

Determinants of Guidance and Counseling Programme in Addressing Students Social Adjustment in Secondary Schools in Siaya District, Kenya

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Abstract

Schools in Siaya District have experienced problems of student unrests, indiscipline cases and poor social relationship among students and teachers. The prevalence of use of alcohol and substance abuse among students between 2004 and 2008 was at 70.0%, while sexual immorality was 54.0% and 34.0% was for cases of unrest. Guidance and counseling programme has a pivotal role in assisting students adopt acceptable behavior in the school environment. The purpose of this study was to examine the determinants of guidance and counseling programme on students' social adjustment in public secondary schools in Siaya District. The study employed Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Target population was 3211 which comprised of 2,505 grade twelve students, 68 Head teachers and 569 teachers all drawn from 68 schools, and one District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 752 students, 171 teachers and 21 Head teachers. Saturated sampling was used to select the District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Questionnaire and interview schedule were used to collect data. The instruments were piloted for their validity and reliability; a correlation coefficient of 0.82 and 0.83 for students' and teachers' questionnaire respectively were obtained. Quantitative data was processed to generate frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative data was transcribed, organized into emergent themes and reported. The study found out that guidance and counseling department is faced with: lack of facilities and resources; inadequate training of teacher counselors; and teacher counselors being members of the disciplinary committees in schools. The study concluded that guidance and counseling programme had inadequately contributed to students' social adjustment as a result of inadequate facilities, and ineffective strategies of guidance and counseling were being used in schools. The study recommended that guidance and counseling be strengthened by providing appropriate facilities to run the programme, and posting of trained teacher-counselors to head the departments.

Key Word: Social Adjustment Challenges, Strategies, Guidance and Counseling

1. Introduction

Guidance and counseling in schools seems to be determined by a number of factors. A study by Bunce and Willower (2001) on counselors' subculture in American schools revealed that teacher-counselors have to manage role ambiguity and overwhelming workload; they have to adhere to professional ethics, on-going professional development and manage links with community and professional bodies in offering services to student-clients. In support of the same, Brigman and Campbell (2003) also raised concern on school counselors' ambiguous role, definition and functions in the context of American schools. Earlier study by Lloyd (1999) suggests that schools need to develop their own statements or policies on ethical issues concerning school counseling skills.

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This task is likely to bring in the stakeholders like the school administrators and counseling bodies and/or funding authorities. Another study by Dwyer and McNaughton (2004) in China on the needs of students and teachers in schools found out that teachers needed to be given as much attention as students in the counseling programme in order to resolve their personal problems so as to assist students. Fox and Butler (2007) echoed that one of the key internal challenges for counselors practicing in schools is familiarity with the students which entails managing students' perception which is essential in encouraging students to use school counseling services. The above studies and views suggest that guidance and counseling programme in schools seems to be influenced by a number of factors, which is why, the current study tried to establish the determinants of guidance and counseling programme in addressing students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Siaya District.

According to Ndambuki and Mutie (2003), a student is faced with many difficult situations in today's life. Students have to make wise choices that could help them achieve in both academics and co-curricular activities and also socially adjust to peers, teachers and parents. Students have to share facilities in the learning institutions with individuals from different socio-economic background, have to make choices on spending their leisure time and adjust to heterosexual relationships. For optimum achievement and proper social adjustment in varied life situations, it is imperative to have guidance and counseling department in schools to prepare students to handle varied life situations. Sue and Gloser (2002) suggests that a head teacher has to learn the complexities of the school, understand behavioral tendencies and the needs of the staff and be able to change undesirable ones while enhancing behavior that contribute to the achievement of academic goals. Bush and Bell (2003) on the effectiveness of head teachers in promoting students' discipline in five European cities, 700 teachers were asked to explain the extent to which certain tasks were a problem to their teaching; 40.0% of the respondents gave poor students social adjustment as their main problem, they also reported that the head teachers had failed to handle discipline cases and did not set standards to be achieved by students. The study concluded that head teachers had not managed students' discipline cases which led to poor students' social adjustment thereby interfering with the learning process in schools. Based on the forgoing, the current study focused on establishing the determinants of guidance and counseling programmes in addressing students' social adjustment in terms of head teachers' support of the programme particularly on resource provision in the secondary schools in Siaya District.

A study by Bichanga (2005) on students' attitude towards guidance and counseling in seven public secondary schools in Ngong Division, Kajiado District (Kenya) revealed that students seek help more frequently from teachers and counselors of their gender. However, Kelleher (2003) maintained that counselors were responsible for an individual's positive choices and should try to create a favorable environment to attract the client. The attitude held by students towards seeking help determines how effectively counseling resources are used while students with positive attitude toward seeking help are more likely to seek counseling than those with negative ones. This suggests that attitude of students determines how often they got help from guidance and counseling personnel. And the guidance and counseling personnel is expected to provide sufficient resources to ensure a favorable environment that would attract student-clients for counseling services. On the forgoing, the present study sought to establish students' parental support and availability and use of resources in schools to run the programme for its efficacy.

Lambat (2003) observes that one way of motivating teachers is to empower them to carry out tasks through consultative decision making, provision of resources to meet teaching and learning requirements and offer opportunities for in-service training. This argument is supported by Massie (2000) who observes that the head teacher can provide an enabling environment for effective guidance and counseling programme to be done through the use of compensation and fringe benefits that can enhance organizational achievements. This was done with an aim of making teachers to participate in management of student discipline.

The teachers are however over-loaded with the responsibility bestowed upon them and therefore need support from the head teachers like employment of more teachers to assist in relieving heads of departments in guidance and counseling of some teaching load in order to enable them avail more contact hours with student-clients. However, there seems to be no indicators to show if the head teachers are collectively working as a team with their teachers through school guidance and counseling programmes to address students' social adjustment to the learning environment.

A study by Ajowi (2005) on the role of Guidance and Counseling in promoting students discipline in primary schools in Kisumu District reported disconnect between the Guidance and Counseling department and disciplinary committees in schools.

This was as a result of lack of sufficient knowledge on the role of Guidance and Counseling department among head teachers, teachers and Heads of department. They seemed to perceive that the role of Guidance and Counseling is like that of disciplinary committee. Mutie and Ndambuki (2003) seem to echo similar sentiments by reporting that Kenya still has a long way to go in school guidance and counseling due to: lack of trained personnel in the area; most schools do not have sufficient funds to carry out the programme effectively; teacher counselors are overloaded with lessons and therefore unable to give proper guidance in schools and; that the teachers are mainly involved in career guidance thus leaving out other aspects needed in guidance and counseling like discipline issues and social relationships.

Another study by Onyango (2004) on perception of head teachers and teacher counselors on guidance and counseling services in Kisumu Municipality revealed that teachers were in agreement that peer counselors were of great help to their student counterparts. A similar study by Muango (2005) on evaluation of the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services in at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology reported that most students sought guidance and counseling services from fellow students. The studies therefore suggest that peer counseling seem to be an effective strategy in addressing students' social adjustment in schools. The present study tried to establish whether peer counseling was being used in school guidance and counseling services in the district.

Guidance and counseling programme in schools has some strategies in place for students' social adjustment. These include appointment of teacher counselors to manage the programmes in schools, establishment of guidance and counseling policy for schools, training of teachers and peer counselors and supervision of the programmes in schools. The American School of Counseling Association (ASCA) recommends a counselor-student ratio of 1:250. The Association also recommends that professional school counselors should be educators certified with license with a minimum of Master degree in school counseling making them uniquely qualified to address all students' academics, personal, social and career needs by designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing a comprehensive school counseling programme that promotes students growth. Stone and Dahir (2006) report that professional school counselors are employed in elementary, middle, junior, high schools, in district supervisory positions and counselor educator positions. They also establish school counseling curriculum that consists of structured lessons designed to help students achieve competencies and also to provide all students with knowledge and skills appropriate for all development levels. The professional school counselors also create a mission statement supporting the schools mission and collaborate with other individuals and organizations to promote all students personal development. The department of Education has effective counseling programmes which are vital to the school climate and a crucial element on students' social adjustment in schools. Based on the forgoing the present study tried to establish strategies put in place by the guidance and counseling programme in addressing students' social adjustment in secondary schools Siaya District.

The study therefore attempted to meet the following objectives:

- i. Determine the constraints of secondary school guidance and counseling programme in addressing students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Siaya District and;
- ii. Establish strategies of guidance and counseling programme in addressing students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Siaya District.

2. Methodology

The study population comprised of 2,505 12th grade students, 68 Head teachers, 68 Heads of Guidance, and Counseling department and 569 teachers. The 12th grade students were selected because they had undergone three quarters of their secondary education and therefore were in a position to provide more reliable information on the guidance and counseling programmes in schools.

The schools, students, teachers, heads of guidance and counseling and head teachers were selected by stratified random sampling method while purposive sampling technique was used to select the District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer (DQASO). There were 68 secondary schools which comprised of 20 girls schools, 22 boys schools and 26 mixed schools. The study therefore selected 7 schools from each category which gave a total of 21 schools. A sample of 986 was obtained which comprised of 21 head teachers, 21 Guidance and Counseling heads of department, 171 teachers and 752 form four students. The instruments employed in data collection were questionnaire and interview schedule. Piloting of the instruments was done in seven secondary schools in the District.

Reliability coefficients of 0.82 and 0.83 were obtained for teachers' and students' questionnaire respectively. However, reliability of the in-depth interview was determined by making them more comprehensive by covering all the study variables. Validity of the instruments was ascertained by making sure that items on the instruments were well constructed and sufficiently addressed each variable of the study. Peer reviewers' expertise was also sought to improve on the instruments. Data collected was sorted, edited, coded, classified and then tabulated. Quantitative data was analyzed by descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. The results were then presented in form of tables. Qualitative data were first transcribed then organized into various themes, analyzed, interpreted and reported in pose.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study were organized and presented based on the study objectives.

3.1 Constraints of Secondary School Guidance and Counseling Programme in Addressing Students' Social Adjustment in Siaya District

The study employed in-depth interviews to collect information from students, head teachers and heads of guidance and counseling departments. During the interview, majority of the respondents reported that guidance and counseling departments were headed by teachers who were either appointed by Teachers' Service Commission or schools and performed other non-teaching duties. A head teachers interviewed reiterated that "Besides their core responsibility of teaching, teachers are in-charge of other activities like class management, games, societies and clubs in the school and most times are overwhelmed by these duties". This contributed to inefficiency in running the guidance and counseling programme. It was also revealed from the heads of guidance and counseling department that some teachers were both members of the guidance and counseling departments as well as disciplinary committees due to understaffing. Students therefore had no confidence in such teachers and were not confiding in them regarding their discipline related problems for fear of being subjected to punishment. One of the head of guidance and counseling reported that, "students do not seek for help from the teachers in charge of guidance and counseling programme if they also happen to be members of the school disciplinary committee on issues that could be considered as indiscipline like drug abuse and immoral sexual behavior." This implied that guidance and counseling programme was not effective in most schools due to shortage of teachers.

Most (95.0%, 20) of the heads of guidance and counseling department observed that the departments lacked adequate facilities to run the programme, although some schools had rooms set aside for guidance and counseling offices. It was revealed further that in some schools as reported by 47.6% (10) respondents, counseling took place in the games field or under the trees since the schools did not have enough buildings and therefore rooms for all offices. Another 85.7% (18) of the respondents reported that there were no facilities like Television sets, radio, audio and visual cassettes that could be useful in gathering information during the counseling sessions. The departments therefore had inadequate or totally lacked guidance and counseling motivational books, charts, journals and other counseling literature to run the counseling sessions in schools. Most schools lacked filing systems to keep records of their clients for follow ups after the counseling sessions and future use.

The study found out from 28.6% (6) heads of guidance and counseling department respondents that, schools had facilities like T.V sets and radio machines but they were used for entertainment of students, curriculum implementation like teaching and acquiring information like news broadcast which were either in the staff-room or in languages department. This thus implied that the guidance and counseling department lacked such facilities which was not only an additional hindrance to training of both teachers and peer counselors in running the departmental programme effectively but also limited ways through which guidance and counseling programme could be offered to students in schools to help them adjust socially.

Majority of the head teachers and heads of department of guidance and counseling (71.4%, 42) collectively reported that some parents were not fully offering support to the guidance and counseling programme on students' social adjustment in terms of making follow ups on students who had received counseling on home-related problems even after some counseling had already been done at school. Majority (90.4%, 53) of respondents also felt that some students had negative attitude towards guidance and counseling services and hardly paid visit to the department unless the department either organized a programme that reached out for them or used the group counseling done during school assemblies on Monday, Wednesday and Friday which did not give personal attention.

A relative majority (85.7%, 21) of the guidance and counseling heads of department reported that the department was faced with challenges in working together with the disciplinary committees where some students were punished before being sent to the guidance and counseling department and therefore the guidance and counseling department being taken by students as a referral center for indiscipline students thus inhibiting the use of the guidance and counseling services by students.

These findings are supported by a study by Aura (2003) on the implementation of guidance and counseling programme in Butere-Mumias District-Kenya. The study reported that inadequate training of guidance and counseling teachers and lack of support from the school administration were the major constraints which frustrated efforts to have the services adequately provided. In Kajiado District, a study by Bichanga (2005) on students attitude towards guidance and counseling reports that students with poor attitude towards guidance and counseling programme or teacher counselors did not seek help from the department. This resulted in many students suffering and indulging in other negative social adjustments like drug taking, theft and immorality in and out of schools. However, Kipnusu (2002) advances that those students with positive attitude are more likely to seek guidance than those with negative attitude.

The foregoing therefore implies that the existing constraints like teacher counselors' high teaching loads due to understaffing in many schools, lack of appropriate resources that could be used for running the programme, the disconnect between the functions of school disciplinary committee and the guidance and counseling programme as well as poor attitude among some students towards the guidance and counseling services seem to contribute to poor students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Siaya District.

3.2 Strategies of Guidance and Counseling Programme on Students Social Adjustment in Public Secondary Schools in Siaya District

The study sought to establish strategies employed by the Ministry of Education on effective functioning of Guidance and counseling programme on students' social adjustment in secondary schools in Siaya District. The study administered questionnaire to teachers to seek their opinions. Their responses were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Strategies of Guidance and Counseling programme on Students' Social Adjustment in Secondary Schools as indicated by Teachers (n=171)

Strategies	Agree % (f)	Undecided % (f)	Disagree % (f)
i. Head teachers employ G&C programme in management of students discipline.	11.7% (20)	11.1% (19)	77.2% (132)
ii. Peer counseling is actively used by G&C department in schools.	50.2% (86)	21.6% (37)	32.6% (55)
iii. Peer counselors are trained to enable them use G&C programme on social adjustment of students.	49.7% (85)	19.9% (34)	30.4% (52)
iv. G&C works together with disciplinary committees in school.	53.8% (92)	18.7% (32)	28.7% (49)
v. School policy support of G&C programme on students social adjustment.	52.6% (90)	18.7% (32)	28.7% (49)
vi. Training of teachers by the Ministry of Education to effectively use G&C on social adjustment of students.	38.6% (66)	19.9% (34)	41.5% (71)
vii. Training of teachers by N.G.O's to effectively run G&C department.	38.0% (65)	19.9% (34)	42.1% (72)

Key: % -: Percentage, f -: Frequency counts, G&C -: Guidance and Counseling

As shown in Table 1, 77.2% (132) of the respondents indicated that guidance and counseling was not effectively being used by Head teachers to manage students' discipline. When asked about existence of peer counselors in schools, only 50.2% (86) of the respondents reported that peer counselors existed in their schools, while 49.7% (80) said peer counselors had undergone some basic training to enable them perform the guidance and counseling services in schools. Another 30.4% (52) of the respondents indicated that peer counselors were not being trained which implied that in some schools the peer counselors had not received any form of training.

On collaboration with disciplinary committee, only a simple majority (53.8%, 92) of teachers reported that guidance and counseling department worked hand in hand with the disciplinary committee on students’ social adjustment. While another 52.6% (90) of the respondents felt that their school policies supported the effectiveness of the use of guidance and counseling programme on students’ social adjustment. On specialized teacher training in guidance and counseling, 38.6% (66) of the respondents felt that teachers were trained by the Ministry of Education while another 38.0% (65) of them reported that the training by Non-governmental Organizations could not enable teachers run the school guidance and counseling services effectively. The study also sought opinions of students on strategies employed by Ministry of Education on effectiveness of guidance and counseling on students’ social adjustment in secondary school in Siaya District by administering questionnaire. Their responses were as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Strategies of Guidance and Counseling programme on Students’ Social Adjustment in Siaya District as indicated by Students (n = 752)

Strategies	Agree % (f)	Undecided % (f)	Disagree % (f)
i. Peer counseling exist in schools	64.2% (483)	14.8% (111)	21.0% (158)
ii. Peer counselors are trained to Handle their duties	49.2% (370)	17.0% (128)	33.8% (254)
iii. G &C department work together with Disciplinary committees in school	68.0% (511)	10.0% (75)	22.0% (166)
iv. School policy support guidance and Counseling Programmes	77.5% (583)	9.3% (70)	13.2% (92)
v. Parents involvement in G &C Programme	36.4% (274)	13.6% (102)	50.0% (376)

Key: % -: Percentage, f -: Frequency counts, G&C -: Guidance and Counseling

As shown in Table 2, there were some strategies used by the guidance and counseling programme on students’ social adjustment in schools as 64.2% (483) of the student respondents indicated that peer counseling existed in schools and was actively being used to run programmes in guidance and counseling services. However, some peer counselors had received basic training as reported by 49.2% (370) student respondents. Students felt that school administration had policies which supported guidance and counseling in schools as 77.5% (583) of the respondents reported that such policies offered support to guidance and counseling programme. Another 68.0% (511) of the respondents claimed that guidance and counseling worked together with disciplinary committees on students’ social adjustment. However, only 50.0% (376) of the respondents reported that parents were not involved in the guidance and counseling programme in schools.

From interviews it was also established that there were some strategies in place by the guidance and counseling programme on students’ social adjustment in schools. The District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer and 100.0% (21) of the head teachers were in agreement that there were some Teachers’ Service Commission appointed heads of guidance and counseling department in schools, however, most schools had been appointed by school head teachers. Since the policy of guidance and counseling emphasizes the use of guidance and counseling on indiscipline issues as opposed to corporal punishment. There was an establishment of disciplinary committees that was expected to work closely with guidance and counseling department. However they seemed to have overlapping roles, in that, in some cases due to understaffing. Some members of disciplinary committee also overlapped in the guidance and counseling committees, thereby limiting most students from confiding in them for fear of exposure. The District Assurance Quality and Standards Officer reported that the district and zones educational offices lacked guidance and counseling personnel whose responsibility was to supervise, facilitate, organize for induction and training of both the teacher-counselors and students peer counselors and to support the guidance and counseling programme in schools in relation to the MOE policy.

The study found out that although schools normally sponsor teachers to attend seminars and workshops on guidance and counseling, there was no intensive training of guidance and counseling department members since the workshops and seminars seemed limited.

The guidance and counseling department heads had also not received help from the divisional and district educational guidance and counseling units and in most cases had to go out on their own in search for resource persons like probation officer, magistrates, spiritual leaders and academicians to give talks to students; an indication that the guidance and counseling educational units neither gave support nor supervised the implementation of guidance and counseling programme in schools.

Another 76.0% (16) of the heads of guidance and counseling department reported that the programme had some strategies in schools such as peer counselors who were appointed to represent each class since they had realized that many students sought for social guidance from fellow students; however, peer counselors had not undergone training to empower them reach out effectively and help their fellow students in matters of social adjustment. A study by Muango (2005) is in agreement with these findings since she also found out that students sought for guidance and counseling services from their fellow students and there was therefore need to train peer counselors who would be empowered with skills to help out others. Ndegwa (2003), in a study of Meru North District on the Role of Guidance and Counseling Services in selected secondary schools also reported that peer groups had a great influence on adolescents and therefore the peer leader had to provide positive role model for other student which in return strengthens the self esteem of peer leaders. More so, the District Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS, 2005) in Kisumu observed that guidance and counseling programme was not effectively being implemented in schools. The education divisional and district guidance and counseling units were not functional. The study therefore found out that the strategies in use in Siaya secondary schools in provision of guidance and counseling programme were not effective towards addressing students' social adjustment.

4. Conclusion

i. The poor students social adjustment in schools was a result of the challenges faced by the guidance and counseling departments; the heads of department had not received training that would equip them to handle the varied issues affecting students in schools, they also had other responsibilities in schools with heavy subject loads and therefore not able to manage the guidance and counseling programme well. Some students had poor attitude towards the programme and were also not willing to confide in teachers doubling up in guidance and counseling department and disciplinary committees' activities. There was also lack of parental and community support in terms of follow ups on students who undergo counseling and those in need of guidance and counseling services on home-based issues.

ii. The strategies of guidance and counseling programme on students' social adjustment were ineffective. The short term workshops and seminars that some heads of guidance and counseling department from some schools had attended were not sufficient in empowering teachers to run the programme well. The zonal and district educational guidance and counseling units were not functional; most peer counselors also lacked skills to use in peer counseling in schools. And the shortage of teachers in most schools in Siaya District made it hard for the guidance and counseling departments to have member teachers who were not in the disciplinary committee so as to work as independent bodies for effective contribution of guidance and counseling on students' social adjustment in public secondary schools in Siaya district.

5. Recommendations

i. The study recommends that teachers who are heads of guidance and counseling department should have less teaching load and school responsibilities so as to run the guidance and counseling programme effectively; teachers who are members of the guidance and counseling department should be trained to help run the programme effectively. Schools should incorporate parents, the church, other sponsors, and the surrounding community to give support to guidance and counseling programme on social adjustment of students.

ii. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should strengthen the guidance and counseling units in the district and zonal levels for efficient implementation of the programme in schools. Trained teacher counselors should be posted to all schools to head the guidance and counseling departments for effective functioning of the programme. Ministry of Education should often facilitate peer counseling training to enable guidance and counseling departments to use peer counselors to reach out to their peer students effectively in schools.

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