THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Analysis of Peer Counseling Programs Offered to Secondary School Students in Rongai Sub-County of Nakuru County, Kenya

Tabitha Wanjiku Muturi
MA Student, Department of Counseling Psychology, St. Paul's University, Kenya
Ndung'u J. B. Ikenye
Associate Professor, Department of Counseling Psychology and Pastoral Theology,
St. Paul's University, Kenya
Dr. Teresia Wamuyu
Senior Lecturer, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, St. Paul's University, Kenya

Abstract:
The study analyzed peer counseling programs offered to secondary school students in Rongai Sub-County, Nakuru County Kenya. In particular, the study analyzed the use of personal responsibility counseling, self-worth counseling, self-confidence counseling, assertiveness counseling and relational counseling. The study used descriptive research. The study engaged 216 respondents, which was selected through a stratified random sampling and simple random purposeful sampling methods. The study used structured questionnaires for data collection. Data analysis was done by use of frequencies and percentages. The results of the study were presented in tables for ease of comprehension. The study found thatmost used peer counseling program in secondary schools was relational counseling (60.4%). It was followed by self-worth counseling, assertiveness counseling and personal responsibility counseling as confirmed by 56.3%, 51.2% and 51.1% respectively. Self-confidence counseling (46.4%) was the least used peer counseling program in secondary schools covered in the study. The study recommends enhanced peer counseling programs in secondary schools given that a significant proportion of the students had either not received peer counseling or could not ascertain whether they had received counseling.

Keywords: Peers, counseling, programs, students

1. Introduction

In Kenya, secondary schools are regarded as the most important stage in the educational cycle of a child. It is the level at which learners are expected to acquire proficiency in both academic and applied subjects [1]. Secondary school education is also important because it is the foundation for further education, training and work [2]. It is also in secondary schools where learners are expected to acquire positive attitudes, self-respect, self-reliance, cooperation, adaptability, sense of purpose, integrity and self-discipline, respect and consideration for others, service to family, society and nation [3]. There is no doubt that secondary school is an important turning point for a learner as observed by the above literature. It is in secondary school that learners make important decisions about their career, life after school and other important life decisions. School counselling can go along away in enabling students make appropriate career choices and other decisions that will help them in their adult lives.

Peer counseling is a recent phenomenon in Kenya. It was established in schools owing to large population of students against the low number of teacher counselors [4]. Previously, students with problems occasionally received help from their peers, even before peer counseling was formally established [4]. Students who received help from their peers reported remarkable behaviour change, a move that prompted the establishment of peer counseling in schools [5].

In an academic setting, peer counseling refers to students helping their fellow students through exploring their thoughts, feelings, issues and concerns, with the hope of reaching a clear understanding and making rational decisions [6]. Secondary schools in Kenya have experienced phenomenal growth in school enrolments. Government policy on 100% transition has seen more students join secondary schools leading to increase in class sizes, making it hard for teachers to offer counseling services to all students. Peer counseling is thus meant to increase access to counseling services to students who might not be reached by teacher counselors. It was important to bring to light the various peer counseling programs being offered to secondary school students in secondary schools in Rongai Sub-County of Nakuru County, Kenya.

Students in secondary schools experience numerous stressful situations that require counseling interventions. For instance, [7]point out academics, career choices, peer relations, intimate relationships, body image and substance use as some of the stressors facing secondary school students. [8]In Kenya concurs that students in secondary schools do experience a lot of academic, social and psychological pressures that if not well managed can overwhelm them leading to

school dropout and poor learning outcomes. The above literature enlightened this study about the problems being experienced by secondary school students. This study analyzed the various counseling programs that peer counselors had designed to help secondary schools students overcome the numerous problems they faced.

A review of literature shows that peer counseling in schools has several benefits. For instance, [9] holds that peer counseling enriches schools' counseling services. This view was reinforced a year earlier by [10] who observed that peer counseling entrenches positive ethos, culture and care and concern for each other in schools. Furthermore, [11] contends that peer counselors can be used as conflict mediators and peer-tutors to other learners. On the same vein, [12]assert that peer counseling services helps in the development of interpersonal skills, enhancement of social skills, facilitation of self-awareness and self-sufficiency, provision of opportunity for role modeling and acts as a source of behavioural standards. The above literature offers overwhelming support for the incorporation of peer counseling in the school counseling programs. While the above literature informed this study of the significance of peer counseling to the school community, the literature was silent on the kinds of programs peer counseling have adopted in the provision of counseling services in secondary schools. This study analyzed the various approaches peer counseling are using to reach out to secondary school students in need of counseling services.

Studies have found that various counseling approaches have been effective in addressing clients' problems. For instance, in Kenya [13]observe that social skills counseling was effective in helping individuals afflicted by drugs and alcohol addiction overcome their problems. In addition, in Zimbabwe teachers indicated that student who had received social skills counseling were at ease in establishing and maintaining fruitful friendship [14]. In another study conducted in Nigeria, [15] established that stigma management approach was effective in helping reduce irregular behaviouramong students. It has also been established that students who were subjected to behaviour change counseling reported a drastic reduction in disciplinary problems [16].

The above studies show that counseling can help students overcome many of the problems that they encounter in the course of their secondary school education. However, like other literature reviewed earlier, the above too covered general school counseling and not peer counseling. It was important to undertake similar studies in the context of peer counseling to ascertain whether findings of studies on general school counseling also apply to peer counseling. It is for this reason that the current study examined the effectiveness of peer counseling programs in secondary schools in Rongai Sub-County of Nakuru County, Kenya.

2. Study Objectives

This study sought to (1) assess the use of personal responsibility counseling programs; (2) analyze the use of relational counseling program; (3) examine the use assertiveness counseling approach; (4) establish the use of self-worth counseling programs; and (5) examine the use of self-confidence counseling interventions in the provision of peer counseling services to secondary school students.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design has been selected for its appropriateness in collection of information about peoples' opinions, thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, or any of the variety of education or social issues. Descriptive research design is generally suitable for studies that cover a large population over a large geographical area [18]. Rongai Sub-County, the study location has 40 secondary schools and over 10,000 students. Descriptive research design was thus the most suitable for the study.

3.2. Sampling Methods

Stratified sampling and simple random sampling methods were the sampling methods adopted for the study. The sampling frame was secondary school students. Stratification was based on gender and class of study. Consequently, the study had both male and female students as well as student from forms one, two, three and four. The study used a sample size of 216, which was determined using [19] formula for sample size calculation.

3.3. Data Collection Instrument and Procedures

This study used questionnaire to collect primary data. The study used structured questionnaires, which were issued to secondary school students. The questionnaire has five-point Likert Scale questions. The questionnaires were self-administered.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data collected was coded and analyzed to facilitate answering the questions. This was done using a descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics used were frequencies and percentages. The results of the study were summarized and presented in tables. Data analysis was done with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0.

4. Results

4.1. Profile of the Respondents

This study covered a number of background information of the respondents. Table 1 is a summary of the respondents' background information.

Background Information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender of the respondents		
Female	100	47
Male	112	53
Total	212	100.00
Religion		
Christians	184	87
Muslims	28	7
Total	212	100.0
Age distribution of the respondents		
14 Years	30	14
15 Years	42	20
16 Years	43	21
17 Years	78	37
Over 17 Years	19	8
Total	212	100.0
Class of Study		
Form One	31	15
Form Two	36	17
Form Three	61	29
Form Four	84	39
Total	230	100.0

Table 1: Summary of the Respondents' Background Information

4.2. Peer Counseling Programs Offered to Secondary School Students

4.2.1. Personal Responsibility Counseling

Personal responsibility counseling aimed at equipping students with skills that prepare and enable them to be personally responsible students. The results of the study on personal responsibility counseling program are presented in Table 2. The results show that 29.2% (strongly disagree 9% and disagree 20.2%) of the respondents had not received personal responsibility counseling. Personal responsibility counseling had, however, been offered to 51.1% (strongly agree 24.6% and agree 16.5%) of the students who participated in this study. However, 29.7% of the respondents could not confirm whether or not they had been counseled on how to be responsible students.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	19	9.0
Disagree	43	20.2
Undecided	63	29.7
Agree	35	16.5
Strongly Agree	52	24.6
Total	212	100.0

Table 2: Personal Responsibility Counseling

It is necessary to equip students with skills on personal responsibility because students often get into trouble with school administration and teachers for not doing what is expected of them. It is expected of students to be punctual in class, submit of homework in time, and obeying school rules and regulations. Violation of school rules and regulations are not interpreted as a sign of irresponsibility on the part of the students but are also punishable. Thus, counseling on the importance of being responsible is offered to students who have failed to live up to the expectations of their teachers and school authority.

Studies have shown that counseling programs that remind and emphasize to students about their personal responsibilities are helpful in enforcing discipline among students. For instance, [20] found that effective school guidance and counseling services resulted in the decrease of cases of poor discipline among learners as well as reduction in school drop-out rate. Similarly, a study by [21] established that students who were exposed to sufficient school counseling programs had significantly less inappropriate behaviors and more positive attitudes toward school unlike their counterparts who were not exposed to similar counseling programs.

Moreover, [22] found that students who are counseled often have better class attendance records than their counterparts who never received regular school counseling. Furthermore, [23] established that truancy rates among students who received school counseling decreased by nearly two thirds after school counseling.

4.2.2. Relational Counseling

Relational counselling is designed to equip students with skills that enable them establish and maintain fruitful friendship. The results of the study in Table 3 show that 25.9% (strongly disagree 14.6%, disagree 11.3%) of the respondents denied that they had received relationalcounseling. On the other hand, 60.4% of the adolescent students who participated in this study generally agreed (strongly agree 35.9%, agree 24.5%) that they had received relational counseling. It is also evident from the results that 13.7% of the respondents were noncommittal when asked to confirm whether they had received relational counseling.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	31	14.6
Disagree	24	11.3
Undecided	29	13.7
Agree	52	24.5
Strongly Agree	76	35.9
Total	212	100.0

Table 3: Relational Counseling

Relational counseling was offered to students who suffered from loneliness due to inability to make friends or maintain fruitful friendship. This counseling program recognizes that as social being, students need to connect and establish strong friendship as a way of overcoming loneliness and possible stress. Research has shown that lack of contact leads to discomfort, distrust and fear [24].

Research has also shown that rrelational counseling is an effective intervention for changing attitudes and reducing social distance between distressed students and their colleagues and teachers[25].It is thus recommended that contact interventions be initiated between lonely individuals and their peers to help them overcome the socio-emotional divide that exists between them and other referent groups.

4.2.3. Assertiveness Counseling

This study sought to find out whether students were given assertiveness counseling. Assertiveness counseling is designed for students who are easily influenced by their peers. Assertiveness counseling aims at helping students develop strong character and courage, which enables them to resist peer pressure. A slight majority or 51.2% of the students who participated in this study agreed generally that they had been counseled on assertiveness (Strongly agree 29% and agree 22.1%). However, 15.5% (strongly disagree 7.5%% and disagree 8%) of the respondents denied that they had been counseled on assertiveness as shown in Table 4. This study also established that 33.4% of the students could not tell whether or not they had received assertiveness counseling

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	16	7.5
Disagree	17	8.0
Undecided	71	33.4
Agree	47	22.1
Strongly Agree	61	29.0
Total	212	100.0

Table 4: Assertiveness Counseling

It was found that peer influence was a major contributing factor to students' indulgence in inappropriate behaviours such as drug abuse, violence and truancy, which ultimately undermined their academic pursuit and career goals. Students found assertiveness counseling valuable in navigating pressure from their peers to engage in activities that could undermine their academic pursuit.

The findings of the current study mirror that of [26], which found that students were, offered skills that enabled them to resist negative peer pressure. Assertiveness skills helped students respectfully turn down friends' pressure without inviting aggression, threat or rejection from their friends. Assertiveness skills also enabled students stamp their authority over issues they considered important to them as well as making their stand known on uncompromising issues.

4.2.4 .Self-worth Counselling

Self-worth counseling was one of the counseling programs offered by peer counselors. It was designed for students with low self-esteem. Some students develop a sense of self-hate due to isolation and social exclusion.When asked to state whether they received self-worth counselling, 13.6% (strongly disagree 4.7%, disagree 8.9%) of the students engaged in this study reported that they had not received self-worth counselling. On the other hand, 56.3% (strongly agree

25.6%, agree 28.7%) of the study participants accepted that they had received self-worth counseling as shown in Table 5. It is also clear from the study results that 32.1% were unable to tell whether they received self-worth counselling.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	10	4.7
Disagree	19	8.9
Undecided	68	32.1
Agree	61	28.7
Strongly Agree	54	25.6
Total	212	100.0

Table 5: Self-Worth Counseling

Some students experience stigma when they are viewed negatively by members of the school community because of their engagement in prohibited behaviours. Students who have been subjected to social stigma may develop a sense of self-hate, which pre-dispose him/her to other anti-social behaviours. School counseling was necessary to help students fight stigma through self-worth counseling.

It has been shown that an individual with high self-esteem easily make and maintain friends and socially interact with people [27]. High self-esteem also enables individuals to resist engagement in negative activities such as consumption of alcohol, indiscipline and casual sex [28].Raising students' self-esteem through self-worth counseling helped students relate well with their colleagues, teachers and peers. There were reduced cases of indiscipline, truancy and substance in schools that effectively implemented self-worth counseling programs.

4.2.5. Self Confidence Counseling

The results of the study presented in Table 6 below indicate that 29.7% (strongly disagree 9.9%, and disagree 19.8%) of the respondents had not been offered self-confidence counseling. However, 46.4% (strongly agree 13.8%, agree 22.6%) of the students who participated in this confirmed that they had received self-confidence counseling. It is also clear from the results of the study that 33.9% of the respondents could not tell whether or not they received self-confidence counseling.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	21	9.9
Disagree	42	19.8
Undecided	72	33.9
Agree	48	22.6
Strongly Agree	29	13.8
Total	212	100.0

Table 6: Self Confidence Counseling

Students who lack self-confidence cannot make informed decisions around issues afflicting their colleagues such as drug abuse, absenteeism, sexuality among others. However, self-confidence counseling helps students make rational decisions and thus avoid the temptation of being lured by their peers to engage in the aforementioned anti-social behaviours.

It has been shown that lack of self-confidence exacerbates anti-social behaviours such as alcohol abuse among adolescent students [29]. It is the view of this study that individuals who do not have confidence in themselves can easily be persuaded into doing things that they had no prior plans.

Drinking alcohol is a social and group activity, which many students have found themselves into due to peer pressure. Secondary school students who lack self-confidence may perceive it inappropriate or rude to turn down friends' invitation to social events such as binge drinking or partying. However, through self-confidence counseling students informed this study that they have developed strong characters that cannot be easily swayed.

5. Conclusions

Personal responsibility counseling was offered to 51.1% (strongly agree 24.6% and agree 16.5%) of the students who participated in this study (Table 2). The results of the study also found that 60.4% of the secondary school students engaged in this study received relational counseling (strongly agree 35.9%, agree 24.5%) (Table1.3). A slight majority or 51.2% of the students who participated in this study had received assertiveness counseling (Strongly agree 29% and agree 22.1%). Further, self-worth counseling was available to 56.3% (strongly agree 25.6%, agree 28.7%) of secondary school students who participated in the study (Table 5). Moreover, 46.4% (strongly agree 13.8%, agree 22.6%) of the students who participated in this confirmed that they had received self-confidence counseling (Table 6). From the results, the most used peer counseling program in secondary schools was relational counseling (60.4%). It was followed by self-worth counseling, assertiveness counseling and personal responsibility counseling as confirmed by 56.3%, 51.2% and 51.1% respectively. Self-confidence counseling (46.4%) was the least used peer counseling program in secondary schools covered in the study.

6. References

i.   GOK (2005). Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on A policy Framework for Education, Training and Research. Nairobi: Government Printers.
ii.   Wolfenson, O. (2000). The Role of Parents in Students Academic Performance in Bondo District, Kenya Bogonko, S.N. (1994). A History of Modern Education in Kenya (1895-1991). Nairobi:
iii. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2013), Personal Challengers and needs for Counselors. MoE. Youth & Sport.
iv.   Kenya Institute of Education. (2008) Guidance & Counseling. A Teachers hand book. Nairobi, Kenya Institute of Education.
v.   Lule, G. M. &Gitau, K. (2008). Strengthening Guidance and in your school: A guide to behavioral change, academic and career support, Rinny; Nairobi.
vi.   Cowie, H. & Pecherek, A 1994. Counselling, approaches and issues in education. London: David Fulton
vii. Ndichu, J., (2005). Guidance and counseling: Handbook for schools. Nairobi: Kur Career Ventures.
viii. Konet, R. 1991. Peer helpers in the middle school. Middle School Journal. September. 13- 15.
ix.   Tindall, J. A & Salmon-White, S. (1990). Peers helping peers, program for the preadolescent. Muncie, Indiana: Accelerated Development.
x.   Letsebe, M. A (1993).Working with youth.2nd edition. Braamfontein. Skotaville.
xi.   Cowie, H. & Sharp, S. (1996). Peer counselling in schools: a time to listen. London: D. Fulton.
xii. Mutie, H. & Ndambuki, W.(2003). The Philosophy behind Guidance and Counselling. Nairobi: Gupa Press
xiii. Chireshe, R. (2012). School of Guidance and Counselling Needs Assessment In Zimbabwean Secondary Schools.14:17-24
xiv. Ekpo, S. S. (2007).Essential of guidance and counselling. A Fundamental Approach: Lagos. John Lad Publishers Ltd
xv.   Baker, S. B., & Gerler, E. R. (2011). Counseling in schools. In D. C. Locke, J. E. Myers, and E. L. Herr (Eds.), The Handbook of Counseling, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
xvi. Kombo, D. K., & Tromp, D. L. A. (2009). Proposal and Thesis Writing: An Introduction. Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa, Don Bosco Printing Press.
xvii. Nassiuma, D. (2000). Survey Sampling: Theory and Methods. University of Nairobi Press, Nairobi.
xviii. Ojo, O.D. (2005). A Guide to guidance and counselling practicum.Concept Publications. Lagos: Shamble
xix. Okocha A.A.G. and I.H. Alika, (2012). Professional Counselling in Nigeria: Past, Present and Future. Journal of Counselling & Development.90, 3, p.362–366.
xx.   Wango, G. &Mungai E. (2007). Counselling in the School: A Handbook for the Teacher. Nairobi: Phonex
xxi. Lee, D., Olson, E. A., Locke, B., Michelson, S. T., & Odes, E. (2009). The effect of college counseling services on academic performance and retention. Journal of College Student Development, 50(3), 305-319.
xxii. Cook, J.E., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Meyer, I.H., and Busch, J.T.A. (2014). Intervening within and across levels: A multilevel approach to stigma and public health. Social Science and Medicine, 103, 101-109.
xxiii. Corrigan, P.W. (2015). Challenging the stigma of mental illness: Different agendas, different goals. Psychiatric Services, 66(12), 1347-1349
xxiv. Bolen, M. (2016). Empowered decision-making. Retrieved on 20th November, 2019 from lessonplanspage.com/peo empowered decision
xxv. McGee R., Williams S. (2000), Does low self-esteem predict health compromising behaviours among adolescents? Journal of Adolescence, Volume 23, Issue 5, 569–582.
xxvi. Dobrescu A. (2013), Adolescent Self-esteem, Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov, Series VII: Social Sciences. Law, Vol. 6 (55), No. 2,139-144
xxvii. Wlazelek, B. G., & Coulter, L. P. (1999). The role of counseling services for students in academic jeopardy: A preliminary study. Journal of College Counseling, 2, 33-41.