequently, one of the key criticisms of this paradigm, as reported by Cohen and colleagues (2013), is that "it regards human behaviour as passive, essentially determined and controlled, thereby ignoring intention, individualism and freedom" (p. 15).

In practice, a conceptual structure such as pragmatism can be essential to the accomplishment of research. Pragmatism has been described as a "deconstructive paradigm" that promotes research using a mixed-methods design, and that "sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality" (Feilzer, 2010, p. 8), "focus[ing] instead on 'what works' as the truth regarding the research questions under investigation" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 713). Furthermore, the significant role played by the investigator's beliefs in the interpretation of outcomes is acknowledged by this paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). As elaborated by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 22-23), this paradigm:

> ... accepts that quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research are all superior under different circumstances and it is the researcher's task to examine the specific contingencies and make the decision about which research approach, or which combination of approaches, should be used in a specific study.

The current study adopted the pragmatic paradigm as the theoretical framework as it amalgamates both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. That is, this theoretical approach uses elements from both paradigms (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

From a philosophical perspective, the origins of pragmatism (from the Greek word 'pragma' meaning action) can be traced to the work of the 19th century American philosopher Charles Peirce (West, 2012). This philosophy was further studied and expanded by different philosophers such as Arthur Bentley, John Dewey, William James, George Mead, Cleo Cherryholmes, and Richard Rorty, among others (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Conventional theories concerning truth, the features of learning and study, were rejected by these philosophers and other scholars (Gale, 2005; West, 2012). It was the opinion of the initial pragmatists that a particular scientific approach could not exclusively gain admittance into everyday existence (Conant & Egleń, 2002; Gale, 2005). As an alternative, they considered that the means to effectively

gain awareness of the world was everyday occurrences and a yearning to improve existence (Wolfe, 1998).

Pragmatism can be understood to have evolved over two periods. The first period (1860-1930) was influenced by scholars such as Peirce, James, Dewey and Bentley. However, pragmatism disappeared from the educational curricula as a consequence of firstly World War I and secondly the Great Depression in the 1930s, until the early 1960s when a revival of this paradigm was seen (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Nevertheless, the greatest influence on social science approaches and scientific philosophy can be seen from the second period (late 20th Century), also referred to as non-pragmatism (McDermid, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This revival has promoted a novel approach of consideration with regard to pragmatism and its status in existence, science and philosophy. In the present day, pragmatism is perceived to be not just a philosophy and research approach but also a "political, religious and aesthetic statement" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 53).

The summary provided by Creswell and Clark (2011) of the various philosophical worldviews and the associated implications for practice (Table 4) helps to clearly recognise why pragmatism has been at the root of much debate within social science research – the appropriately

named "paradigm wars" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 3). It can be seen that pragmatism distinctly differs with regard to crucial components of worldview. In contrast to other conceptual frameworks, the pragmatism worldview lays emphasis on research outcomes, the significance of the research problem for the approaches employed, and the use of more than one method of data collection (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Furthermore, reality can be characteristically singular or multiple as both deductive and inductive reasoning can be combined by the researcher to offer multiple perceptions of reality (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Table 5. Common elements of worldviews and implications for practice (Source: Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 42).

WORLDVIEW ELEMENT	**Pragmatism**	**Postpositivism**	**Constructivism**	**Participatory**
Ontology (what is the nature of reality?)	Singular and multiple realities (e.g., researchers evaluate theories and offer several viewpoints)	Singular reality (e.g., researchers allow or disallow theories)	Multiple realities (e.g., researchers offer quotations to demonstrate varying viewpoints)	Political reality (e.g., outcomes are discussed with participants)

WORLDVIEW ELEMENT	Pragmatism	Postpositivism	Constructivism	Participatory
Epistemology (what is the association between the researcher and the matter being researched?)	Practicality (e.g., researchers gather data by "what works" to deal with research question)	Detachment and objectivity (e.g., researchers impartially collect data on tools)	Proximity (e.g., participants are visited at their sites for data collection)	Collaboration (e.g., participants are actively involved by researchers as research collaborators)
Axiology (What is the role of values?)	Multiple positions (e.g., both subjective and objective viewpoints are included by researchers)	Objective (e.g., checks used by researchers to remove bias)	Subjective (e.g., the biases and understandings of researchers are actively discussed)	Negotiated (e.g., researcher biases are negotiated with participants)
Methodology (What is the process of research?)	Combining (e.g., mixed-methods of research)	Deductive (e.g., a priori theories are tested by researchers)	Inductive (e.g., using participants' views as a starting point, researchers develop concepts, patterns, and generalisations)	Participatory (e.g., participants are involved in all phases of the research and engage in cyclical analyses of outcomes)
Rhetoric (What is the language of research?)	Formal or informal (e.g., both formal and informal	Formal style (e.g., agreed-on definitions of	Informal style (e.g., literary, informal style	Advocacy and change (e.g., language used is

WORLDVIEW ELEMENT	Pragmatism	Postpositivism	Constructivism	Participatory
	writing styles may be used)	variables are used)	used by researchers)	oriented toward bringing about change and campaigning for participants)

From an epistemological perspective, practicality is the key to pragmatism. In other words, when dealing with the research problem, the researcher gathers data by 'what works'. This is in contrast to post-positivism where the researcher is required to gather data in a neutral manner, adhering to the principles of detachment and objectivity (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

From a methodological perspective, collection of quantitative as well as qualitative data is performed under pragmatism. The two types of data are subsequently combined (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), a procedure which both enhances and completes the research. Lastly, the researcher is permitted to use both formal and informal rhetoric by pragmatism (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In other words, telling of the literary and scientific 'story' is permitted.

To conclude this section, I quote the argument provided by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, p.87) with regard to pragmatic research.

> … decisions regarding the use of either (or both) methods depend on the current statement of the research questions and the ongoing phase of the inductive-deductive research cycle.

Thus, in pragmatism, the research method to be used is eventually determined on the basis of which approach most appropriately achieves the research intent (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, I decided to adopt a mixed-methods approach in my research.

5.3 Research design: A mixed-methods sequential explanatory study

In the context of deliberating on a suitable design to perform any research, Cohen et al. (2013, p. 115) observed that:

> There is no single blueprint for planning research. Research design is governed by the notion of 'fitness for purpose'. The purposes of the research determine the methodology and the design of the research.

This perspective directed the choice of research design for the present study, that is, a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used sequentially in the study, respectively referred to as Phase One and Phase Two of data collection. Phase One, the quantitative phase, was deemed to be an exploratory study and used a questionnaire for data collection. The eventual

objective of this phase was to offer a clear representation of the circumstances in Saudi Arabia in relation to the provision of school counselling for children with SEN in mainstream schools. The outcomes of this phase were used to facilitate the determination of the interview questions to be used in Phase Two.

Arguably, the production of greatly diverse data through the use of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches optimises the value of the analysis. Further, the use of this combination of approaches increases the credibility of the data (Mason, 1994). Also, I was aided in evaluating the research questions, while regarding them from various viewpoints, by the mixed-methods approach.

Sandelowski (2003) suggests that the mixed-methods approach is characterised by two key benefits. Firstly, it permits the researcher to obtain a more comprehensive awareness of the phenomenon being studied. Secondly, it aids in the validation of the data by contrasting one set of findings against the other. The different advantages of a mixed-methods approach were confirmed by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 15):

> If you visualise a continuum with qualitative research anchored at one pole and quantitative research anchored at the other, mixed-methods research covers the large set of points in the middle area. If one prefers to think categorically, mixed-methods research sits in a new third chair, with qualitative research sitting on the left side and quantitative research sitting on the right side.

I use both a questionnaire and interviews in my study, two approaches that vary in flexibility. The questionnaire was the tool used for the quantitative component of the study. This is a comparatively inflexible instrument since the same set of questions is to be answered by all participants. Consequently, participants have lower flexibility with regard to their responses in contrast to qualitative instruments, such as interviews. Moreover, the methods of analysis of these two approaches also vary. Quantitative methods produce numerical data that can be statistically analysed. However, qualitative methods provide non-numerical data that require different approaches for analysis. Hence, an approach using mixed-methods will arguably facilitate superior outcomes and thus satisfy the objectives of my study. This is owing to the nature of the study's research questions, which require an in-depth exploration of the Saudi context in the quantitative phase to facilitate a deeper investigation during the qualitative approach of Phase Two.

Several researchers have advocated the use of mixed research methods to determine answers to their research questions. For instance, Witkin and Altschuld (1995, p. 279) comment favourably on the mixed-methods approach, observing that:

> We do recommend that you use more than one data source or method and that you balance quantitative methods with qualitative ones. Data from any single method (surveys, interviews, focus groups, or analysis of existing records) are generally insufficient to provide an adequate basis for understanding needs and making decisions on priorities.

5.3.1 Explanatory design

An explanatory study can be considered to use a two-phase mixed-methods design (Figure 2). In general, the objective of this design is that initial quantitative results are clarified and extended by the qualitative data (Creswell et al., 2003). Figure 2 is a diagrammatic representation of the mixed-methods sequential explanatory model (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 73).

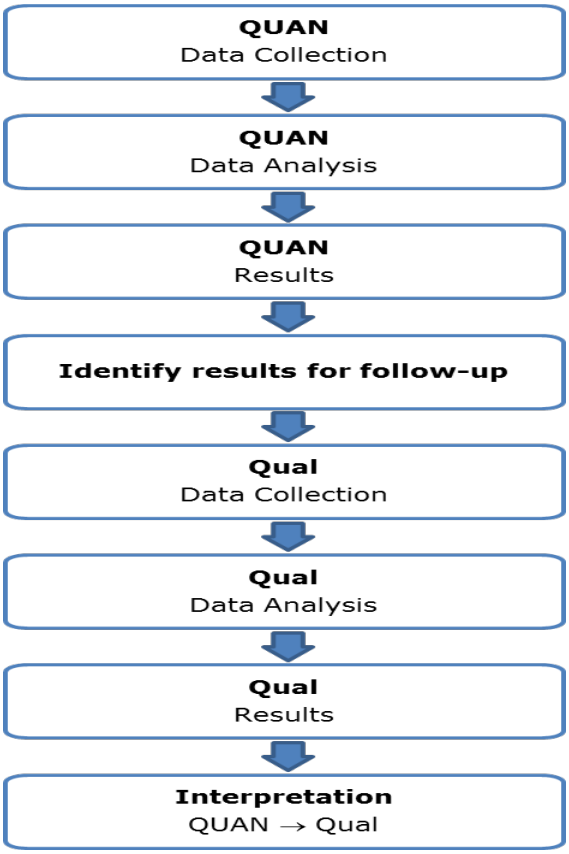


Figure 2. Mixed-methods sequential explanatory model (Source: Creswell et al., 2003, p. 73).

Figure 3 below depicts an adapted model for the current mixed-methods sequential explanatory study to investigate the nature of school counselling for students with SEN in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

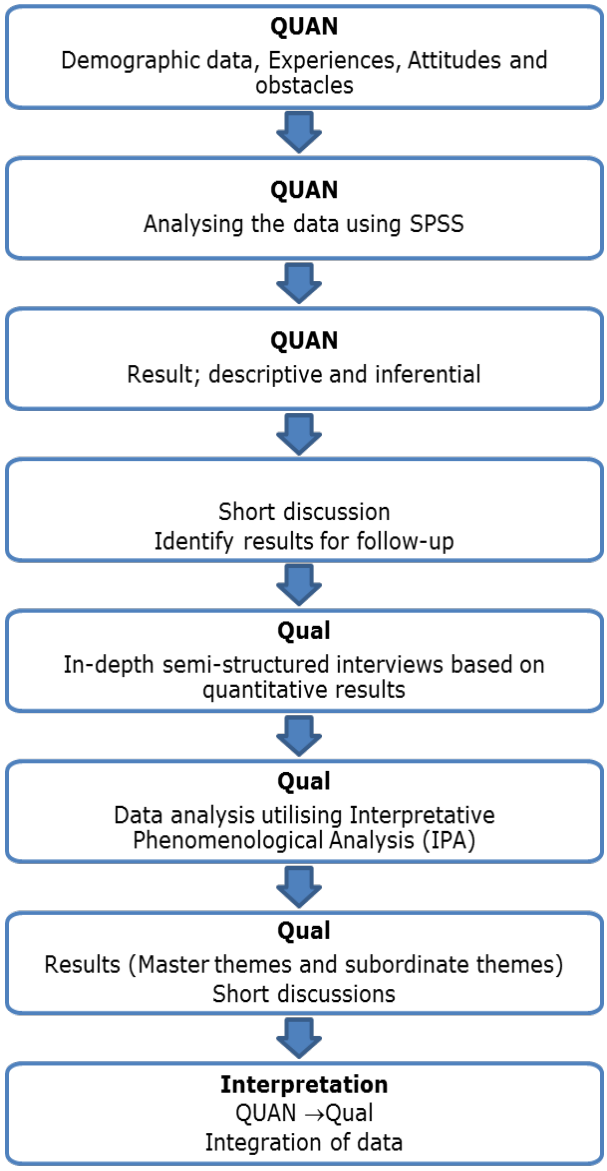


Figure 3 Adapted model for the current mixed-methods sequential explanatory study (Source: Creswell et al., 2003).

The characteristics of the study and the interests of the researcher can influence the procedures used in the mixed-methods approach. For example, a researcher may choose to commence by performing a quantitative study and then progress to a second, qualitative, phase, or the other way around. Accordingly, in my study design, I had to take a procedural issue into consideration that is, the priority attributed to the quantitative or qualitative (or both) approaches during data collection and analysis. As observed by Creswell and colleagues (2003), the process of selecting and prioritising suitable methods is a challenging issue owing to the characteristics of the study and the interests of the researcher. The study's objectives and research questions and the design for each phase are essential aspects to aid the researcher in ascertaining the priority for the qualitative approach through the course of the collection and analysis of data in the study (Morgan, 1998). As stipulated above, the objective of the current study is to determine the perceptions of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia in relation to the provision of school counselling for students with SEN and their contributions to the development of those students. Therefore, taking into the consideration the various obstacles they could encounter in working with students with SEN, I decided even before commencing the data collection that a higher priority would be assigned to the qualitative approach, although the study would start with the quantitative phase. The following section presents a detailed description of the mixed-methods approach used in the current study.

5.4 Mixed-methods procedures

Before proceeding to a description of the methods utilised in this study, I will first define methods. Methods, in general, refer to all tools, procedures or techniques use by researchers to collect and analyse data (Crotty, 1998). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) submit that methods signify the two definite forms of research activity: data collection and data analysis.

The adoption of a mixed-methods design offers critical and deeper data in contrast to the use of a single method (Sechrest & Sidani, 1995; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Furthermore, the mixed-methods design ensures that the different methods adopted can validate or complement the other(s), thus ensuring that a deeper understanding is obtained during the study.

The methods I decided to adopt were a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. My decision was based on the proposed gains from each method. Also, in the context of the current study, I determined that the most suitable manner with which to commence the study was through a quantitative phase. The next section describes the first or quantitative phase of the study.

5.4.1 Phase One: Quantitative study

The objective of this quantitative phase is to explore the current status of the provision of school counselling for students with SEN in the context of Saudi Arabia. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather crucial data in terms of the following factors: social demographics, training, experience, the perception of school counsellors regarding working with students with SEN, attitudes of counsellors toward students with SEN, and the obstacles entailed in providing counselling services for these students in Saudi Arabia.

Questionnaires were described by Burns and Dobson (2012, p. 425) as a "set of carefully designed questions given in exactly the same form to a group of people in order to collect data about some topics in which the researcher is interested". Their use has several reported advantages. For instance, questionnaires can be used without the provision of training either for the person(s) filling in or administering the questionnaire (Murphy et al., 2009). Moreover, a questionnaire can aid in obtaining answers to the 'What?', 'Where?', 'When?' and 'How?' of a phenomenon. However, it has some shortcomings in relation to obtaining an answer to the 'Why?' question. Furthermore, the survey method has been found to rarely, if ever, prove contributory associations. The chief emphasis of this method is to determine facts.

A well-structured and piloted questionnaire can be successful in collecting data speedily at lower costs (Bell, 2014). Additionally, participants who may be busy with other assignments or obligations are enabled to take part in the study at their convenience by questionnaires. In other words, respondents may feel less pressurised while responding as a questionnaire offers them time for consideration (Oppenheim, 1992). These different characteristics and benefits of questionnaires inspired their use in the present study.

From the specific perspective of the current study, a few significant benefits were foreseen from using a questionnaire. Since the subject of school counselling for students with SEN has never been studied in Saudi Arabia schools, a questionnaire could assist in understanding the existing situation in these schools. Additionally, the data gathered in this manner could contribute to deriving important implications by gathering responses from the sample of school counsellors recruited for this study. It must be noted that in quantitative studies, the participants generally act as if the researcher were not present. The following section describes the design of the questionnaire.

5.4.1.1 Questionnaire design

The review of literature (Chapter 3) provided insights into: disability; the concepts of special educational needs (SEN) and inclusive education; the needs of students with SEN; the key factors involved in providing effective inclusive support practices; and the reasons why students with SEN require counselling in school. Moreover, insights were provided with regard to: the objectives of counselling and school-based counselling; the competencies, activities, roles and challenges of school counsellors; the best practices in school counselling; counselling provision for students with SEN; the role of supervision in school-based counselling; and counselling in a Muslim context.

These themes from the review of literature and the research questions of the study were used to design the questionnaire for the quantitative phase. The questions were mostly closed-ended questions with multiple options provided for the participants to choose. A few of the questions used a Likert scale (with rankings ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). Some open-ended questions were also included to encourage participants to share their perceptions in writing. A question was also included to determine whether the participants were interested in taking part in the interviews during the second phase of the study.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 4) was structured into five sections. A brief explanation of the objectives of the study and guidelines for completion was affixed to each copy of the questionnaire. A brief description of the contents of each questionnaire section follows.

Part One: Background Data Sheet

The first section of the questionnaire contained 13 multiple-choice questions designed to obtain demographic data about the participants. Details gathered included: age; location of school (i.e., city or rural), the type of school (public or private); the number of students for which each counsellor was responsible; number of students with SEN in the counsellor's school; counsellor's qualification (Bachelor, Master, or PhD); and educational major (Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Other). Provision for further detail was provided if the participant responded 'Other' to the last question.

With regard to their experience in counselling, the participants were asked whether they possessed a professional certificate in school counselling and whether they had attended a professional training programme in school counselling. Provision for further detail was provided if the participant responded 'Yes' to either of these questions. Furthermore, the participants were asked the number of years of

teaching experience they had and whether they teach in their schools. Provision for further detail was provided if the participant responded 'Yes' to the latter question. The last two sections in this first section were related to the number of years of experience as a counsellor and the number of hours per week each counsellor dedicated to counselling.

Part Two: Providing counselling services for students with SEN

The second section of the questionnaire, which contained 15 questions, was directed to only those counsellors who worked with students with SEN. The first question, therefore, was specifically designed to check whether the participant offered counselling services for students with SEN. If the response was affirmative, the participant was asked to proceed with the remainder of the section. On the other hand, if the response was negative, the participant was requested to proceed to the next section.

The questions in this section invited details such as the duration for which a counsellor had been providing counselling for students with SEN and the means by which students with disabilities gained awareness about the counselling services in their school. From an incentive perspective, a question was included to determine whether

participants obtained an additional salary for dealing with students with SEN and if this affected their sincerity in dealing with such students if this was not the case.

Questions were also included to determine: the frequency of counselling for students with SEN; the number of hours dedicated to counselling each week; and the kind of service(s) delivered for students with SEN (e.g., academic needs, emotional needs, social needs, social relationships, mental health needs, preventative services, and other). A question was included to invite the participants' description of counselling services. The following responses were provided for participants: accessible for all students with SEN; confidential; safe; encourages trusting relationships; other – please specify. One or more of these responses could be selected.

The next question was related to the referral process used in the participants' schools. The responses provided for these were: self-referrals; parents; special education teachers; other school staff; and other – please specify. Again, one or more of these responses could be selected.

Additionally, questions were included to inquire whether the counsellors had received any training specifically for counselling

students with SEN. With regard to training, questions were included to obtain detail about the number of disability short talk/workshops attended and the number of disability courses completed.

The last three questions in this section sought insights on the communication of counsellors with students with SEN, and their relationships with special education teachers as well as with the parents of students with SEN. These last questions used a Likert scale (with rankings ranging from Very difficult to Very easy for communication and Poor to Excellent for relationships).

Part Three: The perception of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services

The emphasis of the third section of the questionnaire was on the views of all participants in relation to including students with SEN in their services. Accordingly, the first question in this section provided a list of 14 statements, and the counsellors were required to indicate their ratings for each of these on a Likert scale (rankings ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). The 14 statements are:

a) Identify students with special educational and personal needs.
b) Keep students with SEN informed of the guidance and counselling service in the school.

c) Assist students with SEN with problems of academic achievement.
d) Provide small-group counselling in regards to academic needs.
e) Help students with SEN to develop their social skills.
f) Provide small-group social-skills counselling to students with SEN.
g) Provide support groups for parents of children with SEN.
h) Consult with parents of students with SEN about the needs or concerns of their children.
i) Consult with teachers of students with SEN about the needs of their students.
j) Consult with principal about the needs of students with SEN.
k) Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN.
l) Work to discover gifted and talented students.
m) Conduct special programmes for gifted and talented students.
n) Conduct research related to inclusion's needs and problems.

The next question in this third section inquired whether the counsellors engaged in consultation. Possible responses were principal, teachers, special education teacher, parents, school psychologist, and another school counsellor. One or more of these responses could be selected.

The last question in the section pertained to professional supervision. The counsellors were asked if they received professional supervision. If the answer was in the affirmative, they were further asked to provide

details of the number of supervisions per month, per semester, and per academic year.

Part Four: Counsellors' attitudes to children with SEN

The emphasis of the fourth section of the questionnaire was the attitudes of school counsellors to students with SEN. The only question in this section provided a list of 14 statements and the counsellors were required to indicate their ratings for each of these on a Likert scale (rankings ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). The 14 statements are:

a) Integrate students with SEN in mainstream schools.
b) Students with special needs can succeed in the mainstream school.
c) Students with special needs are a challenge to work with.
d) I enjoy working with students with special needs.
e) I sometimes feel angry when I see students with SEN are enrolled in my school.
f) I avoid participating in Individualized Educational Programme meetings.
g) I have a positive attitude about working with students with SEN.
h) As far as possible, school counselling services should be provided to students with SEN.

i) No one has the right to exclude students with SEN from school counselling.
j) We need to adopt a far more tolerant attitude toward students with SEN in our schools.
k) We have a responsibility to provide the best possible counselling service for those students.
l) Students with SEN can benefit from school counselling.
m) Increased spending on school counselling for students with SEN is a waste of money.
n) Providing counselling services for students with special needs is overly time consuming.

Part Five: Obstacles faced by counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN

The last section of the questionnaire again contained merely a single question, the objective of which was to gain the perspectives of the counsellors regarding the barriers to offering services for students with SEN. A list of ten barriers gleaned from other studies was provided, and participants were required to choose the five most important barriers to offering services for students with SEN. Additionally, they could provide details of any other barriers not included in the list. The ten barriers provided were:

1. Communication with students with SEN.
2. The ability of students with SEN to process information.
3. The ability of students with SEN to engage with the counselling programme.
4. The level of learning disability.
5. Lack of awareness about students with SEN.
6. Lack of knowledge about learning disability.
7. Lack of experience of working with students with SEN.
8. Failure in building strong relationships with professionals in the school community.
9. Lack of training.
10. Engaging in other roles in the school (e.g., administrative tasks).

The penultimate question in the questionnaire was an open-ended question provided to obtain the participants' perceptions regarding the improvement of the inclusion of students with SEN in school counselling. The final question in the questionnaire was to check the readiness of the counsellors to participate in the interviews phase. The participants were asked to provide their contact information if they were interested in participating in the qualitative study.

5.4.1.2 Content validity

Content validity refers to the "degree to which elements of an assessment instrument are relevant to and representative of the targeted construct for a particular assessment purpose" (Haynes et al., 2011, p. 239). In the current study, the questionnaire was sent to two Professors in the Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling at King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and an expert in school counselling, who had previously been a supervisor at the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, to accomplish content validity. The objective of this process was to invite assurance that the aims of the current study were adequately represented in the questionnaire. Furthermore, this process can facilitate the recognition of any inadequacies in the questionnaire regarding the clarity of the questions. A third reason was to obtain suggestions in relation to the improvement of the questionnaire content and design. In general, this process culminates when all the participants in the process are satisfied that the questions represent the research aims. In the current study, the three reviewers indicated that the language used in the questionnaire was clear and intelligible and that it assisted the purposes of the research. Nevertheless, they also suggested the addition of a question (Question no. 17 in the final questionnaire) to

understand whether participants obtain financial incentives when they deal with students with SEN, as follows:

Do you gain extra salary when you deal with students with SEN?

A- Yes ☐ B- No ☐

If No, does this affect the seriousness of dealing with them?

A- Yes ☐ B- No ☐

5.4.1.3 Sampling for the questionnaire

Scholars have observed that the sampling size in quantitative analysis, in general, is larger than the sample in qualitative studies (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Kemper et al., 2003). I obtained from the Ministry of Education a list of the mainstream schools that include students with SEN in three Saudi cities namely, Jeddah, Mecca and Taif. In total, there are 240 public secondary boys' schools in these three cities which include students with SEN. The distribution of schools across the cities is as follows: Jeddah (79), Mecca (87), and Taif (74). Schools from both rural and urban areas were included in the list. Using the assumption that each school would have at least one counsellor on their staff, one questionnaire was distributed to each of the 240

schools. Of these, 138 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 57.5%. The number of urban school counsellors who responded was 95. Responses were also received from 43 of their rural counterparts.

5.4.1.4 Administering the questionnaire and its challenges

I distributed the questionnaires in the different schools in the three cities, including urban and rural schools, over a period of three and a half months (December 2013 – mid-March 2014). It must be noted that I commenced the distribution only after completing the school access requisition and obtaining the required ethical approval from the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia.

I employed a standard approach while distributing the questionnaires. First, I explained the different procedures I proposed at each stage of data collection. Subsequently, I informed the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and invited them to ask any questions for further clarification. Providing each participant with an envelope containing a copy of the questionnaire, I asked the participants to enclose their completed versions and seal the envelope to forestall any attempts to tamper with the responses.

I personally distributed the questionnaires in Jeddah and Taif. However, the visits to these schools (153 in total) were time- and

effort-consuming, and also expensive. Moreover, I was exposed to the risks associated with travel such as delays, diversions, tiredness, and so on. The travel to the rural schools was particularly risk as the connectivity to these schools was impacted by narrow, poorly lit roads with limited amenities.

Regrettably, an online connection between schools has not been adopted by the Ministry of Education. This could have simplified the process of distribution to entail merely sending the questionnaire via email. It is disheartening that the medium of communication between the schools in Jeddah and Taif, and the General Directorate of Education, remains out-of-date rather than relying on up-to-date methods such as email which is a common tool used across the world.

In stark contrast, the General Directorate of Education in Mecca provided assistance in distributing the questionnaire to the schools in Mecca. Not only they did provide a list of schools in Mecca that have students with SEN (87 schools) but they also distributed the 87 enclosed surveys received from me. The distribution to the schools commenced on 16 February 2014 and the completed questionnaires were ready for collection on 13 March 2014.

Another challenge I encountered during the quantitative data collection was that there was a week-long holiday in the middle of my trip which delayed the completion of the data collection. A family bereavement shortly after arriving in Saudi Arabia was a personal challenge encountered during the trip to collect the quantitative data. This caused a delay of one week in the data collection as I had to remain with my family for this time.

To sum up this section, I remind the reader that a merely quantitative approach was not deemed adequate to achieve the purposes of this study and hence a mixed-methods approach was chosen. As stated by Stange et al. (2006, p. 292), mixed-methods research:

… involves integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to generating new knowledge and can involve either concurrent or sequential use of these two classes of methods to follow a line of inquiry. Combining methods activates their complementary strengths and helps to overcome their discrete weaknesses.

Accordingly, the next section describes the qualitative approach used in Phase Two of the study.

5.4.2 Phase Two: Qualitative study

The second phase of this study used a qualitative approach. In general, qualitative methods of research offer a means to use the views of the persons involved in a social phenomenon to comprehend it. Furthermore, qualitative methods aid in the scrutiny of issues in societal, cultural or political settings, and in altering or modifying societal situations (Glesne, 2011). In other words, the objective is to comprehend and decode how the different participants in a social situation perceive the world around them (Glesne, 2011). To accomplish this, a researcher must employ a probing, unbiased mind to obtain access to the perspectives, often multiple, of the participants with regard to the phenomena under consideration (Glesne, 2011). In the current study, it is hoped that the data collected during the qualitative phase will clarify, delve into, and augment the data obtained during the quantitative phase, thereby offering a more accurate and complete description of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Glesne, 2011). The method of data collection in the qualitative phase of the current study is semi-structured interviews with those participants who consented to participate in the study. It must be noted that the researcher has a significant role to play in qualitative studies and can indeed be considered to be an instrument of data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In fact, the

researcher plays a "central role in generating and interpreting data in qualitative research" (Xu & Storr, 2012, p. 1).

5.4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

An interview is a flexible tool that can be used in studies to obtain deeper information on a one-to-one basis from participants using questions that were previously prepared (Phellas et al., 2011). Interviews have several benefits such as flexibility. Moreover, they help the researcher in understanding the perspectives of the participants. Additionally, they emphasise the significance of preserving the participants' narratives as these can offer the clarifications required by the researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

In general, one-to-one interviews may be performed with a group of participants. Therefore, some level of uniformity may be required in the interview process. This could entail 'standardising' the phrasing of questions or 'scheduling' or sequencing the questions in the same order. Accordingly, a structured interview refers to an interview that adheres strictly to a rigid structure and schedule. In contrast, semi-structured interviews are loosely structured and allow the inclusion of open-ended questions. Hence, they are suitable in situations which require a topic to be pursued in-depth, and facilitate a much deeper

understanding of such situations. This flexibility present in semi-structured interviews shaped my decision to use semi-structured interviews in the current study. As they are neither strictly scheduled nor standardised, semi-structured interviews allow a more thorough collection of data. Consequently, the phenomenon being studied can be more comprehensively scrutinised (Phellas et al., 2011). A further factor that facilitated my decision to use semi-structured interviews was their suitability for the matter under study, that is, perceptions of school counsellors (Drever, 2003).

However, I must also draw attention to a limitation of the semi-structured interview. Due to its flexibility, it is possible that participants may not be asked the same questions. Since this could influence the depth and quality of their responses, an interview schedule (or tracking sheet) containing the list of crucial questions could be used to ensure that key questions are asked while retaining enough flexibility to probe deeper based on the responses of the participants. Furthermore, the information obtained through semi-structured interviews is not easily generalisable (Bryman, 2015).

For the current study, I prepared a list of key or 'headline' themes and issues. I then created a list of questions to be used in the semi-

structured interviews. I used these lists to guide me during the interview process. Some of the headline themes were:

Background – The rationale for the counsellors to take up counselling.

Knowledge of SEN – Awareness of SEN, special considerations from a counselling perspective.

Infrastructure and Support – The environment for counsellors in Saudi Arabia, stakeholders, support, etc.

The objective of using the semi-structured interview in this study was to determine, through in-depth inquiry, the opinions of schools counsellors with regard to the provision of school counselling for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia. Other insights sought during the interviews were to understand school counsellors' experiences of providing support for students with SEN through school counselling and identifying the barriers they experienced in regard with working with those students.

I performed the interviews in two phases. The first, or pilot phase, was conducted with a small group of individuals. The objective of this phase was to recognise and evaluate any practical challenges regarding the planned interviews and also to assess the effectiveness

of the interview questions. The second phase was the main study. The next section describes the pilot phase.

5.4.2.2 Piloting the interviews

The efficacy of the interview questions was assessed by sending the interview schedule for review to two Professors at King Abdulaziz University. Their opinions were sought to improve the quality of the interview questions regarding the content and focus. Furthermore, a pilot interview was performed with an experienced school counsellor of Saudi origin who was pursuing his doctoral studies at the University of Nottingham, UK.

I received valuable suggestions in relation to improving the language and the phrasing of the questions from both the Professors and the school counsellor. In general, their feedback was useful and they were in agreement regarding the validity of the interview questions and schedule, maintaining that the questions adequately represented the principal objectives of the qualitative phase, which was to obtain in-depth information about the perceptions of schools counsellors in Saudi Arabia in the context of counselling students with SEN.

5.4.2.3 Sampling for the interviews

Creswell (2009) observed that it is important for sequential study designs to make use of the same participants in all the phases of a study. Consequently, I used a purposive sample of 24 school counsellors drawn from the same sample who completed the questionnaire. This sample covered schools from the three cities, specified above. The quantitative data revealed that 58.7% of the participants had experience working with students with SEN whereas the remaining 41.3% had not worked with such students. Consequently, the sample for the interviews was sub-divided into two groups. Hence, I performed interviews with 12 counsellors who have worked with students with SEN (see Chapter 6) and a further set of interviews with 12 counsellors who have not dealt with students with SEN (see Chapter 7).

Purposive or judgemental sampling is a non-random or non-probabilistic approach to sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Used in the second phase, this sampling method can be rationalised as this form of sampling is generally regarded to be synonymous with qualitative research (Given, 2008). Furthermore, the purposive sample is the most widely used instrument in qualitative studies (Marshall, 1996). More significantly, this sample was the most beneficial

regarding the current research questions as the subject under consideration was known to the participants and the researcher. Also, the participants have specific experience in relation to the phenomenon under study (Marshall, 1996).

It was demonstrated by Ball (1990) that there are several occasions when a purposive sample can be used. For instance, to contact experts who have wide knowledge and expertise about specific fields, or based on their status or rank, their occupation, and so on. Furthermore, is not necessary for a purposive sample to be large since the selection is influenced by the participants' capability to offer deep and comprehensive information. That is, a purposive sample's benefits are arguably located in its capacity to enhance the study data (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, purposive sampling, in contrast to probability sampling, should not inevitably result in a representative or generalisable sample population. Instead, its objective is to gather information that achieves the aims of the study and satisfies its queries (Cohen et al., 2013). Qualitative researchers, in general, pursue in-depth information rather than generalisable outcomes (Creswell, 2009).

5.4.2.4 Social and Emotional Experience of Conducting Interviews

It has been posited by various researchers (e.g., Bennett, 2009; Bondi, 2003, etc.) that qualitative research concerns meaning-making and that meanings are relationally produced. These meanings cannot be expounded merely by means of the self, but through associations with others, in the background of dealings, such as fieldwork. Hence, it is essential to provide a better awareness of the significance of emotions in the process of research. This must also encompass emotional experiences from the viewpoint of the researcher. It was observed by Widdowfield (2000) that the research process is influenced by the researcher and in turn, the process influences the researcher. Thus, it can be inferred that researchers who do not make use of and/or examine their individual emotions and experiences, at least partly, in their narrative are somehow misrepresenting information (Watts, 2008). Consequently, offering narratives from the perspective of researchers is noteworthy not merely to recognise the significance of emotions, but also to position the interdependence of emotional experiences of information-gathering within the course of the researchers' existence.

Anxiety has been identified as the "classic interviewer's emotion" (Laurier & Parr, 2000, p. 99). In my case, however, this anxiety went

before interviewing and encompassed concerns about obtaining ethical authorisation, planning and managing interviews (Hubbard et al., 2001). It was my intention to group interviews by geography that is, cover locations in close proximity on the same day. I did this to conserve my restricted travel-related resources, time and money. I scheduled the interviews at times of the participants' choosing, to suit their convenience while limiting the location to their offices in the respective schools. However, while I had carefully organised the interviews and their schedules, getting to the schools on time was frequently challenging. In general, evening interviews are not preferred as both participant (and researcher) may be fatigued (Beale et al., 2004). However, in the present study, this could not be avoided at times since evening interviews were preferred by some participants. Thinking back now, I can see that scheduling several interviews on the same day was not really practical as the dearth of time between interviews did not support adequate time for "psychological or emotional recovery" (Beale et al., 2004, p. 143). In addition to the actual conduct of the research, my lack of familiarity with the schools, misgivings about scheduling, forebodings about my vehicle's ability to withstand the strain of the travels to and from the schools, sentiments of anxiety and indecision were routine.

Checking my interview diary, I interviewed 24 counsellors located in three different cities in Saudi Arabia in a matter of a few weeks. The reality of fieldwork was demanding. I juggled concerns about completing the interviews accompanied by anxieties about finances while struggling with the strain of traveling daily between home and the different interview locations. Aside from these everyday worries, I was additionally concerned about the manner in which the participants would view me from the perspective of my person (competence, age, and class) which could produce unease. At the time of the interviews, I was a 29-year-old PhD student and was interviewing participants who were older than I, whose ages were between 36 years and 55 years. Moreover, they were at life-course stages which were very different from mine. Furthermore, I was a novice researcher who did not have much experience with conducting interviews. Nevertheless, I tried to position myself as an 'ally' during the interviews so as to enable more open narratives from the participants.

The participants perceived my professional and social status in various ways and this aspect influenced, sometimes, my developing a connection and fellow feeling with them. The essential uncertainty of fieldwork has been highlighted (Bondi, 2003). Moreover, the likelihood of the research association resulting in connection or understanding is not proven. Though I had had telephonic conversations with the

participants to arrange the interviews, my arrival in their offices was merely our second face-to-face encounter, the first being a fleeting interaction when I was distributing the questionnaire. Thus, these initial impressions were significant and at times triggered nervousness as I was uncertain about the receptiveness of the participants to an interview that day, as they might have had a particularly trying day with unsuccessful encounters with students (with or without SEN).

A further challenge I encountered was the matter of exhaustion or stress; something my supervisors and other colleagues had cautioned me about because of the explanatory nature of my study. Consequently, I was cognisant of the fact that both physical and mental fatigue might, and certainly could, be experienced by researchers during the course of their research. In some cases, this is completely attributable to the number of interviews they have to perform in a limited period, whereas in others, it is the outcome of the substance of the interviews, and the narratives and feelings that they encounter regularly (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009). In my case, however, it was both. Conducting several interviews in a row on such a sensitive topic started to have an effect on me, although I was conscious that this could occur. This did not take place at the start but gradually accumulated. Sometimes I would feel utterly drained after the interviews and just want to go home and sleep. At other times, all I

wanted to do was to disassociate from my study and reflect on other things. This feeling has been described by researchers as akin to participants inhabiting their heads and that completing an interview did not signify the culmination of their feelings and emotional responses to the account they had recently heard (Goodrum & Keys, 2007; Warr, 2004). A likely outcome of such feelings is that researchers may experience nervousness and/or fear as regards future interviews and assign greater likelihood of their being physically and mentally drained in the course of these.

I had foreseen that I would experience difficulties in conducting the interviews, but from time to time, the effect on me was greater than I had originally anticipated. While the continual contemplation on the narratives of my participants was mentally strenuous, it was not entirely adverse as I was provided with the opportunity to engage completely in the data and have flashes of lucidity and/or insight in which the implication of facets of the interviews became obvious. These factual, social, and emotional facets of my experiences while conducting interviews certainly affected my interactions during fieldwork in obvious and subtle ways.

5.5 Translation

Prior to commencing the field work, the researcher translated the questionnaire from English into Arabic. The translation was performed

using the conceptual translation method which "uses terms or phrases in the target language that capture the implied associations, or connotative meaning, of the text used in the source language instrument" (Braverman & Slater, 1996, p. 94). The researcher performed the task of translation due to his awareness and knowledge of both Arabic and English. An independent translator who specialised in linguistic terminology also performed an independent translation of the questions. Both translated versions of the questionnaire were then sent to a certified professional translator fluent in both Arabic and English to be checked and revised to produce high-quality versions of the translations. Furthermore, the researcher translated the interview guide and questions into Arabic to conduct the research and to confirm the correctness and quality of the collected data.

5.6 Ethical considerations

Due care was taken to ensure that ethical issues were taken into consideration at every phase of the study. Several ethical principles are in existence which must be considered when performing any manner of study. Ethics in research are significant and offer researchers standards with regard to the conduct of research in a manner that is morally appropriate (Pring, 2000). In general, the chief ethical considerations include: negotiation of access, obtaining

participants' informed consent, providing the right to withdraw, identity protection and confidentiality (Christians, 2000; Cohen et al., 2013; Pring, 2000). Burgess (2002) observed that ethical challenges can be overcome by commitment and cooperation between participants and researchers. The current study has taken measures to address the various ethical considerations described as can be seen in the following sections.

5.6.1 Access approval and informed consent

The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia requires that all researchers obtain permission to approach and access schools and gather data before they approach participants for their consent. Thus, at the outset, I obtained a formal letter from my supervisor expressing the desire to conduct my field work in Saudi Arabia. I then drafted an official request and sent this to the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in London requesting permission from the General Directorate of Education in Jeddah, Mecca and Taif to distribute my questionnaire and conduct the interviews. Accompanying my official request were the following: a copy of the questionnaire, details of the study's objectives, details of the profile and number of proposed participants, and my supervisor's letter accompanied. Subsequently, a letter was issued by the Saudi Cultural Bureau in London to the General Directorate of Education in the Jeddah,

Mecca and Taif provinces seeking permission for the researcher to visit secondary schools that include students with SEN to administer the questionnaires and afterwards conduct his interviews. I received a letter in November 2013, authorising me to perform the fieldwork for the current study. When in Saudi Arabia, I presented this letter to school principals to facilitate my access to the school and also to introduce myself as a researcher to the school counsellor. It must be noted that this process did not guarantee that the school counsellor would agree to participate in the study.

Nevertheless, informed consent (see Appdindex 5) was obtained from all the participants of the present study. Sufficient information was provided to all participants to ensure that they had a clear awareness of the objectives of the study and the nature of their own involvement in the study. I clarified all stages of data collection and the associated procedures honestly and informed them that they have the right to withdraw at any point from the research. Also, they were encouraged to ask for more clarification as required. All the participants in the study signed a consent form to demonstrate their agreement to participate in the study.

5.6.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

It is an ethical matter that the identity of participants should be kept anonymous and confidential once the researcher obtains their consent for participation. In essence, anonymity signifies that the identities of both participants and their workplaces cannot be recognised by the information provided in the study (Cohen et al., 2013; Kvale, 1996). Accordingly, the identities of the school counsellors and the schools with which they were affiliated were not disclosed in this study. Pseudonyms or codes (e.g., alphabets such as, A, B, C, D…) were used instead of direct references. This ensured the protection of their rights and the preservation of their anonymity.

Moreover, the interviewees were informed that the interviews would be recorded and then archived to the researcher's computer and that they had the right to accept or reject this in their individual cases. However, I also informed them that the records would be used only for the purposes of the current study.

Closely allied to the matter of anonymity is the matter of confidentiality which denotes the notion that, while participants' comments can be used in reports or presentations, their acknowledgment should forestall any recognition of their source. This is vital to maintain participants'

privacy. Although researchers are aware of the source of information or are able to recognise participants based on the information, they are required to conceal the association and prevent it from being made public (Cohen et al., 2013). Therefore, I undertook a pledge to all the participants in this study that the information obtained from them would be kept confidential and their privacy would be maintained. Moreover, I asked the participants' permission to use the findings from the current study for future research and possible publication.

5.7 Data analysis

The analysis of data in studies using mixed-methods research involves the scrutiny of both the quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The data obtained from each phase is scrutinised using a suitable method of analysis. That is, quantitative data is analysed quantitatively whereas qualitative data is analysed qualitatively (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Although some of the processes are similar – namely, data organisation, data examination, data scrutiny, description, and data authentication (Creswell & Clark, 2011) – the analysis in mixed-methods research depends on the study design. As the current study employed a sequential explanatory design, the analysis of the quantitative data is conducted first followed by the

analysis of the qualitative data. Finally, the data from the two phases will be integrated.

The following subsection describes the methods used in the analysis of the quantitative data.

5.7.1 Quantitative data

The analysis of the quantitative data analysis occurred after the quantitative phase of the study. Quantitative data from the questionnaire was statistically analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics (v22) tool.

Different statistical tests were used in the study. Some of the tests included: (i) frequencies and percentages, (ii) descriptive statistics, (iii) independent t-test, (iv) cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis, and (v) Friedman rank test. A brief description of the different tests is provided in the following sections.

Descriptive statistical analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis is used to illustrate the frequencies and percentages of observations that exist for each data element or group of data elements (Lavrakas, 2008). It is used to explain the basic

features of the collected data. This is accompanied by summaries of the sample and the measures, along with simple graphs. I used these processes to describe and compare the responses obtained from the questionnaire. Where appropriate, the data was grouped using factors such as age, location, school size, and so on. Descriptive statistical analysis

Independent t-test

The independent-samples t-test (or independent t-test, for short) is used to compare the means between two non-related groups on the same continuous, dependent variable. I used this test to determine whether there were significant differences between the counsellors' perceptions of various factors. The counsellors were grouped by factors such as age, by location, school size, and so on.

Cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis

A cross-tabulation is a "joint frequency distribution of cases based on two or more categorical variables" (Michael, 2001, p. 1) which can be further scrutinised using the chi-square statistic ($\chi 2$) to determine whether the variables identified in the study are related statistically (that is, independent or dependent). For example, in the current

study, these tests were used to examine how counsellors' experiences with students with SEN varied with school size.

Regression analysis

Linear regression analysis was performed to facilitate the testing of the hypotheses framed for the study. Reviewing and analysing associations between the dependent and independent variables of the study is aided by linear regression analysis. Linear regression analysis may be simple or multiple. Simple linear analysis implies forecasting the value of dependent variables based on one independent variable. The use of multiple linear regression analysis, on the other hand, is to describe the relationship between one constant dependent variable and two or more independent variables. The outcomes of the linear regression analysis are used to establish whether variations in the independent variables can aid in explaining the variations in the dependent variables and to measure the degree to which the independent variable supports the dependent variable. This method has been described as a dependent first-generation method and is thus frequently used in data analysis (Gefen et al., 2000). In the present study, I used multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses derived during the quantitative phase.

Friedman rank test

The Friedman test is a non-parametric statistical test. It is used to detect differences in treatments across multiple test attempts in a manner similar to parametric measures such as ANOVA. The procedure first ranks each row (or block) together and then considers the values of ranks by column. I used the Freidman Rank test to find the five most important barriers encountered by counsellors with regard to offering services for students with SEN.

5.7.2 Qualitative data

The chief approach used to analyse the 24 interviews conducted during this study is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Therefore, it is important to answer the question, 'What is IPA?'

5.7.2.1 What is IPA?

Smith et al. (2009) describe IPA as a precise hermeneutic method that is devoted to investigating of how individuals make sense of experiences. This method extends the work of Heidegger and Gadamer and makes a specific commitment to person-in-environment and not merely phenomenon-as-experienced (Finlay, 2011). Over the past decade, increased use of this methodology has been seen in the area

of health psychology, due partially to its interest in performing a detailed scrutiny of human experience (Smith et al., 2009). From an epistemological perspective, researchers using IPA participate in a deep emphasis on the lived experiences of the participants and how the participants make sense of or decode them (Smith et al., 2009).

Research using IPA is phenomenological with regard to its awareness of a specific experience, with a hermeneutic attitude to the analysis of interview text. Smith (2004, p. 40) observed: "The participant is trying to make sense of their personal and social world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world". In other words, the researcher attempts to comprehend the participants' experiences by listening to the stories through the filter of his or her own experiences. Some components of a participant's experience may be more familiar than others depending on the manner in which the researcher has encountered comparable situations in his or her own life. A significant element of IPA is the capacity to isolate aspects of the participant's experience from the researcher's experience and then offer a description of the experience as truthfully as possible with the least amount of filtering.

Two objectives must be kept in mind by a researcher who proposes to use IPA. The first is to obtain awareness of the participant's universe

and then to describe the features of that world. It has been observed that a "double hermeneutic" exists in IPA (Smith et al., 1997), meaning the researcher strives to understand the participant who in turn attempts to decode the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). However, the researcher is constrained, by his or her own perceptions, from gaining admittance to a participant's distinct experience. Thus, IPA's objective is to achieve an explanation which is as "close to the participant's view as is possible" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 104) while acknowledging that the procedure is unavoidably interpretative. The other objective is to develop an interpretative justification, communicating the manner in which the participant interpreted the experience and what it signifies to him or her. These objectives are directly inspired by the work of Heidegger and Gadamer, with Heidegger maintaining that phenomenological investigation is an interpretative procedure and Gadamer identifying the intricate association between the phenomena and the individual. IPA urges an in-depth examination of the variance of explanations in contrast to bracketing, as applied by Husserl and Giorgi, which urges the researcher to pursue the core of a phenomenon in participant interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). In their use of IPA, Smith and colleagues (2009) advocate that the researcher engages with the participant instead of with bracketing, with the part played by

bracketing viewed as a means of "acknowledging evolving preconceptions, hunches, and theoretical predilections while engaging the hermeneutic circle where fore-structures are continually modified" (Finlay, 2011, p. 79).

In summary, it can be seen that an IPA approach is composed of three essential notions: the phenomenological element which pursues the understanding of the participants; the interpretative element which contemplates cultural and physical settings as they seek to decode the experience; and the improved understanding obtained by the researcher.

A few reasons directed my decision to use the IPA approach in the current study. First, the phenomenological element was significant as it aided in examining the experiences of the participants as they conveyed them. Thus, I could consider the context of each participant as it shaped their narrating of their experiences in school with students with SEN. Second, I intended to reflect on my understandings as associated with extant literature. I could thus ensure that the current study had the capacity to fill the existing gaps in knowledge with regard to the lived experiences of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia who worked with students with SEN. The different elements of IPA offered a robust foundation for investigating the interactions of the

school counsellors with students with SEN, as well as the lived experiences of such counsellors and how they interpreted these experiences in the context of Saudi Arabia.

5.7.2.2 The analytical process

After obtaining the consent of the participants and recording the interviews, I created interview transcripts from the semi-structured interviews recorded with the 24 counsellors. These transcripts were analysed in Arabic without translation to permit the researcher to absorb the data and also to offer the participants the opportunity to review and modify their transcripts. However, all interview extracts employed in the current study were first translated by the researcher to ensure that they accurately represented what had been described by the participants. Subsequently, a certified professional translator reviewed the translations for all the extracts.

The process of analysis was performed in a manner consistent with the practical instructions for using IPA to analyse qualitative data, as suggested by Smith and colleagues (2009). I commenced the process by analysing each interview separately. I then listened and re-listened to each interview recording several times and also carefully read and re-read the interview transcripts multiple times. Again, this adhered to

the suggestion of Smith and colleagues (2009) who indicated that the researcher should immerse him- or herself deeply in the data. These multiple iterations of listening and reading helped me to make exploratory notes, comments and opinions about the content, context and initial interpretive comments which were made in one margin of each transcript. Yet again as suggested by Smith and colleagues (2009), I had to place greater emphasis on my exploratory notes and observations, which reflect the source material, rather than on the transcripts. The objective was to convert my notes into evolving themes which were written in the second margin of the transcript.

After recognising the emergent themes, the next stage was to determine links and associations between them and to group them together according to theoretical likenesses. In other words, a list of master themes and superordinate themes was delivered at the end of the analysis process for each interview. This process was completed for all the 24 interviews conducted in the current study. As I chose not to use any software during the analysis process, it is important to note that I used the time-tested method of pen and paper and some coloured highlighters. After developing the list of master themes and superordinate themes, I wrote down the relevant extract from the participants' transcripts followed by the line number in which it occurred. This made it easy for me to return to the precise location on

the transcripts when needed.

The repeated reviewing of the data and periods of introspection necessitated by these examinations, alerted me to the intermittent fragments of narratives that did not correspond with the emerging themes. These 'outlier data' were not discarded and affected the manner in which I considered, identified and viewed those existing themes. Hence, instead of discarding these exceptions as outlier data that had nothing to contribute, I reviewed them more fully being aware of the importance of including outliers in terms of their contribution to depth and 'richness' of qualitative data (Thorpe & Holt, 2007).

Finally, a cross-case analysis was conducted to make the analysis richer and more comprehensive. This was accomplished by compiling a list of the themes and then clustering them into master and superordinate themes. As the 24 interviews were divided into two studies in this thesis (Chapters 6 and 7), two tables of master themes, including multiple superordinate themes, were produced in the results sections in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.8 Data integration

Data integration signifies the phase or phases in the research process in which the quantitative and qualitative methods mix or integrate

(Creswell et al., 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The options range from mixing in the early phases of the study while its purpose is being formulated and when both quantitative and qualitative research questions are introduced (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003), to the integration of the findings from the quantitative and qualitative phases in the study's interpretation phase (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003).

Furthermore, the quantitative and qualitative phases are linked in the mixed-methods sequential designs (Hanson et al., 2005) as in the intermediate stage when the outcomes of the data analysis in the study's first phase enlighten or direct the data collection in the second phase. A researcher typically connects the two phases while selecting the participants for the qualitative analysis based on the quantitative results from the first phase, in the sequential explanatory design (Creswell et al., 2003). Another linking point might be the creation of the protocols for qualitative data collection, based on the outcomes from the quantitative phase, to examine those outcomes in more detail by gathering and scrutinising the qualitative data in the study's second phase.

In the current study, I established a link between the quantitative and qualitative phases by selecting 24 participants for the qualitative interviews from the participants of the quantitative phase. A second

point of connection involved using the results of the quantitative phase in the creation of the interview questions for the qualitative data collection while the qualitative data explained the numerical data of the quantitative phase. The data was analysed separately and the results were provided in three chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Thus, the integrated results from both phases were constructed during the overall interpretation and discussion of the entire study.

5.9 Trustworthiness of the research and findings

Trustworthiness was described by Yin (1993) as a measure to assess the quality of research design, while it was described as a research objective by Guba and Lincoln (1994). I used several strategies in this study to promote trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) including: triangulation; participant feedback; peer feedback; and audit trails. In mixed methods research, triangulation implies the use of multiple methods to gather and examine data (Rothbauer, 2008). In this study, I used triangulation of methods to gather data from varied viewpoints and in diverse settings. For instance, I made use of interviews and questionnaires to gather data. Furthermore, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I used three methods to triangulate the data and address the requirements of trustworthiness from a data perspective: member checking; using peer review; and keeping an audit trail. I

achieved member checking in the qualitative phase by providing the participants with copies of their individual interview transcripts to review post transcription. This was to ensure that the information collected was accurate and that the participants had the opportunity to clarify or add further information (Creswell, 2009). The participants provided feedback, as appropriate, with regard to their interpreted answers and revisited previously asked questions to expound on responses. Participants were able to make changes to their transcripts; the primary request was to omit any potentially recognisable individual, student or school characteristics. I also encouraged the participants to contact me with any follow-up questions. Furthermore, I recorded an audit trail. This included an overview of the transcripts, the rationale for selecting certain themes, and a summary of all findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also maintained field notes and a reflective journal to track the interview process and my personal reactions. Two colleagues who were advanced doctoral students served as the peer reviewers. These peer reviewers had access to the original interview transcripts, coded transcripts and rationale for identifying emergent themes, the audit trail, and my journal. I continued to be in constant conversation with the peer reviewers throughout the process of data analysis. This process of peer review also aided in minimising the risk of overlooking outlying themes

inherent when the interpretation of an individual researcher is employed to determine central themes (Guest et al., 2012). Moreover, as stated earlier, I did not withhold any information about my previous experience as a teacher of students with SEN in Saudi Arabia and hence was transparent about my position as an 'insider' in the setting of the study. However, it was evident that some of the participants did consider me to be an 'outsider' because I was not currently a part of their universe. Further, I also was transparent during the interviews and after (while analysing and reporting the data) of the probable impact of my subjective lens to the overall findings of the study.

In addition to various activities described above, I also maintained a reflexive journal, recording my thoughts in relation to each facet of the study. This journal functioned as a record which could be available for others to evaluate my process. Mann and Kelley (1997, p. 392) observed that reflexivity is the awareness that "all knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced; it is grounded in both the social location and the social biography of the observer and the observed". It has been recognised that a significant component of establishing trustworthiness is evaluating how the researcher's position or social situation influences the process of the research (Lietz et al., 2006). Reflexivity encourages the researcher to

strive to capture the connections and be aware of how subject and object influence each other as it is not possible to fully understand the lived experience of the participants (Finlay, 2002).

5.10 Summary

This chapter described the research methods employed in the present study. Accordingly, a description was provided of the theoretical framework underlying the chosen research methods, that is, the pragmatic paradigm. Subsequent sections described the mixed-methods sequential explanatory design followed in the study with details of the two phases of the study. Details were also provided regarding the process of translation employed by the study, the ethical considerations undertaken, and the process of data analysis and integration. The measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the research and the findings were also described. The following chapter presents and discusses the findings from the quantitative phase.

Chapter Six: Phase One – Quantitative survey: Findings and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This is the first of three chapters presenting the findings concerning perceptions of school counsellors with regard to the provision of school counselling services for students with SEN in Saudi Arabian schools. As described in Chapter Four, the first phase of the study entailed the collection of data using questionnaires from school counsellors in mainstream schools in three cities in Saudi Arabia: Jeddah, Mecca and Taif. The objective of this chapter is to report and present the analysis of the findings of this first phase. More specifically, this chapter presents the analysis of questionnaire data from the first phase of the study using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. The chapter is organised into four key sections. The first section of the chapter briefly summarises the questionnaire response rate. The second section describes the data as obtained from the five segments of the questionnaire, namely: the background or demographic data of the respondent counsellors; counsellors' experience of providing support for students with SEN; the perception of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services; the counsellors' attitude towards students with SEN; and the obstacles faced by counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN.

The third section presents the testing of the hypotheses as identified from the questionnaire data. The final section provides a discussion of these quantitative findings.

6.2 Section 1 – Questionnaire response rate

Questionnaires were distributed to 240 Saudi counsellors working in schools that include students with special needs in three different cities (Jeddah, Mecca and Taif); of these 138 were completed and returned, resulting in a response rate of 57.5%. Table 5 shows the return rate of the questionnaires by city. It could be observed that the rate of return was fairly even across the three locations.

Table 6: Questionnaire return rate

City	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned	Return rate %
Jeddah	79	47	59.5
Mecca	87	45	51.7
Taif	74	46	62.2
Total	240	138	57.5

6.3 Section 2 – Findings from the questionnaire data

As described in Chapter 4 (Research Methods), the questionnaire used in the study was structured into five sections. The first section was designed to obtain background information about the counsellors. The second section obtained details about the provision of counselling services by counsellors for students with SEN whereas the third

obtained information about the perception of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services. The fourth and fifth parts respectively addressed the counsellors' attitudes to children with SEN and the obstacles faced by counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN.

6.3.1 Demographic data

This section provides a detailed description of the demographic information that was collected from the sample participants. In general, collecting the demographic information of respondents aids a study in assessing the fitness of the respondents to participate in the survey. Furthermore, the demographic distribution of respondents assists in establishing the exactness to which the population of a study is imitated by the sample. Studies across various fields have found that the perceptions of respondents are affected by their demographic characteristics such as age, qualification, experience, etc. Accordingly, the current study gathered and analysed the demographic data of the respondents. Demographic information gathered included personal information regarding the school counsellors and their experience in counselling.

6.3.1.1. Counsellors' age and age-related experience

The majority (97.1% of 138) of counsellors were found to be aged 35 years or older. The remainder were aged 29-34 years (2.9%) (see

Table 1, Appendix 1). Thus, it could be inferred that most of the school counsellors were quite mature in terms of age.

Associated analyses, using cross-tabulation and independent t-test, of the counselling experience of the counsellors revealed that the older (≥35 years of age) counsellors had significantly more counselling experience (M=2.27, SD=1.41; t(78)=-7.97, p<.001) than did the younger (<35 years of age) counsellors (M=1.0, SD=.00) (See Tables 1,2 and 3, Appendix 2).

6.3.1.2. Location and differences in experience between rural and urban

The distribution of the participants across the three cities was fairly even as can be seen in Table 6.

Table 7: Participant location

City	***Number of participants***	***Percentage***
Jeddah	47	34.1
Mecca	45	32.6
Taif	46	33.3
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Furthermore, the data revealed that the majority (68.8%) of the counsellors who participated in the survey worked in urban schools. An analysis of the years of experience of the counsellors with their

location (i.e., rural or urban) indicated that there was no significant difference ($t(71)=1.6$, $p=.11$) in experiences between counsellors in rural and urban schools. In general, the results indicated that counsellors in urban schools had an average of 4-9 years' experience with students with SEN ($M=2.38$, $SD=1.556$) whereas counsellors in rural schools had an average of 4-6 years' experience working with students with SEN ($M=1.92$, $SD=0.954$) (Table 11, Appendix 2). Further analysis of the data revealed that location contributed to a significant difference regarding communication with students with SEN ($t(78)=2.026$, $p<.05$). Counsellors in urban schools found it significantly easier to communicate with students with SEN ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.12$) than counsellors in rural schools ($M=2.71$, $SD=1.16$). Also, no significant differences were found between urban and rural school counsellors regarding the relationship of counsellors with special education teachers ($t(78)=-.801$, $p=.426$), and with parents of students with special educational needs ($t(78)=.575$, $p=.567$) (Tables 4 and 5, Appendix 2).

Moreover, a marginally significant difference was found in relation to the perceptions of counsellors in the urban and rural schools in connection with establishing and maintaining cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN. Counsellors in urban schools tended to agree more with this role for counsellors ($M=1.34$, $SD=.52$)

than counsellors in rural schools (*M*=1.53, *SD*=.63; *t*(135)=-1.898, *p*=.06). No other significant differences appeared between the groups regarding the counsellors' roles (Tables 4 and 5, Appendix 2).

6.3.1.3. Type of school

The results indicated that the majority (97.83%) of the counsellors were associated with public schools. In other words, only three counsellors (2.17%) were from private schools (Table 4, Appendix 1).

6.3.1.4. School size and associated differences

Table 5 (Appendix 1) shows that 28.26% of the participants were associated with schools having 150-300 students, 23.19% were associated with schools having 301-450 students, and 16.67% were each associated with schools having 451-600 students and schools having greater than 600 students. Finally, 15.22% of the participants were associated with schools having less than 150 students. From this data, it could be inferred that the majority (56.52%) of the counsellors were associated with large schools (i.e., schools with >300 students) whereas the remainder (43.48%) were associated with small schools (i.e., schools with <300 students).

With regard to the number of students with SEN in the school (Table 6, Appendix 1), the majority (48.5%) of the counsellors stated that their schools had 11-30 students with SEN. A further 38.4% reported that less than 10 students with SEN attended their schools. Very few

(7.9%) schools appeared to have greater than 30 students with SEN. It must be noted, however, that 7 participants did not report the number of students with SEN in their schools.

A comparison of the counsellors' attitudes towards students with SEN based on the school size (i.e., large and small schools) revealed that a significant difference existed in their opinions regarding whether students with SEN can succeed in the mainstream school ($t(116.24)=3.179$, $p<.01$) (Table 8, Appendix 2). The study's data showed that counsellors in large schools were more likely to agree with this statement ($M=1.88$, $SD=.806$) in comparison to counsellors in small schools ($M=2.37$, $SD=.938$). Moreover, there was a significant difference between groups in the enjoyment of working with students with SEN ($t(134)=3.078$, $p<.01$). School counsellors in larger schools enjoy working with students with SEN more ($M=1.99$, SD=.747) than do counsellors in smaller schools ($M=2.4$, $SD=.79$). However, there were no significant differences between groups regarding the other statements (Tables 7 and 8, Appendix 2).

Also tested was whether counsellors in small and large schools differ regarding the perception of obstacles towards providing counselling to students with SEN. There was a significant difference between groups regarding the lack of experience of working with students with SEN ($\chi^2(1)=3.72$, $p=.05$). Significantly, more counsellors in small schools

(70%) stated that they lacked experience working with students with SEN than counsellors in large schools (53.8%). There were no significant differences between the other obstacles (detailed information is provided in Tables 14 and 15 in Appendix 2).

6.3.1.5. Counsellors' qualifications and specialisations

The majority (91.3%) of counsellors held a Bachelor's degree. That is not surprising because the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia requires at least a Bachelor's degree in order to become a counsellor in a school (MoE, 2007). Postgraduate qualification would be essential in order to facilitate and enhance counselling provision. However, the data show that only 7.2% of counsellors who worked in these schools had a Master's degree, and only two counsellors had a PhD, as shown in Table 7 (Appendix 1).

A related question addressed the counsellors' educational specialisation (i.e., major). The rationale behind this question was due to the preference of the Saudi MoE to appoint counsellors with specialisations in Psychology, Sociology or Social Work (MoE, 2007). However, the results indicate that the majority of participants have majors in other fields such as, Arabic, Islamic studies, Geography and History (63.7%). The fields of Psychology, Sociology and Social Work together accounted for only 12.2% of the participants' majors. The remaining participants (23.9%) majored in other subjects, such as

Science and Mathematics. This data serves to draw attention to the fact that the guidelines provided by the Ministry are not strictly followed by the schools in Saudi Arabia, at least in the three cities under consideration (see Table 8, Appendix 1 for more detailed information).

6.3.1.6. Counsellors' professional training and qualification

Counsellors were asked whether they possessed a professional certificate in school counselling in addition to their basic academic qualifications. As shown in Figure 4, only 30.4% of those who participated in this study reported that they have obtained a professional certificate related to school counselling. The remaining 69.6% counsellors reported that have not obtained any professional certificate in school counselling.

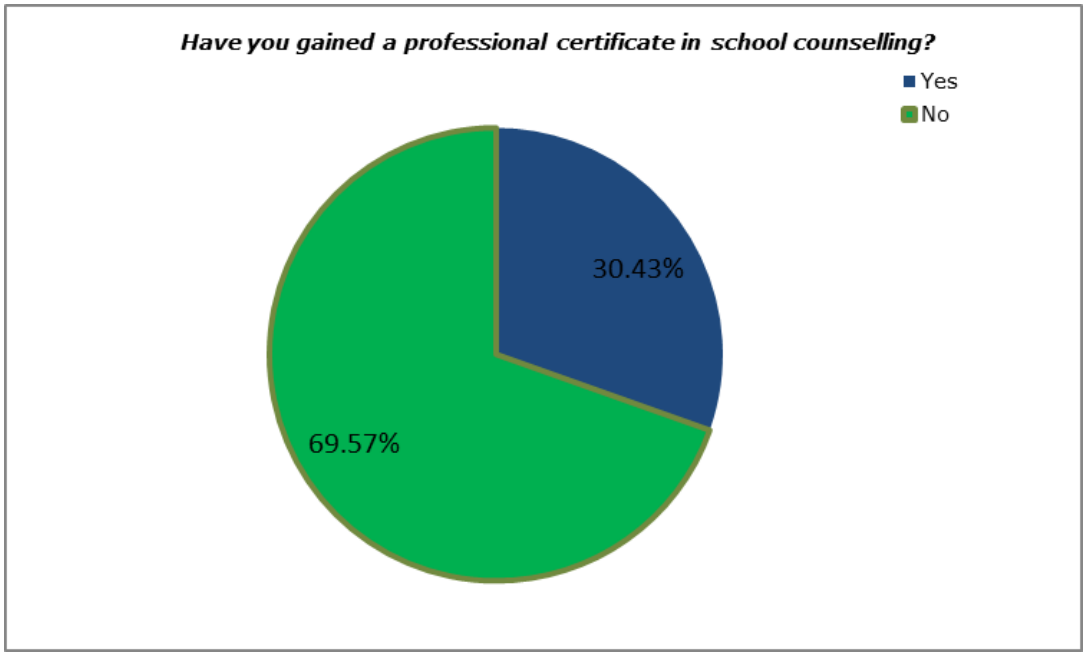


Figure 4 Percentage of counsellors who have a professional certificate in school counselling (n=138)

Counsellors who obtained a professional certificate (30.4%) were asked to provide more details about their certification. The data in Table 9 (see Appendix 1) reveals that 52.3% of the counsellors had obtained a Diploma in Guidance and Educational Counselling. A further 28.6% of the counsellors had undertaken some courses in school counselling. However, these counsellors did not provide any detail regarding labelling these courses or their certificates. A few (12%) of the counsellors reported that they had obtained certification in Psychometrics, in Rehabilitation or Psychological Counselling, school-based Social Services, the Development of Behaviour, and during the course some seminars about the function of school counselling. It must

be noted that 7.1% of the counsellors with professional certification did not respond to this question.

With regard to the professional training programme, the participants were asked whether they had attended a professional training programme. Figure 5 shows an interesting finding that 78.26% of the participants answered "Yes" to having attended professional training, while 21.01 % of counsellors did not attend any professional training programme. One counsellor did not respond to this question.

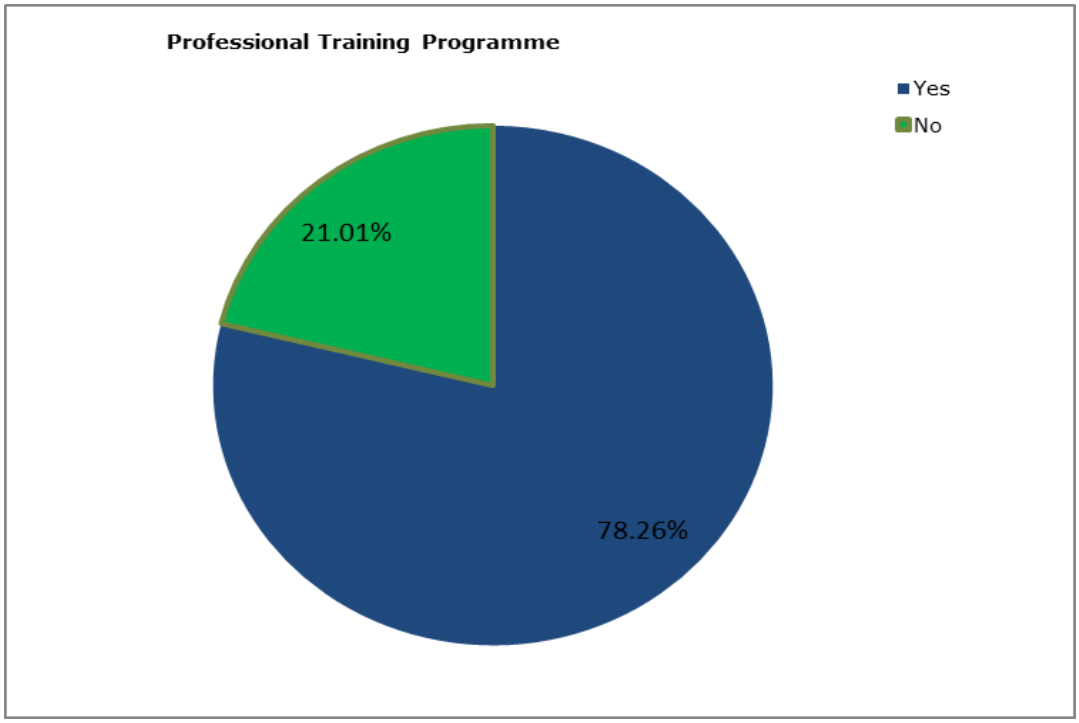


Figure 5 Percentage of counsellors who have attended a professional training programme (n=138)

The counsellors who attended professional training provided some details about the duration of these programmes. The majority (84.26%) of these counsellors reported attending a training

programme for "less than one month". A further 11.11% attended a professional training programme of between one and three months in duration. A few (4.63%) had attended programmes of more than three months in duration (Table 10, Appendix 1).

6.3.1.7. Counsellors' experience

Data related to the experience of the participants was explored from the perspectives of both teaching and counselling. It should be noted that it is not essential for counsellors to have teaching experience. However, in Saudi Arabia the Ministry of Education has permitted individuals from the existing teaching force to work temporarily as counsellors in schools (Alhossaini, 2007).

It was found that the majority (52.9%) of the participants had significant teaching experience, of 16 years or more. A further 20.29% of the counsellors had 6-10 years of teaching experience while 16.67% reported that they had 11-15 years of teaching experience. Only one counsellor did not mention his teaching experience (Table 11, Appendix 1).

To inquire deeper, the counsellors were asked whether they teach in their school besides their responsibilities in providing counselling services. The results indicate that the majority (90.58%) of counsellors do not do any teaching tasks in their schools. However, a

few (9.42%) reported that they do teach in their schools as shown in Figure 6 below.

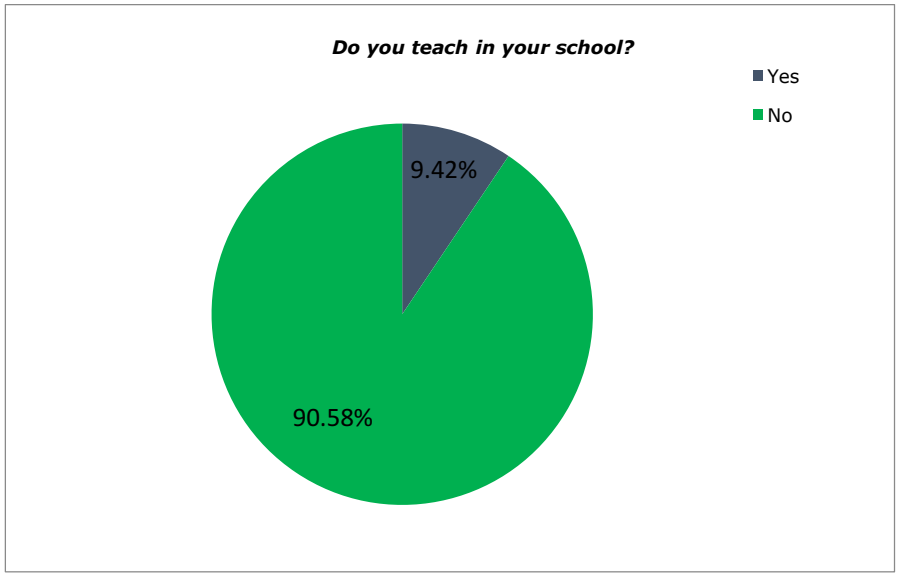


Figure 6 Percentage of counsellors who teach in their school (n=138)

In relation to experience in counselling, Table 13 (see Appendix 1) shows that, while the majority (36.23%) of the counsellors had experience of 13 years and more in counselling, 33.33% had only between 1-3 years of experience in a counselling job. Of the remaining counsellors, 12.32% had worked as a counsellor for 4-6 years while 18.12% had 7-12 years of counselling experience.

The counsellors were also asked about the number of hours they dedicated to counselling every week. The results indicated that the majority (35.51%) of the counsellors spent 26 hours or more in providing counselling in the school. A further 26.09% reported that they spent only 10-15 hours in counselling every week. Moreover, 24.64% of the counsellors reported spending 21-25 hours in providing

counselling services in their schools every week. The remaining 13.77% spent 16-20 hours a week in providing counselling services in school (Table 14, Appendix 1).

Having discussed demographic data, the next section describes the data obtained regarding the second section of the questionnaire, that is, counsellors' experience of providing support for students with SEN.

6.3.2 Counsellors' experience of providing support for students with SEN

Since the objective of the current study is obtain a deeper understanding of the opinions of counsellors in Saudi Arabia in relation to the provision of counselling services to students with SEN, the intention of the first question in this section was to determine the percentage of counsellors who work with students with SEN and those who do not. Participants were asked whether their counselling clients included students with SEN. As shown in Figure 7, 58.7% of counsellors reported that they had worked with students with SEN, while 41.3% of counsellors have not dealt with those students in their schools. The data and commentary provided in this section is based on those counsellors who have had experience with students with special needs.

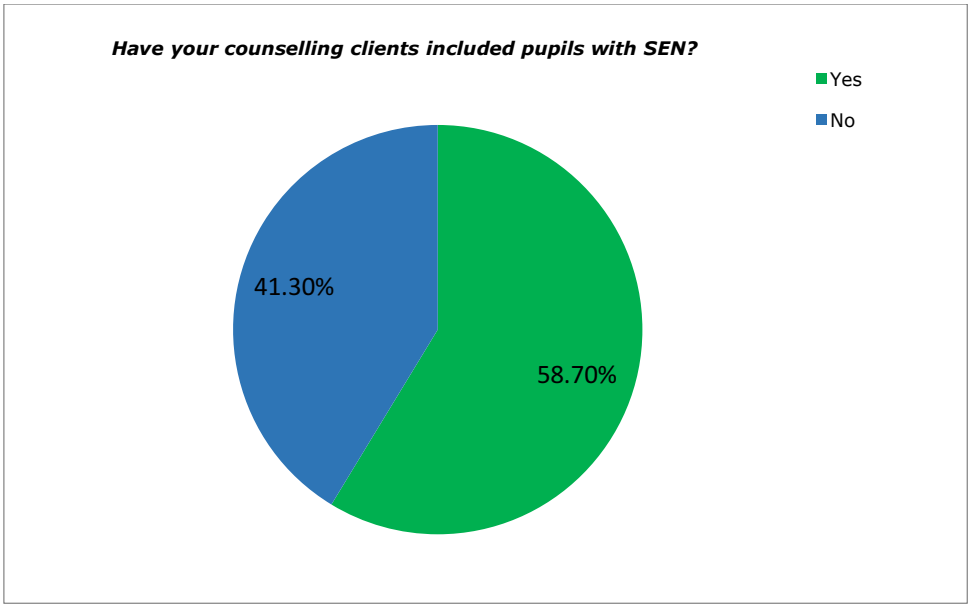


Figure 7 Percentage of counsellors who work with students with SEN (n=138)

It was found that 69.1% of the counsellors who had students with SEN as clients were from urban schools whereas the remainder were from rural schools (Table 15a, Appendix 1). Additional analysis with regard to whether differences in experience existed between counsellors who have and who have not worked with students with SEN revealed that counsellors who have worked with special educational needs students have significantly more counselling experience (M=3.59, SD=1.52; $t(136)=5.07$, $p<.001$) in contrast to counsellors who do not see clients with SEN (M=2.19, SD=1.70) (Table 12, Appendix 2).

Regarding counsellors' experience of dealing with students with SEN in their schools, the results showed that 43.21% of the counsellors had 1-3 years of experience in counselling such students while 23.46% reported that they have dealt with students with SEN for 4-6 years.

Also, it was found that 33.33% of the counsellors had vast experience of working with students with SEN as they reported having provided counselling for students with SEN for seven years or more (Table 16, Appendix 1).

The counsellors who work with students with SEN were also asked whether they gained extra salary as an incentive when they dealt with students with SEN. About two-thirds (65.5%) of these counsellors reported that they gained extra salary when they work with such students whereas 33.3% of school counsellors reported that they do not gain extra salary. Some of the counsellors (47.2%) who answered 'yes' to this question further revealed that the additional incentive did not, in general, affect the seriousness of their dealings with students with SEN. However, an equal percentage (47.2%) did not provide any insights into this matter (Tables 18 and 18a, Appendix 1).

The majority of the participants reported that they have not obtained any training in providing counselling for students with learning disabilities. Figure 8 shows that only 32.1% of counsellors mentioned that they attended some training courses regarding working with those students. These counsellors were asked to provide more details about their training courses. Of those who have taken additional training, nearly 50% mentioned that they had attended some courses in dealing with students with SEN without specifying the nature of these courses,

whereas others explained that they have completed a two-year programme in special needs (known as High Diplomas in Saudi Universities) and some courses in Autism, Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

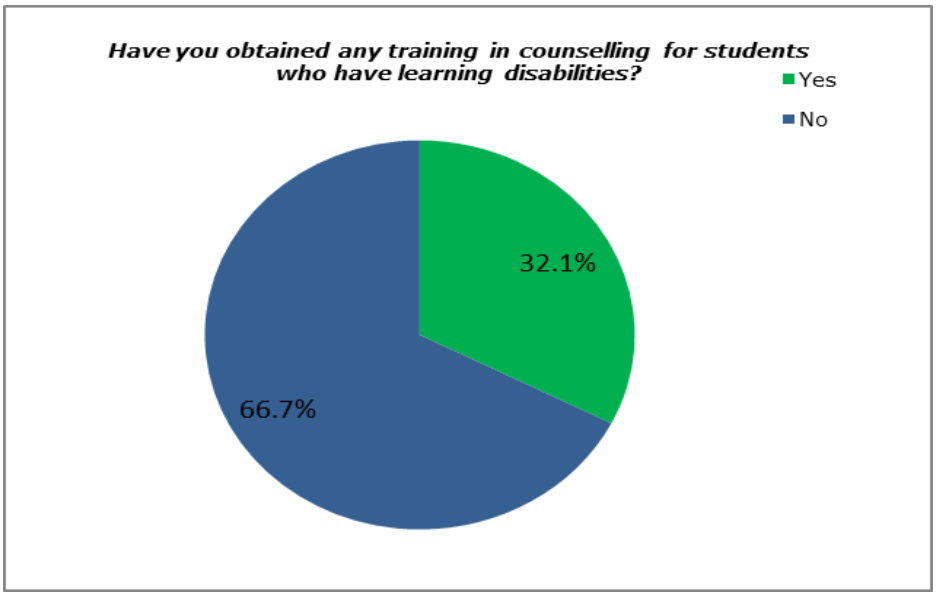


Figure 8: *Percentage of counsellors who have obtained training in counselling students with SEN*

With regard to understanding the professional development of school counsellors related to SEN clients, the participants were asked about the number of disability workshops and courses completed. The results show that 46.9% of counsellors have completed 1-5 short talks and workshops on disability, and 13.6% completed between 6-10 short talks and workshops on disability. In contrast, 33.3% of counsellors report that they have not completed any short talks or workshops on disability. However, comparing the previous results to the number of disability courses completed, the data indicate that 51.9% of

counsellors have not taken any courses related to students with disabilities. Nevertheless, the results indicate that 40.7% of counsellors completed 1-5 disability courses (Tables 25 and 26, Appendix 1).

6.3.2.1. Frequency of providing counselling to SEN clients

In relation to the frequency of providing counselling services for students with SEN, the majority (51.9%) of the counsellors reported that they "Often" provide counselling services to such students. The frequency was reported to be "Always" by 28.4% of the counsellors followed by "Sometimes" by 17.3% and "Rarely" by 1.2%. One of the counsellors had not responded to this question (Table 19, Appendix 1). Furthermore, the majority of the counsellors (37%) reported spending 1-5 hours in counselling students with SEN every week. This was followed by counsellors who spent 6-8 hours (29.6%), 9-11 hours (14.8%), 12-15 hours (8.6%) and >16 hours (7.4%) in counselling students with SEN every week. Two of the counsellors did not respond to this question (Table 20, Appendix 1).

6.3.2.2. School counsellors' communication skills with students with SEN

It is essential to take into consideration the communication of school counsellors with students with SEN, especially from the perspective of counsellors themselves. Table 27 (Appendix 1) shows that, while 37%

of counsellors experience difficulties in their communication with clients with SEN, 39.5% of them perceive that it is easy to communicate with students with SEN. A few (8.6%) even observed that it is very easy to communicate with students with SEN. However, 4.9% of the counsellors reported that it is very difficult to communicate with students with SEN. Finally, 8.6% of those counsellors reported neutral experiences with regard to their communication with SEN students. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being very difficult and 5 being very easy, the participants scored a mean of 3.10 (*SD*=1.15) (Table 16, Appendix 2).

6.3.2.3. School counsellors' relationships

The present study assessed the relationships of participants with special education teachers and with parents of students with SEN (Table 28, Appendix 1). The school counsellors who work with students with SEN were found to maintain positive relationships with special education teachers, with most (48.1%) of them reporting excellent relationships with teachers of students with SEN. A further 29.6% of the counsellors describe their relationships with those teachers as very good, while 16% of the counsellors reported good relationships with special education teachers. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 meaning 'poor' and 5 meaning 'excellent', the participants scored a mean of 4.20

(*SD*=.97) on their assessment of their relationship with special education teachers (Table 17, Appendix 2).

Another vital aspect of counsellors' relationships is taken into consideration, that is, the relationship with parents of students with SEN. The results found that a high percentage of those counsellors (71.6%) who deal with students with SEN maintain 'very good' to 'excellent' relationships with parents of such students. Moreover, another 19.8% of school counsellors perceive that they have 'good' relationships with parents of clients with SEN. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'excellent', the counsellors scored a mean of 4.10 (*SD*=1.01) on the question of how they would rate their relationship with parents of students with special educational needs (Table 18, Appendix 2).

Overall, the indication is that school counsellors have and maintain encouraging relationships with special education teachers and parents of students with SEN.

6.3.2.3. Accessibility of counselling services

Counsellors who work with students with SEN were asked questions related to the accessibility of counselling services for their SEN clients. They were asked to identify the ways in which students with SEN come to know about their service in the school. Multiple responses were permitted. The results indicate that 87.7% of school counsellors

choose teachers as a method for students with SEN to come to know about counselling. According to 44.4% of school counsellors, students come to know about counselling in the school through their parents. Moreover, 37% of school counsellors report that students come to know about counselling through the school principal, whereas only 19.8% of counsellors said that it is through the school psychologist. However, surprisingly, 4.9% of counsellors mentioned that students with SEN come to know about counselling through counsellors themselves. One of the participants did not respond to this question (Table 17, Appendix 1).

The services delivered to students with SEN included Social Needs which was selected by 70.4% of the counsellors, Preventative Service which was selected by 60.5%, Emotional Needs which was selected by 55.6%, Mental Health Needs which was selected by 49.4%, Academic Needs which was selected by 46.9%, and Social Relationships which was selected by 44.4% of the counsellors. One of the counsellors had not responded to this question (Table 21, Appendix 1).

An essential aspect in counselling provision is the referral process in the school regarding students with SEN. Multiple responses were permitted. The counsellors indicated that the referral process utilised in schools included Special Education Teachers which was selected by 74.1% of the counsellors, Parents which was selected by 33.3% of the

counsellors, Self-Referral which was selected by 30.9% of the counsellors, and Other School Staff which was selected by 27.2% of the counsellors. Three of the counsellors did not respond to this question (Table 23, Appendix 1).

The terms used by the counsellors to describe the features of counselling for students with SEN included 'Accessible' which was selected by 55.6% of the counsellors, 'Confidential' which was selected by 55.6% of the counsellors, 'Safe' which was selected by 46.9% of the counsellors, and 'Encourages trusting relationships' which was selected by 45.7% of the counsellors. One of the counsellors had not responded to this question (Table 22, Appendix 1).

The next section describes the data obtained with regard to the third section of the questionnaire that is, the perception of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services.

6.3.3 The perception of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services

In this section, all participants were given examples of possible counselling roles regarding students with SEN in order to understand how much they agree or disagree with these roles. The data indicate that the majority of counsellors select "strongly agree" and "agree" in their answer to each statement. For example, 73% of counsellors 'strongly agree' with identifying students with special educational and

personal needs as one of the counsellors' roles that should be implemented in the school, and 27.2% of participants 'agree' with the same statement.

Furthermore, Table 30 (Appendix 1) shows that 81% of school counsellors 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with providing small-group counselling in regards to academic needs, while 13.1% of them selected 'neutral'. However, only 5.1% of counsellors 'disagreed' with this statement. Another finding from the table is that 45.3% of counsellors 'agree' with providing support groups for parents of children with SEN, and 39.4% of them 'strongly agree' with this role. However, 13.9% of school counsellors were 'neutral' about applying this role in their schools.

The results also indicate that 38% of participants 'strongly agreed' with conducting research related to the students' needs for inclusion, while 35.8% 'agreed' with this statement. However, 21.9% of counsellors were 'neutral' with conducting research related to including students with SEN and their problems. It can be suggested that almost 99% of school counsellors 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with consulting with teachers of students with SEN about the need of their students. Also, all participants in this study 'strongly agree' (75.6%) or 'agree' (35.4%) with consulting with school principals about the needs of students with SEN.

Therefore, consultation could be an essential role in school counselling. Participants were asked whether they engaged in consultation in their school. Figure 9 shows that 89.1% of the counsellors engaged in consultation while 8.7% did not. Three counsellors out of 138 did not answer this question.

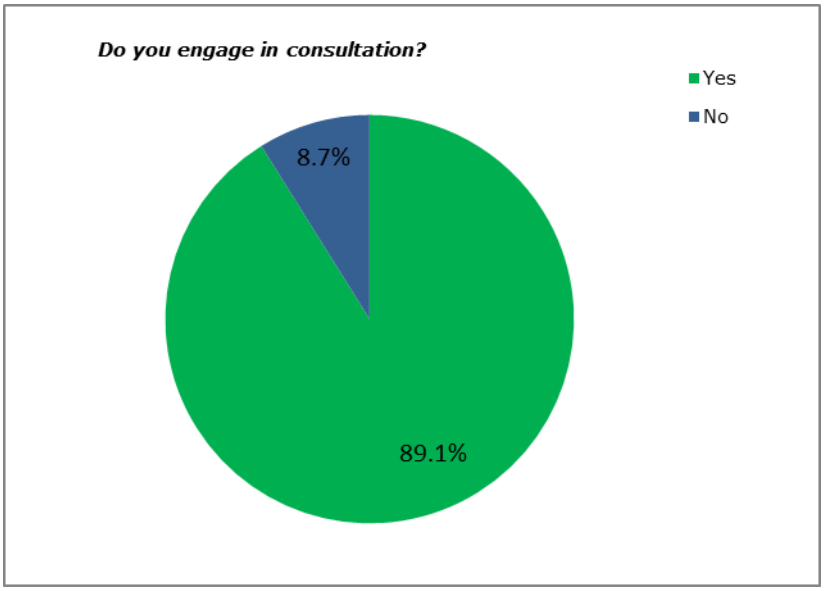


Figure 9 Percentage of counsellors who engage in consultation (n=138)

Table 31b (Appendix 1) indicates that 80.4% of counsellors mentioned that they consulted with the principal as part of their job in the school. Next, 63% of counsellors stipulated that special education teachers were consulted. The results also indicate that 59.4% of counsellors consulted with teachers in the school, while only 24.6% of counsellors consulted with school psychologists in their schools. Another finding from the table is that 42.8% of school counsellors consulted with

another school counsellor in the school. Finally, 8.7% of the participants did not respond to this question.

The counsellors were also asked if they received professional supervision. It was found that 58% of school counsellors had not received professional supervision, whereas 39.9% of participants had received it (Figure 10).

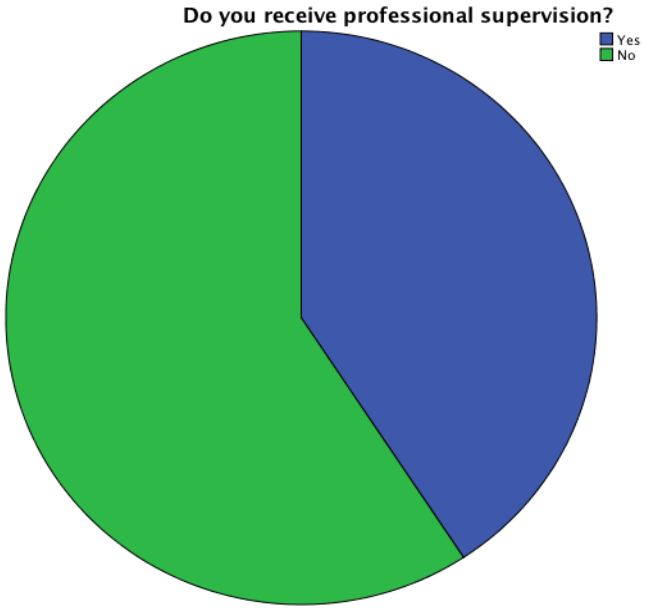


Figure 10 Percentage of counsellors who receive professional supervision (n=138)

Furthermore, the responses of the counsellors indicate that 54.5% of counsellors who receive professional supervision receive two supervisions per academic year, that is, one supervision per semester. A further 26.7% of those counsellors who answered 'yes' reported that they receive four supervision sessions per academic year, that is, two supervision sessions per semester.

The next section describes the data obtained from the fourth section of the questionnaire, that is, counsellors' attitudes to children with SEN.

6.3.4 Counsellors' attitudes towards students with SEN

Counsellors' attitudes towards students with SEN are examined in this section. Participants were asked to provide their ratings of some given statements to assess their degree of agreement or disagreement with these statements (Table 33, Appendix 1).

The data indicated that 48.6% of school counsellors 'agreed' with integrating students with SEN into mainstream schools and 34.1% of the counsellors 'strongly agreed' with this statement. However, 11.6% of participants were 'neutral' about integrating students with SEN in public schools.

Another finding from the table is that 78.3% of school counsellors 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' when asked about whether students with SEN can succeed in mainstream schools. However, 12.3% of counsellors selected 'neutral' to comment on this statement, while 8% of participants 'disagreed' with this statement.

The participants showed more agreement about its being challenging to work with students with SEN; 49.3% of school counsellors 'agreed' and 21% 'strongly agreed' that working with students with SEN is challenging. However, 22.4% of those counsellors stated that they 'disagreed' with this statement. Approximately 15.2% of participants

'agreed' that they sometimes feel angry when they see students with SEN enrolled in their school, and 15.9% were 'neutral' about this. However, the table shows that 68.9% of participants 'strongly disagreed' and 'disagreed' with this statement.

The results in the table indicate that 15.2% of school counsellors avoid participating in individualised educational programme (IEP) meetings. However, 67.4% of counsellors do not avoid participating in these programmes, whereas 17.4% of participant selected 'neutral' to respond to this question. However, it can be derived from the table that 71% of school counsellors have a positive attitude towards working with students with SEN, while 18.8% were 'neutral' about it, and 10.1% of those who responded to this statement 'disagreed' with having a positive attitude towards working with students with SEN. Another interesting finding from the table is that approximately 98.6% showed a positive attitude towards the provision of school counselling for students with SEN. They agreed that school counselling services should be provided to students with SEN as much as possible. Also, the majority of school counsellors (94.2%) agreed that no one has the right to exclude students with SEN from school counselling.

The data in the table further shows that 94.9% of school counsellors agreed that they have a responsibility to provide the best possible counselling service for students with SEN. Also, 96.4% of counsellors

believe that students with SEN can benefit from school counselling in the school.

However, some school counsellors (15.9%) 'agreed' that increased spending on school counselling for students with SEN is a waste of money, and 12.3% were 'neutral', whereas 71.8% of the respondents 'disagreed' with this statement. A final finding from the table is that 81.1% of school counsellors 'disagreed' that providing counselling services for students with special needs is overly time consuming. Finally, it can be concluded that, overall, the participants in this study hold positive attitudes to students with SEN. They are willing to work with students with SEN in their schools and attempt to offer the best possible counselling services.

It has been tested whether there were significant differences between counsellors who have experiences working with students with SEN and counsellors who have no experiences with students with SEN, regarding their attitudes towards students with SEN. Positive attitudes towards students with SEN were operationalised with Q33: "please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements". Negatively worded items were recorded and sum scores were calculated. High scores indicate positive attitudes towards students with SEN. The mean scores for the positive attitudes towards students with SEN of counsellors with experience with students with

SEN (*M*=56.62, *SD*=7.30) do not differ significantly from the mean scores of counsellors who do not have experience with students with SEN (*M*=54.91, *SD*=4.76; t(132)=1.65, *p*=.102). These results suggest that experience with students with SEN does not impact on attitudes towards these students.

Furthermore, it was tested whether the years of providing counselling for students with SEN was predictive of attitudes towards these students. The results of a regression analysis revealed that years of providing counselling (β=.099) did not significantly predict attitude towards students with SEN (*F*(1,77)=.76, *p*=.39).

In addition, it was tested whether the attitudes towards students with SEN differ between counsellors in urban and rural regions. Positive attitudes towards students with SEN were operationalised with Q30: "please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements". Negatively worded items were recorded and sum scores were calculated. High scores indicate positive attitudes towards student with SEN. The results suggest that there were no significant differences between counsellors in urban (*M*=56.58, *SD*=5.88) and rural schools (*M*=54.43, *SD*=7.30; *t*(133)=1.82, *p*=.07).

The next section describes the data obtained in relation to the fifth section of the questionnaire, that is, the obstacles faced by counsellors

in providing counselling for students with SEN.

6.3.5. Obstacles faced by counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN

This section presents the major obstacles that prevent school counsellors from providing counselling for students with SEN. School counsellors were asked to choose the five most important barriers to offering services for students with SEN. The level of learning disability was chosen by 73.2% of school counsellors as the most important barrier against dealing with students with SEN. The second most important obstacle to providing counselling for those students was identified as the lack of counsellor training by 63% of counsellors. The third chosen barrier was the experience of working with students with SEN, as reported by 60.9%. Lack of knowledge about learning disabilities was selected by 52.2% of the school counsellors as a major obstacle for working with students with SEN. Moreover, lack of awareness about students with SEN was identified as the fifth most important barrier, with a percentage of 51.4%. Table 34 (Appendix 1) presents a list of all barriers to providing counselling services for students with SEN identified, starting from the most important, as reported by counsellors.

It was tested whether there was a significant difference between urban and rural school counsellors regarding the perceived obstacles for

providing counselling for students with SEN. However, no significant differences were found (Table 14, Appendix 2).

A Friedman rank test was also performed to find the five most important barriers to offering services for students with SEN. These are presented in Table 7 below. The top five obstacles as determined by this analysis were: engaging in other roles in the school (e.g., administration tasks); the ability of students with SEN to engage with the counselling programme; failure to build strong relationships with professionals in the school community; the ability of students with SEN to process information; and communication with students with SEN. These obstacles were observed to be diametrically opposite to those found through simple descriptive statistics. The chi-square value for the Friedman rank test was found to be 113.146 and this was found to be significant at p=.000.

Table 8: Ranking of obstacles using Friedman rank test

Obstacle	**Mean rank**
Engaging in other roles in the school (e.g., administrative tasks)	6.68
The ability of students with SEN to engage with the counselling programme	6.36
Failure to build strong relationships with professionals in the school community	6.25
The ability of students with SEN to process information	5.63

Communication with students with SEN	5.56
Lack of awareness about students with SEN	5.34
Lack of knowledge about learning disability	5.30
Lack of experience of working with students with SEN	4.87
Lack of training	4.76
The level of learning disability	4.25

6.4 Section 3 - Hypothesis testing

The emphasis of the research questions for this study is to determine how various characteristics of the counsellors affect the perceptions and attitudes of counsellors who deal with students with SEN. Accordingly, the following two hypotheses could be proposed to ascertain the relationship:

Hypothesis 1_0: Counsellor characteristics affect the **perception** of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services.

Hypothesis 2_0: Counsellor characteristics affect the **attitudes** of counsellors to children with SEN.

The hypotheses were tested statistically using multiple regression analyses. Various dependent and independent variables were recognised and are listed in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 9 Dependent variables

Sl #	Dependent variables	Associated question from questionnaire
1	Perceptions of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services	Q29
2	Attitudes of counsellors to students with SEN	Q32

Table 10 Independent variables

Sl #	Independent variables	Associated question from questionnaire
1	Number of students/school size	Q4
2	Number of students with SEN	Q5
3	Qualification of the counsellors	Q6
4	Major subject	Q7
5	Professional certification in SEN	Q8
6	Teaching experience	Q10
7	Years of working as counsellor	Q12
8	Hours of dedicated counselling	Q19
9	Specific training for counselling with learning disability	Q23
10	Extra salary	Q17
11	Communication with students with SEN	Q26
12	Relationship with special education teachers	Q27
13	Relationship with parents of students with SEN	Q28

The testing of the hypotheses is now described. The hypotheses were deemed to be accepted if the standardised co-efficient (β) was significant with a p-value of <0.05 at a confidence level of 95%.

Hypothesis 1

The results of the multiple linear regression analyses, performed to analyse the relationship between perceptions of counsellors with regard to including students with SEN in their services and selected counsellor characteristics, revealed that the counsellor factors contributed to 15.6% of the variation observed in counsellors' perceptions with an F-value of 0.927. However, the influence was not significant (p=0.531). Furthermore, the only element that significantly influenced the perceptions of the counsellors was found to be the counsellors' relationships with the parents of students with SEN (unstandardised beta value=-.117, standardised beta value=-.294, p=.048) although the influence was negative. All the other characteristics were found to non-significantly influence the perceptions of counsellors. *Hypothesis* $\underline{1_0}$ *is therefore rejected.*

The associated model summary and coefficients can be found in Tables 10 and 11.

Table 11: *Model summary for influence of counsellor characteristics on counsellor perceptions*

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate	Change statistics				
					R square change	F change	df1	df2	Sig. F change
1	.396[a]	.156	-.012	.39746	.156	.927	13	65	.531

Table 12: Coefficients for influence of counsellor characteristics on counsellor perceptions

Model		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.533	.569		2.693	.009
	School size	.034	.046	.112	.743	.460
	No. of students with SEN	-.037	.060	-.090	-.612	.543
	Qualification	.089	.151	.074	.591	.556
	Major	-.012	.059	-.029	-.208	.836
	Professional certificate	.086	.113	.099	.757	.452
	Experience	.008	.055	.021	.154	.878
	Counselling experience	.047	.034	.180	1.376	.174

Model		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
	Counselling hours	-.011	.041	-.036	-.275	.784
	Extra money	.089	.120	.107	.745	.459
	Special training	.005	.116	.007	.047	.963
	Ease of communication with students with SEN	-.036	.047	-.105	-.764	.448
	Relationship with teachers with SEN	.026	.058	.063	.440	.662
	Relationship with parents of children with SEN	-.117	.058	-.294	-2.016	.048
a. Dependent variable: Avg_counsellors_perception						

Hypothesis 2

The results of the multiple linear regression analyses, performed to analyse the relationship between attitudes of counsellors with regard to including students with SEN in their services and selected counsellor characteristics, revealed that the counsellor characteristics contributed to 29.5% of the variation observed in counsellor attitudes with an F-value of 2.092. The influence in this case was found to be significant

(p=0.026). Two elements were found to significantly (but negatively) influence the attitudes of the counsellors. The first was the subject major chosen by the counsellor (unstandardised beta value=-.108, standardised beta value=-.310, p=.018) and the second was 'ease of communication with students with SEN' (unstandardised beta value=-.087, standardised beta value=-.312, p=.016). All the other elements, however, were found to non-significantly influence the attitudes of counsellors. *Hypothesis 2_0 is therefore accepted.*

The associated model summary and coefficients can be found in Tables 12 and 13.

Table 13: Model summary for influence of counsellor characteristics on counsellor attitudes

Model	**R**	**R square**	**Adjusted R square**	**Std. error of the estimate**	**Change Statistics**				
					R square change	**F change**	**df1**	**df2**	**Sig. F change**
1	.543[a]	.295	.154	.29691	.295	2.092	13	65	.026

Table 14: Coefficients for influence of counsellor characteristics on counsellor attitudes

Model		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.208	.425		7.543	.000
	School size	-.015	.035	-.060	-.436	.664
	No. of students with SEN	-.023	.045	-.069	-.514	.609
	Qualification	-.145	.113	-.147	-1.287	.203
	Major	-.108	.044	-.310	-2.430	.018
	Professional certificate	.133	.085	.188	1.565	.122
	Experience	-.024	.041	-.073	-.583	.562
	Counselling experience	-.033	.026	-.152	-1.270	.208
	Counselling hours	-.011	.031	-.041	-.345	.731
	Extra money	.048	.089	.070	.538	.592
	Special training	.120	.087	.175	1.379	.173
	Ease of communication with students with SEN	-.087	.035	-.312	-2.479	.016
	Relationship with teachers with SEN	.047	.043	.143	1.086	.281

Model		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
	Relationship with parents of children with SEN	-.082	.043	-.251	-1.878	.065
a. Dependent Variable: Avg_counsellors_attitude						

6.5 Section 4 – Discussion

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the aim of the quantitative phase of the current study was to explore the current status of the provision of school counselling for students with SEN in the context of Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, the questionnaire was used to gather crucial data in terms of the following factors: Social demographics, counsellors' experience with students with SEN, their perceptions regarding working with students with SEN, their attitudes towards students with SEN, and the obstacles with regard to providing counselling services for those students.

6.5.1. Counsellors' background data

Background details gathered about the counsellors included: age; school location; the number of students for which each counsellor was

responsible; the number of students with SEN in the counsellor's school; counsellor's qualifications; educational major; experience in teaching and counselling; training and certification in school counselling; and the number of hours per week each counsellor dedicated to counselling.

First, in relation to age, the majority of the school counsellors who participated in the study were aged 35 or older. Some studies (e.g., Barr & Bracchitta, 2012; Goreczny et al., 2011; Yazbeck et al., 2004) have also obtained data with regard to the age of counsellors and have found that younger persons were more likely to display more favourable attitudes towards students with SEN. The current study correspondingly found that the older (aged ≥35 years) counsellors had significantly more counselling experience than did their younger counterparts.

Another factor pertains to counsellors' location, with the present study ascertaining that more counsellors were from urban schools rather than rural schools. However, this could be attributed to the distribution of respondents as more responses were received from urban schools. Furthermore, the study found that the levels of experience differed between counsellors in urban schools (4-9 years) and rural schools (4-6 years). It could perhaps be inferred from this finding that the turnover of counsellors in rural schools is higher than that in urban schools. However, this inference could be hindered by the fact that the number of urban respondents were almost twice that of the rural

respondents. Location was also found to influence counsellors' communication with students with SEN. However, location did not influence their associations with special education teachers nor with parents of students with SEN. Nevertheless, school location was found to exercise a marginally significant influence with regard to counsellor perceptions of establishing and maintaining cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN.

Similarly in terms of school size, the data from the study revealed that the majority of the counsellors were associated with large schools (i.e., schools with >300 students) whereas the remainder were associated with small schools (i.e., schools with <300 students). Al-ghamdi (2010) in her doctoral study suggested that counsellors who belong to schools with a large student population were less involved in personal and professional development activities than other groups. However, she reported that the school size did not result in significant differences in their perceptions of their ideal role in relation to different categories. However, the current study found that a comparison of counsellor attitudes towards students with SEN based on the school size (i.e., large and small schools) revealed that a significant difference existed in their opinions of whether students with SEN can succeed in the mainstream school and in their enjoyment of working with students with SEN. Moreover, the current study found that counsellors

in small schools were more likely to lack experience of working with students with SEN (53.8%).

The current study found that, in general, the number of students with SEN in the Saudi mainstream schools in Jeddah, Mecca and Taif was less than 30. From Al-Mousa's (2010) report it can be seen that the average number of students with SEN in the various programmes (including programmes in schools) of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the school year 2006/2007 was approximately 19. Hence, the figures revealed by the counsellors are in alignment with previously published figures about the extent of coverage for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia.

With regards to counsellors' qualifications and specialisations, the present study found that the counsellors held at least a Bachelor's degree. As stated earlier, this was probably in conformance to the requirements of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia (MoE, 2007). Some of the counsellors had pursued post-graduate and doctoral qualifications. The typical offering of universities in Saudi Arabia with regard to counselling education is limited to diplomas in guidance and counselling programmes. However, three universities in Saudi Arabia – Al-Imam Mohammed ibn Saudi Islamic University, Umm Al-Qura University, and King Saud University – offer a two-year Master of Arts programme in guidance and counselling (Alghamdi, 2010). Earlier

studies by Scior (2011) and Wong et al. (2004) have drawn attention to the significance of education in shaping the attitudes of counsellors and hence it is unsurprising that counsellors are required to possess some basic qualifications. Furthermore, this study found that most of the respondents had not specialised in Psychology, Sociology or Social Work: the three fields required by the Ministry of Education for an individual to offer counselling services in schools (Alhossaini, 2007). Instead, they had specialised in other fields such as, Arabic, Islamic studies, Geography, History, Science and Mathematics. However, since the Ministry of Education also requested universities in Saudi Arabia to offer guidance and counselling programmes at Masters' level to meet the need for trained, full-time counsellors to work in schools (Alhossaini, 2007), it is also possible that persons who were willing to take up additional qualifications for professional practice as counsellors were also recruited by the schools regardless of their fundamental education. This is consistent with some of the existing views of school counselling in Saudi Arabia such as, "the school counsellor's role is not important", "anyone can be a school counsellor," etc. (Al-Otaibi, 2014). The findings of this current study further indicate a potential shortage of qualified counsellors in the three cities under consideration.

In contrast to the USA, Harris (2013) indicates that the majority of school counsellors in the USA obtain a Master's degree in school-based counselling or guidance and counselling. The current study found that all of the participants have a Bachelor's degree in different subjects, which is in line with Harris' report (2013) that indicates that in the majority of countries, school-based counselling requires a Bachelor's degree, either in teaching, social work, psychology and guidance and counselling. However, the results in this study found that the majority of counsellors have majors in Arabic, Islamic studies and Geography (59.4%) which contradicts the Ministry of Education who prefers to appoint counsellors who have majored in Psychology, Sociology and Social Work. Only 16% of the school counsellors in the current study have a Diploma certificate in guidance and educational counselling, while the majority of them have not obtained any certificate in school counselling. The important issue of the process of selecting school counsellors in the Saudi school could be investigated in the following phase.

Another significant factor relates to counsellors' professional training and qualification. The current study found that only about a third of the participating counsellors possessed a professional certificate in school counselling in addition to their basic academic qualifications. The most popular certifications appeared to be a Diploma in Guidance

and Educational Counselling and some courses in School Counselling. Alghamdi (2010) reports that four universities in Saudi Arabia – Al-Imam Mohammed ibn Saudi Islamic University, King Faisal University (KFU), King Saud University, and Umm Al-Qura University – offer diplomas in guidance and counselling programmes. These programmes were set up by these universities at the request of the Ministry of Education to open a one-year programme in guidance and counselling for counsellors with more than five years of professional experience as counsellors.

However, most of the respondents in the current study reported attending a training programme for "less than one month" or a programme of 1-3 months in duration which does not correlate with the provision authorised by the Saudi Universities. A deeper inquiry into the manner of conduct and source of such trainings is recommended.

In addition to their professional qualification and training, counsellors' experience is comparatively important. As mentioned above, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has permitted existing teachers to work temporarily as counsellors in schools, provided they had the relevant experience (Alhossaini, 2007). The findings of the current study provided confirmation of this practice as it was found that the majority of the participants had significant teaching experience, of 10

years or more. However, the majority of such individuals did not continue to participate in the teaching tasks in their schools. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that the majority of school counsellors have various experiences in teaching for no less than six years and various experiences in counselling ranging from 1-3 years to more than 13 years. These results confirm and support the finding of Harris (2013) who indicated in her report that, in 25 out of 39 countries including Saudi Arabia, school counselling is delivered by experienced teachers who undertake additional training in guidance and counselling.

With regard to experience in counselling, nearly equal numbers of the counsellors were found to have experience of 13 years and more or of only 1-3 years of experience. Thus, it could be seen that the provision of counselling services by counsellors was still popular in Saudi Arabia as people seemed to be entering the field. It could also be inferred that the counselling environment in schools was conducive enough for counsellors to remain in their jobs over extended periods.

Hill et al. (2007) suggest that a typical counselling session is approximately one hour long and is normally conducted once a week or fortnightly. It could be assumed that, as the majority of the counsellors were attached to large schools (i.e., with >300 students), they would be able to counsel about 40 students every week ,and

repeat sessions with a student would take place once in three months or so. Most of the participants of the current study reported that they spent >21 hours in providing counselling services every week.

It can be seen that some questions have arisen from the previous discussions that need to be investigated in the interview phase of this study. For instance, how did counsellors get into counselling and what was their journey into counselling? Furthermore, what does counselling mean to the counsellors and how did they become a school counsellor, in general, and how did they become a counsellor with a degree in Arabic and Islamic studies specifically, rather than a degree in counselling or psychology? Also, how did school counsellors become counsellors without special training?

6.5.2. Counsellors' experience of providing support for students with SEN

In terms of the counsellors' experience of providing counselling services for students with SEN, in contrast to the predictions, the majority were found to provide counselling services to students with SEN. Furthermore, services were provided in both the rural and urban schools. This result indicates that students with SEN may not be neglected in the Saudi mainstream schools. It is an important finding that students with SEN may see a counsellor in the Saudi school because this aspect has not been previously highlighted by studies.

Nevertheless, this finding could be regarded as corresponding with Pattison's (2006, p. 285) observation that "counsellors cannot afford to neglect the matter of including young people with learning disabilities in their practices because apart from moral and ethical issues legislation and policies demand that individuals are treated equally with regard to the provision of services".

On the other hand, the current study has also found that there are some students with SEN in mainstream schools who do not receive counselling services, as the results indicate that a relatively high 41.3% of the participating school counsellors do not deal with such students. This could be interpreted as suggesting that many students with SEN have limited access to school counselling and are therefore excluded.

In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Education is responsible for appointing school counsellors (MoE, 2007). Therefore, the previous discussion raises an issue that needs to be addressed in the interview phase: why is counselling provided for students with special needs in some schools and not offered in other schools? The literature suggests that the work undertaken by some counsellors is not in accordance with social justice because limiting access to counselling is in contradiction with the disability rights movement (Pattison, 2006). However, the reasons behind excluding students with SEN from counselling might be related

not to counsellors but to the system, organisation, practices and processes of the counselling sessions, which is in accordance with the social model of disability (Barnes et al., 2002; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 1998).

Another important finding was that counsellors who have worked with students with SEN have significantly more counselling experience than counsellors who do not deal with special educational needs clients. This finding may be an important indication that counsellors who have dealt with those students have enough confidence and may not have a high level of anxiety when working with this group. Several studies (Brott & Myers, 1999; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008) have found that school counsellors with only a few years of experience may experience high levels of anxiety about their professional abilities. Some questions that need to be asked, however, are whether those counsellors experience anxiety while dealing with students with SEN and what their experiences are in providing counselling to students with SEN.

The findings of the present study indicate that counsellors who work with students with SEN in Saudi Arabia gained extra salary when they work with such students. However, this additional incentive did not, in general, affect the seriousness of the dealings of the counsellors with students with SEN. A study by Rose (2015) commented on the lack of incentives for teachers to work with children with disabilities, a finding

that could be extended to include school counsellors. However, it appears that the provision in Saudi Arabia for counsellors is more in progress. Furthermore, the counsellors seem more receptive to dealing with different kinds of students as they reported that the incentives, or lack of them, did not impact their dealing with students with SEN. School counsellors may feel anxious with regard to the lack of training, in general, and training with regard to working with students with SEN, in particular. One of the most prominent findings from the survey was that the majority of counsellors who work with students with SEN felt that they lacked adequate training in counselling for students with SEN. Accordingly, the majority of school counsellors, in general, in the current study attended professional training in counselling for less than a month. A strong relationship between the positive attitude towards students with SEN in the mainstream schools and training has been reported in the literature. Praisner (2003) found that negative attitudes of school personnel toward working with students with SEN can often be a result of the lack of adequate training regarding students with SEN. Another study found that the more training courses the counsellor completed, the more prepared they felt to deal with students with special needs (Milsom, 2002).

The American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) suggests that school counsellors should regularly engage in professional

development regarding students' needs and mental health issues in order to improve their ability to "recognize and respond to student mental health crises and needs" (ASCA, 2012, p. 1). Regarding the professional development of school counsellors with regard to students with disabilities, the current study found that 51.9% of counsellors have not attended any courses related to students with disabilities. However, 40.7% of counsellors completed 1-5 disability courses. Furthermore, only 46.9% of counsellors have attended and completed 1-5 short talks or workshops, and 33% of them have not completed any disability short talks or workshops. A possible explanation for these results may be the lack of adequate preparation for all counsellors to work with students with disabilities. Also, these findings suggest that the way counsellors receive support needs to be understood as well as how school counsellors perceive professional counselling training. Moreover, what counsellors think is a reasonable preparation for a counselling job and what they have learnt from their training to implement in practice are important questions to ask. These issues need to be addressed in the interview phase.

Earlier research suggests that the greater the number of courses with information about disabilities that the school counsellors completed, the more prepared they felt to perform activities for students with disabilities (Milsom, 2002). In addition, some research has addressed

disability component areas to be taken into consideration. Bowen and Glenn (1998) advocate that in order for counsellors to work with students with disabilities, they should have an understanding of the psychosocial needs, general characteristics, and common cognitive and social problems of these students. The same study suggests that disability legislation, effective counselling interventions and individualised education plans (IEPs) are essential topics to take into account in designing courses for counsellors of students with SEN. The present study found that the counsellors who worked with students with SEN reported that they "Often" or "Always" provide counselling services to such students. However, the average time spent by the counsellors with students with SEN was found to be less than 8 hours per week. It is to be expected that students with SEN will require more support at more frequent intervals from counsellors, and the findings of the current study confirm this.

6.5.2.1. School counsellors' communication skills with students with SEN

Contradictory findings were obtained in this matter by the present study as nearly equal numbers of counsellors reported that they experience difficulties in their communication with clients with SEN or that it is easy to communicate with students with SEN. A few even observed that it is very easy to communicate with students with SEN.

It is recognised by Blaas and Heck (1978) that the process of counselling contains both an exchange as well as processing of intricate verbal and nonverbal communications between the counsellor and client. Furthermore, they suggested that disparities in counselling outcomes could be seen between counsellors displaying various degrees of cognitive processing capabilities. Relatedly, Paisley and Borders (1995) suggest that cognitively complex counsellors are more likely to have the capacity to integrate and hypothesise the requirements of clients at advanced levels. Hence, it can be inferred that the personal capacities of the counsellors influence the effectiveness of their communication with students with SEN.

6.5.2.2. School counsellors' relationships

Overall, the present study found that school counsellors have and maintain encouraging relationships with special education teachers and parents of students with SEN. For instance, the majority of the school counsellors who work with students with SEN were found to maintain positive relationships with special education teachers, with most of the group reporting excellent relationships with teachers of students with SEN. Furthermore, with regard to the parents of students with SEN, a high percentage of the counsellors who deal with students with SEN were found to maintain excellent or very good relationships with parents with students with SEN. School counsellors do not work in

isolation; they are required to collaborate and cooperate not only with teachers in the school but also with the parents of students with SEN to provide complete support to a student with SEN. The favourable relationships reported by the counsellors in this study indicate that these counsellors were aware of the multi-faceted role of the school counsellor. As stated by Melton (2007, p.1), school counsellors "advocate, mediate, coordinate, consult, lead and collaborate with teachers, administrators and parents to help students be successful".

6.5.2.3. Accessibility of counselling services

The majority of the school counsellors in this study reported that teachers were one method for students with SEN to come to know about and gain access to counselling. Other sources for the students to get to know about counselling in the school were their parents, the school principal, the school psychologist, and the counsellors themselves. The most common referral process utilised in schools was found to be the Special Education Teachers rather than self-referrals or through parents and other school staff. Clemens (2007) observes that teacher referrals for counselling of students may be guided by the view that the role of the school counsellor is to solve the currently observed behaviour problems rather than to prevent future problems. However, Davis and Garrett (1998) suggest that the perceptions of teachers with regard to the role of a school counsellor can act as a barrier that

inhibits school counsellors from effectively providing services. Similarly, referrals by parents and principals may also be influenced by their perceptions of the role of school counsellors. It is interesting to note therefore that the various referees associated with students with SEN (i.e., teachers, parents, principals, psychologists, etc.) in the Saudi schools seemed to have a favourable impression of the school counsellors and referred the students with SEN to them for counselling services.

Two of the elements suggested by Hannaford (1987) for consideration when designing a counselling programme include emphasis on the students' academic, career and personal and social needs; and consultation and coordination with parents and institutions. Similarly, the ASCA Ethical Standards (2016, p. 1) stresses that professional school counsellors should emphasise the "educational, academic, career, personal and social needs and encourage the maximum development of every student". Rayle and Adams (2007) suggest that school counsellors execute comprehensive programmes that are "preventative in design" (p.8). Bor et al. (2002) suggest the use of specialist counsellors in schools to meet the educational, psychological and emotional needs of students. Accordingly, the current study found that the most significant services delivered by the counsellors for

students with SEN were Social Needs, Preventative Service and Emotional Needs.

The terms most frequently used by the counsellors to describe the features of counselling for students with SEN were: Accessible, Confidential and Safe. Thus, it could be seen that the not only did the counsellors believe that their services were beneficial for students with SEN but also that their services were accessible and the students could confide personal issues without fear of disclosure.

6.5.3. Perceptions of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services

The current study found that the counsellor perceptions were aligned regarding the inclusion of students with SEN in their services, as the majority of them 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the 14 statements provided for consideration. That is, they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that including students with SEN in the counselling services entailed: the identification of students with special educational and personal needs; keeping students with SEN informed of the guidance and counselling service in the school; assisting students with SEN with problems of academic achievement; providing small-group counselling in regards to academic needs; helping students with SEN to develop their social skills; providing small-group social-skill counselling to students with SEN; providing support groups for parents of children

with SEN; consulting with parents of students SEN about the needs or concerns of their children; consulting with teachers of students with SEN about the need of their students; consulting with the principal about the needs of students with SEN; establishing and maintaining cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN; working to discover gifted and talented students; conducting special programmes for gifted and talented students; and conducting research related to inclusion's needs and problems. This demonstrated that these counsellors were aware of the role of the counsellor and the special considerations required in dealing with students with SEN. The study also found that the majority of the counsellors engaged in consultation. The persons they consulted were (in order of ranking by the participants): school principals; special education teachers; other teachers; and school psychologists. They also consulted with other school counsellors in the school. These findings correspond to the suggestions from earlier studies (e.g., McMillan & Jarvis, 2013) which assert that a coordinated approach across all levels is required to encourage the development and wellbeing of students with disabilities. Myers (2005) argues that collaboration is the most significant skill for counsellors who work with students with disabilities. In particular, associations with special education teachers and parents/ family have been recognised as the most vital cooperative and consultative

associations to be developed by school counsellors in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Bowen & Glenn, 1998; Scarborough et al., 1998; Durodoye et al., 2004; Myers, 2005; Studer & Quigney, 1998; Tarver-Behring et al., 1998).

It has been found that regular group supervision can assist school counsellors in establishing connections with other professionals and regulating the isolation that they encounter in their primary work environments (Peterson & Deuschle, 2006; Thomas, 2005). However, in Saudi Arabia, most school counsellors may find themselves supervised by persons with limited to no training in counselling. In fact, in several instances, the supervisors are from non-counselling fields. Thus, the supervision for counsellors in Saudi Arabia may not benefit them in terms of receiving direction and supervision for school counselling programmes (Al-Rebdi, 2004). In general, supervisory activities, such as planning, meeting, and administrative and paper work, are achieved through one or two visits to the school per year (Al-Ghamdi, 1999). However, the majority of the counsellors in the current study had not received professional supervision. Those who had received supervision reported that they received two supervisions per academic year, that is, one supervision per semester.

6.5.4. Counsellor attitudes towards students with SEN

For the last two decades, the attitudes of a variety of professionals regarding students with disabilities and their education have been researched (Isaacs et al., 1998; Romano et al., 2009). Very little was found in the literature about the attitudes of school counsellors towards students with disabilities. The current study found that school counsellors hold a positive attitude towards these students. Also, the results indicate that school counsellors support providing services to students with SEN in the school regardless of the lack of adequate training to deal with students with SEN. These results match those observed in earlier studies. Romano et al. (2009) found that school counsellors hold positive attitudes towards students with SEN, although they report feeling unprepared to implement specialised services. Another study conducted by Isaacs et al. (1998), in elementary schools, found that school counsellors in these schools had positive attitudes towards students with SEN and their inclusion in the mainstream school.

One of the most prominent themes to emerge from the questionnaire results is that the participants in the current study had positive attitudes regardless of their location. There were no differences between school counsellors in urban and rural schools. Moreover, the experience of working with students with SEN did not influence the

counsellors' attitude towards these students. However, counsellors' attitudes towards students with SEN can be differentiated regarding the size of schools. There was a significant difference regarding the attitude that students with SEN can succeed in the mainstream school. Counsellors in large schools were more likely to agree with this statement compared to counsellors in small schools. Moreover, school counsellors in larger schools enjoyed working with students with SEN more than did counsellors in smaller schools. This might be attributed to the experience of school counsellors because the study found that school counsellors in small schools lacked experience working with students with SEN to a greater extent than those who work in large schools.

Overall, these results are encouraging as they suggest further support for all counsellors is both necessary as well as appreciated, given the positive attitudes, whether improving their knowledge and skills or engaging them in appropriate training. Also, their attitude is vital to implementing counselling services for all students with SEN and meeting their needs. In contrast, the results of this study do not explain the differences between school counselling in large schools and small schools

However, the positive attitudes of school counsellors might be linked with another finding from the survey, namely that the majority of

school counsellors who deal with students with SEN gain an extra salary from the government that may be seen as motivation to work with these students. This finding may explain the positive attitudes towards working with students with SEN. School counsellors may show positive attitudes depending on the financial incentive from the government – an issue that emerges from these findings that needs to be investigated in the second phase in this study. The question is: "is there a real commitment to counselling in Saudi schools irrespective of the financial incentive?"

Therefore, the findings of the current study contribute to the knowledge base of the counsellor's responsibilities for identifying the needs of all students. The study found that virtually all of the participants who took part in the survey support the provision of counselling services to students with SEN through agreeing with all items provided about counsellors' roles in offering services to students with SEN. For instance, 81% of school counsellors 'agree' with providing small-group counselling in regards to academic needs. This statement is one of the recommended roles for counsellors to be implemented as suggested by the ASCA (2013) in their position statement, 'The Professional School Counsellor and Students with Disabilities'. Another activity that is consistent with the ASCA statement is consulting with the principle, teachers of students with

SEN and parents of these students, as the results show that the majority of participants agree with performing this activity in their schools. Overall, the results suggest that school counsellors have a comprehensive understanding of the suggested roles of counsellors in regards to students with SEN. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether the counsellors performed the roles listed in the survey. Performing these activities may depend on the level of counselling training for students with SEN specifically. This should be investigated in the second phase in this study.

6.5.5. Obstacles faced by counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN

Very little was found in the literature about the fourth question in this research concerning the barriers to providing counselling services for students with disabilities in the Saudi schools. The current study identified the five most important barriers to offering services for students with SEN. The level of learning disabilities is the first important obstacle to work with these students, followed by the lack of training. The third identified obstacle is the experience of working with students with SEN, while the fourth and fifth major barriers are the lack of knowledge about learning disabilities and the lack of awareness regarding students with SEN. It is a positive outcome that these findings are identified by school counsellors themselves. The results of

this study will now be compared to the findings of previous work. Most of the findings are consistent with Pattison (2006), who found that the following factors are barriers to providing counselling for students with disabilities: a lack of awareness of the needs of young people with learning disabilities; a lack of knowledge and experience of young people with learning disabilities; a lack of awareness of issues related to disability; and occasional difficulties with communication. Difficulties with communication with students with SEN was identified in the current study as the sixth most important barrier of providing services to students with SEN. However, the difficulties with communication appeared in rural schools more than in urban schools in the current study. School counsellors in urban schools found it significantly easier to communicate with students with SEN.

It is essential to note that the barriers identified in the current study were largely located in the system and in the SEN children themselves, whereas the barriers identified by Pattison (2010) were linked to systems, counsellors and carers rather than to the children and young people with learning disabilities themselves. According to the Department of Health (2001) and the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2003), these barriers may constitute a major obstacle between counsellors and this category of students, in

providing and building an effective therapeutic relationship, and could prevent those students from accessing the counselling service.

It is vital to investigate the opinion of counsellors regarding these barriers and obtain their suggestions for overcoming them. It is also important to encourage school counsellors to become more enthusiastic in working with students with SEN and to increase the inclusiveness of these students. These issues will be taken into account while conducting the interviews. In answering the questions which emerged during the above discussion, it is necessary to determine the individual counsellor's perceptions of providing counselling services to students with special needs in Saudi schools.

6.5.6. Influence of personal characteristics on the perceptions and attitudes of counsellors with regard to including students with SEN

Two hypotheses were suggested to assess whether various characteristics of the counsellors had any impact on their perceptions and attitudes towards including students with SEN. Different characteristics of the counsellors were selected, such as: Number of students/School size; Number of students with SEN; Qualification of the counsellors; Major subject; Professional certification in SEN; Teaching experience; Years of working as counsellor; Hours of dedicated counselling; Specific training for counselling with learning

disability; Extra salary; Communication with students with SEN; Relationship with special education teachers; and Relationship with parents of students with SEN. Performed to analyse the relationships, the multiple linear regression analyses revealed that the different characteristics do not affect perceptions of counsellors with regard to including students with SEN in their services. However, the different characteristics were found to influence the attitudes of the counsellors with regard to students with SEN.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter reported and presented the analysis of the findings of the first or quantitative phase of the current study. The first section of the chapter summarised the questionnaire response rate whereas the second section described the data from the five segments of the questionnaire, namely: the background or demographic data of the respondent counsellors; the counsellors' experience of providing support for students with SEN; the perception of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services; the counsellors' attitude towards students with SEN; and the obstacles faced by counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN. The third section presented the testing of the hypotheses as recognised from the questionnaire data. The final section provided a discussion of these quantitative findings. Several issues and open questions were

identified which will be addressed during the next or qualitative phase of the study. The two chapters which follow describe the findings from the second phase of the study which entails the two sets of qualitative interviews with two separate groups of 12 counsellors.

Chapter Seven: Phase Two - Qualitative study: Findings and Discussion

Part 1: School counsellors who have worked with students with SEN

7.1 Introduction

This is the second of three chapters presenting the findings concerning the perceptions of counsellors with regard to the role of school counsellors in Saudi Arabian schools. As described earlier in the thesis, the second, or qualitative, phase of the study is sub-divided into two parts. The first part involved interviews with 12 counsellors who have worked with students with SEN whereas the second involved a further set of interviews with 12 counsellors who have not dealt with students with SEN. The objective of this chapter is to report and present the analysis of the findings of the first part of Phase Two. The perceptions of school counsellors who have dealt with students with SEN were investigated in relation to the provision of school counselling services for those students. A brief explanation of the method utilised in this phase is provided, including the tool used for analysis and a summary of the participants' information. Analysis of the participants' responses resulted in four master themes and their constituent superordinate themes. The second section of the chapter presents the opinions of the counsellors organised by the various themes. Representative quotes are provided where appropriate (with emphasis added). The third

section presents a discussion of the findings of this qualitative phase. The researcher's personal reflections on this phase are also provided.

7.2 Method

I used a qualitative research method for this study to gain detailed and rich information regarding the phenomenon of the provision of school counselling for students with SEN and to recognise different themes which describe this process.

As described in Chapter Four (Methodology), I adopted a phenomenological approach so that I could understand the phenomenon of providing school counselling for students with SEN from the perspective of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia who have worked with those students. I used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to gain insight into how school counsellors made sense of their experiences working with students with SEN (Smith et al., 2009).

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for this IPA study as Smith et al. (1997) argue that the semi-structured interviews are the optimal method in IPA studies. The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of school counsellors regarding the provision of counselling for students with SEN. It was considered essential that the participant group in this study should be a homogenous group who have a broad understanding and a clear knowledge of that experience.

Smith (2015) identifies that purposive and broadly homogenous samplings tend to be adopted with IPA studies as they can offer a sufficient perspective, given adequate contextualisation.

Table 14 depicts the participants' information. Twelve participants were chosen for this study, their names are masked for confidentiality. The sole criterion for inclusion was that they had worked with students with SEN in their schools. No exclusion criteria were exercised.

As described in Chapter Four (Methodology), prior to all interviews I obtained verbal consent from the participants to record the interview using my mobile phone. Subsequently, I uploaded the interviews to my personal laptop.

Table 15: *Participants' information*

Sl #	**Participant**	**Age**	**Years of experience**	**Years of experience with SEN**	**City**	**Area type**
1	Fahad	44	6	3	Jeddah	Urban
2	Ahmed	42	7	5	Jeddah	Urban
3	Khalid	55	20	7	Taif	Urban
4	Talal	49	7	3	Mecca	Urban
5	Mohd	51	25	11	Jeddah	Rural
6	Sultan	42	10	4	Taif	Urban
7	Saad	55	15	3	Mecca	Rural

8	Hasan	45	8	4	Taif	Rural
9	Anwar	42	10	6	Taif	Rural
10	Salam	51	17	4	Mecca	urban
11	Badar	44	16	5	Mecca	Rural
12	Fares	42	10	6	Jeddah	Rural

It could be seen that most (7 out of 12) of the participants had recently taken up counselling as their years of experience in the field was 10 years or less. However, two of the counsellors had counselling experience of 20 years or more. From the ages of the participants, it could be inferred that most of the counsellors had worked as teachers before becoming counsellors. Furthermore, it could be seen that most of the counsellors had worked with students with SEN for less than 7 years.

7.3 Results

The interviewed participants were asked to speak as broadly as possible regarding their experience of providing support to children with SEN. The interview transcripts revealed a wide range of data pertaining to the school counsellors' experiences of working with students with SEN in the Saudi schools. Furthermore, the emergent themes provided new insights into this previously neglected but important area of research. The analysis is clustered into four master themes which can be viewed with the associated superordinate themes

in Table 15 below. It is recognised that these themes are one possible account of the experience of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia who have experience of working with students with SEN. Therefore, they cannot be assumed to not encompass all facets of the counsellors' experience, and were chosen due to their significance with regard to the study's research questions. Furthermore, it is recognised that these themes are the outcome of my subjective interpretation and that different facets of the narratives may have been the emphasis of another researcher.

Table 16: *Master and superordinate themes*

Master themes	Superordinate themes
Personal and professional motivation for becoming a counsellor	Escape from teaching
	A desire to help and support children
	Personal convenience
'Thrown in at the deep end'	Shock and anxiety about working with students with SEN
	The search for information
	Coping with social stigma
	The financial incentive

Master themes	Superordinate themes
A common approach to Islamic counselling values with some additions	A shared understanding that all counselling should be based on Islamic beliefs and values
	The underlying culture of KSA
	Working with cultural differences (e.g., Bedouin)
Being a SEN counsellor has many challenges	Institutional challenges
	Individual attitudes within the school negatively impact counsellors' work
	Familial attitudes beyond the school that negatively impact counsellors' work
	Mismatch of counsellor needs and training/support available to them

7.3.1 Master Theme 1: Personal and professional motivations for becoming a counsellor

All participants described their journey into counselling. Furthermore, they provided both retrospective and current details of their experiences. They described the manner in which they became school

counsellors and included the personal and professional motivations behind their decision. Three superordinate themes could be derived from this master theme as detailed in the following sections.

7.3.1.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Escape from teaching

The first superordinate theme captures details with regard to the participants' move from teaching to working as a school counsellor. As Ahmed comments:

I felt bored as I was teaching the same subject every day. Besides, I had loads of work in teaching… I was given twelve classes and each class contained a minimum of thirty-five students and four lessons per day … that's a lot and I tried to do my job but the idea of being a counsellor came to my mind. (Ahmed)

Ahmed's comments draw attention to the lack of motivation in teaching. His feelings towards teaching led him to find a more interesting job which he accomplished by moving to school counselling. Ahmed's account emphasises the considerable teaching responsibilities teachers have to deal with as he struggled ("*I tried to do my job")* to manage his situation. It could be seen that the teaching workload caused negative feelings towards teaching because teachers might not have the ability to manage their job due to their many tasks. By choosing a career as school counsellor, a person could be relieved from a teacher's many responsibilities and this may be an

obvious reason that most of the counsellors in the study were formerly teachers.

The motivation Ahmed reported could be associated with the lack of desire to work as a teacher and the perception that school counselling may not be as challenging as teaching.

The nature of teaching and use of traditional methods in Saudi schools may also contribute to teachers' motivation to move from teaching to school counselling. This could be especially true if there are a large number of students in the school which can make it difficult and stressful for a teacher to continue to teach in the school. As Talal highlights:

The traditional curriculum is boring to be delivered… there is no chance to be creative or to use teaching aids. I had to deliver the same curriculum every time using the same traditional methods (Talal)

The accounts of Ahmed and Talal captured many of the participants' feelings about wanting to escape from teaching and move into counselling. One possible explanation for this might be that the teaching field is not supportive and the Ministry of Education fails to adequately meet the needs for teachers. It could be argued that the stress experienced by teachers is a crucial factor motivating their desire to escape from teaching and their perception that school counselling is more comfortable and relaxed in comparison. It can be

inferred that the motivation behind becoming a school counsellor is not necessarily related to interest in school counselling itself. However, while such reasons do determine the motivation of some school counsellors, others may well be motivated instead by a sincere desire to help the children in their schools. This facet is explored in the following superordinate theme.

Other comments highlight a lack of rigour in the process of recruiting counsellors in Saudi schools, which could also motivate teachers to escape from teaching and apply to become school counsellors. Those who are not interested in being teachers anymore can simply become school counsellors. Individuals need only qualify through an exam and interview to be appointed as counsellors in Saudi schools. This is seen in the case of Fahad, for example:

... I did not know anything about school counselling but I had to prepare myself for the exam ... I passed the exam which was related to counselling. After the exam, I attended an interview which was simply an informal chat ... Later on, I was appointed as a counsellor in my school. (Fahad)

Fahad's account represents the experiences of all participants regarding the selection process. It is disappointing when a teacher becomes a counsellor without having enough knowledge about school counselling. Fahad just read extensively about counselling and

prepared himself for the exam and interview. He then found himself in a new position in his school. A key problem with this process is that the Ministry of Education is responsible for the movement from teaching to school counselling, yet their policy for selecting school counsellors does not adhere to professional standards. That is, the policy implemented by the Saudi MoE does not appear to have the required rigour to ensure that counsellors appointed to the schools are able to provide appropriate counselling services for all students.

A final and noteworthy insight under this theme was that teachers who specialised in educational majors such as Arabic, Islamic studies and Geography were found to have greater opportunity to be accepted as school counsellors. This was in contrast to persons with other educational majors due chiefly to the large number of teachers in these majors. As Fahad indicated in the following extract:

It is known that the number of Arabic, Islamic studies and Geography teachers is a large number, so schools may not need some of them... They can be accepted easily to work as a counsellor instead of teachers. (Fahad)

It could be inferred that the Ministry of Education needed to appoint counsellors in schools and encountered a lack of specialist counsellors in the country. Therefore, they benefited from the availability of a large number of Arabic and Islamic studies teachers to take up

counselling positions even if those teachers lacked the willingness, preparation or skills to deliver counselling services within school. Consequently, it could be concluded that the selection process for counsellors in the schools demonstrates poor rigour.

Although the matter of allowing teachers to undertake counselling in schools is globally implemented, school counselling has become a profession that necessitates high professional standards and qualification such as a Master's degree in school counselling as seen in the USA and the UK. However, from the participants' comments, it appears that school counselling in the Saudi context is far from being treated as a profession.

In the next section, I explore the responses which fell under the purview of the second superordinate theme.

7.3.1.2 Superordinate Theme 2: A desire to help and support children

An important motivation to become a counsellor as articulated by some of the participants was the desire to help and support students in their schools. For example, as Khalid reflected on his earliest experience of being a counsellor, he was clear in his own mind regarding his motivation to become a counsellor:

I moved to school counselling only to help all students and solve their problems and I believe I have the ability to do so … I want to serve people in the school and make a difference. (Khalid)

Khalid appeared to have confidence in his capabilities as a counsellor, a person with the ability to help students solve their problems and make a difference in the school. He emphasised his desire to support students in the school which indicated that he had positive feelings toward school counselling. More importantly, Khalid's account showed that the counsellors' belief that they can make a difference in their school is one of the most important attributes of effective school counsellors. This belief guides their relationships with students and school members and also their counselling practice in the school. From Khalid's account, it can be recognised that school counsellors should have a strong desire to help students in the school and should be able to inspire confidence and respect.

The analysed interviews revealed the importance of the relationship between school counsellors and their students, as could be seen in Mohd's comment:

I became a counsellor in order to change my behaviour with all students in the school… I used to be an aggressive person, but now I'm keen on building a strong relationship with them... This is the best way to help them. (Mohd)

Mohd's earliest recollections of the relationship experienced with his students reflect his aggressive personality toward them. Subsequently, he realised that the key to the success of school counsellors is their ability to build and evolve strong relationships with their students and school community members.

Khalid explained the manner in which he developed a relationship with his students. He sought to build a strong relationship with students in the school by being friendly with them.

I tend to get closer to my student and then I start to talk to him nicely to allow him reveal what's inside of him, this is my style. (Khalid)

He also reinforced his happiness and willingness to provide counselling services for those who sought help:

I feel so happy when a student comes to me and says: "Can you please help me?.

This extract expressed Khalid's desire to provide help to his students and showed his positive feelings towards working with students and spending much effort to help them solve their issues in the school. This could be evidence that the desire to help children has a positive influence on the relationship between school counsellors and their students.

Another participant, Saad, appeared to have the same view of Khalid in relation to having the desire and the willingness to solve students'

problems, as well as showing their happiness when dealing with students. As Saad commented:

I feel delighted to help a student cope with his psychological issues such as depression. Some students hate the school and their teachers … So, solving these issues and helping them engage in the school is a meaningful success for me. (Saad)

It can be seen from these narratives that various motivations and positive feelings towards counselling played a vital role in the decisions of some of the participants to become a school counsellor. As Saad reflected on his experience, he perceived that the success in his counselling roles was solving his students' issues, whether psychological or social.

The next section explores the responses which fell under the scope of the third superordinate theme.

7.3.1.3 Superordinate Theme 3: Personal convenience

The intent of this third superordinate theme is to articulate the personal convenience that led participants to become counsellors. Talking about this matter an interviewee, Sultan, said:

…I will not change my position as a counsellor right now … No one can convince me to do otherwise. (Sultan)

After being appointed as a school counsellors in the school it may difficult for a counsellor to return to teaching or any other roles in the school, a matter exploited by some counsellors. Sultan's account emphasises this shortcoming in the Saudi educational system. Hence, the motivation might be to escape teaching rather than to become a counsellor.

This view was echoed by another participant, Hasan, who also indicated that being a counsellor in the school allowed counsellors to have more stability in terms of remaining at the same school until retirement. Currently in Saudi Arabia, educational system does not permit counsellors to move from one school to another without a formal request from the counsellor himself. As Hasan put it:

Working in school counselling gives me more job stability in the school, which is close to my house and my children's school, and in my life. This is important for me … I do not want to change my school and position. (Hasan)

Hasan and Sultan usage of the phrases *'I do not want to change'* and *'I will not change'* demonstrates that being a school counsellor was a matter of personal convenience for them.

It could be seen from the discussions under this master theme that the process of selecting school counsellors invited criticism from the counsellors and does not formally evaluate the candidates' motivations

to become school counsellors, which is a serious weakness in the educational system in the country. Furthermore, the selection of school counsellors whose chief motivation is a comfortable job and greater life stability does not necessarily help in the delivery of effective counselling within schools. Conversely, it can be argued that the existence of school counsellors who might not be interested in providing effective school counselling is the result of the existing selection process.

It is obvious that the requirement for school counsellors to work with students with SEN was not based on a defined policy or a clear plan aiming to provide counselling in school for these students. Instead, the provision of school counsellors in the school was performed regardless of whether the school included students with SEN. The main purpose of the current selection process appears to be to provide counsellors to work with students without SEN. In the event that students with SEN are present in the school, these counsellors are officially or formally assigned to work with them. However, it must be noted that they are permitted to refuse to provide their services to students with SEN. Therefore, it can be inferred that this current process of selection might negatively impact the provision of school counselling for students with SEN.

The next section presents the findings from the second master theme.

7.3.2 Master Theme 2: 'Thrown in at the deep end'

This master theme captures the idea that participants in this study may have worked with students with SEN before they had the required knowledge or awareness of this new situation. Consequently, they experienced negative feelings towards working with students with SEN. The participants' perceptions regarding their experience with students with SEN are revealed in the following superordinate themes.

7.3.2.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Shock and anxiety about working with students with SEN

This superordinate theme addresses the participants' accounts of experiencing negative feelings about working with students with SEN in their schools. This theme was represented by all participants in the study as they were shocked and experienced anxiety when asked to counsel students with SEN. As Khalid reflected on his earliest experience of working with students with SEN:

There was a sense of anxiety and I was very concerned and shocked at the beginning ... I did not accept my new situation, because I was afraid of anything new and the term 'special education' was new for me. (Khalid)

He recounted that he did not accept the assignment to work with such students because he lacked awareness of the concept of special education. Moreover, Khalid's narrative offered considerable descriptive

information regarding his feelings about working with students with SEN:

Introduced me the meaning of the special education term, defined special education for me and informed me of what my roles would be. I was very afraid and I overcame this concern by integrating more with students and teachers. (Khalid)

These feelings of anxiety and shock could be attributed to shortcomings in the Saudi educational system. The participants' narratives indicated that working with students with SEN was a new task for some of them and that they required support. However, it could also be seen that the Ministry of Education, which oversees all training and recruitment of educational staff in the country, had not provided them with the needed support. Hence, Khalid felt alone and attempted to resign himself to the new position by integrating himself with students with SEN and their teachers.

Badar's account was similar to Khalid's in the sense that he also suffered anxiety during his early experiences of working with students with SEN. He stated, *"I felt anxious at the beginning of dealing with students with SEN and I was afraid of working with them"*. He also described himself as *"not a specialist to engage with students with SEN in a counselling capacity"*.

Similar to Khalid and Badar, Salam also reported that he had experienced anxiety. However, he appeared to have a positive perception of this anxiety as he stated that it convinced him to improve his skills and to gain a better understanding of students with SEN.

The narratives of all the participants attributed the shock and anxiety they experienced to the lack of attention from the Ministry of Education towards school counsellors and students with SEN. Access to counselling provision is one of the rights of students with SEN in schools. Thus, assigning tasks regarding students with SEN to school counsellors without providing appropriate support does not help to ensure that such students receive their due rights and equality in the school. Moreover, this would contravene the legislation which calls for equal education for students with SEN with other students. The anxiety felt by school counsellors could be attributable to the expectation that they were required to deliver school counselling services without any previous knowledge or understanding of these particular clients and they were conscious that they were in some way denying these students their basic rights.

The next section explores the responses which fell under the purview of the second superordinate theme.

7.3.2.2 Superordinate Theme 2: The search for information

This superordinate theme captures the participants' experiences of searching for information about the characteristics of students with SEN and their needs in the school in response to their appointment as counsellors for students with SEN. In this theme, all participants explained that they had been self-reliant in searching for information regarding students with SEN as they were appointed as counsellors for those students without being adequately prepared by the Ministry of Education. All participants had spent much effort in trying to understand these students and how to work with them. As Anwar said:

…so, I had to seek information and help from my colleagues who were already working with students with SEN at different schools. (Anwar)

This attempt to garner information could be recognised to be the first step in understanding how to work with those students before offering them appropriate counselling services.

Talal and Fares had also been self-reliant in obtaining information about students with SEN as they also did not have sufficient knowledge about students with SEN.

I used to know hardly anything about special needs students … In fact, I had to visit the special needs department in order to have some leaflets about those students. I wanted to get to know them better. (Talal)

… I spent most of the time reading about those students on the internet ... It was not enough. (Fares)

Similar experiences were reported by the other participants in this phase of the study. From the participants' experience, it could be seen that the provision of school counselling for students with SEN was not organised and delivered in a systematic way because the majority of school counsellors appeared to be caught unawares. It is unreasonable to cause conflicted emotions in counsellors with regard to new SEN-related tasks without providing appropriate support. It could be concluded that the Ministry of Education placed the counsellors in a difficult situation which further indicates that policy-makers in Saudi Arabia do not recognise the value of school counselling for students with SEN.

The next section explores the responses which fell under the purview of the third superordinate theme.

7.3.2.3 Superordinate Theme 3: Coping with social stigma

This superordinate theme addresses the participants' experiences regarding helping students with SEN cope with the social stigma associated with their disabilities. Such social stigma was seen particularly in rural areas. All participants from rural areas observed that students with SEN suffer from the stigma associated with their

disability in rural areas, and attempted to help these students cope with the social stigma. For example, Mohd's account emphasised the idea that students with SEN are still seen as inferior in their school and in the society:

Individuals with SEN in rural areas are seen inferior ... They don't have enough social confidence to participate in the school and in society ... Therefore, the first thing that came to my mind was to help those students overcome their feelings of inferiority. (Mohd)

Mohd seemed to understand that students with SEN often have negative experiences related to their disability, such as being perceived to be inferior, and consequently did not have enough social confidence. He was aware that counsellors could aid them in creating more positive experiences in the school and in society. This is an important indication that Mohd seemed to want to provide social supports to students with SEN. In addition, Mohd provided a great deal of descriptive information regarding the reason behind the lack of social confidence for students with SEN in their schools:

They are struggling to gain more social confidence because people in the community don't want to deal with them ... They might have few or no friends at all. They seem to have limited social experience. (Mohd)

The social stigma associated with disabilities contributed to social ignorance which further resulted in students with SEN being neglected or isolated in the school or in society. As Mohd indicated, students with SEN may have few friends which could prevent them from being sociable and having more social experiences.

A lack of social acceptance for students with SEN was an area of major concern for the school counsellors. Hasan and Fares contended that lack of social acceptance for students with SEN may be due to the stigma associated with their disabilities. Also, they perceived that one of the most important services they provided was to help those students to be accepted socially, whether in the school or in the community, and to alleviate the stigma as much as possible

Individuals with SEN suffer from the lack of social acceptance because of the social stigma that is still prevalent in the rural communities ... This reflected negatively on their interactions in the school … So, improving awareness among all school students will be beneficial. (Hasan)

I discovered that no one wants to interact with students with SEN because they have a disability, which is wrong. I then decided to change their situation by improving their interaction with other students in the school. (Fares)

Hasan and Fares showed some understanding and commitment for change and they recognised that there is a job to do. School counsellors can be well-positioned to assist students with SEN in the school to cope with the social stigma and the feeling of isolation. They are considered to be key sources of social support for students with SEN, providing them with appropriate school counselling services and trying to ensure that these students are not ignored.

The next section explores the responses which fell under the purview of the fourth superordinate theme.

7.3.2.4 Superordinate Theme 4: The financial incentive

The fourth superordinate theme deals with participant perceptions of the financial incentives for school counsellors working with students with SEN. The Saudi government provides school counsellors with an extra 20% of their salary when they work with students with SEN. Examining the impact of financial incentives on school counsellors' recruitment to work with students with SEN is important since getting counsellors to effectively work with those students in the school is a major concern. All participants in this study perceived the financial incentive to be an important motivational factor to provide students with SEN school counselling services. For instance, as Talal commented:

Firstly, it increases my effort … I consider the increase in the salary as an increase in the burdens on the school counsellors' shoulders, as well as more commitments in our job ... The government pays me for the extra work I have to carry out … But in the end, this increase is a motivational factor and I should honestly be accountable for the new given tasks. (Talal)

It could be seen that Talal responded favourably to the financial incentive by increasing his efforts and assuming additional commitments with regard to his counselling roles in the school. On the other hand, he viewed this incentive as increasing the burden for school counsellors because they work with all the students in the school, not just students with SEN. However, Talal seemed to be honest and accountable for the new tasks regarding students with SEN.

Similarly, Fahad's account indicated that providing a financial incentive to school counsellors was an encouragement for them to include students with SEN among their clients. He believed that, as a Muslim, this incentive increased his honesty and sincerity in dealing with those students. He perceived this matter from a religious point of view which positively shaped his attitudes towards his work.

It is something that provides incentive … You were assigned with new tasks and got paid for it … This should motivate you to do these tasks,

but it is not right as a Muslim to take an extra salary without performing the job in the required manner. (Fahad)

Although this financial incentive is an important motivating factor, there is evidence that other factors can undermine the counsellors' commitment to providing counselling services to students with SEN. Commenting on the same, Sultan said:

*The financial incentive is an attractive factor when working with students with SEN ... It is an important reason for accepting to work with those students ... But after I had started dealing with them, I found that the task is very difficult. (*Sultan)

From Sultan's account it could be seen that while his decision to accept working with students with SEN appeared to be solely because of the financial incentive, he found it difficult to effectively perform his role for those students. The Ministry of Education provides this financial incentive in order to encourage school counsellors to work with students with SEN regardless of whether they are able to do their job or not. It is evident that this step may be ineffective in providing counselling services for students of SEN, especially with the absence of proper preparation for school counsellors. In another words, it could be inferred that the Ministry of Education was wasting government funds without achieving positive results because most students with SEN had still not received counselling services. Moreover, school counsellors

suffered from having ineffective support. It can be argued that the Ministry of Education has become a major part of the issue with regard to providing appropriate school counselling services to students with SEN.

Surprisingly, Saad's account illustrated that some school counsellors become counsellors for students with SEN merely to increase their salary without having any real commitment to students with SEN in their school.

I know some of my colleagues who sought to become counsellors for students with SEN only for the sake of the extra salary ... They do not deal with those students. (Saad)

Thus, it could be seen that the professional integrity of school counsellors determined whether they have a real commitment to their roles regarding students with SEN especially after receiving the financial incentive. From an Islamic perspective, the Quran stipulates that if a person is paid to undertake a specific job, school counsellors in this case, they have to deliver a perfect job. However, the majority of school counsellors do not have the ability to deliver the appropriate services for those students. In this case, the financial incentive might not be beneficial for school counsellors unless they have been suitably equipped to understand how to do their job properly.

The following section presents the findings from the third master theme.

7.3.3 Master Theme 3: A common approach to Islamic counselling values with some additions

This master theme captures narratives reflecting the idea that school counselling in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on Islamic values as school counsellors try to inculcate Islamic values in children and young people and make them understand their duty towards God. This master theme also attempts to identify how the underlying culture of KSA influences the efforts of counsellors and how they work with persons from different cultures, such as the Bedouin. The findings categorised under the first superordinate theme are presented in the following section.

7.3.3.1 Superordinate Theme 1: A shared understanding that all counselling should be based on Islamic beliefs and values

The first superordinate theme provides insights into a shared understanding that all counselling should be based on Islamic beliefs and values. In KSA, education as well as school counselling are also greatly influenced by Islam and religious values. For instance, the interview with Ahmed revealed the model of school counselling he followed:

I use Islamic counselling as a model in my school ... We are Muslims and we should use Islamic principles in our counselling roles instead of other counselling models. (Ahmed)

It is evident that Ahmed was not interested in utilising recognised counselling models in his role in the school. Instead, he labelled his use of Islamic beliefs and values in counselling encounters as Islamic counselling. Moreover, he believed that, as he, his colleagues, and the students were most likely to be Muslims, the use of Islamic counselling was obvious. In his opinion, Islamic values, rather than any other counselling model, was the appropriate method to help students solve their problems. Ahmed also provided a great deal of descriptive information regarding the use of Islamic beliefs and values in counselling roles:

I believe that the first thing to do in order to help a student solve his issue is to remind him of our God, Allah, and ask him whether he performs prayers on time or not ... As Muslims, it is difficult to solve any issue when you are far away from Allah. (Ahmed)

Again, the influence of Islam and religious values on providing students with counselling services was seen in Ahmed's account. It seemed from this narrative that some counsellors in Saudi Arabia believed that the main focus of the counsellor's roles was to be in line with Islamic values and principles.

The account of another counsellor, Salam, revealed that the school counsellors in Saudi Arabia sometimes made use of their religious beliefs in the provision of counselling services at school.

How would anyone seek help from Allah to solve their problems when they do not obey His instructions? ... This is the secret phrase that I use and believe in. (Salam)

I also asked Salam whether he was aware of counselling theories when he worked with his students in the school. From his answer, it could be inferred that he perceived that the use of Islamic beliefs and values in school counselling was the same as traditional counselling. The use of Islamic principles in school counselling could be understood to explain the lack of specialist counsellors in the Saudi schools. Relatedly, Mohd described the modification of behavioural patterns using Islamic principles and values in the school:

I use the Islamic principles to modify any bad behaviour from students ... I explain to them what the acceptable behaviours in Islam are and those which are not ... I remind them that if they behave wrongly they may get a punishment from Allah. (Mohd)

Further insights were provided by the counsellors with regard to the manner in which the use of their religious background shapes school counsellors' roles in the school and their strategies in working with their students. The following accounts of Badar and Anwar provide

further evidence of the participants' identification with the importance of imitating the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, while providing school counselling to their students. It appeared that Badar and Anwar were significantly influenced by the instructions given by the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, so they worked in school counselling following the Prophet in order to get closer to God.

From my perspective, I imitate the Prophet, peace be upon him, who said that a good word is an act of charity. (Badar)

I love counselling because of Prophet Mohammed who said that one of the best deeds is to bring happiness to your Muslim brother. (Anwar)

The next section explores the responses which fell under the purview of the second superordinate theme.

7.3.3.2 Superordinate Theme 2: The underlying culture of KSA

This theme describes the participants' experiences regarding the effect of the culture of KSA on the provision of school counselling in the schools. One thread that was obvious was that parents do not usually trust counsellors to assist their children in overcoming issues, possibly because they perceive the counsellor to be an outsider who should not interfere with their children's issues. In particular, the discussion at the school of any issue that occurred at home was not acceptable because it was seen as a private matter which should not be revealed

outside the home. This view could be seen in both the rural and urban schools. As Fahad stated:

A student came to my office and looked really concerned … I understood that he had a problem ... I closed the door then he felt relaxed and said that he had a family problem, but he wanted me to promise not to tell his father ... I promised him then he explained his problem, which was related to his parents' divorce .... (Fahad)

Fahad's account reflected that the counselling services in the school were influenced by the Saudi cultural attitudes towards counsellors themselves or their roles within the school. It was apparent that the student in this narrative was afraid of repercussions from his father if he talked to the school counsellor regarding the broken relationship between the student's father and mother. Moreover, this was further evidence that the Saudi culture tries to keep any problem that takes place in the home within the home and between family members only.

Fares, who works as a counsellor in a rural school, was clear about the cultural attitudes towards school counsellor in rural schools. His account reflected that rural societies are narrow-minded which might create difficulties with regard to performing the role of counsellor. These societies are rigid in order to prevent just anyone, whether professional or not, from delivering counselling services regarding family matters, which are perceived to be private.

Another participant revealed that counsellors might be seen as strangers by parents. This view affects the collaboration between parents and school counsellors who are not encouraged to work to resolve students' issues. From the extract below, it could be seen that parents could rebuff the counsellors' efforts in meeting their children's needs.

Parents sometimes destroy what I do for their children, which did happen a lot. I mean, whenever I start working on the student's problem and the parents find out, they come to the school or call me to say they will deal with their son's problem ... I think they see me as a stranger. (Khalid)

Another aspect of the Saudi culture that might influence school counselling is that students are not allowed to speak about sensitive issues such as sexual abuse. Rules are strict and those who have suffered sexual abuse are compelled to endure social disgrace. As Sultan comments:

There are some sensitive issues that the society takes so seriously and are completely rejected by the local community, such as sexual abuse ... As school counsellors, we must be careful when dealing with these issues ... It may cause other cultural problems because it is a shame. (Sultan)

Sultan drew attention to the social rejection of persons who were sexually abused which could be linked to the conservative Muslim culture, customs and traditions as well as religious rules. Further, the culture in KSA is family-oriented which guides the actions and relationships of children and young people with family and society. Badar noted that students with SEN are less accepted in the schools and the society, which reflects the Saudi culture regarding these students.

We try to include students with SEN in the school trips and activities to improve their acceptance in the school and outside the school (Badar)

Similarly, Talal's narrative reflected that students with SEN are seen in the Saudi culture as an isolated group, whether in the school or in society. Talal attempted to improve their acceptance by including those students in the school activities. The interviews revealed that the position of students with SEN within the Saudi culture may be inferior to that of their peers without special educational needs. This is in contradiction to the Islamic perspective which advocates that all Muslim communities must respect individuals with SEN and must allow them to engage in society without negatives attitudes towards them. Also, it could be argued that the culture might affect the provision of school counselling for those students.

They are a different group who may be introverted and refrain from engaging with others. Therefore, I tend to choose from them to participate in school activities. (Talal)

The next section explores the responses which fell under the purview of the third superordinate theme.

7.3.3.3 Superordinate Theme 3: Working with cultural differences (e.g., Bedouin)

This theme addresses the extent to which cultural differences in the school influenced school-based counselling. This theme was the most pronounced in the accounts of the majority of the participants. The account of one counsellor, Saad, reflected that the Bedouin culture is one of the diverse cultural presences in Saudi schools. Besides, as a religious state, there is a greater likelihood that many religious students can be found in schools and thus religion could be an integral part of the school culture. Thus, this cultural diversity in the school may significantly impact the work of school counsellors and their roles in the school.

It is common to deal with students coming from a Bedouin background and religious students in the school. (Saad)

Saad also provided deep insights into the way he worked with his clients in the school. His roles in the school were shaped and influenced by the cultural differences in the school.

For those who are from Bedouin background, I focus on the role of Bedouin in dealing with those students… If the student seeking help is religious, I tend to concentrate on the religious faith. (Saad)

Interestingly, in the same context, Hasan observed that psychological issues frequently exist in students from the Bedouin culture in schools located in rural areas. Hasan perceived that the Bedouin environment was characterised by the presence of many psychological and emotional problems related to the family and the Bedouin community. Also, he noted that this community tended to deal with its members in an aggressive way.

Hasan's narrative revealed many challenges he had encountered to effectively counsel Bedouin students. Later in the interview, he explained that the reason behind this was that the psychological and emotional problems in this community were mainly treated through the Imam, which is an Islamic leadership position such as the leader of the mosque. In other words, a student would come to him for counselling only after he had already approached the Imam or without the knowledge of the Imam.

The common way here to heal emotional and psychological problems is through the Imam of the mosque using the Holy Qur'an ... Therefore, I found some challenges to even discuss these problems with my clients who believe in the Imam ... (Hasan)

Another counsellor, Fahad, drew attention to another important theme: the provision of counselling services to students of different nationalities in his school and the resulting racism. In his case, the students in his school were comprised mainly of students from different backgrounds and different nationalities. This cultural diversity in the school could be the reason for the existence of racism in the school especially towards those who come from different countries. It could be inferred that the existence of these multi-cultural communities in schools can influence the efficacy and extent of school-based counselling and thus counsellors must advocate for more systematic efforts to help these schools overcome the issue of racism which may be especially challenging in some schools.

School counselling is very hard at schools that have students from different nationalities ... We suffer from the acts of racism among students, which may drastically limit our work in the school (Fahad)

In conclusion, in this master theme it could be seen that the provision of school counselling for students with SEN is affected by both the Saudi culture and Islamic values and principles. These two factors

impede the provision of counselling services for those students as it appears that counselling provision for them is inadequate and ineffective. Furthermore, the scope of counselling seems to be limited to very basic requirements such as focusing on the acceptance of these students in the school. In addition, the main experiences of the school counsellors of supporting those students were related to working on the improvement of the awareness of the other students regarding students with SEN. School counsellors attempted to change the current position of students with SEN in the school whether in urban or rural schools by including those students in the social activities in the school and outside the school.

The following section presents the findings from the fourth master theme.

7.3.4 Master Theme 4: Being a SEN Counsellor has many challenges

The fourth master theme captures the variety of challenges encountered by counsellors working with students with SEN. These include institutional challenges, individual attitudes within and beyond the school that negatively impact the counsellors' work, and the mismatch of counsellors' needs and training/support available to them. Findings under the first superordinate theme are presented in the following section.

7.3.4.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Institutional challenges

This superordinate theme addresses the institutional challenges that influence school-based counselling provision for students with SEN. Participants in the study maintained that the challenges and obstacles which hinder the provision of effective counselling services to students with SEN could be attributed to the lack of support provided by the Department of Special Educational Needs (DoSEN) and the General Directorate of Guidance and Counselling (GDoGC). With regard to this particular issue, Sultan observed:

I have never had any support from the Department of Special Educational Needs ... I need their support to help me work with SEN. (Sultan)

A powerful message could be seen in Sultan's account suggesting that addressing the gap between DoSEN and school counsellors would provide counsellors with the support they need. He observed that this department did not visit counsellors in their schools and failed to provide beneficial information regarding students with SEN. It could be seen that there was a lack of communication between the DoSEN and school counsellors.

The DoSEN ignores visiting counsellors or sending them information about special educational needs students ... They haven't provided us with any courses. (Sultan)

This view was echoed by another participant, Mohd, who also indicated that DoSEN does not support counsellors in their endeavours to become more qualified to meet the needs of students with SEN. Mohd's account reflected that he was given new tasks regarding students with SEN but he needed more support in order to improve his knowledge and skills to be more confident in counselling students with SEN. He drew attention to the responsibility of DoSEN regarding the provision of effective training courses to assist school counsellors in the development of student-centred counselling services in the school.

The DoSEN does not provide programmes to improve counsellors' knowledge and skills for them to better deal with students with SEN ... They should be responsible for this important matter. (Mohd)

Another interesting finding from the narrative of another counsellor, Talal, was that the General Directorate of Guidance and Counselling (GDoGC) did not provide adequate support for those who work with students with SEN as most of the programmes and training courses provided were seen to be related to ordinary students, without SEN. This, however, could be attributed to the lack of financial support received by the GDoGC to provide specialised training courses related to school counselling for students with SEN. As Talal commented:

I appreciate what the GDoGC did to help me in the school ... But they said that general training was enough and they didn't have enough money for the special needs courses. (Talal)

Interestingly, another analysed interview revealed that the lack of collaboration between DoSEN and GDoGC seemed to be a serious challenge which could affect the development of the school counselling services for students with SEN. The extract below illustrates that once school counsellors were assigned more counselling duties and tasks in relation to students with SEN, it was essential for both DoSEN and GDoGC to work together to allow school counsellors to develop themselves through the provision of advanced programmes and specialised training courses related to students with SEN.

There is no collaboration between the DoSEN and the GDoGC and we cannot effectively work with students with SEN without their support ... They must cooperate with each other. (Salam)

The next section explores the responses which fell under the purview of the second superordinate theme.

7.3.4.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Individual attitudes within the school negatively impact counsellors' work

This superordinate theme captures the impact on counsellors' work of the attitudes of those who work at schools (for example, principals,

school deputies and teachers). While participants accepted assignments with students with SEN, they acknowledged that the attitudes of some individuals towards their role in the school could be challenging towards providing counselling services for students with SEN. For instance, Ahmed observed that school principals showed less interest and attention with respect to students with SEN in the school. The reason behind this could be that they might not have the capability to provide more monitoring and accountability regarding those students. Also, principals have many administrative responsibilities in the school and thus may not welcome additional commitments to their role.

Some principals are not happy about having some SEN students in the school because this is considered to be an extra burden on them and their schools ... Some school principals may say that they do not want SEN students in their schools because those students need more commitment, monitoring and accountability. (Ahmed)

Fahad described the negative effect of the principal upon his counselling provision in the school as he was assigned administrative tasks by the school principal.

I have to perform some administrative tasks in the school ... The Ministry of Education sent us a letter stating that the counsellor should perform all tasks assigned to him by the school principal (Fahad)

Fahad's observations indicate that school principals ignore the roles of school counsellors regarding students with SEN and instead assign other administrative tasks to them which negatively influence the development of student-centred counselling services in the school. However, in this case, it does appear that the directive from the Ministry of Education could have guided the principal.

Interestingly, when asked the reason why some schools offer counselling for students with SEN while others do not, Anwar reflected that principals are not effective and qualified to make significant improvements in school counselling regarding students with SEN.

Some principals are not effective and qualified to control everything in the school ... They don't support counsellors and that's why school counselling is provided in some schools but not in others. (Anwar)

This extract suggests that some schools that include students with SEN are more likely to have less effective principals. Importantly, effective principals are those who provide their counsellors with the support and motivation they need to be effective school counsellors. Also, principals become more effective in enhancing school-based counselling for those students when they gain more experience and enough knowledge regarding students with SEN in their school.

The interviews revealed that school deputies' attitudes are also perceived to be a serious challenge to effectively delivering school

counselling services in the school. Within Saad's account, there were suggestions that school deputies lacked sufficient understanding of school counsellors' roles in the school.

The school deputy does not understand the counsellors' roles in the school ... He refers everything in the school to the counsellor ... For example, students' absence and school phone calls shouldn't be with the counsellor. (Saad)

As seen from Saad's comments, it could be understood that school deputies do little to assist school counsellors in successfully working with students in the school including students with SEN. It may be interpreted that they therefore assign unrelated tasks to school counsellors such as preparing students' absence forms and being responsible for the school phone that is, responsible for receiving calls from the GDoGC or families.

Similarly, Badar seemed to understand his roles in his school but he attributed the difficulty in working with all students in the school including students with SEN to the school deputy who prevented him from performing his specific tasks in the school. He seemed upset about the behaviour of the school deputy, saying:

My tasks in the school are clear, but the school deputy always disrupts me while performing my tasks and duties ... He should fully understand my roles in the school. (Badar)

Another important finding revealed by the interviews was the impact of teachers on the school counsellors' performance of their roles and tasks in the schools. All participants in this study perceived negative attitudes and lack of acceptance from teachers towards school counsellors. For example, Fahad reflected that there was a lack of teachers' understanding of the roles of counsellors in the school. Teachers might view the school counsellor as redundant in the school, to the extent that they refer students to the counsellor even for issues that they could resolve themselves.

Teachers feel that school counsellors are only there to sit in a comfortable room without contributing anything to the school ... Therefore, they try to keep me busy by referring their students to me even though their problems are not that significant and not related to my roles.(Fahad)

Teachers can solve many of their students' problems before referring them to me. Sometimes, they want me to punish a student if he misbehaves or doesn't complete his homework, but I actually consider myself a lawyer for the student for him to gain self-confidence. (Fahad)

Thus, it could be seen that teachers do not understand school counsellors' roles and duties as they ask counsellors to perform unrelated tasks such as punishing students if they misbehave in the

school or do not complete their homework. This misunderstanding could challenge the ability of school counsellors to work successfully in the school.

However, Anwar's account indicates that the teachers' lack of understanding of counsellors' role led to the lack of their acceptance in the school which definitely affected the collaboration between school counsellors and teachers. Anwar reflected that he explained his role to teachers in order to improve the collaboration level in his school. However, the teachers still believed that the role of counsellor in the school was to solve all the problems, whether behavioural or otherwise. Anwar, therefore, perceived that it was challenging to deal with all students' issues without the presence of sufficient understanding and cooperation between teachers and counsellors.

I tried to explain my roles to the teachers in my school in order to increase cooperation between us ... Unfortunately, they still think that it is my responsibility to deal with all students' behavioural problems or any other problems, which is actually difficult. (Anwar)

Fares commented that the lack of commitment of SEN teachers to their work causes problems among their students which directly and significantly affected the school counsellors' work.

Some SEN teachers just want to ensure they get a job in the school ... So they arrive at the school from 7 am and leave at 9 or 10 am, or

they come to school very late without showing any interest in working with their students ... This leads to more problems between their students. (Fares)

Furthermore, Badar's account revealed that deficiencies in the roles of special educational needs teachers had a considerable impact on the work of school counsellors.

Give the teacher of students with SEN clear roles and ask them to perform their roles properly ... This will make the school counsellors' work more effective ... But if they only come to the school to catch up their students in the hall, this will be a serious problem ... The shortcomings in the work of SEN teachers negatively affects the work of counsellor. (Badar)

The accounts of Badar and Fares reflected the attitudes of most of the participants in relation to the impact of special educational teachers on providing school counselling for students.

The next section explores the responses which fell under the purview of the third superordinate theme.

7.3.4.3 Superordinate Theme 3: Familial attitudes beyond the school that negatively impact on counsellors' work

This theme addresses the participants' experiences regarding the impact of familial attitudes on counsellors' work in the school. This

theme could be associated with the cultural impact on the provision of school counselling which was previously explained in Section 7.3.3.2. The majority of participants maintained that the parents have a negative impact on their work in the school. For example, Hasan commented on the lack of communication with parents, suggesting that parents refused communication with counsellors as a result of the shame they feel and the potential social stigma. This could seriously impact the counsellors' work and the cooperation between school counsellors and parents.

Mohd provided some reasons behind this lack of communication with parents. In his opinion, it is affected by the cultural impact of providing counselling to students with SEN. Parents and the family members seemed to have a severe lack of understanding of counsellors' roles. This leads to the shortage in the provision of school counselling for students with SEN at schools. He stated:

The family members forbade us as counsellors to interfere in their children's issues ... When we tried to communicate with parents, they often asked us to keep away ... For example, we tried to help a child, but his father said he would not allow us to intervene at all ... The child was desperate for help, but his father or brothers asked us not to deal with his issue ... This is the problem. (Mohd)

Salam appeared to have the same view of Hasan in relation to the lack of cooperation between school counsellors and parents:

Among the difficulties is the lack of cooperation between parents and school counsellors because parents want to have a break from their children at home during the time they spend at school ... Also, there is some parental domestic violence towards their children. (Salam)

Salam reflected that parents avoid cooperating with school counsellors due to their children's rowdiness at home: their children's attendance at school offers the parents a break from their noise. In other words, it can be seen that parents send their children to the school without sufficient follow up. Another important reason was that parents may treat their children violently because of their children's disability. From this perspective, it could be inferred that parents do not want to deal with the school counsellor as a result of the psychological and social impacts of the child's disability.

The next section explores the responses which fell under the purview of the fourth superordinate theme.

7.3.4.4 Superordinate Theme 4: Mismatch of counsellor needs and training/support available to them

This theme addresses the extent to which participants' self-efficacy for working with students with SEN seemed to be challenged by the

mismatch of counsellors' needs, training and support available to them. This theme was represented by all participants in this study. According to Khalid, the training has not sufficiently equipped school counsellors to perform their roles and duties in their school:

"*The preparation of counsellors seems to be very weak and not enough for us to provide better service for students".* (Khalid)

All the training courses are general, and unfortunately were provided by our colleagues. (Khalid)

It could be seen that Khalid was quite honest in talking about the preparation he received. He perceived that the preparation for school counselling was not adequate to work with all students in the school. He attributed this shortage to the lack of specified courses regarding school counselling which implies that these courses did not meet his needs. Also, the trainers in these courses were school counsellors who were not specialists in counselling or even in special educational needs. Khalid seemed to be disinterested in receiving training delivered by his colleagues.

Similar thoughts were expressed by Ahmed who felt that he was not equipped to deal with students with SEN. Ahmed seemed to feel disappointed regarding the lack of benefits he gained in relation to working with SEN students after he had attended some training courses in counselling.

I did not find the old training courses beneficial to successfully work with students with SEN ... They are not helpful in the field work. (Ahmed)

This lack of specialised training courses regarding counselling students with SEN in the Saudi context was represented by all participants in the study. Badar reflected that he had attended only one training course designed for dealing with students with SEN in the school in the last seven years. Such shortcomings in supporting school counsellors to work with students with SEN may not be in line with the trend to make school counselling more inclusive.

I only attended a course regarding how to deal with students with SEN in the last 7 years ... The majority of the provided courses are about school counselling and nothing about students with SEN. (Badar)

Similarly, Fares and Talal maintained that the majority of the training courses provided to school counsellors did not include information about students with SEN and how to effectively work with them. This was reported to be frustrating for counsellors who were assigned additional roles to work with students with SEN as they did not receive adequate support.

Regarding students with SEN, most of the training courses do not include anything about them. (Talal)

We don't know anything about special educational needs ... There is a lack of courses regarding students with SEN. (Fares)

The majority of participants articulated that the existing training courses provided to them were presented by non-specialist speakers. This matter was perceived to be a significant theme with regard to limiting their ability to deliver effective school counselling services in the school. For instance, Fahad said:

The provided training courses are not beneficial because the speakers are our colleagues ... They are not professional or academics. (Fahad)

I am not going to attend any course because it's a waste of time as the presenter is not a specialist ... He just reads from papers. (Fahad)

Fahad's account reflected that the existing trainers provided by GDoGC were less qualified compared to professionals who, it can be expected, will be more proficient in facilitating their development and raising the level of the counselling services provided at schools. Fahad's account could be a logical interpretation of Ahmed's account regarding the lack of benefits from the old training courses. These out-dated courses result in a mismatch between the training provided to school counsellors and their needs in the school.

The lack of specialists in counselling for students with SEN to provide training courses for school counsellors could be one of the fundamental reasons for the absence of qualified counsellors in the Saudi schools.

Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of motivation for school counsellors to attend the training courses provided. As extensively described by Ahmed:

All training courses are provided in the evening time and there is no motivation for counsellors to attend them ... It is hard for counsellors to work from early morning till late afternoon then attend training courses in the evening ... They have families, children and other social commitments. (Ahmed)

Similar thoughts were expressed by Mohd who perceived that training courses were only provided in the cities and urban areas. The long distances that school counsellors in rural schools would have to travel means that there is a lack of opportunity for them to participate in the training courses and counsellors' meetings.

We feel quite lonely in rural schools because nothing is provided for us regarding training ... We have to travel to the city to attend a course or a meeting ... It is difficult for me. (Mohd)

I haven't received any useful information regarding students with SEN. (Mohd)

The chances of having a qualified counsellor in rural schools are limited because nobody wants to move out from Jeddah as a city, for example, to work in a village. (Mohd)

Importantly, school counsellors in rural schools were found to work with students with SEN without having enough support. It could be seen that it might be difficult to provide qualified counsellors in rural schools because qualified counsellors tend to be based more in urban than in rural schools. Moreover, the urban counsellors may reject transfers to rural schools.

The following section provides a discussion of the results presented in this chapter.

7.4 Discussion

The aim of this section is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of school counsellors in providing school counselling services for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia. As found by the quantitative study (Chapter Five), 58.7% of participating school counsellors reported that they had worked with students with SEN. This section attempts to determine how they conceptualise their roles in relation to those students. Moreover, the practice of school-based-counselling for students with SEN will be discussed, followed by a critical focus on the barriers identified in the development of student-centred counselling in schools in Saudi Arabia.

As seen in the presentation of the results (Section 7.3), the participants' narratives could be clustered into four Master themes:

- Personal and Professional Motivation for becoming a counsellor

- Thrown in at the deep end
- A common approach to Islamic counselling values with some additions
- Being a SEN counsellor has many challenges

It could be seen that the participants' perceptions provided insights into main research question of the study:

What is the perception of school counsellors regarding the provision of counselling for students with special needs in Saudi schools?

A deeper synthesis of the findings revealed that the findings converged into the following areas:

1) What the participants perceived with regard to the recruitment and identity of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia.
2) What the participants perceived with regard to the counselling profession and its appropriateness in the cultural and religious context of Saudi Arabia.
3) What the participants perceived with regard to the provision of school-based counselling for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia.
4) The participants' views regarding the factors that influence the successful provision of school counselling for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia.
5) The participants' views and experiences regarding continuous professional development.

The findings from the study will now be considered in light of the above questions, and discussed with respect to extant literature and evidence.

7.4.1 School counsellors' recruitment and identity

This subsection addresses the first area explored in relation to the research question: What the participants perceived with regard to the recruitment and identity of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia. Overall, it could be seen that the process for recruitment of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia lacked sufficient rigour. Furthermore, the participants' narratives suggested that most counsellors lack knowledge or recognition of their identity as school counsellors.

7.4.1.1 Recruitment of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia

In general, the process of recruiting school counsellors is an important factor that can impact the effectiveness of counselling in schools. In Saudi Arabia, all decisions related to staffing in schools are overseen by the Ministry of Education, including the recruitment of school counsellors. From the narratives of the participants in the current study, it was evident that the current process in Saudi Arabia does not include meet professional standards in the criteria for school-counsellor selection. The criteria applied by the Ministry of Education was in fact simplistic, requiring only that a prospective candidate had

former teaching experience and that he/she qualify in a written exam followed by a face-to-face interview. This recruitment process was revealed to lack provision for determining the school counsellors' personal motivations for becoming school counsellors as well as their qualifications.

Overall, the participants were found to be critical of the recruitment process and criteria adopted by the Ministry of Education. In their opinion, the non-systematic process failed to ensure that the school counsellors could effectively perform their roles in schools; it overlooked the suitability, or fit, of the candidate for the job. The downstream effects of such a process could include failure in implementing policies, failure to provide adequate and timely guidance for school counsellors, and failure to meet the Ministry's educational goals.

Another inference that could be drawn from the participants' narratives was that the Ministry of Education's inadequate recruitment process reflected the Ministry's failure to recognise the significance of school counselling. The current study found it was possible for anyone to become a school counsellor, whether or not they were suitable for the role. Overall, the participants' narratives give the impression that school counselling in Saudi Arabia is still in a nascent stage, since the

selection process has not changed since it was originally set up and in fact resembles that used to recruit general school counsellors.

It can be surmised that this non-rigorous and non-systematic selection process could result in the appointment of teachers, who have no counselling experience or counselling qualification, as school counsellors for students with SEN and ultimately impact the provision of effective counselling services for such students. This is a great disservice to these students and something that the Ministry must rectify speedily as adverse consequences can arise from this shortcoming.

Students with SEN require counselling support in school to be able to integrate socially with their peers and also outside in society. Since they are more likely to encounter bullying or experience sexual abuse (Jones et al., 2012; Sullivan & Knutson, 2000), their need for counselling support could be deemed to be higher than average in comparison to students without SEN. Moreover, in conservative cultures such as in Saudi Arabia, persons with disability are often stigmatised, although this is not endorsed by religion. Consequently, it could be expected that the counsellors who attend to them have the specialised skills and training to deal with their special needs. However, this does not appear to be the case in Saudi Arabia though

some of the participants revealed a deep desire to help such students by providing them with suitable counselling support. Thus, it appears that the provision of school counselling services for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia does not meet the standards as required by the notion of educational rights for such children, Islamic principles, or international agreement.

Furthermore, the current process of recruitment for counsellors provides a reasonable explanation for the findings from the quantitative phase that a very small proportion (12.2%) of the participants had qualifications in Psychology, Sociology or Social Work. Moreover, the majority did not have any qualification or certification in school counselling.

A comparison of the processes and counsellor characteristics with other countries (e.g., the UK) reveals that different methods are used to appoint school counsellors, such as direct appointment through the school, the local authority or an external agency (Cooper, 2013). If schools prefer to directly appoint a counsellor, they are directed to choose a counsellor who has relevant experience and demonstrable competence in working with children and youths as well as a minimum qualification in counselling (e.g., diploma or certificate). Furthermore, the counsellor should also accredited from a recognised professional body. The process of recruitment of school counsellors in the UK is

permitted both directly through the school and through external agencies which are responsible for supplying counsellors who are skilled, supervised by professionals, insured and operating within approved guidelines. Moreover, the external agency is also required to provide assurance that the counsellor is affiliated, and hence accountable, to a professional body (DfE, 2016). Another interesting characteristic found in school counsellors in the UK is that the majority (70%) have a master's level qualification or higher (Cooper, 2013). Hence, it can be seen that counselling in schools is viewed as a serious profession in the UK in contrast to the scenario in Saudi Arabia.

Similarly in the United States, Romano et al. (2005) found that the school counsellors are trained and certified/licensed by the Department of Education in the state in which the school counsellor operates. Moreover, the majority of school counsellors in American schools typically have a Master's level qualification or higher in school counselling. It is clear that such standards and procedures are not yet in place in Saudi Arabia.

7.4.1.2 Identity of school counsellors

Counsellor identity was defined by Puglia (2008) as being composed of three elements: "agreement with the counselling philosophy, beliefs that the counselling profession includes activities such as becoming licensed and certified, and professional engagement" (p. 13). Thus,

the concept of professional identity for counsellors encompasses who they are, what they do, how they differ from other professionals who offer assistance, such as social workers and counselling psychologists (Puglia, 2008), and the manner in which they are qualified and authorised. Benefits related to a robust professional identity include enhanced ethical operations, adherence to wellness, and an increased recognition of the roles and functions of counselling (Brott & Myers, 1999; Grimmit & Paisley, 2008; Ponton & Duba, 2009). Furthermore, a greater awareness of professional identity shapes a consistent development of professional identity, which is required to safeguard the future of the profession (O'Bryant, 1992).

The current study found that the identity of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia is affected by the current process of selection in that the school counsellors were not perceived to be professionals and their work was under-appreciated by teachers and other associated professionals, a matter that influenced their work and identity in the school. This finding confirms the work of Schmidt (2003) who submitted that the identity of counsellors and the significance of their roles within the school could be adversely affected by the perceptions of teachers, coordinator and administrators. It could be concluded that effective school counselling provision for all students including students with

SEN will never be achieved while school counsellors lack a strong and positive identity.

This study also found that the predominant motivation for a person to work as school counsellor in Saudi schools was to escape from teaching. This is another factor that could affect the identity of school counsellors within schools because teachers may perceive that the counsellors do not have a rigorous job schedule and hence seek to take up this role due to its perceived lack of rigour and consequent easier schedule. The participating school counsellors acknowledged that this perception was widespread among school teachers in Saudi Arabia.

The preceding discussions strongly indicate that the reported failure in establishing definite standards in recruitment does not merely offer a restrictive perception of counsellors' identity but also limits their ability to effectively provide counselling services in the schools.

It is also apparent that the Ministry of Education has neither attempted to review the role of school counsellors in the school environment nor created any policy to improve the current recruitment processes and hence the current procedures related to the provision of counselling services in Saudi schools, especially regarding students with SEN.

7.4.2 Counselling profession and cultural and religion appropriateness

This subsection addresses the second area explored in relation to the research question: What the participants perceived with regard to the counselling profession and its appropriateness in the cultural and religious context of Saudi Arabia.

Culture, in general, has an impact on a person's understanding and acceptance of the things taking place around him/her. In a country such as Saudi Arabia where culture is additionally influenced by the underlying religion, Islam, it can be assumed that the country's very functioning at all levels is influenced by Islamic principles and the Saudi culture, counselling being no exception. Scholars have advocated taking cultural factors into consideration when planning the counselling approach to be used in a certain cultural context (Moodley & West, 2005).Consequently, one of the aspects I explored in this study was the implications of the religion and culture on the professional practice of counselling as perceived by the participants.

7.4.2.1 Impact of Islam on counselling practice

This study confirms that the current policies in force in Saudi Arabia with regard to school counselling emphasise the need to provide counselling services which take Islamic principles and values into

consideration. As the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a self-professed Islamic State, this is within its legitimate rights. However, this may lead to a lack of willingness to understand Western theories and be open to these theories, especially in this modern era, which may be effective in achieving positive results in the work of school counsellors.

For example, one of the participants in this study indicated that he used 'Islamic counselling' in dealing with his clients in the school. Furthermore, he had not used western theories of school counselling because, in his opinion, the tenets of Islam were sufficient to deal with the students. This suggests that counsellors in Saudi Arabia may have a misconception with regard to the theories underlying counselling wherein they believe that these theories are applicable only in a western context and not in their own country. That is, they may believe that the western theories are not compatible with Islam, a belief which is incorrect. Another participant's belief was that these theories were too complex for him to use, which indicates the lack of awareness and preparation before a counsellor took up his role in school.

It is evident that while counsellors can use Islamic principles to ensure that the guidance and counsel they provide to their clients does not disobey any specific religious or cultural requirements, there is an

accompanying lack of information and awareness of the general principles of counselling and how these have been proven to be effective in different countries across the world. The perceptions of the participating counsellors in this matter again indicate the inadequacies of the support provided by the Ministry of Education for counsellors. It appears that the Ministry's policies and guidelines fail to highlight a general or standard process of counselling to be employed by all counsellors in Saudi Arabia. Thus, it would be advisable for the Ministry to establish, publish and enforce a set of counselling guidelines for counsellors practicing in Saudi Arabia. These guidelines should be based on the general counselling principles employed across the world and adapted for appropriateness in the religious and cultural context of Saudi Arabia.

Another gap that could be detected from the participants' narratives was the lack of training provided to counsellors before they took up their assignments in the schools. For instance, one participant's description of the strategies he used to deal with students' problems corresponded to cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) (Miller et al., 2011), one of the most common western approaches in use. This participant described that his dealing with clients began with discussion. Subsequently, he attempted to change the client's way of thinking which then helped to improve the client's behaviour. However,

this participant was not aware of CBT, or indeed any other theories related to counselling. Thus, a great need for training is indicated wherein the counsellors are introduced to the general theories and approaches to counselling. Furthermore, they also need to be shown how these theories can be used in a manner that supports Islamic principles.

Another shortcoming revealed by the current study was with regard to the obligation to provide counselling services for students with SEN. The availability of counselling services to such students is mandated by law. Hence, the lack of training reported by the counsellors could be seen to impact their provision of services to students with SEN. Islamic principles require a person to do a job competently, however, in this case it could be seen that the participants were attempting to counsel students with SEN without due consideration for their special requirements. Thus, it can be seen that the provision of counselling services in Saudi Arabia, in general, and to students with SEN, in particular, appears to disregard these Islamic principles while claiming to use Islamic counselling methods. However, it is not clear if this is due to shortcomings in the existing counsellors or weaknesses in the support provided to the counsellors by Ministry of Education. Overall, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education take adequate measures, such as the design of suitable training courses, to ensure

that all counsellors who are appointed to the mainstream schools, that include students with SEN understand, counselling theory and the purpose of counselling and the use of these in the Islamic context of Saudi Arabia.

7.4.2.2 Counselling as pastoral care

An additional finding from the study is the misunderstanding of counselling care to be equivalent to pastoral care. Pastoral care, in general, indicates all non-teaching aspects of work with pupils (Mah, 2015) such as enhancing a student's personal and social development (Fosket & Lynch, 2001). Some scholars have described pastoral care in the school context to include guidance and counselling by teachers (Aluede & Egbochuku, 2009; De Jong & Kerr-Roubicek, 2007; Lam & Hui, 2010). Hence, one possible reason for apparent predilection for teachers in Saudi Arabia to move to counselling is their experience with counselling in their role as teachers. They could thus perceive that the role of school counsellor was an extension of their pastoral care as teachers but without the burden of teaching.

7.4.2.3 Cooperation from parents

This study further found that the lack of cooperation between school counsellors and parents of students with SEN is an indication of the prevailing culture in the community that individual problems must be

resolved and dealt with in the home and only within the framework of the family; strange people are not allowed to deal with it.

This finding appears to contradict earlier studies on counselling in schools which have suggested that parents can offer insights about students which can facilitate the work of school counsellors. Conversely, parents also can greatly benefit from interacting or collaborating with counsellors. Thus, it could be inferred that a positive and supportive association between counsellors and parents is advantageous to students, and that collaborating with parents helps counsellors in dealing with the emotional and social requirements of all students. Counsellors and parents should develop a successful partnership in order to enable students to achieve their goals. Parents can help counsellors by providing information about students that may facilitate their work. On the other hand, parents benefit greatly from communicating with counsellors. It was thought that a positive and co-operative relationship between counsellors and parents benefits the students, and that consulting with parents is a key element of meeting the social and emotional needs of all children. Furthermore, effective collaboration between counsellors and parents can help students achieve their goals (Oliver et al., 2007). However, since the current study is situated in the cultural context of Saudi Arabia, it is not

perhaps surprising that parents try to avoid publicity with regard to any issues that might require counselling assistance for a child.

7.4.2.4 Social stigma

This study indicates that the social stigma associated with disabilities has a direct impact on the work of school counsellors with students with SEN which is seen through the lack of cooperation of parents with the counsellor or with the school in general. Studies (e.g., Ansary & Salloum, 2012; Kobeisy, 2001) have recognised several barriers to counselling with regard to Muslims. These include the stigma related to mental health services; the belief that seeking counselling is an indication of weakness or reduced social position/influence; dishonour and shame towards family or community; an innate distrust of Western options of treatment; etc. Furthermore, Muslim communities, due to their collectivist nature, have strong support systems in their extended families and society. However, as observed by Ansary and Salloum (2012, p. 164), "family and community can be sources of support to protect one against the onset of mental illness … they can simultaneously serve to undermine treatment-seeking, with potentially grave consequences". Consequently, parents often may delay seeking early interventions for their children if they believe it is against the guidance of their families or communities.

7.4.3 The provision of school-based-counselling for students with SEN

This subsection addresses the third area explored in relation to the research question: What the participants perceived with regard to the provision of school-based counselling for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia.

In general, in the context of students with SEN, school counsellors have legal, professional and ethical obligations to offer sufficient primary and secondary services to such students. In fact, as members of a multi-specialty team in schools, schools counsellors are required to "engage in advocacy, consultation, diagnosis, assessment, development of delivery system, and provision of support services for students, parents and teachers" (Dunn & Baker, 2002, p. 227).

A significant finding from this study is that, whilst there is a recent tendency in the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to provide counselling services for students of SEN, the provision of school counselling for these students tends to focus on the social acceptance of these students in the school, including improving awareness of students with SEN among all school students. School counsellors attempted to change the current position of students with SEN in the school, whether urban or rural, by including these students

in social activities inside or outside the school. Furthermore, school counsellors stressed that the social stigma associated with disabilities resulted in society's ignorance of how to deal with such individuals. Inclusive counselling was understood by school counsellors from a social perspective because they executed their roles at a very basic level of commitment and understanding. A possible explanation for this might be the social stigma found in the Saudi culture regarding the acceptance and the position of students with SEN in school and in society. For example, the Bedouin heritage considers a disability to be a social stigma which affects the image of the family in the society.

This study found that the provision of school counselling for students with SEN is performed in a very basic manner. Counsellors were inadequately trained and consequently only minimal levels of counselling were offered in the schools. This could indicate that the likelihood of students with SEN encountering abuse may increase because students with SEN who are integrated into mainstream schools are highly likely to be abused in comparison to those without special needs. Sullivan and Knutson (2000) found that children with SEN are 3.4 times more likely to be victims of abuse than their peers.

This thesis sheds light on the experiences of school counsellors in relation to their work with students with SEN. From the results of the

quantitative study (Chapter Five), some of the participants indicated that they had dealt with students with SEN but after analysing the results of this qualitative study (Part 1) and understanding their roles in the school it is clear that they do not provide the actual counselling services required by those students. The main services provided for those students were found to be administrative services. No evidence could be found of any effective and structured counselling services to manage or resolve those students' issues in the school.

Furthermore, this study found that Islamic principles – that is, social justice for all – regarding individuals with SEN and the international legislation for inclusion in the schools were being transgressed. Therefore, it is recommended that the school counsellors in Saudi Arabia comply with Islamic principles and international legislation and offer students with SEN the appropriate services they need.

7.4.3.1 Undefined roles

This study shows that the roles of school counsellors regarding students with SEN are not clear. There is an obvious weakness in the definition of the roles of counsellors in Saudi Arabia. This study shows that performing various administrative (or non-counselling) tasks within the school can adversely affect the work of school counsellors with all students, including students with SEN. Examples of non-

counselling tasks include working as substitute teachers, clerical/administrative work, monitoring or disciplining of students, scheduling of courses, etc. (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Scarborough, 2005). When counsellors participate in such tasks they may encounter inconsistency and uncertainty with regard to their role, lack professional identity, diminished capacity to function as school counsellor, and reduced well-being at work (Culbreth et al., 2005; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Lieberman, 2004; Woods, 2009). Thus, it is advised that non-counselling related tasks be kept to the minimum so that the counsellors' purpose in helping students can be fulfilled (Mullen, 2014).

Furthermore, a lack of robust relationship between teachers and counsellors may affect the counsellors' ability to deal with the concerns of the students (Sink, 2011). For example, teachers may refer students to the counsellors for incorrect purposes (Persi, 1997). Furthermore, teachers may be ignorant (Carlson, 1990) or have impractical beliefs about counselling (Jackson & White, 2000). Adams et al. (2007) observed that counselling is not understood by all teachers. Moreover, teachers may refer students for individual counselling based on the belief that the role of the school counsellor is to solve the current behavioural challenges of students instead of to forestall future difficulties (Clemens, 2007).

This study also found that a lack of clarity with regard to the roles of counsellors was reported with principals and school deputy principals. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education create some mechanism (e.g., training, workshops, etc.) to ensure that all stakeholders in the education of students (with or without SEN) share an equal awareness of the roles of counsellors so that the schools can make best use of the services of counsellors in aiding students. Furthermore, it is anticipated that such measures would also increase the motivation of counsellors to remain up-to-date in their knowledge and be inspired to provide the best services to the students under their purview.

7.4.3.2 Anxiety

Several counsellors reported that they experienced feelings of anxiety when they were asked to work with students with SEN. The common thread underlying their narratives was the lack of knowledge and awareness with regard to the needs of students with SEN. Furthermore, the fact that the educational major for very few was Psychology, Sociology or Social Work, exposed the shortcomings of the process of recruitment of counsellors in Saudi Arabia, as persons with a background in these speciality areas could be expected to have some prior knowledge about special needs and how to deal with them.

Moreover, professional certification in this area was also found to be lacking in the counsellors.

As highlighted in Chapter Five, education can significantly influence the attitudes of counsellors (Scior, 2011; Wong et al., 2004). It can be inferred that the lack of suitable education can hinder their attitudes. The current study found that this is indeed the situation in Saudi Arabia. However, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education take stringent steps and enforce strict guidelines with regard to the educational qualifications of persons applying to be counsellors. As an alternative, the Ministry can provide training to equip counsellors before they take up roles involving students with SEN.

7.4.3.3 The quality of the relationship between school counsellors and students with SEN

Bordin (1979) suggests that a crucial aspect of a successful relationship between a client and counsellor is the development of a robust working partnership. However, the current study found that school counsellors provide very basic services to students with SEN. The involvement of school counsellors in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process is an opportunity for school counsellors to demonstrate their unique contributions as they are believed to have special knowledge with regard to improving the career prospects and

life quality of their clients (Milsom et al., 2007). Furthermore, school counsellors are trained to link the personal and social aspects of a student with regard to scholastic performance – facets that may require highlighting during IEP meetings. Moreover, school counsellors may be perceived as advisors in the school who advocate for the students, both explicitly and implicitly (Owens et al., 2011). However, the current study indicates that school counsellors in Saudi Arabia do not participate in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Nevertheless, given the current understanding of their lack of skills and knowledge with regard to students with SEN, this may be a good thing.

The current study found that some of the school counsellors attempted to build strong relationships with all students in the school. However, the lack of provision of school counselling services for students with SEN might be interpreted to indicate that school counsellors fail to establish positive relationships with students with SEN. Furthermore, the lack of communication and relationships between parents and school counsellors can prohibit the building of relationships between students with SEN and school counsellors. The relationship (or lack thereof) between teachers of students with SEN and school counsellors can also limit the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationships of counsellors with students with SEN. Other significant factors that can

affect the establishing of relationships between school counsellors and students with SEN are the effect of Saudi culture and the social stigma on the relationship.

7.4.4 Factors that influence the successful provision of school counselling for SEN students

This subsection addresses the fourth area explored in relation to the research question: The participants' views regarding the factors that influence the successful provision of school counselling for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia.

The current study found from the participants' narratives that a few recurring factors influenced the successful provision of school counselling for students with SEN. The first were the attitudes and perceptions of related professions in the schools, that is, professions related to counselling. A second factor was the lack of knowledge and skills for effectively providing school counselling for SEN students. A third factor was the lack of training and support received by school counsellors who work with students with SEN.

7.4.4.1 Related professions

In general, the association between counselling and professions related to counselling can influence the progress of school-based counselling or the practices related to school-based counselling in the

country (Martin et al., 2015). For example, a study about counselling in Kenya reported the existence of a complex relationship between teachers and counsellors:

> In an effort to address the growing need, senior teachers were and continue to be assigned routinely the role of counsellor in spite of having no formal training in the area. In other schools, the counsellor role is assigned to teachers of religious studies, and in still other schools, the deputy head teacher is designated as the counsellor (Okech & Kimemia, 2012, p. 109).

As was seen earlier in this chapter, the recruitment of counsellors in Saudi Arabia is similar with teachers being routinely recruited to fill counsellor roles in schools. Also, these teachers are frequently ill-equipped to take up counselling, in general, and to deal with students with SEN, in particular. This affects the successful provision of counselling services to students with SEN.

Another perspective to consider related professions is the attitudes of other school personnel (e.g., teachers, principals and deputy principals) and the students themselves with regard to counsellors and the provision of counselling services in schools. The significance of teachers in establishing counselling programmes in the school due to

their large numbers was pointed out by Low (2009). The support of teachers can crucially affect the development of counselling services to benefit all students. Furthermore, teachers are an important point of referral for counselling services.

Cooper et al. (2005) and Low (2009) found that many teachers hold a positive attitude towards school counselling. However, Cooper et al. (2005) found that some teachers believed that counselling in schools was limited to giving advice, revealing that they had either inadequate awareness of the benefits of counselling or had a poor opinion of counselling. Colbert and Colbert (2003) and Bor et al. (2002) submitted that more effective counselling services could be provided if school counsellors and teachers collaborated.

A study of how school administrators conceptualise the school counsellor role by Amatea and Clark (2005) found that the administrators believed that school counsellors should take an active leadership role with school staff to improve the overall functioning of the school. Others suggested that the expertise of school counsellors should be harnessed to assist other school staff in how they work with students. Another set of participants in this same study expressed the belief that the primary role of school counsellors is providing direct services to students using individual counselling or through classroom

guidance; that is, a separate set of services that complements the work of the other staff.

Beesley and Frey (2006) investigated the perceptions of school principals regarding school counsellors' role and satisfaction with counselling services and found that principals reported overall satisfaction with the counselling services provided in the school.

Studies (e.g., Antoniou et al., 2009; Kauffman & Landrum, 2013; MacBeath et al. , 2005) have found that support is certainly needed by teachers in dealing with the increasingly complex requirements of pupils such as social, emotional, and behavioural challenges. Equally, students who have positive relationships with teachers may be safeguarded from the risks of rejection from peers and other teachers, failure in school or society, etc. (Kauffman & Landrum, 2013; Kourkoutas, 2012; Levine, 2007; Simpson & Mundschenk, 2012). In general, schools can be regarded as the perfect location to effect counselling programmes that can be useful to a large number of students with or without SEN. However, such programmes require that teachers and counsellors collaborate to ensure that students obtain the right kind and level of support to achieve their various goals (scholastic, societal, emotional, and behavioural) (Kourkoutas & Giovazolias, 2015).

This quantitative study found that the school counsellors, in general, have and maintain encouraging relationships with special education teachers. However, the interviews with the counsellors who work with students with SEN indicated otherwise. These participants perceived negative attitudes and poor acceptance from teachers. It was apparent from their narratives that some teachers believed that counsellors' role was irrelevant and that the counsellors did not perform any significant tasks in the school. Consequently, they believed that the counsellors had time to spare and referred trivial issues to the counsellors which could have been solved easily by the teachers. Moreover, teachers did not seem to understand the roles and duties of the school counsellor as they assigned tasks such as chastising students for minor misdemeanours such as misbehaving in school or failure to complete homework. Some teachers were even reported to believe that it was the counsellors' duty to resolve all problems related to the students, behavioural or otherwise. Thus, it could be concluded that the counsellors' effectiveness in performing their roles was hindered by the lack of awareness regarding their role and support from teachers in their schools. It is evident that this factor could be alleviated by the provision of timely training to the teachers to educate them on the distinctions between their role and those of counsellors. Furthermore, they could be guided with regard to the kinds of issues to be referred

to the counsellors. Again, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education take the required action in this regard.

7.4.4.2 The lack of knowledge and skills for effectively providing school counselling for SEN students

In general, a counsellor's skills are considered to be what he or she performs during an intervention (i.e., counselling session) and may include basic and advanced helping skills, procedural skills, theory-based therapies, and issue-related tasks (Borders & Brown, 2006). Researchers have displayed varied opinions regarding the most effective approach for helping novice counsellors to gain counselling skills. However, they are agreed that it is crucial for counsellors to gain counselling skills (Fitch et al., 2004). Moreover, some professional counselling associations specify the desirable personal qualities and values of a counsellor (e.g., BACP, 2016).

In general, the current study found that the counsellors who work with students with SEN lacked both counselling knowledge and skills. In several instances they reported being 'thrown in at the deep end' without adequate preparation to take up counselling of students with SEN. This finding is further evidence of the lack of preparation and training provided to persons appointed as counsellors, a shortcoming that can perhaps be attributed again to the lack of rigour in the

Ministry's process of recruitment. However, since the number of persons who apply for the role of counsellor with qualification in Psychology, Sociology or Social Work may be limited, it is the Ministry's responsibility to ensure that all counsellors appointed by them meet some pre-defined standards of qualification and awareness even if these have to be obtained post-employment.

7.4.4.3 The lack of training and support

As seen in Chapter Two, the Saudi Ministry of Education (2001) has published a definition of the term 'counselling' and the associated objectives of counselling in the Saudi education system. These objectives encompass: the guidance to be provided to students incorporating the use of Islamic principles; resolution of students' problems; creation of an encouraging environment wherein students can pursue their studies; promotion of students' talents and capabilities; helping students adjust to the school environment and to participate in the various school programmers; and aiding students in career planning.

However, as also noted, some of the objectives specified for counselling were observed to overlap with the objectives of general education in Saudi Arabia and those associated with the roles of principals and teachers. Moreover, the objectives have not been updated to include considerations in the context of students with SEN

in inclusive educational environments. Thus, it could be seen that there is a lack of clarity regarding the objectives to be achieved by the appointment of counsellors in schools in Saudi Arabia.

The narratives of the participants in this phase of the study indicated that, although they had been assigned to work with students with SEN, they were not aware of the special needs of such students and were frequently caught unawares. Their comments suggested the need for specific training for counsellors dealing with the needs of students with SEN. Furthermore, it could be seen that counsellors received no support from the Ministry of Education as even formal supervision sessions were rare (once or twice per academic year). Also, the supervisors' awareness of the problems counsellors could face and how these could be resolved was inadequate as they were mostly officials from the Ministry of Education, not trained counsellors themselves.

Thus, a clear lack could be seen in relation to the training provision for counsellors assigned to work with students with SEN. As mentioned earlier, counsellors in Saudi Arabia may have educational qualifications in areas not related to counselling (e.g., Islamic Studies, Geography, etc.). Consequently, regardless of their motivation to take up counselling, they lack sufficient knowledge of the different approaches and therapies in counselling. Even if they pursue knowledge on their

own, it is still advisable to obtain some official certification to ensure that all the counsellors are at the same level of competence.

Hence, it is recommended that the Ministry revise the objectives for the provision of counselling services in schools to include considerations for students with SEN. Furthermore, it is imperative that adequate training and oversight for counsellors who work with such students be instituted at the earliest opportunity so that the provision of counselling for students with SEN can increase in effectiveness.

7.4.5 The increasing demand for continuous professional development

This subsection addresses the fifth area explored in relation to the research question: The participants' views and experiences regarding continuous professional development.

Research has found that, while it is anticipated that school counsellors will play a pivotal role in the education of students with SEN, the counsellors may be limited by a lack of adequate training (Dunn & Baker, 2002; Nichter & Edmonson, 2005; Studer & Quigney, 2005). Romano et al. (2009) observed that school counsellors would profit from supplementary training when counselling students with SEN. Studer and Quigney (2005) compellingly suggested that education

programmes for counsellors could use introductory courses or integrate the content and issues associated with students with SEN into existing courses to include pre-service training in special education. Similarly, the current study shows that there is a high demand for continuous professional development to facilitate the role of school counsellors related to students with SEN.

All participants stressed that the urgent need for the government to help all school counsellors to improve their abilities to deal with students with SEN through the participation of school counsellors in continuous professional training. Otherwise, the situation is one of lost time and money when counsellors could be effectively occupied in working with students with SEN.

As seen in Chapter Five, the participants of the current study were found to hold a positive attitude towards students with SEN, in general. Also, the results indicated that school counsellors support providing services to students with SEN in the school regardless of the lack of adequate and appropriate training. However, for long-term effectiveness of the counselling services, the provision of continuous professional development is critical and could be more important than providing the financial incentive for school counsellors to work with students with SEN. Thus, it is clear that the Ministry of Education must

institute a mechanism to provide adequate and continuous professional development for persons appointed as counsellors. Furthermore, the Ministry must be mindful of the special considerations to be taken regarding students with SEN when devising programmes for counsellors of such students.

7.5 Reflections on this phase

Although Islam emphasises that all Muslims must deal with individuals with SEN equally, the education system in Saudi Arabia appears to be deficient in relation to these individuals. An example of this is the process of selecting counsellors which recruits school counsellors to work with such students without ensuring that the counsellors have received appropriate training and consequently sufficient understanding of special needs. This is the basis of the problem existing in Saudi Arabia as school counsellors may not know how to deal with those with SEN, resulting in the loss of their rights, as their peers, to see a counsellor. This is an area of great concern and one that requires criticism to be levelled at the decision-makers within the Ministry of Education.

It could be seen that the Ministry of Education has developed a policy of financial incentive to support those counsellors who work with students with SEN in the school. However, while financial incentives are important in motivating counsellors to perform the additional

functions that are related to special educational needs students, the objective of providing this incentive fails when school counsellors may ineffectively provide their services to these students and further may not even have the ability to do so. Thus, the Ministry of Education appears to be blindly granting incentives resulting in foolish expenditure from the government budget for the inclusive education of students with SEN because most of the counsellors who work with special education students are not qualified to do so.

The study found that there are three major domains that affect the provision of school counselling for students with SEN which can result in the exclusion of these students from school counselling services: the system in Saudi Arabia, the school counsellors themselves, and other associated caregivers for students with SEN such as teachers and parents. Erickson and Smith (1947) suggest that counselling's primary goal is to enable students to more effectively adjust to the environment where they live and to be aware of themselves and their world. It can thus be anticipated that a far-reaching and official guidance programme could significantly assist students with SEN in inclusive schools. However, from the preceding discussions, it is evident that the emphasis of guidance and counselling in Saudi Arabia has been to the population without special educational needs.

Furthermore, earlier studies (e.g., Arthur, 2001; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2001; Vasco & Dryden, 1994) have emphasised that the choice of educational major significantly influences the professional careers of counsellors, their personal welfare and professional functioning. It was observed that the educational majors of the counsellors in this study were significantly unrelated to counselling (e.g., Islamic Studies, Geography, etc.). It is obvious therefore that the Ministry of Education must necessarily revamp the process of selection and recruitment of counsellors and draw up strict guidelines with regard to counsellors' qualification and motivation.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter reported and presented the analysis of the findings of the first qualitative phase of the current study. The first section of the chapter briefly summarised the method used during this phase. The second section presented the findings from the interviews organised into master and superordinate themes. The third section provided a discussion of these qualitative findings. My personal reflections on this phase were also provided. The following chapter presents the findings of the second set of the interviews, followed by the discussion.

Chapter Eight: Phase Two - Qualitative study: Findings and discussion

Part 2: School counsellors who have not worked with students with SEN

8.1 Introduction

This is the last of three chapters presenting the findings concerning perceptions of counsellors with regard to the role of school counsellors in Saudi Arabian schools. As described earlier in the thesis, the second, or qualitative, phase of the study was divided into two parts. The first part involved interviews with 12 counsellors who have worked with students with SEN. As a significant percentage (41.3%) of the school counsellors who participated in the quantitative study were found not to have provided school counselling services for students with SEN, a separate set of interviews was performed with 12 counsellors who fell into this category. The purpose of this chapter is to report and analyse the perceptions of these counsellors in relation to the provision of school counselling services for students with SEN. A brief explanation of the method used is provided, including the tool adopted for analysis and a summary of the participants' information. Four master themes and their constituent superordinate themes are

presented in the results section. The third section presents a brief discussion of the findings.

8.2 Method

As with Part One of the qualitative study, I used a qualitative research method to gain detailed and rich information regarding the provision of school counselling for students with SEN and to recognise the different themes which describe this process.

I again adopted a phenomenological approach so that I could understand the phenomenon of providing school counselling for students with SEN from the perspective of school counsellors who have not worked with those students. I used interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to gain insight into how such school counsellors made sense of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviews were again utilised for data collection as recommended by Smith et al. (1997) for IPA studies.

Table 16 depicts the participants' information, with the names of the participants masked for confidentiality. The sole criterion for inclusion was that they had not provided counselling services for students with SEN in their schools. There were no exclusion criteria.

As described in Chapter Four (Methodology), I obtained gained verbal consent from the participants, prior to all the interviews, to record the

interview using my mobile phone. I subsequently uploaded the interviews to my personal laptop.

Table 17: *Participants' information*

Sl #	Participant	Age	Years of experience	City	Area type
1	Sami	49	27	Jeddah	Urban
2	Mohammed	44	7	Jeddah	Urban
3	Turki	50	28	Mecca	Urban
4	Azooz	45	8	Mecca	Urban
5	Kamal	42	5	Taif	Urban
6	Saeed	43	24	Taif	Urban
7	Ayman	40	4	Jeddah	Rural
8	Adel	36	3	Jeddah	Rural
9	Yasser	39	5	Mecca	Rural
10	Majed	47	4	Mecca	Rural
11	Fareed	40	2	Taif	Rural
12	Jamal	39	8	Taif	Rural

It could be seen that most (9 out of 12) of the participants had recently taken up counselling as their years of experience in the field was 8 years or less. About a fourth (3 out of 12) had experience of 24

years or more. Thus, it could be inferred that 9 of the counsellors had worked as teachers before becoming counsellors whereas the remainder had taken up counselling almost immediately after completing their education.

The detailed findings from the interviews are presented in the following section.

8.3 Results

The twelve counsellors were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The data were clustered into four master themes using IPA. These themes, along with their constituent superordinate themes, can be viewed in the table below (see Table 17).

As stated in Chapter Six, it is again recognised that these themes are merely one probable narrative of the experience of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia who have no experience in working with students with SEN. Consequently, all facets of the counsellors' experience cannot be assumed to be covered by these themes. Moreover, the themes were chosen due to their significance in the context of the study.

Table 18: *Table of master and superordinate themes*

Master themes	Superordinate themes
School counsellors' experience	Previous experience to inform practice
	The importance of school counsellors' relationships with school personnel
Preparedness for school counselling	Lack of understanding and preparedness
	Self-directed learning
	Improving preparedness
Working with students with SEN as a supplementary task	Feeling unprepared
	School counsellors' lack of knowledge of special educational needs
	Having many responsibilities in the school
Challenges of being a school counsellor for students with SEN	The lack of clarity of counsellors' roles toward students with SEN
	A lack of cooperation between the special education teachers and school counsellors
	A lack of supportive supervision

8.3.1 Master theme 1: School counsellors' experience

This master theme was developed as all participants reflected on their experiences of becoming school counsellors. Two superordinate themes were identified which seemed to contribute to a better understanding of the participants' experiences: 'previous experience being used to inform practice' and 'the importance of school counsellors' relationships with school personnel'.

8.3.1.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Previous experience to inform practice

This first theme captures the counsellors' perceptions of how their experiences before becoming school counsellors informed their counselling practice in the school. I found that all the interviewees in this phase had been teachers except for one participant who became a school counsellor immediately after graduating from university.

The reflections of Mohammed and Azooz on their early experiences of being a counsellor in their school revealed that studying a special educational programme at the university and their personal experiences in teaching had been central to informing their counselling role in the school.

I have the desire to work as a counsellor ... I studied Arabic with a special educational programme at the College of Education which contained different subjects, such as Developmental Psychology,

Educational Psychology ... So I have learnt how to deal with others ... What I've studied in the college plus my experience in teaching my students enabled me to carry out the counselling role in my school. (Mohammed)

We were well-prepared at the University for teaching, and also provided an educational programme in order to familiarise ourselves with counselling and how to better deal with students in the school. I transferred much of my experience of being a teacher to the school counselling role. (Azooz)

It could be recognised from the participants' conversations that an important component of their previous experience was practicing informal counselling in addition to their teaching roles. Turki, Kamal and Ayman reflected that they had a desire to work as a counsellor even while they were teachers. Their experiences with informal counselling and their desire to move into school counselling informed their counselling work at their schools:

At the beginning, I was honestly inclined to do counselling when I was a teacher. I love the counselling job and I did practise counselling with my students in my school. (Turki)

I was a teacher and very close to my students ... At that time, my students kept asking me about the best disciplines and about my

opinion regarding the professions ... I really enjoyed it, especially vocational counselling. (Kamal)

I have been involved in counselling for long time ... I had developed an interest in counselling before becoming a school counsellor ... I had already been a Science teacher for 14 years and practiced informal counselling with my students. (Ayman)

A different perspective was provided by Saeed who realised the role of learnt experience in informing school counselling practice. He reflected that he had obtained significant insights from working with different school counsellors who worked at his schools, which benefited him in his current role as counsellor:

I used to be a science teacher ... The school counsellor asked me to participate in solving some of the students' problems and I agreed because I was able to build an excellent rapport with all students whilst teaching ... I started working with him to resolve some of the students' problems in the school and gained more benefits from the counsellor's experience. (Saeed)

Upon further inquiry, Saeed revealed that, based on his learnt experience, there is no positive or negative method for working as a school counsellor. Rather, it is about the counsellor himself developing and finding his style or way of becoming an independent school counsellor. It could be inferred from Saeed's remarks that counsellors

must adapt their approach based on the context or student they are counselling.

I've been engaged with various school counsellors and I've gained a lot from them ... All of them work differently and each counsellor has his own approach at work ... I was convinced that there are other ways to work as schools counsellor and that I would be able to figure out my own approach at the school. (Saeed)

Yasser, who also transitioned from teaching to school counselling, reported that he was motivated to become a school counsellor because he reflected that he had the ability to deal with students' issues. Therefore, he joined a short training course in counselling which boosted his confidence in solving students' problems.

My colleagues motivated me to become a school counsellor because I was responsible for different activities in the school ... I was confident in my ability to deal with students' issues because I had already attended a short training course in counselling after which I took the decision to become a school counsellor. (Yasser)

One of the participants, Sami, surprisingly, did not have any previous teaching experience. This was because he had been appointed as a school counsellor immediately after graduating from the Psychology Department at his university. He was allowed to practice school counselling roles in a school in the last semester of his studies as part

of his fieldwork. In Sami's opinion, his specialisation in Psychology and his short practice in school counselling were the key to informing his practice as school counsellor.

I have no previous experience in teaching as my specialty is Psychology, but I did have the chance to do some fieldwork for one semester at one school ... I was appointed as a school counsellor soon after my graduation. (Sami)

In the next section, I explore the responses which fell under the purview of the second superordinate theme.

8.3.1.2 Superordinate Theme 2: The importance of school counsellors' relationships with school personnel

Under this theme, I capture the participants' accounts of the importance of their relationships with school personnel such as teachers, principals and school deputies. This theme was represented by all participants in the study as they considered that their success in providing school counselling services depended on their positive relationships with school staff.

The importance of counsellors' relationship with various key staff in the school could be perceived, for instance, from Turki who indicated that he considered good relationships with the school's key staff to be an essential requirement for school counsellors. Failure to develop positive relationships with teachers, he felt, could lead to shortcomings

in the counsellors' work through being sent many cases which may not actually require counselling. Accordingly, Turki reflected that he tried to avoid negative views from teachers, which could be a result of the teachers' lack of understanding of counsellor's roles in the school, and attempted to build an effective relationship with them to help the work environment in the school. However, it could be inferred from his remarks that his feelings regarding the relationship between himself and teachers were not favourable:

Teachers may not understand our roles or appreciate our job, but because we are colleagues in the same school, I have to overlook some of the negative attitudes towards myself for the sake of the school. (Turki)

Similarly, the negative effects of teachers' lack of understanding of school counsellors' roles could also be discerned from Adel's reflections:

Honestly, teachers have this idea that we do not do anything and that we just sit in the office without being given a particular role ... This has probably had an impact on teachers and on their relationship with school counsellors. (Adel)

Both Adel and Turki attributed the shortcomings in their relationships with teachers to the teachers' lack of understanding of the nature of school counsellors' roles, which caused negative attitudes towards

counsellors. The relationship between school counsellors and teachers could in turn affect the provision of appropriate school counselling services in the school.

As a way to improve counsellors' relationships with teachers, Saeed highlighted the importance of having meetings with teachers in order to clarify the role of the school counsellor within the school. In his opinion, these meetings would enable teachers to understand counsellors' roles and plans and subsequently lead to an improvement in their relationships with counsellors. This would in turn reduce number of insignificant and inappropriate referrals made by the teachers for counselling services. All the other participants echoed Saeed's suggestion regarding this simple technique to improve their relationships with teachers.

It is necessary to have meetings with teachers to clarify our roles, either by myself or together with the school principal, and explain to them my tasks and plans ... Once they understand what I do in the school, the number of unimportant referrals will decrease. (Saeed)

From the analysis of the interviews, it could be seen that the school counsellors experienced anxiety and uncertainty particularly in relation to their roles in the school during the early stages of becoming a school counsellor. Therefore, the participants highlighted the importance of supportive and encouraging relationships with school

principals in order to help them to overcome their initial anxiety. As Jamal commented:

When I started out as a counsellor in the school, I had no clue what to do next ... I didn't have the foggiest idea how to go about my work ... The school principal who seemed to have a general understanding of school counselling established positive relationships, which assisted me when I first started my job. (Jamal)

Thus, Jamal identified the importance of school counsellors' establishing encouraging relationships with school principals in order for counsellors to understand and perform their roles in the school. However, it must be noted that not all principals have a general understanding of school counselling – a factor that may influence their perceptions and behaviour towards counsellors.

Another insight from the interviews was that a supportive relationship with school principals significantly facilitates the provision of unobstructed counselling services in the school. One of the participants, Majed, identified principals' support as allowing him to work unhindered. However, his comments indicate that he had to take a middle path of conflict avoidance in order to establish a favourable relationship.

Another interviewee, Fareed, also highlighted the importance of principals' understanding and appreciation of the counsellors' role in

the school. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of feeling supported and valued. However, his comments indicated that the principal's authority could compel him to accept non-counselling tasks in the school if assigned these by the principal.

For the principal, he understands and appreciates my roles in the school ... He supports me in everything that I need and I have quite a strong relationship with him ... Sometimes, he asks me to do some tasks that are not related to my roles and I do so without complaining. (Fareed)

The school deputy principals were found to be another group of key personnel whose relationships with counsellors could affect their service provision in the school. All participants in this study reported that they did not have a professional relationship with school deputies. For example, Azooz argues below that the school deputy lacked an understanding of school counsellors' roles which contributed to a poor relationship with counsellors. Azooz reflected that the school deputy continued to intervene in his work although he had explained his role. Feeling that he lacked the support of the school deputy, Azooz reported avoiding dealing with the school deputy and focusing instead on interactions with the principal.

School deputies don't understand counsellors' roles in the school ... I explained the counsellor's job description and roles at work, but the

school deputy still interfered in my work ... After a while, I avoided dealing with him as my immediate contact was with the principal.

(Azooz)

Another indication that relationships between school counsellors and school deputies were challenging and lacked trust was provided by Yasser who reflected that the school deputy referred non-counselling tasks to the school counsellor – a matter that seemed to be of some concern to the counsellors.

The problem has always been with the school deputy ... I have a feeling that he doesn't trust me because he keeps referring students to me and giving me tasks that have nothing to do with my roles.

(Yasser)

The following section describes the findings categorised under the second superordinate theme.

8.3.2 Master Theme 2: Preparedness for school counselling

This master theme captures the perceptions of the participants regarding their preparedness for school counselling. This master theme includes three superordinate themes, the first of which is described in the following section.

8.3.2.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Lack of understanding and preparedness

I asked the participants to provide insights about their understanding and knowledge about school counselling when they first became school counsellors. I felt that this would help obtain rich information regarding how school counsellors gained their understanding of school counselling, the effectiveness of the received preparation, and the consequent effect on their experiences of becoming a school counsellor.

Jamal's reflections on his earliest experience of being a school counsellor indicate uncertainty and a sense of lacking understanding about school counselling roles. Furthermore, it could be seen that school counselling was considered to be something that could take place with little formal preparation:

I didn't have any understanding about my roles as a counsellor ... I felt that I wasn't prepared for school counselling. (Jamal)

This view was echoed by Majed who also indicated a lack of conceptual knowledge regarding school counselling as a counsellor:

I think I didn't have much knowledge about school counselling before becoming a counsellor. (Majed)

From their comments, it could be inferred that a lack of preparedness and knowledge appeared to be common in counsellors in Saudi Arabia.

A few of the participants also reported experiencing anxiety as a result of the lack of preparation when they first became school counsellors. For instance, as Adel and Fareed commented:

Honestly, I was worried about performing my roles in the school because there was a lack of preparation. (Adel)

I felt more nervous as I was not aware of school counselling tasks in the school, especially seeing a client and studying his case. (Fareed)

Their comments suggest that a lack of knowledge about counselling may be equated to the lack of preparation for counselling in the school. Even when formal preparation had in some cases been provided to the counsellors, this was not without its own shortcomings, as could be seen in Turki's comments.

Our formal preparation was very basic and limited ... This does not help qualified school counsellors in their job, which is the biggest problem ... I relied on my previous experience in providing informal counselling when I was a teacher. (Turki)

Thus, Turki reflected that formal preparation for school counsellors is limited. Ayman also articulated his experiences of feeling unprepared for school counselling though he had been selected for the role by the Ministry of Education:

The Ministry of Education accepted us as school counsellors ... We were a group, but we were not actually prepared well enough to provide effective school counselling services in our schools. (Ayman)

Furthermore, some of the counsellors commented on the brevity of the course content of the formal preparation that they received, as well as its lack of specialisation in counselling areas. Another noteworthy area that was highlighted was the inadequacy of the persons who delivered the formal training:

At that time, we were given training for one week only, which was not that beneficial for us because those who delivered the training sessions were not specialists in the field and provided materials of no relevance to us. (Saeed)

The training we were given was far too general with basic information about school counselling ... I haven't learnt anything from it. (Mohammed)

I think the main problem is that the majority of school counsellors are non-specialists ... About 70% of them were not formally trained and knew very little about school counselling ... We were thrown in at the deep end and had to work based on our own efforts. (Sami)

These accounts of Saeed, Mohammed and Sami were clear about the absence of effective formal preparation for school counselling in Saudi Arabia. Their disappointment regarding the received preparation was

evident and their language reflected the lack of importance and value they attributed to their preparation because it had not assisted them in providing school counselling services in their schools. It can be inferred that all the participants in the current study had received very little preparation regarding their roles as school counsellors.

The responses which fell under the purview of the second superordinate theme are explored in the following section.

8.3.2.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Self-directed learning

This superordinate theme captures the insights of the participants' regarding their self-directed learning. The participants highlighted that self-directed learning in association with their previous experiences were essential factors for increasing their understanding of school counselling.

As Kamal reflected on his preparedness for school counselling, he emphasised that he relied on self-directed learning through websites to gain a better understanding of school counselling:

It could be best described as self-development ... You develop yourself by continuously searching the internet and finding out more about how to deal with your students and how to help them solve their problems. (Kamal)

They left us to do whatever we want in this job ... I don't know really, but I had to prepare myself through what I was reading. (Kamal)

Kamal's comments also demonstrated a real sense of the lack of the formal training he received in relation to school counselling and the resulting need for self-reliance. He seemed to consider reading or studying to be suitable preparation for himself because the formal preparation received was inadequate.

From Mohammed's reflections, it was clear that his self-directed learning had fostered his understanding regarding school counselling. Furthermore, he had developed a clear understanding of counselling and gained more advantages from his self-reliance than from the formal preparation received. Moreover, he was able to gain a better understanding of his role regarding the behavioural and academic weaknesses in the school:

I had to find out effective ways to deal with my students ... I searched online about how to deal with children and how to identify those who have behavioural and academic weaknesses ... I found many topics under school counselling and guidance that I did not find in the preparation I had already received ... I made good use of them to develop my understanding about school counselling. (Mohammed)

Another interesting aspect of this self-directed learning revealed from the interviews was that the counsellors attempted to visit and meet various experienced school counsellors and discuss their counselling experiences with them, a step which could result in the obtaining and

developing of substantial understanding about counselling in schools. The reflections of Saeed and Majed on their experience regarding visiting different school counsellors highlighted the fact that experienced school counsellors helped them gain a better understanding of their roles in the school. For example, as Majed observed:

At the beginning of my journey as a counsellor, I had some assistance from my colleagues in different schools ... I have learnt a lot because of their expertise in providing school counselling services at their schools. (Majed)

The responses which fell under the purview of the third superordinate theme are explored in the following section.

8.3.2.3 Superordinate Theme 3: Improving preparedness

Having examined the participants' understanding of preparedness for school counselling, this theme describes some of their suggestions and observations for improving the preparedness of those who wish to become school counsellors whether or not they work at schools that include students with SEN.

Turki suggested that recruitment should be based on stringent selection criteria that will ensure the quality of the individuals recruited to become school counsellors. He went on to suggest the need to avoid appointing merely anyone to become a school counsellor. Turki's

account emphasised the importance of choosing counsellors who can work effectively in the school and put effort into the school counselling practice. He seemed to be dissatisfied with the current system of appointment of school counsellors which could allow individuals with the only objective of gaining a restful tenure to become school counsellors.

The first and most important point lies in the appointment of counsellors in the school ... Not just anyone is fit for the school counselling role ... The appointment should be done according to high quality standards to ensure recruitment of the right counsellor who understands the counselling profession. (Turki)

School counselling needs a person who cares about the profession ... It isn't a place for rest. (Turki)

Interestingly, Sami appeared to share Turki's view regarding the appointment of school counsellors in the schools, although from a different perspective. Sami argued that the educational major of applicants should be taken into consideration by the Ministry of Education when appointing school counsellors, and that these majors should be related to school counselling such as Psychology, Social Work or Sociology. This suggestion seemed to be the outcome of observing that the significant majority of school counsellors in the Saudi schools had majored in Arabic, Islamic Studies or Geography.

The accounts of Sami and Turki captured the perspectives of most of the participants in relation to the recruitment of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia.

It is necessary to appoint school counsellors whose majors are more related to counselling, such as Psychology, Social Work, or Sociology. (Sami)

The importance of having training courses of longer duration before being appointed as counsellors in the schools was identified by the participants of this study. In addition, Saeed suggested establishing a formal structure for the training courses containing, among other topics, an introduction to school counselling, the need to understand the goals of school counselling, articulating counsellors' roles, and how to work with various students in schools.

I think it is important to establish long training courses prior to the appointment of counsellors in the school, including what school counselling is about and also more about counsellors' roles and counselling goals and issues in the school and so on. (Saeed)

School counsellors encounter students of different ages with different needs and characteristics. Consequently, it was not surprising that Azooz identified the need to become familiar with students' characteristics at different stages and ages as an important element for preparing counsellors for effectiveness in school counselling:

It is important to be familiar with the nature and characteristics of different ages of students in the school before working as a counsellor ... I spent a long time trying to understand and gain experience in terms of students' characteristics. (Azooz)

Another essential observation by Mohammed was that most of the school counsellors who are recruited are not fully equipped and prepared to meet the needs of all students in the school.

I guess most of the counsellors are accepted to work as counsellors in the schools without having basic information about school counselling ... I think it is important not to accept anyone without ensuring they have a diploma in school counselling. (Mohammed)

Further, Yasser suggested implementing a long-term plan to allow all school counsellors who do not currently possess a diploma in school counselling to have an opportunity to improve their knowledge and understanding of school counselling by acquiring a the diploma in school counselling. Both Yasser and Mohammed seemed to perceive the diploma in school counselling as an important requirement both for becoming a school counsellor and for developing the school counselling field in Saudi Arabia.

It is supposed to provide many opportunities for school counsellors to seek a diploma in school counselling ... Why not try out a plan even for 10 years, so everyone has to then be qualified in school counselling

and guidance ... In other words, after 10 years, the number of those who do not have a diploma will go down considerably. (Yasser)

The following section describes the findings categorised under the third superordinate theme.

8.3.3 Master Theme 3: Working with students with SEN is a supplementary task

This master theme emerged as I explored the participants' understanding of being a school counsellor for students with SEN in the school. Their reflections indicated that working with students with SEN was considered to be supplementary tasks in their counselling roles in the school. Exploring the participants' perceptions regarding the provision of school counselling services for students with SEN, I identified three superordinate themes that contributed to understanding their perceptions, the first of which is described in the following section.

8.3.3.1 Superordinate Theme 1: Feeling unprepared

From Kamal's comments on his experience of being a school counsellor in his school, it was clear that he was asked to work with students with SEN without first being prepared for the new additional tasks. There was a sense of disappointment and a feeling of shock at being put in a position for which he felt unprepared.

... It is not logical to be asked to work with this category of students without having adequate preparation ... What is it that I am expected to do for them and how? I really do not know. (Kamal)

Kamal's comments indicate the helplessness he felt at being "formally asked" to be a school counsellor for students with SEN in his school. An increasing sense of self-doubt within Kamal about his ability to provide school counselling services for these students compounded the problem.

Another participant, Adel, felt similarly unprepared to be a school counsellor for students with SEN. He highlighted that he his lack of preparedness led to self-doubt and bewilderment regarding the ability to provide counselling services to students with SEN. He also believed that students with SEN required specialised counselling services.

Honestly, I found it a frightening prospect because dealing with students with SEN is difficult ... They need a specialist counsellor to work with them not someone like me ... I'm handed this responsibility without being given enough training to help me provide services to these students ... I feel that I'm incapable of delivering them these counselling services. (Adel)

I haven't had the opportunity to be trained since I started my counselling job ... So, how do they expect me to work with these students? (Adel)

It could be seen from Adel's comments that there was a real sense that the lack of preparedness in relation to working with students with SEN had an effect on his self-belief while at the same time he felt resentful that he had not been provided an opportunity to be sufficiently trained in school counselling, whether working with ordinary students or students with SEN.

Also identifying a lack of appropriate knowledge and understanding of school counselling, another participant Majed seemed to be resentful of the fact that he was requested to perform additional roles related to students with SEN in light of this lack. He felt that his lack of unpreparednes resulted in the inability to effectively work with students who have disabilities in the school. The perceptions of Majed, Adel and Kamal reflect the perceptions of all the participants in this study in relation to feeling unprepared to work with students with SEN.

To be honest, how am I expected to work with students with SEN without being prepared very well? ... I feel that I don't have enough knowledge and understanding about counselling in the school ... This is why my focus is only on students without SEN. (Majed)

Mohammed argued that the argued that stressful feelings that result from being unprepared to provide school counselling services for students with SEN can be remedied through providing them with adequate preparation:

I think this improvised approach to appointments added a lot of stress to the work of most school counsellors who were requested to work with students with SEN ... This can be overcome through providing suitable preparation before asking them to perform this role. (Mohammed)

The responses which fell under the purview of the second superordinate theme are explored in the following section.

8.3.3.2 Superordinate Theme 2: School counsellors' lack of knowledge of Special Educational Needs

Represented by all the participants in this study, this theme captures the perceptions of the participants regarding the impact of school counsellors' knowledge of students with SEN on the provision of school counselling services for these students. As Azooz commented:

I have a lack of knowledge about those with SEN and about the special educational needs classifications and categories ... I don't know how to differentiate between these students and how to deal with them ... The Ministry of Education is responsible for assisting all counsellors with valuable knowledge and understanding of those students. (Azooz)

From Azooz's account above, it is clear that his lack of knowledge related to special educational needs and disabilities affected his motivation to work with students with SEN influenced the provision of school counselling services to these students. Azooz suggested that

this situation can be alleviated by substantial efforts from the Ministry of Education to assist school counsellors in fostering their knowledge in relation to students with SEN. This would ensure that counsellors, at the very least, would expand their practice to include students with SEN.

Saeed revealed honestly that he had never provided any help to students with SEN. His opinion coincided with Azooz in that he did not have even a basic background regarding students with SEN that might encourage him to expand his counselling practice to include them. His lack of awareness of these students negatively impacted his provision of appropriate school counselling services to these students:

I am not familiar with students with SEN ... I feel like this has been a barrier for me to work with them ... I have been told to be responsible for them, but I have never worked with them simply because it was never my field of concern ... I have no idea whatsoever about these students. (Saeed)

The reflections of Ayman on his experience of becoming a school counsellor for students with SEN clearly revealed a lack of the basic knowledge of those who have a disability in schools such as intellectual disabilities and autism:

It is necessary to understand special educational needs categories like intellectual disabilities or autism and other groups ... Everyone in the

school needs to know about these students and their characteristics. (Ayman)

Ayman's comments further reveal a deep sense of the powerlessness he experienced when asked to be a counsellor for students with SEN without having any basic knowledge or information about their characteristics and the nature of their disabilities. As a result, Ayman found it difficult to work with those students and provide them with counselling services. He seemed to have remained concerned about this matter which led him to suggest that all school staff need to obtain knowledge about all students with SEN.

Turki also expressed frustration regarding his lack of knowledge about autistic students in his school. It was evident that Turki felt resentful regarding the decision of the Ministry of Education to assign him to work with autistic students in his school. The resentment he experienced is a result of the lack of knowledge and information he had in relation to those students. Turki's account revealed that, although he had attempted to communicate with those students he was hindered by his lack of knowledge from identifying the appropriate way to communicate with them. He decided not to work with them anymore without being given the opportunity to enhance his knowledge and the requisite the skills related to those students.

There are some autistic students in the school ... But I don't have any information about them ... How do you want me to work with them when I know virtually nothing on autism? I tried to speak to them, but I had no clue how to effectively communicate with them ... It felt like it was a complete waste of time so I've not seen them since then.
(Turki)

The responses which fell under the purview of the third superordinate theme are explored in the following section.

8.3.3.3 Superordinate Theme 3: Having many responsibilities in the school

This superordinate theme captures the participants' perceptions that their many responsibilities and roles in the school affected their provision of effective school counselling services for students with SEN. These included students' responsibilities and being an integral part of the administrative team with school principals and schools deputies. Sami's reflections clearly indicated that having many responsibilities resulted in neglecting working with students with SEN. He also reflected that working with those students is difficult regardless of the financial incentive received. Overall, Sami seemed to feel bewildered because of his many responsibilities in the school and thus could not meet the needs of students with SEN.

This is a very huge responsibility as far as I'm concerned despite the financial incentive that comes with it ... I have a lot of work in the school and feel it is too challenging to achieve ... So, it is hard to squeeze in time to work with students with SEN ... These students are also difficult to deal with. (Sami)

Another important finding – confirmed by all participants in this study – revealed from the interviews was the impact of non-counselling related tasks on the provision of school counselling to students with SEN. For instance, Jamal reflected that he was assigned tasks unrelated to counselling in his school including administrative tasks which consumed much of his time. He believed that his constant multi-tasking prevented him from working directly with all students, including students with SEN. In fact, Jamal seemed to give priority to the non-counselling related tasks.

Other participants such as Mohammed, Yasser and Kamal's accounts referred to additional non-counselling related tasks, such as documentation, which were described as time consuming. The three extracts below, from Mohammed, Yasser and Kamal, convey a clear feeling of discontent and resentment with respect to paper work and the numerous responsibilities in the school, which adversely impact the provision of appropriate school counselling services to students with SEN:

Among the roles that we have to assume in school is documentation which is honestly very annoying ... We spend too much time on data entry, which can be nerve-racking ... Documentation is required on paper and also electronically on the Ministry's website ... Anything we do on paper we are required to fill in using an electronic form ... These tasks cause so much inconvenience when I'm going on about my job in the school ... Also, there is lack of job clarity because it does not allow me to focus on my key roles with students and ways to help them.
(Mohammed)

The worst thing in my job is the office paperwork, which is really difficult ... There are too many files that I've got to arrange, such as health cases files and social circumstances files ... These countless files cannot easily be completed ... In addition to that, I have other different roles related to students and sometimes to their parents ... All that I've mentioned goes for most school counsellors ... So it is difficult to take on responsibilities regarding students with SEN.
(Kamal)

Interestingly, these comments of Mohammed, Yasser and Kamal demonstrated their evaluation of their school counselling roles and performance in the schools. They seemed to show great understanding that the avoidance of tasks unrelated to counselling plays an integral role in the effective delivery of school counselling in the school. Yet

they reflected that their performance of these tasks resulted in shortcomings concerning their roles, lack of job clarity within their counselling role, and also much time allocated to less important roles in the school instead of prioritising student's issues, including students with SEN.

The following section describes the findings categorised under the fourth Master theme.

8.3.4 Master Theme 4: Challenges of being a school counsellors for students with SEN

This fourth Master theme captures the participants' perceptions of the challenges encountered after formally being responsible for providing school counselling for students with SEN. All participants in this study perceived the following three superordinate themes as main barriers to working with students with SEN and providing those students effective counselling services.

8.3.4.1 Superordinate Theme 1: The lack of clarity of counsellors' roles toward students with SEN

The majority of the participants in this study highlighted that the lack of provision of appropriate counselling services for those students is a result of the lack of clarity regarding the role of school counsellors in relation to those students.

The reflections of Fareed and Adel revealed that counselling duties related to students with SEN are a new experience for them. A sense of role ambiguity and uncertainty about working with students with SEN appeared to influence their motivation to provide appropriate school counselling for those students.

I don't know my roles with regards to students with SEN ... I still don't understand what it is that I have to do for these students. (Fareed)

I feel that I'm not familiar with my counselling roles with respect to those who have SEN ... The picture is not clear for me. (Adel)

Azooz's comments showed a reluctance to work with students with SEN without gaining full understanding of the key roles to be provided for those students. He displayed a greater understanding of what should be done for school counsellors before they start working with students with SEN because he proposed that the Ministry of Education improve the knowledge of counsellors and raise their awareness with respect to the services that need to be provided to those students.

Before appointing me to work with students with SEN, it is common sense that they explain to me what they want me to offer to those students ... But placing them under my responsibility in the school without having a clear understanding of my roles is completely wrong and unhelpful. (Azooz)

Similarly, Kamal also acknowledged that his role was still ambiguous. His reflections clearly indicated that he had expended much effort in attempts to obtain valuable information in relation to his role with those students. Furthermore, Kamal revealed that although he had tried to learn on his own, his efforts were hindered by the difficulty in obtaining online information about school counselling for students with SEN. This suggests a dearth of resources and books on this subject.

It's like the school counselling side in the field of special education is yet to be explored ... I mean, I tried to look for books about this subject, but I couldn't find any ... I searched online for pdf books or anything about school counselling for students with SEN, but with no success ... My roles regarding those students are still vague. (Kamal)

The responses which fell under the purview of the second superordinate theme are explored in the following section.

8.3.4.2 Superordinate Theme 2: A lack of cooperation between the special education teachers and school counsellor

The analysed interviews revealed that there is a lack of the cooperation between school counsellors and the teachers of students with SEN at the mainstream schools. This finding was confirmed by all participants in this study.

As Majed reflected on his relationship with the teachers of students with SEN, he indicated that these teachers do not have the desire to

be involved in the school environment. Furthermore, Majed seemed to feel miserable and resentful about this lack of cooperation between him and these teachers as well as the way in which these teachers isolated themselves in the school.

I can describe special education teachers as isolated teachers ... This is not a good thing ... There are five teachers, but none of them talks to us because they come and go together ... In fact, I discussed this matter with them and asked them to cooperate and engage with me and the teachers, but the situation is still as it is ... This is very strange. (Majed)

This lack of cooperation between counsellors and the teachers of students with SEN could be inferred to reflect the absence of adequate provision of school counselling for students with SEN in the school. Another participant who reports having reached out to the teachers, offering himself and his services, is Mohammed. He mentions that a lack of trust could be seen among these teachers towards the school counsellor.

I met up with the special education teachers and asked if they needed me to help with anything or if there were any problems I could help them deal with ... But the teachers said no ... As a school counsellor, I want these teachers to pass me any work to do, but they don't

cooperate with me at all ... I don't know why, but they don't seem to trust my roles and ability as a counsellor. (Mohammed)

Fareed appeared to have the same view of Mohammed: his huge desire to serve to these teachers and deliver counselling services to their students did not appear to encounter a positive response. It could be surmised that Fareed blamed these teachers for his not being allowed to provide appropriate counselling services for students with SEN. This could be because they did not show the desire and enthusiasm to cooperate with him as a school counsellor.

I couldn't identify any enthusiastic teachers of students with SEN like myself ... I recognise myself as an enthusiastic counsellor and if I find enthusiastic SEN teachers, we might be able to provide some programmes and counselling services for students with SEN, but these teachers haven't shown the desire to do so ... I need the teachers to interact more and entrust me with tasks here and there ... I want them to make a plan for me because they are closer to their students than I am. (Fareed)

Another participant, Turki, suggested that the school counsellors and these teachers should be giving each other mutual assistance in order to adequately respond to the needs of students with SEN. Interestingly, Turki's account showed a broad understanding of the importance of appropriately organised cooperation between the special

education teachers and school counsellors which will lead to visible results.

I feel like I want to help teachers with their roles, but in the meantime, I want them to help me understand my roles with their students ... There should be mutual support to develop our skills to meet the needs of students with SEN. (Turki)

The responses which fell under the purview of the third superordinate theme are explored in the following section.

8.3.4.3 Superordinate Theme 3: A lack of supportive supervision

This superordinate theme highlights the extent to which the lack of support received from supervisors, both from the Department of Special Educational Needs (DoSEN) and the General Directorate of Guidance and Counselling (GDoGC), influences the delivery of school counselling services to students with SEN. This was again emphasised in the narratives of the majority of the participants.

The participants' narratives revealed evidence of a significant lack of supervision sessions between school counsellors and their supervisors. For instance, Adel reported that a meeting with his supervisor was only conducted once per a year. Adel seemed to feel dissatisfied about this insufficient support:

I haven't got enough support from the educational supervisor at the General Directorate of Guidance and Counselling ... His support is very limited because I only see him once a year. (Adel)

The narratives of Azooz and Jamal also showed a sense of resentment regarding the lack of valuable assistance from their supervisors which prevents them from understanding their work with students with SEN.

My supervisor hasn't showed up in my school for a long time ... So he hasn't helped me understand my roles regarding students with SEN. (Azooz)

I haven't seen my supervisor for a while ... In fact, I'm still waiting for him to let me know what to do with students with SEN. (Jamal)

Sami's account provided a great deal of information about the nature of his supervision sessions. However, it could be seen that he had not benefitted from the small number of supervision meetings with his supervisor. Sami suggested that the supervisor should follow up on the counsellors' roles and their work in the school at least once in every two weeks. The lack of support from his supervisor was clear and he seemed to be significantly disappointed about the role of his supervisor which he perceived as a tremendous failure of the role of supervisors.

Our supervisors have a fairly more relaxed approach to things as they don't seem to be putting much effort in practice to help us ... They are yet to follow up with what we've been doing in the school, which

should be done once a week or a fortnight ... For them, it's simply about visiting us at the end of the year to take our report and go ... This is a massive shortcoming in the supervisors' roles. (Sami)

A final interesting insight under this theme came from Saeed's supervision meeting with a supervisor from the DoSEN. Saeed reported that the SEN supervisor believed that the teachers of students with SEN and their supervisors provide appropriate support to these students. In addition, this supervisor seemed to believe that Saeed's focus regarding these students was limited to behavioural and academic aspects and then only when the special needs teacher or his supervisor deemed it necessary. Saeed did not provide any information about meetings with his supervisor from GDoGC.

One day ago, I met a supervisor from the Department of Special Educational Needs and he told me that they are responsible for everything as far as students with SEN are concerned, but in case of there are any behavioural problems, they would call and discuss it with me ... He said that if they needed me in terms of behavioural or academic aspects, they would ask me to sit down with the student and write my opinion about him ... That's all. (Saeed)

The next section discusses the findings of the current qualitative study.

8.4 Discussion

The aim of this section is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of school counsellors who have not provided school counselling services for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia. As indicated by the quantitative study (Chapter Five), 41.3% of participating school counsellors reported that they had not worked with students with SEN. This section attempts to determine how they conceptualise their roles in relation to those students.

As seen in the presentation of the results (Section 8.3), the participants' narratives could be clustered into four master themes:

- School counsellors' experience
- Preparedness for school counselling
- Working with students with SEN as a supplementary task
- Challenges of being a school counsellors for students with SEN

It could be seen that the participants' perceptions provided insights into main research question of the study, namely:

What is the perception of school counsellors regarding the provision of counselling for students with SEN in Saudi schools?

A deeper examination revealed that the findings converged into the following areas:

1) What the participants perceived with regard to the provision of school-based-counselling for students in Saudi Arabia;

2) What the participants perceived with regard to their preparedness to deliver school counselling services in Saudi Arabia;
3) What the participants perceived with regard to being a school counsellor for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia;
4) What the participants perceived to be the significant barriers to working with students with SEN.

The findings from the current qualitative study will now be considered in light of the above questions, and discussed with respect to extant literature and evidence.

8.4.1 The provision of school-based-counselling for students in Saudi Arabia

This subsection addresses the first area explored in relation to the research question: What the participants perceived with regard to the provision of school-based counselling for students in Saudi Arabia. Overall, the narratives of the participants indicated that three key factors hindered their provision of counselling services to students in schools: associations with other school personnel, lack of awareness of the role of counsellors, and lack of knowledge of counselling.

8.4.1.1 Relationships with school personnel

Counsellors have a significant role to play in creating school environments where all students can achieve academic success. Leading models of school counselling practice have stressed that

collaboration and information are both crucial to creating such educational environments (Bowers & Hatch, 2002; Fields & Hines, 2000; House & Hayes, 2002).

Counsellors require understanding of the different factors that influence the academic success of students. Consequently, they require information, such as the students' current scholastic progress and areas requiring attention, before they can make suggestions to aid the students (Hayes et al., 2002; House & Hayes, 2002). However, the successful practice of a school counsellor does depend on collaboration between themselves and school administrators (e.g., principals and deputy principals) and teachers (Dimmit, 2003). As stipulated by the ASCA (1999), in order to help students to be more successful, counsellors should consult and collaborate with teachers, families, and administrators.

Accordingly, the current study found that all the participants considered that their success in providing school counselling services depended on positive relationships with other personnel in their schools. For instance, participants recognised that failing to develop positive relationships with teachers could lead to referrals which may not require actual counselling. Moreover, they believed that the teachers could have poor awareness and understanding of the nature of school counsellors' roles in the school, which could result in negative

attitudes towards counsellors. Thus, the counsellors perceived that their relationship with teachers could affect the provision of appropriate school counselling services in the school. This finding corresponded to those of Colbert and Colbert (2003) and Bor et al. (2002) who suggested that counselling services could be provided more effectively if school counsellors and teachers collaborated. The participants appeared to have made some attempts to improve their relationships with teachers. For example, they suggested that meetings with teachers could help clarify the role of the school counsellor within the school. In their opinion, these meetings would enable teachers to understand counsellors' roles and plans and subsequently lead to an improvement in their relationships with counsellors. This would in turn then reduce number of insignificant and inappropriate referrals made by the teachers for counselling services. It could be assumed that it is the responsibility of school principals to engage the different school personnel, including counsellors (Marchetta, 2011). However, some studies have also suggested that school counsellors can demonstrate their dedication to the school and their regard towards the principal by becoming involved and communicating with the principals. Such interactions between counsellors and school principals can aid the counsellors in developing trusting and respectful relationships with their principals. Moreover, a

collaborative relationship with the principal can result in the support for wide-ranging counselling programmes in the school (Armstrong et al., 2010; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Geigel, 2013).

Accordingly, the study found that some of the counsellors believed that a supportive relationship with school principals would improve their provision of counselling services. However, sometimes the relationships with principals required conflict avoidance on the part of the counsellors. It was also seen that a positive relationship with the school principal could result in the assignment of non-counselling tasks to the counsellors and the counsellors' compulsion to accept these. In contrast, in the US, Mullen (2014) reported that school counsellors are inclined to experience a supportive relationship with their school principal. Clemens et al. (2009) also found that school counsellors reported moderately favourable relationships with their principals. It could be inferred that the relationships between school principals and counsellors in Saudi Arabia need to be improved to help school counsellors to provide their services more effectively.

On similar lines, the counsellors' relationships with school deputies (deputy principals) were also found to have an influence on the counselling service provision in the school. It appeared that the counsellors' relationships with these persons were strained and lacking

in trust, with counsellors preferring to interact directly with the school principal.

It could be seen that the emphasis of the counsellors' narratives was the school personnel's lack of awareness of their role or the lack of trust they encountered. However, none of them suggested that they used their own collaborative skills to improve the relationship between themselves and the various school personnel. Thus, it could be inferred that school counsellors in Saudi Arabia experienced challenges in the provision of services as they were not supported by congenial or cooperative associations with the other school personnel.

8.4.1.2 Lack of awareness of counsellors' role

Since the inception of school counselling, school counsellors have contended with ambiguous roles, the assignment of inappropriate responsibilities, and a lack of support (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Lieberman, 2004; Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006; Perusse et al., 2001; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006). An environment in which the role of the school counsellor is not adequately understood by stakeholders (e.g., administrators, parents/primary caregivers, and teachers) hinders counsellors from dealing with their students' various needs (e.g., academic, social or personal). Moreover, ambiguity with regard to the school counsellor's role can lead to counsellors expending considerable

effort in non-counselling related tasks such as clerical work and attendance monitoring. (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Therefore, lack of clarity with regard to the role of school counsellors lessens the efficacy of counsellors' service provision in the school (Geigel, 2013). In general, the development of strategic publications that articulate the roles, responsibilities and principles for school counsellors have helped to establish the identity of school counsellors (Mullen, 2014). It could therefore be assumed that counsellors operating in countries where such clear articulation exists have a greater sense of their identity and special role in the schools. Furthermore, such publications would serve to ensure that other personnel in schools were aware of the counsellors' remit and interact with them appropriately.

Studies have found that role of school counsellors is well-defined in some schools. However, in others they are ambiguous, with the principals and teachers determining the scope of the counsellors' roles in the school (Low, 2009). A lack of clarity or awareness regarding the role of counsellors in schools could be understood to impact the effectiveness of counselling provision in schools.

However, in the current study, a lack of awareness of counsellors' role could be found in the counsellors themselves and also in the school personnel. Thus, the current study found that the counsellors in the study area lacked awareness of their role. Moreover, the study found

that teachers, principals and school deputies lacked adequate understanding of counsellors' roles in the school. Consequently, they made inappropriate referrals for counselling services and their attitudes were frequently unfavourable.

Many studies submit that role ambiguity can persist if the school counsellors demonstrate a lack of leadership and self-advocacy (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Culbreth et al., 2005; Kaplan, 1995; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). For example, while school counsellors may not have sufficient time for the counselling of students, they have only themselves to blame if they do not adequately promote their role and connect with the various personnel in school (Armstrong et al., 2010; Dollarhide, 2003; Fitch et al., 2001; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Lieberman, 2004; Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006, Zalaquett, 2005). The findings of the current study therefore also indicate an overall lack of initiative on the part of the counsellors to increase awareness of their role among other school staff. Thus, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education take some initiatives to spread awareness of the role of school counsellors among school personnel and other interested stakeholders such as parents of students.

8.4.1.3 Lack of knowledge of counselling

Counsellor competencies are vital for the ethical clinical practice of counsellors (Toporek et al., 2009). Moreover, these competencies should encompass functional knowledge, capabilities and outlooks (Sue et al., 1992) and offer precise guidelines for counsellors occupied in ethical and learned clinical practice (Ratts et al., 2010). The ACA Code of Ethics (2014) recognises that competence is a core element of the ethical conduct of counsellors. This ethical code particularly deals with counsellors involved in specialist areas and states that "counsellors practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, and supervised experience" (ACA, 2014, p.8).

Several researchers have identified the competences that can facilitate effectiveness provision of counselling services. For instance, a model by Beutler et al. (1986) recognised various classes of variables associated with competence: disposition, emotional health, outlooks and principles, attitudes regarding relationships (e.g., affection, empathy, and equivalence), characteristics of social influence (e.g., expertise, reliability, attraction, integrity and influence), beliefs, professional background, style of intervention and understanding of technical processes and theoretical principles. Larson et al. (1992) developed a model that recognises five categories of counsellor

competence: micro-skills, method, addressing problematic client conduct, cultural skills, and knowledge of values.

Moreover, studies (e.g., Gibson & Mitchell, 1986) have found that counsellors should establish a trusting relationship with the persons they counsel and should have adequate knowledge about them to achieve positive results. Consequently, it can be assumed that specialised counsellors with adequate training in developmental theory, human behaviour and communication skills are required (Myrick, 1997; Sheldon & Morgan, 1984).

However, the counsellors' narratives of the mode of recruitment existing in Saudi Arabia indicated that a lack of education about counselling and consequent lack of knowledge of counselling was the norm rather than the exception in the country, even with regard to the counsellors themselves. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Six, the lack of rigour in the recruitment process indicates that the counsellors were recruited without any mechanism to check their competency for the role.

Furthermore, while studies (e.g., Leuwerke et al., 2008; Myrick, 2003) have argued that counsellors can use their knowledge of their roles to help others understand their role in the school, this was found to be a significant shortcoming in the studied counsellors as they often lacked understanding about their own roles in the school. A lack of conceptual

knowledge about counselling, in general, was also found. Again, this finding can be linked to the poor rigour in recruitment which leads to counsellors being appointed to school duties without any preliminary check of their knowledge or motivation to be a counsellor.

Further, counsellors' lack of counsellor knowledge of counselling can result in reluctance to provide counselling for more complex situations such as counselling students with SEN (Pattison, 2006). This could be one reason why 41.3% of the counsellors who participated in the study had not worked with students with SEN. Therefore, a recommended course of action for the Ministry of Education, which oversees school counselling services, could be to create programmes to ensure that counsellors acquire sufficient knowledge of counselling before they are assigned to a school.

8.4.2 School counsellors' preparedness to take up school counselling in Saudi Arabia

This subsection addresses the second area explored in relation to the research question: What the participants perceived with regard to their preparedness to deliver school counselling services in Saudi Arabia. It could be seen that counsellors' preparedness and their own emotions, were all factors which influenced their preparedness to take up school counselling.

8.4.2.1 Counsellors' preparedness

In general, school counsellors have a significant role in the lives of students with SEN (Studer & Quigney, 2005). Accordingly, it is required that they should be well prepared to provide students with SEN the services they need in a self-assured manner (Milsom, 2006; Milsom & Akos, 2003; Myers, 2005; Scarborough & Deck, 1998). However, some studies have shown that several school counsellors feel that they are insufficiently prepared to meet the requirements of all students (Isaacs et al., 1998; Milsom, 2002: Milsom & Akos, 2003). It can be inferred that, whether or not counsellors work with students with SEN, they require adequate preparation and knowledge. Furthermore, previous research has suggested that education programmes for counsellors should assess the syllabus related to school counselling to verify whether supplementary training or field experience is required to prepare school counsellors sufficiently to deal with the needs of all students (Romano et al., 2009), particularly those with SEN.

However, the current study found that participants had inadequate or very brief training before they took up counselling appointments in schools. Nevertheless, the participants recognised the importance of having training courses of longer duration before being appointed as counsellors in the schools. Moreover, participants suggested

establishing a formal structure for the training courses containing, among other topics, an introduction to school counselling, the need to understand the goals of school counselling, articulating counsellors' roles, and how to work with various students in schools. This breadth of requirements expressed by the counsellors provides rather disturbing insights into the practices associated with counsellor recruitment in Saudi Arabia.

Earlier studies (e.g., Korinek & Prillaman, 1992) have drawn attention to the gap between the academic preparation of counsellors and their actual practice. As seen in Chapter Five, the basic requirement for a person to be appointed as a counsellor in Saudi Arabia is the possession of a bachelor's degree. However, the study's participants revealed that the educational major of the counsellors was rarely related to counselling, that is, few counsellors had bachelor's degrees, or higher, in Psychology, Sociology or Social Work. Moreover, only 16% of the 138 school counsellors in the current study were found to have a Diploma certificate in guidance and educational counselling. The current study found that the counsellors' lack of qualification in counselling also contributed to their lack of knowledge of counselling. A similar scenario was seen in the first phase of the qualitative study. Hence, it is apparent that the standards set for counsellors'

requirements are not as stringent as those in countries such as the UK (Cooper, 2013) or the US (Romano et al., 2005).

Most of the school counsellors who were recruited to work in schools were not fully equipped to meet the needs of all students in the school. A good diploma in school counselling was suggested as a key requirement for employing counsellors in the schools. Another suggestion was the implementation of a long-term plan to allow all school counsellors who do not currently possess a diploma in school counselling to acquire such a diploma. Thus, it was not surprising that the counsellors in this second phase of the qualitative study reported a lack of preparedness in providing counselling services in their schools, similar to their colleagues in the first phase of the qualitative study.

An important consideration for the success of counselling programmes is the age (and developmental stage) of children (Wallace et al., 2011), since students of different ages have different needs and characteristics. It follows that different services should be offered by school counsellors to a varied group of students, the objective being to support the individual/societal, scholastic, and career development of students (ASCA, 2012). Accordingly, the participants in the current study identified the need to become familiar with students' characteristics at different stages and ages as an important element for preparing counsellors for effectiveness in school counselling. Thus,

it could be inferred that the practices with regard to training counsellors in Saudi Arabia were inadequate as they did not ensure that the counsellors had a reasonable grasp of their field or their clients before the commencement of their assignments.

The current study found that the interviewed counsellors had different methods of preparation for assuming the role of school counsellor: informal and formal. As for students, counsellors themselves have different learning styles and different capacities for absorbing information (Enache, 2015). This was demonstrated in the current study as most of the interviewees in this phase had been teachers prior to taking up the role of school counsellor. A few of them had also enrolled in special education programmes while at university. One participant reported taking up additional training after he realised that he had the aptitude to be a counsellor. Moreover, some of the participants reported practicing informal counselling while they were still teachers. One of the participants reported that his knowledge of counselling came from working with different school counsellors. He subsequently realised that counsellors must adapt their counselling approaches to fulfil the needs of the student or context under consideration. While extant literature explored the need for training and preparation for counsellors, the different methods of preparation did not appear to merit separate attention.

The study found that, in some cases, formal preparation had been provided to the counsellors. However, this was not without its own shortcomings as it was limited and generic in nature. Moreover, the persons who delivered the formal training were found to have inadequate knowledge themselves as it was usually a peer who conducted the training.

Self-directed learning was another method used by the counsellors to increase their preparedness for school counselling. For instance, they used online websites to find materials or guidance related to counselling in schools. The study found that the counsellors seemed to rely more on themselves to gain knowledge rather than depending on other means. Another means used was reaching out to various experienced school counsellors to discuss counselling experiences with them. This finding is not surprising as it reflects the findings of Kelly (1995) who found that in general, counsellors were high in the values of self-direction, benevolence, autonomy and self-expression.

The current study found that the interviewed counsellors had different reasons for taking up the role of school counsellor. The idea that school counsellors are dedicated to their occupation and consequently were deeply motivated to provide high-quality services was supported by Howell et al. (2007).

Accordingly, one participant in the study reported that his motivation arose from his self-realisation or reflection that he had the aptitude to deal with students' issues. Others simply wanted to prepare as they encountered anxiety upon being assigned to the role. Hence, it could be seen that counsellors in Saudi Arabia did demonstrate some dedication to their occupation and were accordingly motivated to try and provide high-quality services by preparing thoroughly for their roles.

This study found that the process of recruitment of counsellors in Saudi Arabia did not specify stringent selection criteria. Thus, counsellors who can work effectively in the school and put sincere effort into school counselling practice were lacking. The participants believed that some individuals became school counsellors merely because as they believed this role to be less stressful than teaching, for example.

The study further found that participants believed that the educational major of applicants should be taken into consideration by the Ministry of Education when appointing school counsellors to work in the schools. These findings corresponded to the findings from the first phase of the qualitative study. Thus, it is clear that there is an urgent need for revision of the recruitment practices of counsellors in Saudi Arabia.

8.4.2.2 Counsellors' emotions

This study found that various emotions were reported by the counsellors early in their counselling careers, largely attributable to a perceived lack of preparation for their role. These findings are in line with Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) who found that high levels of anxiety are experienced by school counsellors who are comparatively fresh to the field with regard to their professional abilities. Other emotions experienced by the counsellors included: uncertainty, disappointment, resentment, discontent, shock, helplessness/powerlessness, self-doubt and lowered self-belief. The present study also found that counsellors experienced disappointment and feeling of shock at being put in a position for which they felt unprepared, particularly if they were asked to provide counselling services to students with SEN. Studies have found that similar feelings of self-doubt and insecurity have been reported by mental health professionals about their efficacy, irrespective of their levels of experience (Kottler, 2002;; Thériault & Gazzola, 2008). Thériault (2003) suggested that the emotions and thoughts that are caused when therapists' beliefs of their skills, conclusions, and/or efficacy in their role are weakened or threatened internally could be termed feelings of incompetence. Such feelings of incompetence can

detrimentally impact not only the psychotherapy process but also the general welfare of the counsellor/practitioner (Thériault et al., 2009). In the present study, a few of the participants also reported that they experienced anxiety as a result of the lack of preparation when they first became school counsellors. Their comments could lead us to infer that a lack of knowledge about counselling leads to negative emotions with regard to the counselling role. Again it is evident that some immediate action is required from the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to overcome deficits in training and preparation for school counsellors.

8.4.3 Perceptions of being a school counsellor for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia

This subsection addresses the third area explored in relation to the research question: What the participants perceived with regard being a school counsellor for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia. In general, the study found that participants believed that students with SEN required specialised counselling services.

The reflections of the counsellors indicated that working with students with SEN was considered to be supplementary tasks in their counselling roles in the school. Their perceptions in this matter reflected the lack of preparation, lack of SEN knowledge and the

onerous nature of the responsibilities associated with counselling students with SEN.

8.4.3.1 Lack of preparation

The study found that counsellors were asked to work with students with SEN without first preparing them for the new additional tasks – a finding that was also seen in the first qualitative study. This lack of preparation resulted in feelings of disappointment and shock. Furthermore, some counsellors felt helpless and encountered self-doubt with regard to their ability to provide school counselling services for such students. Some others reported bewilderment and diminished self-belief.

As was seen in Chapter Six, the first qualitative study also found that the counsellors who work with students with SEN lacked both counselling knowledge and skills. In several instances they reported being 'thrown in at the deep end' without adequate preparation to take up counselling of students with SEN.

The confirmation of this finding by the second qualitative study clearly underlines the lack of preparation and training provided to persons appointed as counsellors in Saudi Arabia due to the lack of rigour in the Ministry's process of recruitment. The Ministry must therefore take appropriate measures to ensure that all counsellors appointed by them

meet some pre-defined standards of qualification and awareness, even if these have to be obtained post-employment.

The study further found that some of the counsellors did not have adequate knowledge of school counselling for any kind of student, whether with or without SEN. Such counsellors reported resentment when asked to additionally undertake counselling for students with SEN. It can be seen that appropriate measures need to be taken to provide counsellors with adequate preparation before they are assigned to counsel students with SEN.

However, in a strange coincidence, earlier studies (e.g. Milsom & Akos, 2003; Nichter & Edmonson, 2005; Romano et al., 2009; Studer & Quigney, 2005) reported a similar lack of preparation resulting from different counsellor education programmes with specific regard to enabling counsellors to take up counselling of students with SEN. These studies reported that counsellor education programmes do not train future school counsellors adequately in this regard. For instance, McEachern (2003) reported that more than 40% of school counsellor preparation programmes did not require students to include special education topics and subjects related to students with SEN in their coursework. Other studies showed that educational programmes for school counselling varied with regard to assignments related to special education and that more programmes were merely including such

content into already necessary classes rather than setting up supplementary mandatory classes for the requirements of students with SEN (Milsom, 2002; Milsom & Akos, 2003; Studer & Quigney, 2005). In summary, it could be seen that school counsellor training programmes failed to take the needs of all students into consideration (Korinek & Prillaman, 1992; Nichter & Edmonson, 2005; Studer & Quigney, 2005). As a similar situation exists in Saudi Arabia, it is recommended that speedy and urgent action be taken to remedy this situation so that students with SEN who need counselling services in school do not experience any deficits in the service provision in their schools.

8.4.3.2 Lack of SEN knowledge

Studer and Quigley (2005) observed the critical role that can be played by school counsellors in the lives of students with SEN. Accordingly there is an accompanying need to ensure that school counsellors are better prepared to confidently provide the required services to students with SEN (Milsom, 2006; Milsom & Akos, 2003; Myers, 2005; Scarborough & Deck, 1998).

Moreover, completion of assignments and training related to SEN has been demonstrated to: improve the attitudes of school counsellors towards inclusion (Erhard & Umanksy, 2005); generate favourable school experiences for students with SEN (Milsom, 2006); and offer

recommendations for successful counselling strategies for such students (Myers, 2005). Moreover, attitudes concerning working with students with SEN have also been recognised as "important qualities of a professional, ethical, and multicultural competent school counsellor" (Milsom, 2006, p. 69). Bowen and Glenn (1998) and Durodoye et al. (2004) also recognise that school counsellors' attitudes towards students with SEN could impact the manner in which they perceive their roles with regard to fulfilling the needs of students SEN.

The present study found that a lack of knowledge related to special educational needs and disabilities affected counsellors' motivation to work with students with SEN. This finding was also seen in the first qualitative study. Furthermore, it could be seen that the school counsellors' lack of understanding of the nature of students with SEN and their categories and their inability to distinguish between them significantly influenced the provision of school counselling services to these students. For instance, the lack of knowledge prevented counsellors from identifying the best approach or therapy that would suit a specific type of special needs. This situation can be alleviated by the Ministry of Education through making substantial efforts to assist school counsellors in fostering their knowledge in relation to students with SEN.

This study further found that some counsellors resented the Ministry's decision to assign them to work with students with SEN. However, the origin of this resentment could again be traced back to the counsellors' lack of knowledge and information regarding such students.

The study also found that counsellors believed that it would be beneficial for all school staff to have knowledge about students with SEN and the different aspects of the various forms of special needs. For example, students with autism would have different requirements in comparison to students with ADHD. Consequently, this could help special education teachers, principals, and others to support each other and the counsellors in providing effective services in the school to such children. Since the provision of appropriate counselling services is one of the requirements for the successful inclusion of students with SEN in general education settings, it is the Ministry's responsibility to ensure that all counsellors appointed by them have some awareness of the implications of SEN and the manner in which the different needs of different students will require to be supported.

8.4.3.3 Onerous responsibilities in school

In general, deploying counsellors to accomplish non-counselling tasks has been observed to be unproductive and unprofitable (Marchetta, 2011). The current study found that counsellors were expected to

undertake additional responsibilities in school apart from their core counselling role. Similar findings were reported from Kok et al. (2012) who in a Malaysian study observed that the school counsellor's role in Malaysian secondary schools was so poorly defined that some counsellors were occupied with non-counselling related jobs, such as: checking badges and uniforms; overseeing road safety and latecomers; aiding weak students; or helping teachers with disciplinary cases. Additionally, Nelson et al. (2008) found that high-school counsellors expended much of their time in non-counselling duties such as class scheduling. Consequently, they had less time than required to offer counselling and counselling-related services (e.g., consultation and coordination) to students. DePaul et al. (2007) also found that only one-third of the time of elementary school counsellors was spent in counselling services. The remainder of their time was spent in guidance, individual planning, and system support activities. The additional responsibilities reported by the present study's participants included being responsible for students and participating in school's the administration along with the school principals and deputy principals. The counsellors clearly indicated that they believed that these additional responsibilities would prevent them from providing effective counselling services to students with SEN. In fact, they believed that such students may be neglected or overlooked for

counselling provision as the counsellors lacked for time. Furthermore, they believed that even the financial incentives could not help improve the provision of counselling services to students with SEN in such situations. However, in some cases, counsellors were found to prefer the non-counselling tasks over their counselling duties.

Another responsibility that the counsellors found to be cumbersome was the documentation and paperwork that they were required to undertake in the school. It can be assumed that some of this paperwork was related to the counselling services whereas the remainder was associated with non-counselling tasks. However, regardless of the nature of the paperwork, the counsellors tended to find it substantial and thus reduces their capacity to provide effective counselling services to students, in general, and students with SEN, in particular. Al-ghamdi's (2010) study in Saudi Arabia reported that documentation and paperwork included record keeping, scheduling, registration and reports, and that this paperwork was required either by the school administration or the Ministry of Education. Thus, it could be inferred that a review into the amount of paperwork required to be completed by counsellors is needed with the view of reducing this.

The study also found that the assignment of non-counselling tasks to counsellors could be attributed to a lack of clarity with regard to

counsellors' jobs within the schools. As seen also in the first phase of the qualitative study, it appears that a lack of knowledge about the role of counsellors is a matter of much concern and it is imperative that speedy action be taken by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to rectify this situation. Failing to do so will ensure that the provision of counselling services for students with SEN will continue to be compromised as the counsellors are occupied with non-counselling assignments.

8.4.4 Significant barriers to working with students with SEN

This subsection addresses the fourth area explored in relation to the research question: What the participants perceived in relation to the significant barriers to working with students with SEN. Three significant areas of concern could be detected from the present qualitative study, the first of which is discussed in the following section.

8.4.4.1 Lack of clarity of counsellors' roles towards students with SEN

The study found that the counsellors lacked clarity and understanding with regard to their roles for students with SEN, as could also be seen in the first phase of the qualitative study. Thus, it was evident that regardless of whether or not the counsellors offered services to students with SEN, they were not clear about what constituted

counselling services for such students or the scope or extent of services to be provided. Consequently, feelings of role ambiguity and uncertainty were frequently reported by the counsellors. Moreover, this lack of clarity was found to influence the counsellors' motivation to take up counselling services for students with SEN. However, some counsellors did rise to the challenge by seeking information on their own from online sources or other counsellors, although they reported that helpful resources were lacking. Other studies (e.g., Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Clemens et al., 2009) have also reported that some school counsellors do not have clarity with regard to their roles.

Furthermore, the study found that the counsellors were reluctant to provide counselling services for students with SEN as they lacked understanding with regard to the role of counselling for such students. Moreover, they believed that the recruitment process which permitted them to be assigned to work with students with SEN was deeply flawed. Accordingly, the counsellors suggested that the Ministry of Education take action to improve the knowledge of counsellors and raise their awareness of the services that need to be provided to students with SEN.

Interestingly, none of the participants of the current study expressed unfavourable attitudes towards the students with SEN themselves. This was in line with the findings of earlier studies (e.g., Erhard &

Umanksy, 2005; Isaacs et al., 1998; Milsom, 2002). This was despite their recognition of inadequacies in their understanding of special education and disability. Again, it is evident that the Ministry of Education which appoints counsellors in schools must take the lead in ensuring that counsellors are clear about the scope of their roles, in general, and with regard to students with SEN, in particular.

8.4.4.2 Lack of cooperation

Lunenburg (2010, p. 7) suggested that cooperation is demonstrated in the extent of "active interest, mutual help, and collaboration among teachers, counsellors, and administrators". From earlier discussions, it has been observed that the provision of school counselling services in Saudi Arabia is of fairly recent origin and the lack of cooperation can perhaps be partially attributed to this factor. A similar situation was reported in South Korea (Lee & Yang, 2008) where, due to the relatively short tradition of school counselling, school counsellors occasionally had to deal with less cooperative attitudes and responses in the school from teachers and administrators and even students. Kim (2007) found that one of the reasons to which school counsellors attributed stress was the lack of cooperation encountered from co-workers (teachers and administrators).

In general, school counsellors do not work alone; rather, mutual cooperation is necessary with the other school personnel. They may

consult with (or be consulted by) teachers and principals with regard to counselling services, while the teachers and principals may refer students to them for counselling. Thus, a great deal of collaboration and cooperation essential in school counselling services. Studies have found that counsellors' consultation with teachers can result in improved academic achievement, attention levels, motivation, and attitudes of students (Conoley, 1981).

However, the current study found a lack of cooperation between the school counsellors and other school personnel. As already mentioned, this challenge was evident with regard to the general provision of school counselling services. However, in the context of counselling provision for students with SEN, the counsellors seemed to encounter a lack of cooperation from the special education teachers. This lack of cooperation appeared to be the outcome of the resistance or reluctance of these special education teachers to participate outside the boundaries of their special needs responsibilities. These teachers seemed to prefer working in an isolated manner and did not consider collaboration even with counsellors assigned to work with students with SEN. This was observed to be unusual as it could be expected that all personnel involved in working with students with SEN would want to work cooperatively to ensure that the most appropriate and effective services are provided to these children. In particular, it could

be expected that school counsellors and special education teachers would mutually assisted each other to adequately respond to the needs of students with SEN. However, the non-cooperative attitude of special needs teachers caused the counsellors to experience resentment and become miserable, chiefly because this attitude prevented the counsellors from providing effective counselling services to students with SEN. The study found that some counsellors believed that this attitude was the outcome of the lack of trust of special needs teachers towards school counsellors.

The study found that counsellors who encountered lack of cooperation from special education teachers had reduced desire and enthusiasm for delivering counselling services to students with SEN. Some counsellors were found to want to follow the guidance of the special needs teachers when working with students with SEN. However, the lack of enthusiasm from the teachers limited this. Although most of the participants highlighted the lack of cooperation from the special needs teachers, one participant in particular drew attention to the role that counsellors could play in increasing the empowerment of the special education teachers.

A study by Bemak (2000) suggested that counsellors could take steps to increase cooperation with personnel within school, such as developing prevention and intervention counselling programmes,

sharing and collecting data, and working with administrators. Moreover, he encouraged them to reach out to professional and community agencies, and to collaborate with families and encourage parental involvement. Thus, it could be concluded that school counsellors need to be encouraged to facilitate cooperation from the other stakeholders in the welfare of students with SEN and not wait for it to happen automatically.

Since counsellors require the cooperation of other persons to effectively counsel a student with SEN, it is evident that the Ministry of Education must take measures to ensure that other stakeholders involved with students with SEN – such as parents, teachers, principals, other school personnel, etc. – are aware of the counsellors' role in supporting such students.

8.4.4.3 Lack of supervision

Crutchfield and Borders (1997) reported that inadequate supervisory support intensifies the levels of stress experienced by school counsellors and results in poorer support for the students they work with. Several scholars have emphasised the significance of clinical supervision for counsellors and have reported favourable outcomes on many factors (e.g., case conceptualisation by counsellors, clinical skills, moral development, cognitive complexity, and empathy levels) (Griffin, 2007; Strozier et al., 2000). Furthermore, school counsellors

who receive supervision report significantly less emotional fatigue (Feldstein, 2000). Dunn (2004) summarised the benefits of supervision for counsellors. For instance, supervision:

- Aids school counsellors in managing the growing number of tasks and responsibilities expected of them (ASCA, 1993; Herlihy et al., 2002).
- Enhances feelings of support from colleagues and communication (Peace, 1995; Sutton, 1988).
- Enhances efficacy in service delivery to students (Borders, 1991b; Cashwell & Dooley, 2001; Henderson & Lampe, 1992).
- Offers a way of keeping up-to-date with current and innovative counselling practices (Portman, 2002; Shechtman & Wirzberger, 1999).
- Promotes enhanced self-efficacy (Borders et al., 1996; Cashwell & Dooley, 2001).
- Permits time for assessment of counselling performance (Borders, 1991a; Bernard & Goodyear, 1992).

With specific regard to novice school counsellors, supervision:

- Deals with any gaps between training and actual practice (Sutton & Page, 1994; VanZandt & Perry, 1992).
- Offers time to deal with the emotions that result from performance expectations that take the novice status of the school counsellor into consideration (Matthes, 1992; Portman, 2002).

However, most school counsellors do not receive supervision (Borders & Usher, 1992; Sutton & Page, 1994) although it is clearly an important provision to help counsellors in their practice.

As seen from the quantitative study (Chapter Five), although supervisory activities in general encompass planning, meeting, and administrative and paperwork achieved through planned yearly or twice-yearly school visits (Al-Ghamdi, 1999), the majority of the counsellors had not received professional supervision. Furthermore, those who had received supervision reported that they received two supervisions per academic year, that is, one supervision per semester. Al-Ghamdi (2010) also observed that, in Saudi Arabia, school counsellors were supervised chiefly by persons with little or no counselling training. Thus, the supervisors are rarely equipped to provide direction and supervision for school counsellors (Al-Rebdi, 2004). One possible outcome from the lack of supervision is the assignment of non-counselling duties to counsellors (Al-Ghamdi, 1999).

The current qualitative study found that two departments of the Ministry of Education are responsible for counsellor supervisions in Saudi Arabia: the Department of Special Educational Needs (DoSEN) and the General Directorate of Guidance and Counselling (GDoGC). However, a significant lack of supervision sessions could be seen. In

most cases, counsellors met their supervisors only once a year, which presumably is inadequate given the significance of counselling services particularly for students with SEN.

The study found that the lack of supervision caused several adverse outcomes with regard to the counsellors. For instance, counsellors perceived a lack of support and assistance in their work. Furthermore, they believed that the lack of supervision affected their ability to provide counselling services to students with SEN as they were not able to improve their understanding of their roles with regard to such students. Counsellors thus reported feelings of resentment towards the lack of supervision.

A further finding was that the supervisor meetings lacked effectiveness. First, they were conducted infrequently. Second, they were not productive discussions which could help the counsellor improve the quality of his services. Third, some of the supervisors did not seem to recognise that counsellors could provide assistance to students with SEN, as they believed that the special education teachers were adequate in this matter. Moreover, some supervisors believed that the counsellors' focus with regard to such students should be limited to behavioural and academic aspects and this only when deemed necessary by special needs teachers or the teachers' supervisors.

Thus, it is evident that the system of supervision for school counsellors in Saudi Arabia is inadequate and lacks sufficient rigour. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education create guidelines with regard to supervision and also define the qualifications of supervisors so that this role does not diminish into merely administrative oversight.

8.5 My reflections on this phase

Overall, my conversations with the counsellors who had not worked with students with SEN reinforced my perceptions that the three major domains that affect the provision of school counselling for students with SEN are: the education system in Saudi Arabia, the school counsellors themselves, and other associated caregivers for students with SEN such as teachers and parents.

In particular, I found that counsellors who had not worked with students with SEN were constrained even in their general role of school counsellor by the relationships with other school personnel and the widespread lack of awareness of their role. Furthermore, a lack of preparation and knowledge continued to be key aspects influencing their ability to perform various counselling roles. It was unsettling to realise that persons who genuinely desired to provide effective counselling services were being hindered by the lack of suitable

enabling mechanisms, often resulting in the counsellors experiencing negative emotions such as anxiety with regard to taking up their roles. Again, I could see that the recruitment practices in Saudi Arabia require considerable revamping as the lack of rigour resulted in persons being appointed as school counsellors who lacked knowledge, experience and even motivation to take up this role.

In the comments of the participants in the current phase, regarding providing counselling for students with SEN, I could perceive that they had observed the challenges encountered by colleagues who had taken up this role, and their perceptions had been accordingly coloured by their colleagues' experiences.

It was disconcerting to recognise that some of the challenges and concerns of counsellors who had not worked with students with SEN were similar to those of the participants in the first qualitative phase. Of these, the lack of training and support, the unfavourable attitudes of teachers, principals and school deputies, and the assignment of non-counselling-related tasks, stood out as concerns that could be easily addressed by the Ministry of Education if they would only take the trouble to modify their recruitment practices and processes and improve the training and guidance provided to counsellors and other personnel in the schools.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter reported and presented the analysis of the findings of the second qualitative phase of the current study. The first section of the chapter briefly summarised the method used during this phase. The next section presented the findings from the interviews, organised by the recognised master and superordinate themes. The third section provided a discussion of these qualitative findings. My personal reflections on this phase were also provided.

Chapter Nine: Overall discussion and conclusions

9.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to consider the findings of this study from the standpoint of the aim and objectives as articulated in Chapter One. The contribution of this study to the body of knowledge related to counselling students with SEN, in general, and in Saudi Arabia, in particular, is also presented. Recommendations for school counsellors, schools and policy makers are also provided. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the study's limitations and makes some suggestions for further research.

9.2 Overall discussion of the findings from both phases

This study has investigated the perception of school counsellors regarding the provision of counselling for students with SEN in mainstream schools for boys in three cities in Saudi Arabia: Jeddah, Mecca and Taif. A questionnaire and two sets of semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data from the counsellors. In general, it was found that the qualitative findings from the interviews with the two groups of counsellors supported each other as well as the quantitative findings from the questionnaire. Some issues were revealed which were considered to require immediate attention to improve the provision of school counselling services in Saudi Arabia. These included raising awareness of counsellor identity, counsellor recruitment and

training. The findings pertaining to each of the research objectives is summarised below.

9.2.1 Role of school counsellors in Saudi schools in relation to special needs students

In general, the study found that the counsellors had a good understanding of their role. The counsellors did appear to be neutral in a few areas, such as providing small group counselling in regard to academic needs; providing small group social skill counselling to students with SEN; providing support groups for parents of children with SEN; working to discover gifted and talented students; conducting special programmes for gifted and talented students; and performing research related to the needs and problems with regard to inclusion of students with SEN. Some dissent was observed with regard to providing small group counselling in regard to academic needs, indicating that some counsellors perceived themselves to have no role in the academic accomplishments of students with SEN, and this finding did not appear to be affected by the size or location of the school. In contrast, the findings from the interviews revealed that some counsellors were not aware of the extent or scope of their roles, and the lack of guidelines was found to prohibit the overall understanding of the role among counsellors, teachers, and other persons associated with the school and students with SEN.

The study found that as part of their role, the counsellors' advocated consultation with principals firstly, then special education teachers, other teachers, parents of students with SEN, other school counsellors and school psychologists. Another aspect of the role as theorised by counsellors was receiving supervision (Al-Rebdi, 2004, Al-Ghamdi, 2010). However, the provision of supervision to counsellors was found to be limited to approximately two supervisory visits each school year.

Moreover, the study found that the attitudes of the counsellors to students with SEN in Saudi Arabia were positive. Nevertheless, the study found that counsellors felt that it was a challenge to work with students with special needs.

However, the study revealed that counsellors had taken up the role of counsellor for various reasons, such as desire to escape from teaching; a desire to help and support students with special needs; and because the role suited their personal requirements or was convenient for them.

Curiously, the cultural and religious beliefs of Saudi Arabia appeared to influence the abilities of the counsellors to counsel the students with SEN in their schools. For instance, some of the counsellors believed that it was their role to instil Islamic principles in children and young people and make them understand their duty towards God. Accordingly, some of them were found to employ Islamic beliefs and values in their

counselling encounters. However, this also indicated that they eschewed "western" theories and instead pursued what they believed was an optimal combination of Islamic values in providing counselling to students with SEN.

Additionally, the study found that counsellors who had not worked with students with SEN viewed counselling for such students as an additional responsibility or a supplementary task, undertaken only over and above their primary responsibility of providing counselling to students without SEN. This perception was further intensified by their being asked to undertake counselling responsibilities for students with SEN when they lacked preparation, a situation which led counsellors to experience stress, shock, anxiety, and disappointment.

9.2.2 Experiences of providing support by the counsellors

Overall, the study found that not all the school counsellors in mainstream schools in Saudi Arabia had worked with students with SEN. This was regardless of the location of the school. Most of the counsellors who provided support for students with SEN had been working with such students for less than seven years. This indicated that the inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream schools is a relatively recent development. The study also found that students with SEN obtained knowledge about the counselling services in school through teachers, parents, principals, psychologists, or the counsellors themselves.

In general, counsellors were found to provide counselling services often or always to students with SEN, indicating that more counselling support is required by such students in contrast to other students. Also, the majority of the counsellors spent 1-8 hours each week counselling such students. Counselling services offered to students with SEN encompassed: their social needs, preventative services, emotional needs, mental health needs, academic needs and social relationships. Social needs were the most reported service. The study found that the counsellors perceived their services to students with SEN to be accessible, confidential, safe and encouraging trust. Moreover, the referral process was found to be chiefly through special education teachers and parents although sometimes a student with SEN could refer himself for counselling.

From the counsellors who worked with students with SEN, the study found that many counsellors believed that they had been 'thrown in at the deep end' with regard to their experiences of counselling students with SEN, resulting in shock and anxiety. In some cases, this was found to be due to the counsellors' lack of awareness regarding special educational needs. However, the study also found that the counsellors looked for avenues to increase their knowledge, such as consulting with colleagues who were providing counselling services to students with SEN in other schools, or seeking out books and Internet resources. It was

evident that the Ministry had failed to provide training to equip the counsellors to deal with students with SEN.

From the perspective of students with SEN, the counsellors' key role in Saudi schools was determined to be social support for such students. As described earlier, the social and cultural environment of Saudi Arabia has contributed to persons with disabilities feeling stigmatised and excluded from conventional social existence. Accordingly, the study found that the chief aspect of the counsellors' experience with students with SEN was in providing them social support to facilitate their social acceptance in the school and hence in the outside world.

Additionally, the study found that the counsellors who provided services to students with SEN acknowledged the significance of the financial incentive. However, the study found that the additional 20% provided to a counsellor's salary when he or she agrees to counsel students with SEN was did not counterbalance the inadequacy of the support received from the Ministry of Education, nor neither did it ensure the commitment of the counsellors to counselling students with SEN. Instead, in some cases, counsellors viewed the incentive merely as a means to increase their income and did not make any attempt to improve their effectiveness regarding students with SEN. Contrarily, some counsellors were very conscious of their responsibilities as Muslims to perform a task as effectively as possible once they received remuneration for it.

For counsellors who had not worked with students with SEN, the study found that their lack of SEN knowledge affected their motivation to work with students with SEN. Also, preventing them from taking up counselling for students with SEN were their lack of understanding of the different categories of SEN and the various characteristics of students with SEN. Again, this lack of knowledge was accompanied by some unfavourable emotions such as feelings of powerlessness.

Finally, the study found that some counsellors had significant non-counselling responsibilities in the schools as they were part of the school's leadership alongside the principal and deputy principal. Other counsellors were assigned non-counselling tasks which were time-consuming and limited the time they could spend in counselling. The amount of paper work faced by counsellors was found often result in feelings of discontent and resentment. Thus, the study found that the counsellors felt that non-counselling tasks could detrimentally affect their provision of counselling services to such students.

9.2.3 Assessment of counsellor's own ability to provide counselling to students with special needs

This study found that, while the school counsellors in Saudi Arabia possessed at least a bachelors' degree, they could be hindered in their ability to provide counselling to students with SEN as the educational major of most were unrelated to counselling. Although the guidelines of

the Ministry of Education stipulated the required qualifications for counsellors, the study could conclude that these were not strictly followed or even enforced by the Ministry itself.

Moreover, the study found that certifications in school counselling had not been obtained by the majority of the counsellors, although the majority had attended professional training programmes, of typically less than one month in duration. Most of the counsellors were found to have prior experience in teaching before entering into the counselling field. The majority of the counsellors were also found to have more than four years of counselling experience, in general, and in dealing with students with SEN, in particular.

However, the study also found that the counsellors made various attempts to improve their abilities to provide counselling services to students with SEN, including attendance at some training programmes, disability short talks and workshops or disability courses. Also, they were found to be receptive to consultation with parents and teachers and sought timely and effective supervision from designated supervisors to improve their effectiveness in counselling.

The study also found that, while some counsellors had a genuine desire to help students with SEN, others had instead the desire to escape from the monotony of teaching and the accompanying belief that counselling

is less onerous and stressful than teaching. Yet others chose counselling because it appeared to be a more convenient option for them. This evidently affected their ability to provide counselling services as underlying motives can influence ability to provide service.

Moreover, the study found that the counsellors believed that they lacked the training and resources required to work effectively with students with SEN (Al-Trairy & Al-Saeigh, 1990, Al-Zahrani, 1990). This consequently influenced their perceptions of their ability to work with such students. Thus, the study found that training courses or workshops about counselling students with SEN should be provided to counsellors before or after being assigned to counsel such students. Factors which could facilitate the effectiveness of such training courses, inspiring attendance and commitment, included optimal duration and the selection of appropriately trained and experienced faculty to deliver the training.

Furthermore, some counsellors reported that their teaching and informal counselling experiences and attendance in special educational programmes aided in their current experience as counsellors. Insights received from other more experienced counsellors were also found to support in improving counsellors' ability. In addition, some counsellors were able to adapt their approach to suit the counselling situation, which

indicated that some of the counsellors had the acquired ability to effectively counsel students with SEN.

The relationships of school counsellors with special education teachers, school principals and school deputy principals was further found to influence their ability to provide counselling services to students with SEN. For instance, the counsellors believed that the teachers' lack of awareness about the counselling role hampered the provision of counselling services. This could be through a lack of referrals for counselling or refusing the support the counsellor when he suggested some actions for the students. On the other hand, favourable relationships with principals were found to provide the counsellors with a person who could advise and guide them and ensure that the counsellor was not hindered in his provision of services. However, principals were also found to misuse their authority in assigning non-counselling related tasks to counsellors that could affect their ability to perform their core task of counselling. School deputy principals were also found to be influential in aiding or hindering the counsellors' ability to provide effective services to students with SEN. This was frequently found to be associated with their awareness, or lack of thereof, of the role of counsellors in school.

Both groups of counsellors interviewed in the study confirmed that their ability to counsel students with SEN could be hampered by their lack of

preparedness for school counselling. This lack of preparation was found to be attributable to having taken an educational major that is unrelated to counselling, such as Islamic Studies or Arabic; receiving either no formal training or inadequate training, often delivered by unqualified faculty members. However, the counsellors attempted to overcome these shortcomings by pursuing self-directed learning.

The study found that counsellors believed that improving the recruitment practices in their country and provision of adequate and effective counselling-related training would result in counsellors who were confident in their ability to provide counselling services to students with SEN in schools. A related area was the provision of adequate, timely and effective supervision to counsellors as they believed that they required support during their tenure in the schools.

9.2.4 Identification of barriers experienced by the counsellor in the development of student-centred counselling services in Saudi schools

The study found that the top five barriers encountered by the counsellors in providing counselling services to students with SEN in their schools in Saudi Arabia were: the level of learning disability of the students with SEN; their own lack of training; their lack of experience of working with students with SEN; their lack of knowledge about learning disabilities; and their lack of awareness about students with

SEN. Other challenges were communicating with students with SEN; the ability of students with SEN to process information and engage with the counselling programme; the counsellors' failure to build strong relationships with professionals in the school community; and the counsellors' engagement in non-counselling roles in the school such as administrative tasks.

Additionally, the interviews revealed that the underlying culture in Saudi Arabia could serve as a significant barrier to developing and providing counselling services to students with SEN. To varying degrees, the counsellors felt that the counselling should be provided based on Islamic beliefs and values. While some shunned western counselling theories and limited their practice to enforcing Islamic values and principles in the students with SEN, others were found to imitate the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, while counselling the students. This apparent confusion or conflict of western and Islamic principles in counselling could explain the shortfall of counsellors in Saudi schools.

The perspectives of Saudi society and families on disability were also found to frequently hinder the counsellors' provision of service, as students or their family members were reluctant to discuss their personal matters with an outsider. Rural societies in particular were found to be more conservative and prejudiced towards the students with SEN and towards counsellors. Students also tend to beconstrained by

their cultural upbringing from discussing topics that are taboo such as sexual abuse.

A third cultural factor that served as a barrier was found to be the different races and cultures populating the schools. For example, students from a Bedouin background are reared in a strict tribal environment with harsh and violent punishments. Accordingly they had significant emotional and psychological issues. Hence, the study found that counsellors must be aware of the different racial characteristics of the students they encounter in the schools and be ready to mitigate any social discrimination due to race, colour, financial status, etc.

Additional challenges included: institutional challenges; individual attitudes within the school; familial attitudes beyond the school; and the mismatch of counsellor needs and training/support available to them.

From an institutional perspective, the study found that the Department of Special Educational Needs (DoSEN) and the General Directorate of Guidance and Counselling (GDoGC) provided inadequate support to counsellors, in terms of information about students with SEN, supervision and offering the opportunity to pursue further qualifications. There was also a lack of communication between the departments and the school counsellors. The lack of collaboration and cooperation

between these two governmental departments was also found obstruct the provision of counselling services by counsellors.

The study also found that the attitudes of principals, deputy principals, and teachers could serve as a barrier to counselling provision to students with SEN. Their disinterest and inattentiveness could be attributed to their lack of competence with regard to monitoring such students or feeling accountable to them, or considering them to be an additional overhead. Additionally, principals who lacked awareness of the role of school counsellors were found to assign non-administrative tasks to the counsellors – a further barrier to the provision of counselling services to students with SEN. The attitudes of school deputies also were found to be affected by their lack of knowledge about school counselling, while teachers' lack of awareness could lead to a lack of collaboration with counsellors and bombarding counsellors with non-critical requests for counselling.

From the perspective of familial attitudes, counsellors were found to lack support from parents, which may be attributed to the cultural and social stigma associated with disability and an associated lack of awareness about counselling.

The lack of training/support received by counsellors was also found to be a significant barrier to providing counselling services. In general, it

can be assumed that school counsellors need specialised training and qualification, awareness of their clients, support and cooperation from counsellor colleagues and other school personnel, and the educational infrastructure in the country. However, this was clearly not the case in Saudi Arabia.

From counsellors who had not worked with students with SEN, the study found that the counsellors themselves had an ambiguous understanding of their role and consequently it could be inferred that their provision of counselling services was hindered by this lack of clarity.

A second barrier revealed by this group of counsellors was the lack of cooperation between the special education teachers and school counsellors. As the special education teachers were not aware of the role played by school counsellors in aiding students with SEN, the teachers were distrustful of the counsellors and were uncooperative, which again hindered the counsellors' provision of services.

A third barrier found was the lack of supportive supervision. Often supervisors were ill-equipped to aid the counsellors, as they were often officials from the Department of Special Educational Needs (DoSEN) or the General Directorate of Guidance and Counselling (GDoGC). In some cases, supervisors believed that the focus of the counsellors was to be

limited to behavioural and academic aspects of students with SEN. The current system of infrequent meetings was also found to be ineffective.

Overall, the study found that there were significant issues associated with the provision of school-based counselling in Saudi Arabia and these could be organised into five salient categories: 1) systemic issues such as recruitment standards; 2) cultural issues including Islamic collectivist values and the treatment of ethnic minorities in schools in Saudi Arabia; 3) school-level issues such as counsellors' involvement in administrative tasks and the lack of cooperation from other personnel; 4) the lack of a statutory body for the counselling profession in Saudi Arabia which leaves the profession open to the individual interpretation; 5) the counsellors themselves who make take up counselling for the wrong motivations.

9.3 Contributions of the study

This is the first study to focus on the perceptions of school counsellors on providing counselling services for students with SEN in schools in the Arab world in general, and in Saudi Arabia, in particular. From this perspective, this study contributes to the international discussions on counselling for students with SEN in the school environment. In addition, the study investigated the perceptions of both counsellors who currently provide counselling services to students with SEN and those who do not. Thus, a balanced perspective could be provided with regard to the provision of counselling services for students with SEN.

Further, this study serves to draw global attention to the current status of educational reform and measures existing in Saudi Arabia with regard to the inclusive education of students with SEN. Awareness is also provided with regard to the progress of school counselling in the country with particular emphasis on boys' mainstream schools. Finally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a distinct religious and socio-cultural context which differs even from its neighbours in the Arabian Peninsula. Consequently, the study has drawn attention to the influence of culture in offering counselling to students with SEN.

Methodologically, to the best of my knowledge, the current study is the first to employ a mixed-methods approach comprising quantitative and qualitative methodologies (questionnaire and interviews) in the field of school counselling for special educational needs students in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the use of IPA for the analysis of interviews suggests that this study has offered an innovative approach for researching social issues in the context of Saudi Arabia.

9.4 Recommendations of the study

The following sections describe the key recommendations recognised from the findings of this study. These are organised into three categories: recommendations for school counsellors, recommendations for schools and recommendations for policy makers from the Ministry of Education.

9.4.1 Recommendations for school counsellors

1. Awareness of counsellor's role. Counsellors need to be aware of the nature of their role and identity in school, in general, and in the context of students with SEN, in particular.

2. Recognise the role of cooperation. Counsellors must recognise that they are not independent entities when it comes to providing counselling services. Inputs and insights are required from other persons who are involved in the education and care of students with SEN, such as parents, general education teachers, special education teachers, principals and deputy principals.

3. Recognise the role of supervision. It is an accepted practice that supervision is necessary for counsellors. Hence, counsellors must actively seek supervision and thus pursue policy that supports the provision of supervision on a timely basis. Furthermore, the role of the supervisor should be clearly understood.

4. Recognise the role of culture. The culture of Saudi Arabia plays a significant role in the effectiveness of counselling services. Hence, counsellors should be aware of the cultural environment in which they function and appropriately tailor their services to students.

5. Awareness of inclusion. Counsellors must be aware of the foundation and principles of inclusive education and the role of counselling in this context.

6. Awareness of special educational needs. Counsellors require awareness of the various types of special educational needs and the different characteristics associated with each.

7. Understand the commonalities and distinctions between Islamic counselling and the different theories of counselling. Counsellors in Muslim countries must be especially aware that a combination of approaches may be advisable in some contexts. However, failing to evaluate the effectiveness of each approach and assessing it prior to use could result in adverse effects for the students requiring counselling.

9.4.2 Recommendations for schools

The recommendations in this section relate to principals and the general school infrastructure.

1. Clearly defined referral process. A robust referral process is critical for ensuring that the right students are referred to counsellors for the right reasons. Implementing a clearly defined process for referral can assist counsellors to focus their efforts on the students who most need their services.

2. Awareness of counsellor's role. School personnel should be aware of the nature of the counsellors' role in school, in general, and in the context of students with SEN, in particular. This will help ensure that inappropriate referrals for counselling services are regulated.

3. Support counselling policies of the Ministry of Education. Schools should support the counselling policies of the MoE. For instance, schools can help in improving awareness among the school community (students, teachers and principals) and in society about the objectives and functions of guidance and counselling and its role in education.

4. Avoid assigning of non-counselling tasks to counsellors. Counsellors can be more effective if they focus on their core competence of providing counselling services. Hence, administration in schools should avoid assigning non-counselling tasks to counsellors.

9.4.3 Recommendations for the policy makers from the Ministry of Education

1. Extend the objectives for school-based counselling to explicitly include provision for students with SEN. Although objectives exist with regard to providing counselling services in school, it is recommended that the Ministry revise these objectives to explicitly include considerations for students with SEN.

2. Strengthen the recruitment process for counsellors. It was evident that the process of recruitment of counsellors in Saudi Arabia lacked rigor. Thus, clear guidelines must be drawn up with regard to the proficiencies of persons who apply to be counsellors as well as clear selection criteria. For example, guidelines can be set with regard to educational qualification, educational major, teaching or counselling experience. Furthermore, aptitude tests can be used to determine if an applicant is suitable for the role of counsellor.

3. Enhance training provision for counsellors. Persons appointed as counsellors must be up-to-date with the latest trends in counselling. Also, they must be provided with counsellor training if they have the aptitude but lack the qualification. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Ministry establish regular training programmes for counsellors to upgrade or update counsellors' skills.

4. Enhance training provision for other personnel in the school. The other personnel in school are required to support counsellors in the provision of their services. Hence, it is recommended that the Ministry establish guidelines and training courses to ensure that all stakeholders in the education of students (with or without SEN) share an equal awareness of the roles of counsellors so that the schools can make best use of the services of counsellors in aiding students.

5. Enhance quality of supervision. Supervision of counsellors must conform to international standards and must go beyond status updates such as number of students counselled. Instead, a supervisory session should be an opportunity for the counsellor to share his views on his progress and highlight issues or concerns. Furthermore, a supervisor should be able to guide a counsellor based on his own experience. Hence, it is recommended that a supervisor be aware of counselling or be a former counsellor.

   Other countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, have been successful in setting up statutory bodies to oversee the practice of counselling. Other countries such as South Korea have initiated the process to establish such guidance. It would be useful for the policymakers in Saudi Arabia to invite experts from these countries to help establish the necessary counselling infrastructure in Saudi Arabia.

9.5 Limitations of the study

Some limitations could be observed in the study. Firstly, the findings of the study cannot be generalised. This can be attributed to the fairly small sample size (n=138), sampling technique used (purposive sampling), and the precise nature of the phenomenon being investigated.

Furthermore, due to the brief time permitted by the Saudi authorities for the completion of the field work (three months), and the associated costs, it was not possible to survey the whole of the counsellor population in Saudi Arabia. Hence, the sample was drawn from only three cities in a single region in Saudi Arabia, i.e., the Mecca region. Also, the schools were specifically selected as they were known to be mainstream schools which included students with SEN.

Unfortunately it was not possible to include special needs teachers and school principals in the study as this would have required additional time and funding. Due to the gender segregation in Saudi Arabia, female school counsellors could also not participate in this study as it would have been difficult for me to arrange for the permission to approach them. Furthermore, their participation would have involved the permission and participation of their guardians, which could be time-consuming. Consequently, the study was deprived of an additional layer of participants who could have provided a gender perspective and also strengthened the study through triangulation of samples (Denzin, 1978; De Vos, 1998; Patton, 1990).

9.6 Suggestions for further research

Some areas for future research were revealed by the current study's findings and limitations. For instance, a future study could investigate the perceptions of female counsellors in mainstream girls' schools in

Saudi Arabia to assess the situation from a feminine perspective. Another area for investigation could be the perceptions of counsellors across the different regions of Saudi Arabia. A comparison of perceptions between counsellors in Saudi Arabia and counsellors in other countries of the Arabian Peninsula would be another useful study.

A different direction of future research could be to investigate the power dynamic in Saudi schools which influenced the provision of counselling services, in general, and for students with SEN, in particular. Moreover, scrutinising the factors which caused counsellors in Saudi Arabia to stop working with students with SEN after having worked with them could be another avenue for investigation.

9.7 My Research Journey

As I contemplate the years spent in this study, I can state in simple terms that every facet of the study transported me into various, challenging experiences. Admittedly, some elements of these experiences have been exhilarating and carefree whereas others have been fraught with snags and annoyances.

Looking back, I remember the mixture of emotions that accompanied my enrolment into the PhD programme at the University of Nottingham. For instance, I was very motivated but unsure, ecstatic but simultaneously anxious. At the outset, I believed that I understood the direction of my PhD journey. However, I then started to get

distracted as I had chosen a topic for my PhD study which had not been the matter of much consideration and consequently a great challenge. There were several intersections in the course of the protracted journey that forced me to pause, and often stop, to examine the markers along the way. Several times I felt that I was lost and could not recognise where I was and needed to take stock of my current position, a situation similar to stopping to get directions on the way to an unfamiliar destination. Similarly, I encountered many crucial instances when I needed to reconsider my research proposal. At the beginning of my study, I had considered studying the barriers of providing school counselling for students with SEN in Saudi Arabia. However, I was undecided and when my first supervisor suggested that I instead consider a different topic that is, the perceptions of school counsellors regarding the provision of counselling for students with SEN in mainstream schools in Saudi Arabia, I also became a little confused. Nevertheless, after a time of introspection and detailed discussion with my supervisor I understood the merits of investigating this broader topic as my eventual objective was to draw attention to this important aspect of the education of students with SEN in mainstream schools across the world.

Having finalised the topic, I decided to maintain a research journal through the course of my research. This turned out to be a very

effective notion as it was important to me, at the beginning of my PhD journey and later, to believe that I could defend my decisions with regard to my familiarity with the topic, and to make it evident that I had finalised the topic after grave consideration. Also, I wanted it to be clear from the beginning that my familiarity was an element of my identity, and in essence, it was impossible for me to ignore it while performing the research. I did not attempt to conceal my experiences in the Saudi educational system or with students with SEN during the study and I believed strongly that if I had done so, it would in some sense influence my work. My keeping of a journal has allowed me to document my processes of thought and the reason(s) why I took specific decisions, and also the contribution of my emotional responses. My journal has not only served as a space to note my early responses and choices but also as a means to revisit them and scrutinise the circumstances responsible for making those choices, and to perceive the manner in which my thought processes evolved during the course of the study.

Subsequently, scrutinising several studies in the process of the review of literature facilitated the enhancement of my understanding and awareness of school counselling as a subject within the field of special education and of the range of school-based counselling services for the benefit of individuals with SEN. Thus, I was able to understand the

significance of the role of school counsellors, and extant information about their attitudes and beliefs, in general, and in working with children with SEN, in particular.

A significant challenge I encountered was my capacity to effectively manage my time to achieve several different tasks. I gradually expanded my skills in time management thus learning to effectively plan the different phases of the research, for example, the duration of the phases of data collection, the length of the interviews, and so on. Moreover, I needed to manage the whole process of research from start to finish to satisfy the requirements of my supervisors and the university and also to ensure timely publication of the outcomes and associated data.

Overall, my PhD journey has aided me in articulating the standards and philosophies of the research process and in gaining awareness of the different paradigms and methodologies of research and their use in the real world. This incalculable experience has enhanced my personal capacity to collect, categorise, assess, and decipher information by creating diverse research instruments. In addition, I developed certain skills, such as time management, priority setting, task control, operating under pressure, effective communication, and resilience that are necessary for finding different solutions to problems. Moreover, during my journey, I had to interact not only with my peers but also

with persons who had limited awareness on the subject of school counselling for students with SEN. These varied opportunities aided me in developing my presentation skills. Furthermore, I have not only honed my skills to study and report from an academic standpoint, but also have acquired the assurance to continue to contribute meaningfully to the academic world. I was privileged to learn something new daily during my time as a researcher in the field of counselling children with SEN. My sense of worth and my process of deliberation were also transformed due to the constant renewal of my knowledge as a result of my research activities.

I must admit that my course of research was marked by both positive and negative events and moods as my family remained in Saudi Arabia while I was in the United Kingdom. My visits home were necessarily infrequent and were chiefly to obtain permissions for the fieldwork and to conduct the actual fieldwork. Periodically, I would feel lonely, perplexed, despairing, exasperated, and inadequate, unable to understand how I would meet my goal of conducting a well-organised and focused study, the outcomes of which could be used for the enhancement of the education of students with SEN in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, my experiences of sharing my research with my peers in the Department of Education of the University of Nottingham have been truly rewarding. Moreover, my presentation of my work at local

and international conferences has made it possible for me to become personally and interactively involved in the academic world. The accomplishment of my research work and my sincere hope that it will benefit others has made the struggles and hardships I experienced during the process worthwhile.

9.8 Concluding remarks

The aim of the current study was to determine the perceptions of counsellors in relation to the provision of counselling for students with special educational needs and to determine the contribution of counsellors to the development of students with SEN in mainstream schools in Saudi Arabia. This study also aimed to identify the obstacles that counsellors could face in providing beneficial services for students.

This study, therefore, examined the opinions of counsellors with respect to the provision of effective counselling services for students with SEN in the cultural context of the Mecca region of Saudi Arabia. The perceptions of counsellors who currently work with students with SEN and those who do not were both examined to provide a more complete and balanced perspective.

The current chapter provided a summary of the significant findings of the study. Three recurring themes could be recognised across the findings. First, counsellors in Saudi Arabia lacked knowledge and awareness of their role as counsellors, in general, and with regard to

students with SEN, in particular. Second, the process used by the Ministry of Education to appoint counsellors lacked rigor and required immediate attention and correction. Third, the environment within the school and the familial environment outside school did not appear to be conducive to the provision of effective counselling services to students with SEN. The underlying factor in these themes was recognised to be an overall lack of awareness of the role of the counsellor across stakeholders in the education of students with SEN. The cultural environment of Saudi Arabia provided its own challenges.

This chapter also summarised the contributions of this study, and offered recommendations for counsellors, schools and the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia with regard to the provision of counselling services for students with SEN. Limitations of the study and areas for further research were also identified.

Overall, the current study contributes to the extant literature with regard to the provision of counselling services for students with SEN. In particular, it is hoped that the cases and findings described in this thesis will assist counsellors' in Saudi Arabia to effectively help their students, both socially and academically as required.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Descriptive Statistics

Section One: Demographic Data

Q1: How old are you?

Table 1: Participant Age groups

Age group	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
29-34	4	2.9
35-40	40	29
41-46	45	32.6
47 and above	49	35.5
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Q2: Please indicate your city?

Table 2: Participant City

City	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Jeddah	47	34.1
Mecca	45	32.6
Taif	46	33.3
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Q3: Please indicate the location of your school?

Table 3: School location

Location	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Urban	95	68.8
Rural	43	31.2
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Q4: Please indicate the type of your school?

Table 4: School Type

Type of schools	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Public	135	97.8
Private	3	2.2
Total	**138**	**100**

Q5: How many students are you responsible for?

Table 5: School Size

Number of students	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
1-150	21	15.2
151-300	39	28.3
301-450	32	23.2
451-600	23	16.7
601 and above	23	16.7
Total	**138**	**100**

Q6: How many students with SEN are in your school?

Table 6: Students with SEN

Number of students with SEN	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
1-10	53	38.4
11-20	37	26.8
21-30	30	21.7
31-40	10	7.2
41 and above	1	.7
Missing answer	7	5.1
Total	**138**	**100**

Q7: Please indicate your qualification?

Table 7: Participants' Qualification

Qualification	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Bachelor	126	91.3
Master	10	7.2
PhD	2	1.4
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Q8: Please indicate your major?

Table 8: Participants' Major

Major	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Psychology	5	3.6
Sociology	10	7.2

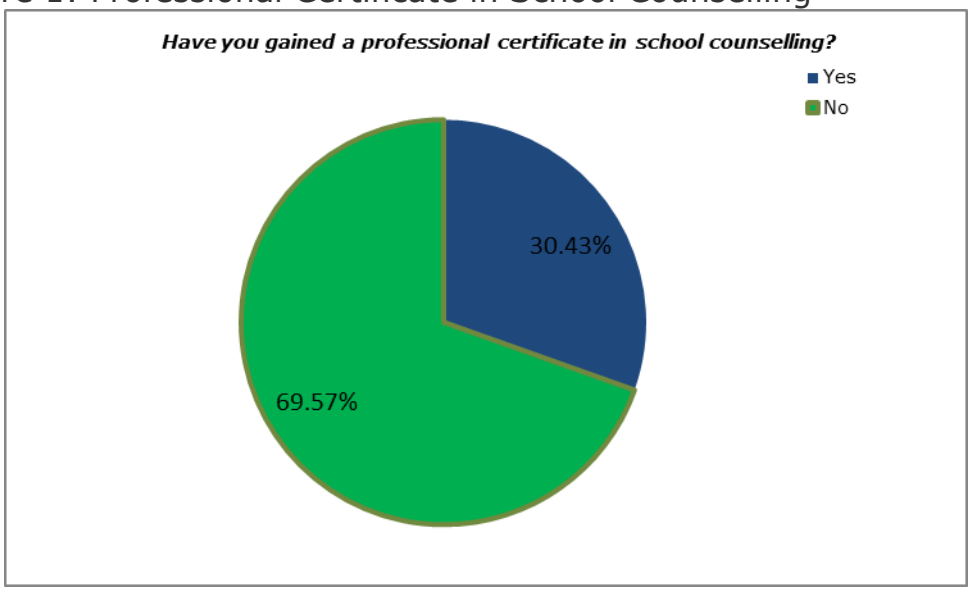
Social work	2	1.4
Arabic	37	26.8
Geography	16	11.6
History	6	4.3
Islamic Studies	29	21.0
Other	33	23.9
Total	**138**	**100**

Q9: Have you gained a professional certificate in school counselling?

Table 9: Professional Certificate in School Counselling

	Frequency	***Percentage***
Yes	42	30.43
No	96	69.57
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Figure 1: Professional Certificate in School Counselling



9a: If yes, please provide more details

Table 9a: Professional Courses Attended in School Counselling

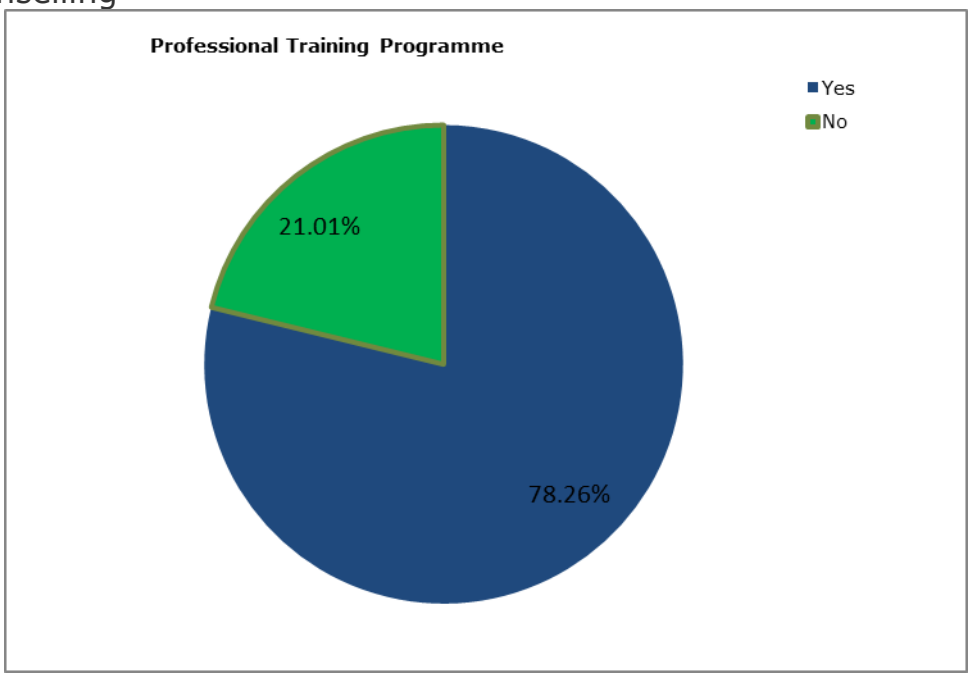
Course Name	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Diploma in Guidance and Educational Counselling	22	52.3
Courses in School Counselling	12	28.6
Psychometrics	1	2.4
Rehabilitation counsellors. A course in psychological counselling	1	2.4
Social service in the school	1	2.4
The development of behaviour	1	2.4
Some seminars about the function of school counselling.	1	2.4
Declined to give details	3	7.1
Total	**42**	**100**

Q10: Have you attended a professional training programme in school counselling?

Table 10: Professional Training Programmes Attended in School Counselling

	Frequency	***Percentage***
Yes	108	78.26
No	29	21.01
Missing answer	1	0.72
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Figure 2: Professional Training Programmes Attended in School Counselling



a) ***Length of professional training programme for those who attended***

Table 10a: Length of Professional Training Programmes Attended

Length	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Less than one month	91	84.26
1-3 months	12	11.11
3-4 months	1	0.93
4-6 months	1	0.93
7-9 months	1	0.93
10 months and above	2	1.85
Total	**108**	**100**

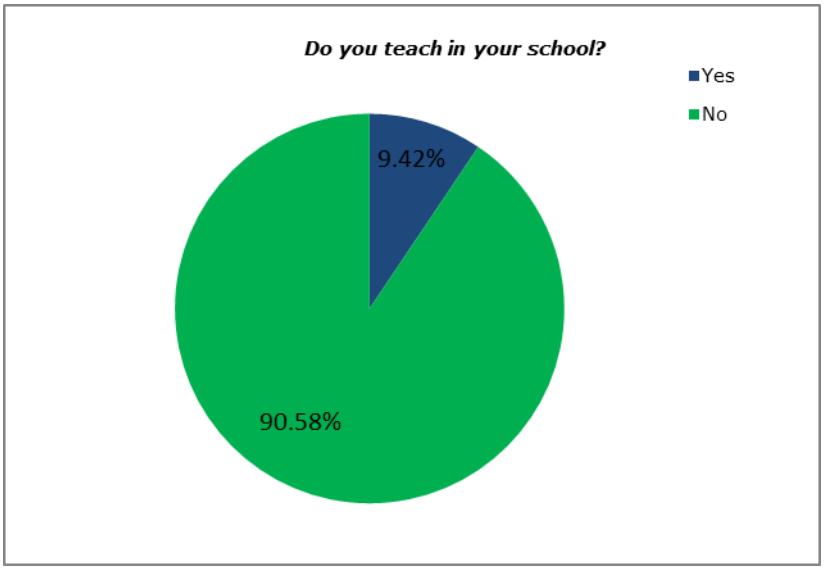
Q11: How many years of teaching experience do you have?

Table 11: Years of Teaching Experience

Number of years	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
None	3	2.2
1-5 years	10	7.2
6-10 years	28	20.3
11-15 years	23	16.7
16 and above	73	52.9
Missing Answer	1	.7
Total	**138**	**100**

Q12: Do you teach in your school?

Figure 3: Counsellors who teach in the schools



Q13: How long have you been working as a counsellor?

Table 13: Experience as Counsellors

Number of years	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
1-3 years	46	33.3
4-6 years	17	12.3
7-9 years	14	10.1
10-12 years	11	8.0
13 and above	50	36.2
Total	**138**	**100**

Q14: How many hours do you dedicated to counselling per week?

Table 14: Hours dedicated to counselling per week

Number of hours	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
10-15 hours	36	26.1
16-20 hours	19	13.8
21-25 hours	34	24.6
26 and above	49	35.5
Total	**138**	**100**

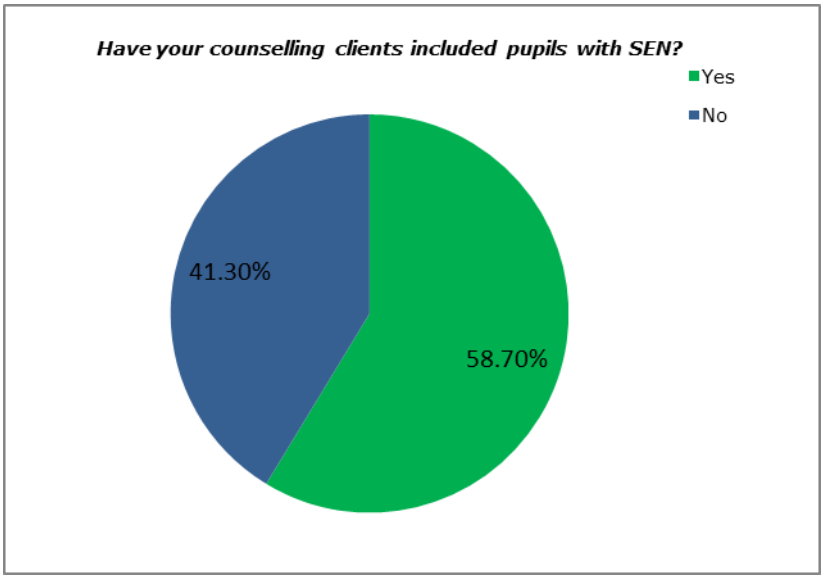
Section Two: Providing counselling for students with SEN

Q15: Have you ever offered counselling service for students with SEN?

Table 15: Counsellors offering counselling services for students with SEN

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	81	58.7
No	57	41.3
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Figure 4: Counsellors offering counselling services for students with SEN



Q15a

Table 15a: Counsellors offering counselling services for students with SEN by school location

			Location of school		Total
			Urban	Rural	
Have your counselling clients included pupils with SEN	**Yes**	Count	56	25	81
		% within Location of school	58.9%	58.1%	58.7%
	No	Count	39	18	57
		% within Location of school	41.1%	41.9%	41.3%
Total		Count	95	43	138
		% within Location of school	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Q16: How long have been providing counselling for students with SEN?

Table 16: Experience with providing counselling for students with SEN

Number of years	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
1-3 years	35	43.21
4-6 years	19	23.46

Number of years	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
7-9 years	10	12.3
10-12 years	7	8.6
13 and above	10	12.3
Total	**81**	**100**

Q17: If students with learning disabilities benefit from your service in the school, could you please specify how they get to know about your service? (A multiple response item).

Table 17: Methods by which students with SEN learn about counselling services

Methods	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Teacher	71	87.7
Psychologist	16	19.8
Principal	30	37.0
Parents	36	44.4
Counsellors Themselves	4	4.9

Q18: a) Do you gain extra salary when you deal with students with SEN?

Table 18: Additional salary for dealing with students with SEN

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Yes	53	65.5
No	27	33.3

Missing Answer	1	1.2
Total	**81**	**100**

b) If Yes, Does this affect the seriousness of dealing with them?

Table 18a: Additional salary for dealing with students with SEN

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Yes	3	5.6
No	25	47.2
Missing Answer	25	47.2
Total	**53**	**100.0**

Q19: How often do you provide counselling for students with SEN?

Table 19: Frequency of counselling provision for students with SEN

How often	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
Always	23	28.4
Often	42	51.9
Sometimes	14	17.3
Rarely	1	1.2
Missing Answer	1	1.2
Total	**81**	**100**

Q20: How many hours do you dedicated to counselling per week?

Table 20: Number of hours dedicated to counselling per week

Number of hours	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
1-5 hours	30	37.0
6-8 hours	24	29.6
9-11 hours	12	14.8
12-15 hours	7	8.6
16 and above	6	7.4
Missing answer	2	2.5
Total	**81**	**100**

Q21: What kind of service do you deliver for students with SEN? (A multiple response item)

Table 21: Services delivered for students with SEN

Kind of Service	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Social Needs	57	70.4
Preventative Service	49	60.5
Emotional Needs	45	55.6
Mental Health Needs	40	49.4
Academic Needs	38	46.9
Social Relationships	36	44.4

Q22: Please describe counselling for students with SEN from the following answer? (A multiple response item)

Table 22: Description of counselling for students with SEN

Description of counselling	Frequency	Percentage
Accessible	45	55.6
Confidential	45	55.6
Safe	38	46.9
Encourages trusting relationships	37	45.7

Q23: Please indicate the referral process utilized in your school? (A multiple response item).

Table 23: Referral process utilised in schools counselling for students with SEN

Referral Process	Frequency	Percentage
Special Education Teacher	60	74.1
Parents	27	33.3
Self-Referral	25	30.9
Other School Staff	22	27.2

Q24: Have you obtained any training in counselling for students who have learning disabilities?

Table 24: Training in counselling for students with learning disabilities

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	26	23.1

No	54	66.7
Missing Answer	1	1.2
Total	**81**	**100.0**

Q25: Please indicate the number of disability short talk/workshops completed?

Table 25: Number of disability short talk/workshops completed

Number of short talk/workshops	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
0	27	33.3
1-5	38	46.9
6-10	11	13.6
11-15	2	2.5
16 and above	2	2.5
Missing answer	1	1.2
Total	**81**	**100**

Q26: Please indicate the number of disability courses completed?

Table 26: Number of disability courses completed

Number of disability courses completed	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
0	42	51.9
1-5	33	40.7
6-10	2	2.5
11-15	2	2.5
16 and above	1	1.2
Missing answer	1	1.2
Total	**81**	**100**

Q27: How do you consider your communication with students with SEN?

Table 27: Communication with students with SEN

	Frequency	***Percentage***
Very difficult	4	4.9
Difficult	30	37.0
Neutral	7	8.6
Easy	32	39.5
Very easy	7	8.6
Missing answer	1	1.2
Total	**81**	**100**

Q28: How do you consider your relationship with special education teachers?

Table 28: Relationship with special education teachers

	Frequency	***Percentage***
Poor	2	2.5
Fair	2	2.5
Good	13	16.0
Very good	24	29.6
Excellent	39	48.1
Missing answer	1	1.2
Total	**81**	**100**

Q29: How do you consider your relationship with parents of students with SEN?

Table 29: Relationship with parents of students with SEN

	Frequency	***Percentage***
Poor	1	1.2
Fair	5	6.2
Good	16	19.8
Very good	21	25.9
Excellent	37	45.7
Missing answer	1	1.2
Total	**81**	**100**

Section Three: the perception of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services

Q30: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Tick one answer for each statement).

Table 30: Counsellors' perceptions of including students with SEN in their services

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
1. Identify students with special educational and personal needs.	97	71.3%	37	27.2%	1	0.7%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
2. Keep students with SEN informed of the guidance and counselling service in the school.	71	51.8%	59	43.1%	3	2.2%	4	2.9%	0	0.0%
3. Assist students with SEN with problems of academic achievement.	79	57.7%	48	35.0%	7	5.1%	1	0.7%	2	1.5%
4. Provide small group counselling in regards to academic needs.	50	36.5%	61	44.5%	18	13.1%	7	5.1%	1	0.7%
5. Help students with SEN to develop their social skills.	76	55.5%	55	40.1%	4	2.9%	2	1.5%	0	0.0%
6. Provide small group social skill counselling students with SEN.	46	33.6%	79	57.7%	11	8.0%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
7. Provide support groups for parents of children with SEN	54	39.4%	62	45.3%	19	13.9%	2	1.5%	0	0.0%
8. Consult with parents of students SEN about the needs or concerns of their children	89	65.0%	43	31.4%	5	3.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
9. Consult with teachers of students with SEN about the need of their students	103	75.2%	32	23.4%	2	1.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
10. Consult with principal about the needs of students with SEN	90	65.7%	47	34.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
11. Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN	86	62.8%	48	35.0%	2	1.5%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%
12. Work to discover gifted and talented students	86	62.8%	47	34.3%	4	2.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
13. Conduct special programmes for gifted and talented students	80	58.4%	45	32.8%	11	8.0%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%

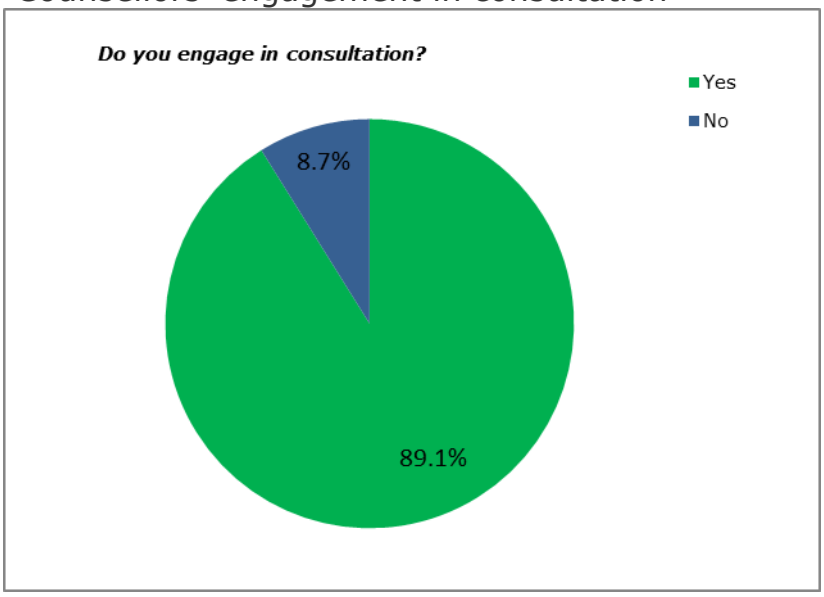
Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
14. Conduct research related to inclusion's needs and problems	52	38.0%	49	35.8%	30	21.9%	4	2.9%	2	1.5%

Q31: a) Do you engage in consultation?

Table 31: Counsellors' engagement in consultation

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	123	89.1
No	12	8.7
Missing answer	3	2.2
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Figure 6: Counsellors' engagement in consultation



b) If yes, please indicate with whom they consulted? (You can choose more than one).

Table 31b: Parties consulted by Counsellors

Parties consulted by Counsellors	***Frequency***	***Percentage***	***Missing answers***
Principal	111	80.4	12
Teachers	82	59.4	12
Special education teacher	87	63.0	12
Parents	70	50.7	12
School Psychologist	34	24.6	12
Other school counsellors	59	42.8	12

Q32: Do you receive professional supervision?

Table 32: Professional Supervision Received by Counsellors

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Yes	55	39.9
No	80	58.0
Missing Answer	3	2.1
Total	**138**	**100.0**

Figure 7: Professional Supervision Received by Counsellors

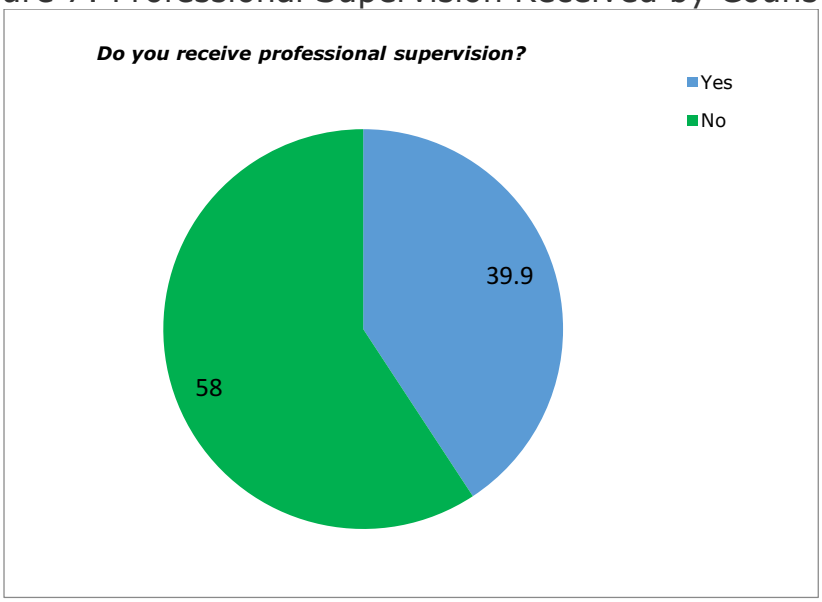


Table 32a: Professional Supervision Received by Counsellors – Per Month

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid		94	68.1
	0	30	21.7
	1	10	7.2
	2	2	1.4
	5	2	1.4
	Total	**138**	**100.0**

Table 32b: Professional Supervision Received by Counsellors – Per Semester

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid		92	66.7
	1	30	21.7
	10	2	1.4
	2	11	8.0
	3	2	1.4
	4	1	.7
	Total	**138**	**100.0**

Table 32b: Professional Supervision Received by Counsellors – Per Year

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid		92	66.7
	2	30	21.7
	2-3	1	.7
	20	2	1.4
	3-4	2	1.4
	4	8	5.8
	5-6	1	.7
	6	1	.7
	8	1	.7
	Total	**138**	**100.0**

Section Four: Counsellors' Attitudes to children with SEN

Q33: Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Table 33: Counsellors' Attitudes to children with SEN

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
1. Integrate students with SEN in mainstream schools.	47	34.1 %	67	48.6 %	16	11.6 %	5	3.6 %	3	2.2 %
2. Students with special needs can succeed in the mainstream school.	32	23.2 %	76	55.1 %	17	12.3 %	11	8.0 %	2	1.4 %

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
3. Students with special needs are a challenge to work with.	29	21.0 %	68	49.3 %	10	7.2 %	29	21.0 %	2	1.4 %
4. I enjoy working with students with special needs	26	19.1 %	69	50.7 %	34	25.0 %	7	5.1 %	0	0.0 %

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
5. I sometimes feel angry when I see students with SEN are enrolled in my school.	5	3.6 %	16	11.6 %	22	15.9 %	48	34.8 %	47	34.1 %
6. I avoid participating in Individualized Educational Programme meetings.	4	2.9 %	17	12.3 %	24	17.4 %	73	52.9 %	20	14.5 %

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
7. I have a positive attitude about working with students with SEN.	32	23.2 %	66	47.8 %	26	18.8 %	12	8.7 %	2	1.4 %
8. As far as possible, school counselling services should be provided to students with SEN.	63	45.7 %	73	52.9 %	0	0.0 %	2	1.4 %	0	0.0 %

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
9. No one has the right to exclude students with SEN from school counselling.	89	65.0 %	41	29.9 %	5	3.6 %	1	0.7 %	1	0.7 %
10. We need to adopt a far more tolerant attitude toward students with SEN in our schools.	82	59.4 %	47	34.1 %	5	3.6 %	2	1.4 %	2	1.4 %

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
11.We have a responsibility to provide the best possible counselling service for those students.	69	50.0%	62	44.9%	5	3.6%	1	0.7%	1	0.7%
12. Students with SEN can benefit from school counselling.	80	58.0%	53	38.4%	4	2.9%	1	0.7%	0	0.0%

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
13. Increased spending on school counselling for students with SEN is a waste of money.	5	3.6 %	17	12.3 %	17	12.3 %	44	31.9 %	55	39.9 %
14. Providing counselling services for students with special needs is overly time consuming.	5	3.6 %	12	8.7 %	9	6.5 %	46	33.3 %	66	47.8 %

Section Five: Obstacles faced by counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN

Q34: Following are some answer given, in other studies, as barriers to providing counselling for students with SEN. Please choose the five most important barriers to offering services for students with SEN.

Table 34: Obstacles faced by Counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN

Obstacles	***Frequency***	***Percentage***
1. The level of learning disability	101	73.2
2. The lack of training	87	63.0
3. The lack of experience of working with students with SEN	84	60.0
4. Lack of knowledge about Learning disability	72	52.2
5. Lack of awareness about students with SEN	71	51.4
6. Communication with students with SEN	65	47.1
7. The ability of students with SEN to process information	63	45.7
8. Failure in building strong relationship with professional in the school community	46	33.3
9. The ability of students with SEN to engage with the counselling programme	43	31.2
10. Engaging in other roles in the school (e.g., administration tasks)	34	24.6

Appendix 2: Comparison across groups

Counsellors' Age and Age-Related Experience

Table 1: Cross-tabulation of Age and Counselling experience

		Counselling experience					Total
		1-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	10-12 years	13 and above	
Age	29-34	1	2	1	0	0	4
	35-40	22	3	7	4	4	40
	41-46	18	11	1	2	13	45
	47 and above	5	1	5	5	33	49
Total		46	17	14	11	50	138

Table 2: Group Statistics for Age and Counselling experience

	age_dichotomous	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
How long have you been providing counselling for students with SEN?	<35	2	1.00	.000	.000
	>35	79	2.27	1.412	.159

Table 3: Independent Samples Test for Age and Counselling experience

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
How long have you been	Equal variances assumed	4.876	.030	-1.260	79	.211	-1.266	1.004	-3.265	.733

providing counselling for students with SEN?	Equal variances not assumed			-7.970	78.000	.000	-1.266	.159	-1.582	-.950

Perceptions of school counsellors' roles

By school location

Table 4: Group Statistics for perception of school counsellors' roles according to school location

	Location of school	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Communication with students with SEN	Urban	56	3.27	1.120	.150
	Rural	24	2.71	1.160	.237
Relationship with special education teachers	Urban	56	4.14	1.052	.141
	Rural	24	4.33	.761	.155
Relationship with parents of students with SEN	Urban	56	4.14	.999	.133
	Rural	24	4.00	1.063	.217
Identify students with special educational and personal needs	Urban	94	1.29	.521	.054
	Rural	42	1.36	.533	.082
Keep students with SEN informed of the guidance and counselling service in the school	Urban	94	1.54	.698	.072
	Rural	43	1.60	.660	.101
	Urban	94	1.57	.836	.086

	Location of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Assist students with SEN with problems of academic achievement	Rural	43	1.44	.548	.084
Provide small group counselling in regards to academic needs	Urban	94	1.89	.921	.095
	Rural	43	1.88	.762	.116
Help students with SEN to develop their social skills	Urban	94	1.50	.652	.067
	Rural	43	1.51	.592	.090
Provide small group social skill counselling students with SEN	Urban	94	1.72	.629	.065
	Rural	43	1.84	.615	.094
Provide support groups for parents of children with SEN	Urban	94	1.76	.714	.074
	Rural	43	1.81	.794	.121
Consult with parents of students SEN about the needs or concerns of their children	Urban	94	1.33	.495	.051
	Rural	43	1.51	.668	.102
Consult with teachers of students with SEN about the need of their students	Urban	94	1.22	.467	.048
	Rural	43	1.35	.482	.074
Consult with principal about the needs of students with SEN	Urban	94	1.30	.460	.047
	Rural	43	1.44	.502	.077
	Urban	94	1.34	.520	.054

	Location of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN	Rural	43	1.53	.631	.096
Work to discover gifted and talented students	Urban	94	1.41	.557	.057
	Rural	43	1.37	.536	.082
Conduct special programmes for gifted and talented students	Urban	94	1.49	.668	.069
	Rural	43	1.56	.700	.107
Conduct research related to inclusion's needs and problems	Urban	94	1.87	.907	.094
	Rural	43	2.09	.947	.144

Table 5: Independent Samples Test for perception of school counsellors' roles according to school location

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Communication with students with SEN	Equal variances assumed	.035	.852	2.026	78	.046	.560	.276	.010	1.109
	Equal variances not assumed			1.997	42.222	.052	.560	.280	-.006	1.125
Relationship with special education teachers	Equal variances assumed	1.325	.253	-.801	78	.426	-.190	.238	-.664	.283
	Equal variances not assumed			-.909	59.398	.367	-.190	.210	-.610	.229
Relationship with parents of students with SEN	Equal variances assumed	.758	.387	.575	78	.567	.143	.248	-.352	.637

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			.561	41.218	.578	.143	.255	-.372	.657
Identify students with special educational and personal needs	Equal variances assumed	1.085	.299	-.718	134	.474	-.070	.097	-.263	.123
	Equal variances not assumed			-.712	77.286	.479	-.070	.098	-.265	.126
Keep students with SEN informed of the guidance and counselling service in the school	Equal variances assumed	.158	.692	-.491	135	.624	-.062	.126	-.312	.188
	Equal variances not assumed			-.502	85.879	.617	-.062	.124	-.308	.184

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Assist students with SEN with problems of academic achievement	Equal variances assumed	3.369	.069	.950	135	.344	.133	.140	-.143	.409
	Equal variances not assumed			1.105	118.432	.272	.133	.120	-.105	.370
Provide small group counselling in regards to academic needs	Equal variances assumed	1.050	.307	.061	135	.951	.010	.161	-.309	.328
	Equal variances not assumed			.066	97.243	.948	.010	.150	-.288	.308
Help students with SEN to develop their	Equal variances assumed	.095	.759	-.100	135	.921	-.012	.117	-.242	.219

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
social skills	Equal variances not assumed			-.103	89.038	.918	-.012	.113	-.235	.212
Provide small group social skill counselling students with SEN	Equal variances assumed	.713	.400	-.990	135	.324	-.114	.115	-.341	.114
	Equal variances not assumed			-.998	83.282	.321	-.114	.114	-.341	.113
Provide support groups for parents of children with SEN	Equal variances assumed	.418	.519	-.431	135	.668	-.059	.136	-.328	.211
	Equal variances not assumed			-.414	74.167	.680	-.059	.142	-.341	.224

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Consult with parents of students SEN about the needs or concerns of their children	Equal variances assumed	11.534	.001	-1.781	135	.077	-.182	.102	-.384	.020
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.596	63.914	.115	-.182	.114	-.409	.046
Consult with teachers of students with SEN about the need of their students	Equal variances assumed	4.117	.044	-1.443	135	.151	-.125	.087	-.297	.046
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.427	79.229	.158	-.125	.088	-.300	.050
Consult with principal about the needs of	Equal variances assumed	6.667	.011	-1.652	135	.101	-.144	.087	-.316	.028

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
students with SEN	Equal variances not assumed			-1.598	75.341	.114	-.144	.090	-.323	.036
Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN	Equal variances assumed	3.204	.076	-1.898	135	.060	-.194	.102	-.397	.008
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.767	69.132	.082	-.194	.110	-.414	.025
Work to discover gifted and talented students	Equal variances assumed	.488	.486	.423	135	.673	.043	.101	-.158	.243
	Equal variances not assumed			.429	84.457	.669	.043	.100	-.156	.241

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Conduct special programmes for gifted and talented students	Equal variances assumed	.004	.951	-.551	135	.583	-.069	.125	-.316	.178
	Equal variances not assumed			-.541	78.107	.590	-.069	.127	-.322	.184
Conduct research related to inclusion's needs and problems	Equal variances assumed	.004	.951	-1.304	135	.194	-.221	.169	-.555	.114
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.283	78.426	.203	-.221	.172	-.563	.122

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for perception of school counsellors' roles according to school location

Statements	**Location**	***M***	***SD***	***t***	***df***	***p***
1. Identify students with special educational and personal needs.	Urban Rural	1.29 1.36	.521 .533	- .718	134	.474
2. Keep students with SEN informed of the guidance and counselling service in the school.	Urban Rural	1.54 1.60	.698 .660	- .491	135	.624
3. Assist students with SEN with problems of academic achievement.	Urban Rural	1.57 1.44	. 836 .548	.950	135	.344
4. Provide small group counselling in regards to academic needs.	Urban Rural	1.89 1.88	.921 .762	.061	135	.951
5. Help students with SEN to develop their social skills.	Urban Rural	1.50 1.51	.652 .592	- .100	135	.921
6. Provide small group social skill counselling students with SEN.	Urban Rural	1.72 1.84	.629 .615	- .990	135	.324
7. Provide support groups for parents of children with SEN.	Urban Rural	1.76 1.81	.714 .794	- .431	135	.668
8. Consult with parents of students SEN about the needs or concerns of their children	Urban Rural	1.33 1.51	.495 .688	- 1.60	63.91	.115
9. Consult with teachers of students with SEN about the need of their students	Urban Rural	1.22 1.35	.467 .482	- 1.43	79.23	.158
10. Consult with principal about the needs of students with SEN	Urban Rural	1.30 1.44	.460 .502	- 1.60	75.34	.114
11. Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN	Urban Rural	1.34 1.53	.520 .631	- 1.90	135	.060
12. Work to discover gifted and talented students	Urban Rural	1.41 1.37	.557 .536	.423	135	.673
13. Conduct special programmes for gifted and talented students	Urban Rural	1.49 1.56	.668 .700	- .551	135	.583
14. Conduct research related to inclusion's needs and problems	Urban Rural	1.87 2.09	.907 .947	- 1.30	135	.194

Note: Degrees of freedom were adjusted in cases where the assumption of homogeneity of variances were not met

By school size

Table 7: Group Statistics for perception of school counsellors' roles according to school size

	student_no_dichotomous	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Integrate students with SEN in mainstream schools	<300	60	2.05	.891	.115
	>300	78	1.81	.884	.100
Students with special needs can succeed in the mainstream school	<300	60	2.37	.938	.121
	>300	78	1.88	.806	.091
Students with special needs are a challenge to work with	<300	60	2.17	1.028	.133
	>300	78	2.45	1.101	.125
I enjoy working with students with special needs	<300	58	2.40	.793	.104
	>300	78	1.99	.747	.085
I sometimes feel angry when I see students with SEN are enrolled in my school	<300	60	3.82	1.097	.142
	>300	78	3.86	1.159	.131
I avoid participating in Individualized Educational Programme meetings	<300	60	3.65	.988	.128
	>300	78	3.63	.968	.110
I have a positive attitude about working with students with SEN	<300	60	2.12	.715	.092
	>300	78	2.22	1.077	.122
As far as possible, school counselling services should be provided to students with SEN	<300	60	1.60	.494	.064
	>300	78	1.55	.638	.072
No one has the right to exclude students with SEN from school counselling	<300	60	1.35	.606	.078
	>300	77	1.48	.718	.082
We need to adopt a far more tolerant attitude toward students with SEN in our schools	<300	60	1.48	.701	.090
	>300	78	1.54	.817	.092
	<300	60	1.63	.712	.092

	student_no_dichotomous	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
We have a responsibility to provide the best possible counselling service for those students	>300	78	1.53	.639	.072
Students with SEN can benefit from school counselling	<300	60	1.43	.621	.080
	>300	78	1.49	.575	.065
Increased spending on school counselling for students with SEN is a waste of money	<300	60	3.95	1.016	.131
	>300	78	3.90	1.265	.143
Providing counselling services for students with special needs is overly time consuming	<300	60	4.17	1.011	.131
	>300	78	4.10	1.169	.132

Table 8: Independent Samples Test for perception of school counsellors' roles according to school size

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Integrate students with SEN in mainstream schools	Equal variances assumed	1.604	.208	1.591	136	.114	.242	.152	-.059	.543
	Equal variances not assumed			1.589	126.534	.114	.242	.152	-.059	.544
Students with special needs can succeed in the mainstream school	Equal variances assumed	4.619	.033	3.243	136	.001	.482	.149	.188	.776
	Equal variances not assumed			3.179	116.242	.002	.482	.152	.182	.782
Students with special needs are a	Equal variances assumed	1.984	.161	-1.535	136	.127	-.282	.184	-.645	.081

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
challenge to work with	Equal variances not assumed			-1.549	130.935	.124	-.282	.182	-.642	.078
I enjoy working with students with special needs	Equal variances assumed	2.532	.114	3.078	134	.003	.409	.133	.146	.672
	Equal variances not assumed			3.050	118.743	.003	.409	.134	.144	.675
I sometimes feel angry when I see students with SEN are enrolled in my school	Equal variances assumed	.458	.500	-.218	136	.828	-.042	.194	-.427	.342
	Equal variances not assumed			-.219	130.253	.827	-.042	.193	-.424	.340

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
I avoid participating in Individualized Educational Programme meetings	Equal variances assumed	.147	.702	.130	136	.897	.022	.168	-.310	.354
	Equal variances not assumed			.130	125.758	.897	.022	.168	-.311	.355
I have a positive attitude about working with students with SEN	Equal variances assumed	12.354	.001	-.629	136	.530	-.101	.161	-.420	.217
	Equal variances not assumed			-.662	133.388	.509	-.101	.153	-.404	.201
As far as possible, school counselling	Equal variances assumed	2.870	.093	.489	136	.625	.049	.100	-.148	.246

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
services should be provided to students with SEN	Equal variances not assumed			.506	135.988	.614	.049	.096	-.142	.239
No one has the right to exclude students with SEN from school counselling	Equal variances assumed	1.172	.281	-1.129	135	.261	-.131	.116	-.359	.098
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.153	134.124	.251	-.131	.113	-.354	.093
We need to adopt a far more tolerant attitude toward students with SEN in our schools	Equal variances assumed	1.172	.281	-.418	136	.677	-.055	.132	-.316	.206
	Equal variances not assumed			-.426	134.335	.671	-.055	.129	-.311	.201

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
We have a responsibility to provide the best possible counselling service for those students	Equal variances assumed	.004	.948	.934	136	.352	.108	.115	-.120	.336
	Equal variances not assumed			.920	119.565	.359	.108	.117	-.124	.339
Students with SEN can benefit from school counselling	Equal variances assumed	.004	.950	-.527	136	.599	-.054	.102	-.256	.148
	Equal variances not assumed			-.521	121.939	.603	-.054	.103	-.258	.151
Increased spending on school counselli	Equal variances assumed	1.372	.244	.263	136	.793	.053	.200	-.342	.448

		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	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
ng for students with SEN is a waste of money	Equal variances not assumed			.271	135.729	.787	.053	.194	-.331	.437
Providing counselling services for students with special needs is overly time consuming	Equal variances assumed	.619	.433	.338	136	.736	.064	.189	-.311	.439
	Equal variances not assumed			.345	134.075	.731	.064	.186	-.304	.432

Counsellors' Experience of students with SEN

Cross tabulation with school size

Table 9: Cross tabulation of school size and counsellors' experience with students with SEN

			Lack of experience of working with students with SEN		Total
			Yes	No	
student_no_dichotomous	<300	Count	42	18	60
		% within student_no_dichotomous	70.0%	30.0%	100.0%
		% within Lack of experience of working with students with SEN	50.0%	33.3%	43.5%
		% of Total	30.4%	13.0%	43.5%
	>300	Count	42	36	78
		% within student_no_dichotomous	53.8%	46.2%	100.0%
		% within Lack of experience of working with students with SEN	50.0%	66.7%	56.5%
		% of Total	30.4%	26.1%	56.5%
Total		Count	84	54	138
		% within student_no_dichotomous	60.9%	39.1%	100.0%

	% within Lack of experience of working with students with SEN	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %
	% of Total	60.9%	39.1%	100.0 %

Chi-Square tests of school size and counsellors' experience with students with SEN

Table 10: Chi-Square tests of school size and counsellors' experience with students with SEN

	Value	**df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**	**Exact Sig. (2-sided)**	**Exact Sig. (1-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	1.194[a]	1	.274		
Continuity Correction	.829	1	.362		
Likelihood Ratio	1.190	1	.275		
Fisher's Exact Test				.282	.181
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.186	1	.276		
N of Valid Cases	138				
a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 20.00.					
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table					

Independent sample test for Location of School and experience of the counsellor

Table 11: Independent sample test for Location of School and experience of the counsellor

	Location	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	**df**	**t**	**Sig**
	Urban	56	2.38	1.556	.208	71	1.61	0.11

Counselling for SEN	Rural	25	1.92	.954	.191			

Independent sample test for Experience of the counsellor and Experience in counselling students with SEN

Table 12: Independent sample test for Experience of the counsellor and Experience in counselling students with SEN

	Counselling client	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**	**df**	**t**	**Sig**
Q12_counselling Exp	Yes	81	3.59	1.523	.169	136	5.072	.000
	No	57	2.19	1.695	.224			

Attitudes towards working with students with SEN according to school size

Table 13: Attitudes towards working with students with SEN according to school size

Statements	**School size**	***M***	***SD***	***t***	***df***	***p***
1. Integrate students with SEN in mainstream schools.	<300 >300	2.05 1.81	.89 .88	1.59	136	.11
2. Students with special needs can succeed in the mainstream school.	<300 >300	2.37 1.88	.84 .81	3.18	116.24	.00
3. Students with special needs are a challenge to work with.	<300 >300	2.17 2.45	1.3 1.10	- 1.54	136	.13
4. I enjoy working with students with special needs	<300 >300	2.40 1.99	.79 .75	3.08	134	.00
5. I sometimes feel angry when I see students with SEN are enrolled in my school.	<300 >300	3.82 3.86	1.10 1.16	-.22	136	.83

Statements	**School size**	***M***	***SD***	***t***	***df***	***p***
6. I avoid participating in Individualized Educational Programme meetings.	<300 >300	3.65 3.63	.99 .97	.13	136	.90
7. I have a positive attitude about working with students with SEN.	<300 >300	2.12 2.22	.72 1.08	-.66	133.39	.51
8. As far as possible, school counselling services should be provided to students with SEN.	<300 >300	1.60 1.55	.49 .64	.49	136	.63
9. No one has the right to exclude students with SEN from school counselling.	<300 >300	1.35 1.48	.61 .72	- 1.13	135	.26
10. We need to adopt a far more tolerant attitude toward students with SEN in our schools.	<300 >300	1.48 1.54	.70 .82	-.42	136	.68
11.We have a responsibility to provide the best possible counselling service for those students.	<300 >300	1.63 1.53	.71 .64	.93	136	.35
12. Students with SEN can benefit from school counselling.	<300 >300	1.43 1.49	.62 .58	-.53	136	.60
13. Increased spending on school counselling for students with SEN is a waste of money.	<300 >300	3.95 3.90	1.02 1.27	.26	136	.79
14. Providing counselling services for students with special needs is overly time consuming.	<300 >300	4.17 4.10	1.01 1.17	.34	136	.74

Note: Degrees of freedom were adjusted in cases where the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met.

Barriers to providing counselling services to students with SEN

By school location

Table 14: Barriers to providing counselling services to students with SEN according to school location

Barriers	**Location**	**%**	**X^2 (df)**	***p***
1. The level of learning disability	Urban Rural	72.6 74.4	.05 (1)	.83
2. The lack of training	Urban Rural	63.2 62.8	.00 (1)	.97
3. The lack of experience of working with students with SEN	Urban Rural	61.1 60.5	.00 (1)	.95
4. Lack of knowledge about Learning disability	Urban Rural	51.6 53.5	.04 (1)	.84
5. Lack of awareness about students with SEN	Urban Rural	54.7 44.2	1.32 (1)	.25
6. Communication with students with SEN	Urban Rural	42.1 58.1	3.05 (1)	.08
7. The ability of students with SEN to process information	Urban Rural	31.6 30.2	.03 (1)	.87
8. Failure in building strong relationship with professional in the school community	Urban Rural	32.6 34.9	.07 (1)	.80
9. The ability of students with SEN to engage with the counselling programme	Urban Rural	31.6 30.2	.03 (1)	.87
10. Engaging in other roles in the school (e.g., administration tasks)	Urban Rural	26.3 20.9	.46 (1)	.50

By school size

Table 15: Barriers to providing counselling services to students with SEN according to school size

Barriers	**School size**	**%**	**X^2 (df)**	***p***
1. The level of learning disability	<300 >300	68.3 76.9	1.28 (1)	.26
2. The lack of training	<300 >300	58.3 66.7	1.01 (1)	.32
3. The lack of experience of working with students with SEN	<300 >300	70.0 53.8	3.72 (1)	.05

Barriers	School size	%	X^2 (df)	*p*
4. Lack of knowledge about Learning disability	<300 >300	55.0 50.0	.34 (1)	.56
5. Lack of awareness about students with SEN	<300 >300	46.7 55.1	.97 (1)	.32
6. Communication with students with SEN	<300 >300	50.0 44.9	.36 (1)	.55
7. The ability of students with SEN to process information	<300 >300	48.3 43.6	.31 (1)	.58
8. Failure in building strong relationship with professional in the school community	<300 >300	38.3 29.5	1.19 (1)	.27
9. The ability of students with SEN to engage with the counselling programme	<300 >300	31.7 30.8	.01 (1)	.91
10. Engaging in other roles in the school (e.g., administration tasks)	<300 >300	21.7 26.9	.51 (1)	.48

Descriptive Statistics

Communication with students with SEN

Table 16: Descriptive Statistics for communication with students with SEN

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q26_communication	80	1	5	3.10	1.154

Relationship with special education teachers

Table 17: Descriptive Statistics for relationship with special education teachers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q27_relationship	80	1	5	4.20	.973

Relationship with parents of students with SEN

Table 18: Descriptive Statistics for relationship with parents of students with SEN

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q28_relationship with Parents	80	1	5	4.10	1.014

Appendix 3: Functions of school counsellors in Saudi Arabia

In addition to the objectives of guidance and counselling in Saudi Arabia, which seem to focus on the counsellors' role inside the school, the counsellors' guidelines, provided by the Saudi Ministry of Education (2001), highlights some additional functions and roles for school counsellors:

1. Preparation and implementation of the general and annual plan for the counselling and guidance programme and with approval from the school principal.
2. Enlighten the educational community about the objectives of counselling and guidance and its plans, programmes and services to ensure that each member in the school understands his or her responsibility in achieving these goals.
3. Providing the potential and the appropriate tools such as records and registration forms that are required in the implementation of counselling programmes in the school.
4. Contributing to the formation of the counselling committee, behaviour care group, counselling group and organising meetings with parents, teachers and students according to the school instructions. Also, following up the implementation of meeting recommendations and evaluating the results.
5. Preparing and implementing education programmes and projects that the school counsellor sees as suitable programmes for students or that are proposed by the school principal.

6. Participating in the activities provided by the counselling and guidance unit such as meetings, courses and research.

7. Implementing counselling programmes and services, as well as prevention programmes, which are concentrated on the following:

- Assist the students in exploiting their abilities and aptitudes to the fullest extent possible to achieve normal growth in their characters;
- Help students to develop and promote positive features in the light of Islamic principles;
- Develop students' motivation towards learning and improving their level of aspiration or ambition;
- Follow up the level of academic achievement for all groups of students, both high and low achievers;
- Identify excessive student absences and students absent without convincing excuses, and identify students who drop out of the school and the causes and factors leading to these issues and address them;
- Provide students with potential opportunities to form positive attitudes towards vocational work in accordance with the objectives of vocational guidance and counselling, according to community’s needs;
- Identify talented students and provide them with the appropriate curriculum;

- Help new students to participate and to feel accepted in the school community as this will promote positive attitudes towards the school environment;
- Try to diagnose various disabilities at an early stage and take appropriate action;
- Improve the relationship between home and school, and work together to develop all aspects of a student's life;
- Identify both the needs of students and individual differences within the student population to meet individual needs, and raise awareness of them among the school and in the local community.
- A comprehensive survey of students' health, and both psychological and social conditions, should be conducted at the beginning of the school year; any students who are likely to need protective services, whether individually or in a group, should be identified, especially new students in the school and at every stage of education;
- Build professional relationships with the administrative staff, teachers, students and their parents based on trust and mutual respect to achieve the objectives of guidance and counselling.

8. Prepare periodic reports on students' levels of achievement and present these to the school principal.

9. Conduct educational research into the school individually or collaboratively with other counsellors from different schools (Ministry of Education, 2001)

Appendix 4: A copy of the utilised Questionnaire

Counselling for students with special needs

Researcher: Youssef Aloteabi

Dear Counsellor

I am conducting a research study on the provision of school counselling for students with special needs (SEN) in Saudi schools. I would be grateful if you could participate in the questionnaire. Your participation will help give a clear image of the current situation and enable future recommendations for improvement.

Completion Guidelines:

Important: YOU DO NOT NEED TO WRITE YOUR NAME OR SCHOOL'S NAME IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE!

Please answer all the questions and give your opinions honestly.

Remember, the questionnaire is not a test as there are no "correct" or "incorrect" answers.

Your views will be used for research purpose only.

Finally, I will take very seriously my responsibility to guard the privacy of your response.

Thank very much for your participation.

Participant's code:

_____

Part one: Background Data Sheet

Please answer the following questions:

1) How old are you?

23-28	29-34	35-40	41-46	47 and above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2) Please indicate the location of your school?

City ☐ rural ☐

3) Please indicate the type of your school?

Public ☐ Private ☐

4) How many students are you responsible for?

1-150	151-300	301-450	451-600	601 and above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5) How many students with SEN are in your school?

1-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41 and above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6) Please indicate your qualification?

A) Bachelor	B) Master	C) PhD
☐	☐	☐

7) Please indicate your major?

Psychology	Sociology	Social work	Other
☐	☐	☐	☐

If other, please write your major.

……..

8) Have you gained a professional certificate in school counselling?

A- Yes ☐ B- No ☐

If yes, please give details

.....

9) Have you attended a professional training programme in school counselling?

A- Yes ☐ B- No ☐

If yes, please give details

Less than one month	1-3 months	3-4 months	4-6 months	7-9 months	10 months and above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10) How many years of teaching experience do you have?

None	1-5	6-10	11-15	16- above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11) Do you teach in your school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please indicate how many hours do you teach per week?

1-5	6-8	9-11	12-15	16 and above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12) How long have you been working as a counsellor?

1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13) How many hours do you dedicated to counselling per week?

10-15	15-20	21-25	26 and above
☐	☐	☐	☐

Part two: providing counselling for students with SEN

Please answer the following questions:

14) Have you ever offered counselling service for students with SEN?

A- Yes ☐ please complete all questions

B- No ☐ please go to question 29

15) How long have been providing counselling for students with SEN?

1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16) If students with learning disabilities benefit from your service in the school, could you please specify how they get to know about your service?

Teachers ☐

Psychologist ☐

Principal ☐

Parents ☐

Other ☐

Please specify…….

17) Do you gain extra salary when you deal with students with SEN?

A- Yes ☐ B- No ☐

If No, Does this affect the seriousness of dealing with them?

A- Yes ☐ B- No ☐

18) How often do you provide counselling for students with SEN?

Always ☐ Often ☐ Sometimes ☐ Rarely ☐

19) How many hours do you dedicated to counselling per week?

1-5	6-8	9-11	12-15	16 and above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20) What kind of service do you deliver for students with SEN? *(You can tick more than one).*

Academic needs ☐

Emotional needs ☐

Social needs ☐

Social relationships ☐

Mental health needs ☐

Preventative services ☐

Other, please specify ……..

…….

21) Please describe counselling for students with SEN from the following answer? *(You can choose more than one).*

☐ accessible for all students with SEN

☐ confidential

☐ safe

☐ encourages for trusting relationships

☐ other, please specify

……..

22) Please indicate the referral process utilized in your school? *(You can choose more than one).*

☐ self-referrals

☐ Parents

☐ Special education teachers

☐ other school staff

☐ other, please specify

……

23) Have you obtained any training specifically for counselling students who have learning disabilities?

A- Yes ☐ B- No ☐

If yes, Please give details

……

……

……

24) Please indicate the number of disability short talk/workshops completed?

0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16 and above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

25) Please indicate the number of disability courses completed?

0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16 and above
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26) How do you consider your communication with students with SEN?

Very difficult	Difficult	Neutral	Easy	Very easy
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

27) How do you consider your relationship with special education teachers?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

28) How do you consider your relationship with parents of students with SEN?

Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part three: the perception of counsellors of including students with SEN in their services

29. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. *(Tick one answer for each statement).*

Statements	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
a) Identify students with special educational and personal needs.					
b) Keep students with SEN informed of the guidance and counselling service in the school.					
c) Assist students with SEN with problems of academic achievement.					
d) Provide small group counselling in regards to academic needs.					
e) Help students with SEN to develop their social skills.					
f) Provide small group social skill counselling students with SEN.					
g) Provide support groups for parents of children with SEN.					
h) Consult with parents of students SEN about the needs or concerns of their children.					
i) Consult with teachers of students with SEN about the					

need of their students.					
j) Consult with principal about the needs of students with SEN.					
k) Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with teachers of students with SEN.					
l) Work to discover gifted and talented students.					
m) Conduct special programmes for gifted and talented students.					
n) Conduct research related to inclusion's needs and problems.					

30) Do you engage in consultation?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please indicate with whom they consulted? *(You can choose more than one).*

1. Principal ☐
2. Teachers ☐
3. Special education teacher ☐
4. Parents ☐
5. School Psychologist ☐
6. Another school counsellors ☐

31) Do you receive professional supervision?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please answer the following questions.

How many supervision per month?

…….

How many supervision per semester?

…….

How many supervision per academic year?

…….

Part Four: School counsellors' attitudes to children with SEN

32. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. *(Tick one answer for each statement).*

Statements	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
a) Integrate students with SEN in mainstream schools.					
b) Students with special needs can succeed in the mainstream school.					
c) Students with special needs are a challenge to work with.					
d) I enjoy working with students with special needs.					
e) I sometimes feel angry when I see students with SEN are enrolled in my school.					
f) I avoid participating in Individualized Educational Programme meetings.					
g) I have a positive attitude about working with students with SEN.					
h) As far as possible, school counselling services should be provided to students with SEN.					
i) No one has the right to exclude students with SEN from school counselling.					
j) We need to adopt a far more tolerant attitude					

toward students with SEN in our schools.					
k) We have a responsibility to provide the best possible counselling service for those students.					
l) Students with SEN can benefit from school counselling.					
m) Increased spending on school counselling for students with SEN is a waste of money.					
n) Providing counselling services for students with special needs is overly time consuming.					

Part Five: obstacles faced by counsellors in providing counselling for students with SEN

33) Following are some answer given, in other studies, as barriers to providing counselling for students with SEN. Please choose the five most important barriers to offering services for students with SEN.

1. Communication with students with SEN. ☐
2. The ability of students with SEN to process information. ☐
3. The ability of students with SEN to engage with the counselling programme. ☐
4. The level of learning disability. ☐
5. Lack of awareness about students with SEN. ☐
6. Lack of knowledge about Learning disability. ☐
7. Lack of experience of working with students with SEN. ☐
8. Failure in building strong relationship with professional in the school community. ☐
9. Lack of training. ☐
10. Engaging in other roles in the school (e.g administration tasks). ☐

Any other barriers please specify:

……

……

……

34) If you wished to improve the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in school counselling could you please indicate any ideas below?

……

……

……

35) Please indicate whether you wish to take part in a research

Interview regarding providing counselling for students with special needs:

No ☐ I do not wish to take part in a research interview.

Yes ☐ I do wish to take part in a research interview.

If yes, please write your name and contact details below:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Thank you very much for your time and effort in completing this questionnaire.

Appendix 5: Participant consent form

Research title:

An Investigation into the Perceptions of School Counsellors in Relation to Providing Counselling for Students with Special Needs in Saudi Arabia Schools.

Researcher's name: Youssef Aloteabi – School of Education, University of Nottingham.

Supervisor's names: Dr. Belinda Harris and Dr. David Murphy

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I understand that data will be stored in a lockable draw at the University of Nottingham or in a lockable filing cabinet at Youssef's office. I understand Youssef will password protect

access to both recordings and transcripts. The only people who will have access to these transcripts will be the supervisors named above and examiners. I understand that a code will be allocated to me and that the transcripts which will be held anonymously and confidentially by all involved.

- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed……..…… (Research participant)

Print name…… **Date** ……..……

Contact details:

Researcher: Youssef Aloteabi

Contact Details:

ttxyha@nottingham.ac.uk