

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Level of involvement of Peer Counsellors and Students' Discipline in Selected High Schools in Ainamoi Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Peer counselling is a program focussing on peers helping peers. The duty of a peer counsellor is to moderate problems within students by helping them to find out answers to their challenges. Peer counselling has been lauded as a strategy to curb indiscipline in high schools. The study aims to establish the influence of involvement and participation of peer counsellors on students' discipline in selected schools in Ainamoi sub-county, Kericho County. The study may be useful to key stakeholders in education, including school administrators, both private and public, and researchers who may find this information useful in implementing policy on students' discipline in schools in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in 4 selected high schools in Ainamoi sub-county, Kericho County, with a target population of 2980. The research involved students, peer counsellors, teacher heads of Guidance and Counselling department, and deputy head teachers. The sample size of 325 respondents was selected using a stratified sampling technique. The researcher used two instruments for data collection: The questionnaire and Focus Discussion Groups (FDGs) was key to gathering information on students' response. An interview schedule was used to collect Data from the Teacher HODs, Deputy Head Teachers, and Sub-County Education Officer. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics that adopted mean and standard deviation. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used as inferential statistics. Data were further presented in tables, pie charts, and bar graphs. Content analysis was used for interview questions. The processes involving the students, teachers, and administration significantly influence students' discipline. Therefore, the study concluded that peer counselling affected the students' discipline. The peer counselling has assisted in reducing bullying, solving problems, and reducing students' fights and strikes, giving a positive picture to the students.

Keywords: Counselling program involvement, students' discipline

1. Introduction

Peer counselling is a programme focussing on peers helping peers. The duty of a peer counsellor is to moderate problems within students by helping them to find out the answers to their challenges (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Peer Counselling assumes that people who share the same characteristics and age are liable to influence one another's behaviour (Bett, 2013). Peer counselling can be used as a strategy to curb indiscipline in high schools (Osodo *et al.*, 2016). Through a unique way of interaction, for instance, role-playing and modelling, peer counsellors can discuss the students' challenges harmoniously and consequently improve discipline (Marangu *et al.*, 2012). Peer counselling typically addresses change at the individual level by attempting to modify a person's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviour in the environment and influencing through interaction and action (Taheri *et al.*, 2013).

Currently, a good number of counselling centres have been established across the country to bring the services closer to people (Oketch & Kimenia, 2012). In addition, there has been the formation of associations, such as Kenya Counselling and Psychological Association (KCPA), whose function is, for example, to ensure the accountability of practitioners and to regulate and standardise counselling activities in Kenya (Kimiru, 2008). The same author further explains that the Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors (KAPC) concentrates on young people. It offers professional training in counselling, and hence has increased the number of school counsellors and peer counselling clubs in schools.

In Kenya, deviant behaviours in students in high schools have reached an alarming point. This situation casts a shadow of doubt on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in Kenyan high schools. The wave of unrest in high schools has reached a crisis level. Properties worth millions of shillings were destroyed, and, in many institutions, facilities

were reduced to shells in a short time. In the article by National Crime Research (2016), on the assessment of arsons in secondary schools, between May and August 2016, over 130 secondary schools in Kenya suffered the burning of school infrastructure and also resulted in the destruction of school property and loss of lives, as a result of students' unrests and violence. The unrest was reportedly due to anxiety over mock exams, discontentment between learners and the administration, and lack of free time (Yuen, & Leung, 2010; Tikoko & Kiprop, 2011). However, following such findings, questions arise on the effectiveness of peer counselling in imparting moral knowledge, promoting responsibility, enhancing good behaviours, and empowering students to contain anxieties adequately.

Peer counselling in high schools in Kericho County is a new field that is currently under the Peer Counselling Association. The Peer Counselling Association has trained the principals, the heads of departments, and the peer counsellors. The peer counsellors were selected from among the other learners in their various schools. The Association has set up its administrative structure as follows:

- At the school level, the Head of Department (HOD) is the patron,
- At the sub-county level, the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association (KESSHA) Sub-county chairperson is the patron,
- At the county level, the KESSHA Chairperson is the patron, and
- At the National level, the KESSHA Chairperson is the patron (Peer counselling association, 2015)

Ainamoi Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya, had its own share of indiscipline cases. Sources from Ainamoi Sub County Education office (2010) indicate that from 2007-2010, Kericho High school, Chebigen Secondary, and Kipchimchim secondary were among the schools with major disciplined cases. A meeting was called on 20th July, 2010 for all the principals and BOG members by the Ainamoi Sub County Education officer to find a solution for that trend. The meeting ended with a suggestion that peer counselling clubs should be used among other alternatives in containing indiscipline.

In high schools, indiscipline cases have been on the rise ranging from school unrest, drug abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, and aggressive behaviour. Most high schools have been using guidance and counseling as the main tool for curtailing instances of indiscipline. Indeed, a study done by Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) endorses the significance of guidance and counseling in Kenyan high schools. However, a study by Wambui (2015) cast aspersion on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling as a tool for resolving indiscipline issues owing mainly to an increase in cases of school unrest in recent years. Peer counseling as a method of counseling has been widely accepted in public schools, and its results are promising as it taps into the abilities of peers (Koech, 1999). Based on such recommendations and studies, this research aims to determine the influence of peer counseling clubs in dealing with indiscipline cases in Ainamoi Sub County, Kericho County, Kenya. This study intends to examine the influence of involvement and participation of peer counsellors on students' discipline in selected schools in Ainamoi sub-county, Kericho County.

2. Literature Review

This study was guided by social learning theory as postulated by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory helps to explain how people acquire complex behaviours in a social context. The theory accepts that learning takes place through modelling by observing the behaviour and imitating. The theory further explains that the learners are influenced by people they are in contact with and learn different abilities, such as:

- The ability to pay attention,
- The ability to retain what has been observed,
- The ability to reproduce the behaviour and
- The motivation to perform the behaviour

It proposes that through observing the role model, the learners can pay attention to a model and retain what has been observed, which can be retrieved especially if motivated to imitate and do as the model, resulting in good behaviour as desired in the context. The role of the peer counsellors in this context is to facilitate the learners as they observe them as role models around them (Phares, 1988).

In empirical research, Chereshe (2013) found that peer counselling overcame peer pressure and other challenges in the school as the peer counsellors understood one another with their peer learners. According to Lines (2006), a peer counselling group is the best alternative for learners' as they understand one another better with their peers. Peers join cliques and groups for various divergent reasons, such as providing personal needs of affiliation and companionship. That is either material or psychological, for reward, and that is prestige and recognition, enjoyment and excitement, provision of information for raising their self-esteem as a means of gaining identity.

In Kenya, a survey by Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) revealed that all the public high schools in Kenya have school-based counselling services. The study revealed that there is overwhelming evidence that counselling services are important to these schools. Peer counselling has a significant role in promoting the learners' discipline in high schools, especially if motivated to be more productive (Osodo *et al.*, 2016). It was observed that the general principles of social learning theory: observation, imitation, and modelling, operate the same way throughout life, but learning can occur without a change in behaviour (Bandura, 2006). Wambui (2015) noted that teachers appear skeptical as to whether students' indiscipline issues were resolved through peer counselling.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design in examining the influence of peer counselling programmes on students' discipline in high schools. The research targeted four selected schools from the 22 high schools in the Sub-County. Some of the schools have experienced rioting, tension, and even destruction of property. The four selected schools consist

of 2723 students, 275 peer counsellors, 4 Deputy Head Teachers, 4 teacher Heads of Guidance, and 4 counselling representing a target population of 3010. Thus, the sample size consisted of 272 students representing 10% of 2720, and 93 peer counsellors representing 30% of 275. Therefore, students who were not peer counsellors were 179. The research involved students, HOD counselling department, and deputy head teacher. The questionnaires adapt the Likert scale questionnaire. The questionnaires used structured questionnaires. Data for the Teacher counsellors and Deputy Head Teachers were collected by interview schedules. The study was conducted after getting approval from the School of Postgraduate Studies of Kisii University. Permission to conduct the study was also sought from National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) and approval from the selected schools. Descriptive analysis, including mean and standard deviation, was used to enable a meaningful description of the distribution of scores. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used where all tests were done at $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance. Data were further presented in tables, pie charts, and bar graphs, while interview questions were analysed thematically using content analysis.

4. Summary of Results and Presentations

The objective was to establish the influence of the involvement and participation of peer counsellors on student discipline. The descriptive statistics were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the involvement and participation of students in students' academic performance. The mean and standard deviation were extracted from the questions, which have a scale between 1 and 5, representing agreed, strongly agreed, partially agreed, disagreed, and strongly disagreed. They represent correlation analysis values for the involvement and participation of students in students' discipline. Further content analysis was done using interview questions on student involvement and participation in students' discipline.

Details	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer counselling helps students have good behaviour	262	1.00	5.00	4.18	.88
Information from peer counsellors contributes to the management of discipline in learners	262	2.00	5.00	4.24	.61
Peer counselling has contributed to behaviour modification in unruly behaviour	262	2.00	5.00	3.42	1.05
Peer counselling assists in behaviour change of the learners as they understand one another better	262	2.00	5.00	3.89	.76
Peer counsellors help students to be well-behaved since they are good role models	262	2.00	5.00	3.87	.90
Peer counsellors have effectively solved the challenging situation in the students	262	2.00	5.00	3.88	.92
Peer counselling services are always available to the students	262	2.00	5.00	4.08	.75
Peer counselling has enabled students to adhere to school rules through participating in peer counselling clubs	262	2.00	5.00	4.14	.58
Peer counselling is given adequate support by the teachers	262	2.00	5.00	4.29	.79

Table 1: Students and Peer Counsellors' Responses on Involvement and Participation

Table 1 indicated that the teachers gave peer counselors adequate support (mean of 4.29). Information from peer counsellors contributes to the management of discipline in learners (mean of 4.24). Peer counselling assisted students in having good behaviour (mean of 4.18). Peer counselling enabled students to adhere to school rules through involvement in peer counselling activities (mean of 4.14). The respondents indicated that peer counselling services are always available to the students (mean of 4.08).

On the contrary, peer counselling assisted in the behaviour change of the learners as they understood one another better (mean of 3.89). Peer counsellors effectively solved challenging situations in the students (mean of 3.88). Peer counsellors effectively solved the challenging situation in the students to some extent (mean of 3.87). Finally, peer counselling contributed somehow to behaviour modification in unruly behaviour (mean of 3.42).

Details	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer counselling helps students have good behaviour	91	2.00	5.00	4.18	.74
Information from peer counsellors contributes to the management of discipline in learners	91	4.00	5.00	4.12	.33
Peer counselling has contributed to behaviour modification in unruly behaviour	91	2.00	5.00	3.37	.93
Peer counselling assists in behaviour change of the learners as they understand one another better	91	2.00	5.00	3.78	.73
Peer counsellors help students to be well-behaved since they are good role models	91	3.00	5.00	3.87	.69
Peer counsellors have effectively solved the challenging situation in the students	91	2.00	5.00	3.71	.82
Peer counselling services are available to the students	91	4.00	5.00	4.36	.48
Peer counselling has enabled students to adhere to school rules through participating in peer counselling clubs	91	3.00	5.00	4.05	.43
Peer counselling is given adequate support by the teachers	91	3.00	5.00	4.24	.56

Table 2: Peer Counsellors' Responses on Involvement and Participation

Table 2 investigated peer counsellors' responses to involvement and participation in students' discipline. Peer counselling services were found to be always available to the students (mean of 4.36). The responses from peer counsellors indicated that peer counselling was given adequate support by teachers (mean of 4.24). The results also revealed that peer counselling assisted students in having good behaviours (mean of 4.18). According to information from peer counsellors' contributions to the management through discipline in learners were greater (mean of 4.12). Therefore, peer counselling significantly enabled students to adhere to school rules through participation in peer counselling clubs (mean of 4.05).

Further peer counsellors revealed that students were:

- Somewhat well-behaved due to role modelling,
- Able to understand one another better, and
- Effectively solve challenging situations affecting the students (mean of 3.87, 3.78, and 3.71, respectively)

The results revealed that the lowest was the contribution of peer counselling to behaviour modification in unruly behaviour where peer counselling had the lowest impact (mean of 3.37).

Details	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer counselling helps students have good behaviour	171	1.00	5.00	4.18	.94
Information from peer counsellors contributes to the management of discipline in learners	171	2.00	5.00	4.31	.71
Peer counselling has contributed to behaviour modification in unruly behaviour	171	2.00	5.00	3.44	1.11
Peer counselling assists in behaviour change of the learners as they understand one another better	171	2.00	5.00	3.94	.77
Peer counsellors help students to be well-behaved since they are good role models	171	2.00	5.00	3.87	1.00
Peer counsellors have effectively solved the challenging situation in the students	171	2.00	5.00	3.97	.96
Peer counselling services are always available to the students	171	2.00	5.00	3.94	.83
Peer counselling has enabled students to adhere to school rules through participating in peer counselling clubs	171	2.00	5.00	4.18	.65
Peer counselling is given adequate support by the teachers	171	2.00	5.00	4.31	.88

Table 3: Students' Responses on Involvement and Participation

Table 3 was related to students' responses on involvement and participation in peer counselling in relation to students' discipline. The responses from students revealed that peer counsellors were well supported by the teachers since their information assisted the management of discipline in learners (mean of 4.31 each). Similarly, peer counselling assisted students in attaining good behaviour as well as enabling students to adhere to school rules as a result of students' involvement in counselling activities (both with a mean of 4.18 each).

According to students' responses, peer counselling had some impact on effectiveness in solving challenging students' situations and changing learners' behaviour (mean of 3.94, 3.94, and 3.94, respectively). The students were also found to have moderately good behaviour through role models from the peer counsellors to students (mean of 3.87). Students indicated a small contribution of peer counselling in the modification of unruly behaving students (mean of 3.44). This indicated a low success of changing such behaviours by peer counsellors.

Details		Peer Counsellors' Involvement	Students Discipline
Peer Counsellors' Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.346**
	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i> -Value		.000
	N	262	262
Students Discipline	Pearson Correlation	.346**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed) <i>p</i> -Value	.000	
	N	262	262
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4: Involvement and Participation of Peer Counsellors in Student Discipline

Table 4 reveals a significant positive relationship between the involvement and participation of peer counsellors and student discipline. Results reveals that the relationship was significant at the 0.01 level, $r(262) = 0.346$, $p < 0.01$. This indicates that the involvement and participation of peer counsellors positively influence student discipline.

In response to 'How often are you involved in peer counselling activities?', the majority of HODs were fully involved, while deputy head teachers were partially involved. HOD 4 commended, 'I usually must visit them on Tuesday, which is set for guidance and counselling club. We also meet on Thursday meeting as we participate in students' body meetings, and I am always available in my office from 8 AM to 5 PM for counselling session.' HOD 2 pointed out that sharing office with staff made it difficult during the counselling session with students. Headteacher 4 alluded, 'We are partially involved in the running but assist guidance and counselling in their activities. Sometimes when we have time, I participate in guidance and counselling club meeting sessions.' Therefore, the majority of HODs are committed despite some lacking the necessary support from the management.

The respondents to 'In your view, what do you think should be considered in future to improve peer counselling programmes?' revealed that the majority would want more support from the administration as well as training and infrastructure improvement. HOD 2 responded, 'We need the administration to recognise the department, through recognition of peer counsellors, provide an office that we can use in our session, and provide seminars or even invite an external speaker with a specialty in psychology and counselling.' Deputy Headteacher 2 commented, 'There is a need to improve the budget for guidance and counselling to facilitate extra training besides induction training offered at the selection time.' There is much effort related to administrative support in training, office provision, and recognition from the responses.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

According to the results, peer counselling was given adequate support by teachers since teachers were involved in assisting the peer counsellors. The peer counsellors shared information with the administration, which assisted in the management of discipline in learners. This assisted the students in behaving and adhering to school rules. The results revealed that there were somewhat changes in the students' behaviour, effective solving of students' problems, and role modelling. Students' involvement assisted in improving modelling, but it had a low impact on behaviour modification. The results from HOD guidance and counselling and deputy headteachers indicated that the teacher and administration supported in training, office provision, and recognitions which assisted peer counsellors in their work. The correlation analysis results revealed a significant correlation between peer counsellors' involvement and students' discipline ($R = .346$, $P = .000 < .05$). Therefore, the result revealed that peer counselling involvement had the highest impact on students' discipline.

The study concludes that peer counsellors were supported by teachers. They also shared information with the administration to help in the management of discipline. The study also concluded that peer counselling changes the behaviour of students through modelling and effective problem-solving. On the contrary, peer counselling could not modify students' behaviour. Therefore, peer counselling involvement had a significant relationship with students' discipline.

The study recommended that there was a need for further involvement of students in peer counselling. Administration and teachers were well-represented and well-involved in training, office provision, and recognition. Despite such support, there is a need for the administration to assist in the provision of counselling materials as well as books to assist the counsellors in doing their work.

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