

Influence of Principals' Use of Peer Counselling as an Alternative Disciplinary Method on Students' Discipline in Kitui County, Kenya

Dr. Janet K. Mulwa, PhD

Lecturer, Department of Educational Administration and Planning, School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, South Eastern Kenya University

Abstract: This study sought to investigate Principals' influence in use of peer counseling as an alternative disciplinary method on students' discipline in public secondary schools principals' in kitui county, Kenya. The study objective sought to establish the extent to which public secondary school principals had implemented peer counseling as an alternative disciplinary method in their schools. The study adopted the ex-post-facto research design to establish the situation of students' discipline at the ground. The target population consisted of 333 secondary school principals from which a sample of 101 respondents was obtained. Data was collected by use of Questionnaires. A pilot study was used to establish instrument validity. Instrument reliability was determined by a test-re-test technique. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyse data. Data was presented using frequency distribution and cross tabulation tables. Qualitative data was organised and presented in narrative form. A Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to establish the significance of implementation of peer counselling and students' discipline. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. From the findings, 67.3 per cent of the principals agreed that students attended peer counselling in their schools while others did not. Results of chi-square (χ^2) test had a p-value $0.349 > 0.05$. The study concluded that school discipline could be shaped by the disciplinary methods that school principals adopted.

Key words: Peer counseling, Students' discipline, Public secondary schools, Implementation, Alternative disciplinary methods.

I. INTRODUCTION

Peer counselling is a component of guidance and counselling which traces its roots to the development of psychology in the United States of America (USA). It came about as a reaction to change in the industrialised society. In 1911, Goodwin organised a wide range of programmes in guidance and counselling in high schools in America (Were, 2003). In the 1980's peer helping programs in schools across Canada, escalated at an alarmingly fast rate (Carr, 1988). The purpose of peer counselling in schools as noted by Cowie and sharp (1996), is to render help to peers within the schooling environment and to assist school counsellors in the schooling environment. Thus, as an alternative disciplinary method, peer counselling could be used to manage students' discipline in learning institutions in Kenya.

According to Phillips and Sturkie (1993), peer-counselling is a process whereby young adults are trained to help their peers to identify and talk about their problems. Peer counselling is achieved in America through coaching and training students who are trained in basic listening and helping skills of problem solving and decision making (Borders & Drury, 1992). Lines (2006), observed that the best alternatives for addressing adolescent needs are peer counselling. In peer counselling students identify with their peers and address problems at home and at school which may include substance abuse and career planning.

Peer counselling in Botswana is based on the understanding that students tend to relate more to those with whom they are comfortable with (UNESCO, 2002). The peer counsellors assist in identifying students with problems and making referrals to the school counsellors (Chireshe, 2006). Phillips and Sturkie (1993), noted that peers provide a listening ear to other adolescents who are in distress or who need help with various problems relating to school matters, domestic problems, problems of self-esteem, personal pain, learning difficulties and adjustment problems. According to Mutie and Ndambuki (2004), peers in the African communities had control over each other's behaviour through open disapproval of an unacceptable behaviour, continuous rebukes till unacceptable behaviour ceased.

Peer counselling according to Bett (2013) is an interactive relationship within age groups aimed at influencing positive behaviour change. The peers discuss their problems amicably without getting involved in bad behaviour and consequently improve their academic performance. Peer group interactions enabled both peer educators and students experience increased self-esteem and greater ability to deal with adolescence related problems. Effective peer counselling in schools supplements the provision of guidance and counselling services hence promoting positive behaviour change and improvement among students in academic performance.

Peer counselling in Uganda enables students to discuss freely and express personal problems about parents, the authority and themselves in a free frank manner. Peer educators provide information that the adults would normally not be prepared to discuss (Rutondoki, 2000). According to Carr (1981), it is

through peer counselling that students learn how to care for others and to put their caring into practice. This is consistent with Marangu, Bururia and Njonge (2012), who noted that Peer counselling is important in mentoring other students as they addressed issues related to the youth. This implies that the peers played a very important role in shaping each other's' behaviour.

Peer education concept in Kenyan schools is a recent phenomenon that is rapidly gaining momentum (KIE, 2004; Were, 2003). The MoE (Ministry of Education) through a report of the presidential working party in Education and Manpower Training for the next decade and beyond Republic of Kenya (1988), and the Commission of inquiry into the Education system of Kenya Republic of Kenya (1999), recommended the establishment of peer counselling services in all educational institutions to motivate the youth to express their desire to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS(Human Immune Deficiency Virus)/(Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and other social and psychological problems. Peer counselling was therefore integrated into the guidance and counselling program as a remedy for clients whose struggle revolve around problems in coping with demands of life and learning.

The Kenya Development Plan (1997-2000), recommended enhancement of peer counselling in learning institutions in Kenya. As a result, peer education and counselling clubs have been established in schools and training colleges (KIE, 2004). Republic of Kenya (2001), recommended the inauguration of peer counselling groups in every school and training of peer counsellors to enable them acquire skills and knowledge that would empower them to perform their roles of managing discipline issues in schools.

Republic of Kenya (2001), pointed out the importance of inauguration of peer counselling groups in every school and training of peer counsellors to enable them acquire skills and knowledge that would empower them to perform their roles. It is therefore noted that, as a policy requirement, secondary school principals are expected to use peer counselling programmes as a method of managing the discipline of students in their schools. However, this study sought to establish public secondary schools principals influence in use of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya in order to fill a knowledge gap.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Ndichu (2005), the modern society has changed very much. The social safety nets that existed in the traditional societies and ensured somewhat stable environment for children to grow up in have all but gone. Students express many difficulties through withdrawal, unhappiness, annoyance, anger, and inability to meet needs, lack of knowledge, anxiety and hyperactivity. Therefore, it is noted that such difficulties could be managed though peer counselling.

However, Public secondary schools in Kitui County experience students' discipline problems in form of truancy, incitement by students from other schools, defiance to school authority, rudeness, use of hard drugs, attempts to burn schools for flimsy excuses, burning of schools and destruction of school structures and stealing of school property (Kitui County Director of Education, 2013). The underlying justification behind the use of peer counselling programs in schools as observed by Carroll (1973), is based on expanding or augmenting current counselling and support services. It is therefore noted that the use of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method to manage students' discipline in schools, could probably calm down the myriad forms of learner discipline in schools. This justifies the need for this study in order to investigate principals' influence in use of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County, Kenya.

Study objective

The study used the following objective;

To establish principals influence in implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui county

Peer counselling and students' discipline

The school principals' role in implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method is very paramount. However, according to David (1988), for a peer counseling program, to successfully establish itself in Canada, it must gain support of its participants including all decision makers and target groups to which its services will be directed. In a school setting, participants include peer counselor applicants, while the target group encompasses the school population. Decision makers include school administrators, such as principal, vice-principal(s), and heads-of-departments, Teachers and parents.

Chireshe (2013), while investigating the status of peer counselling in Zimbabwean secondary schools revealed that most of the secondary schools from which the respondents came from, did not have peer counselors. This is inconsistent with Marangu, Bururia and Njonge (2012), who found that peer counsellors are established in many schools giving them the opportunity to model good behaviour. In addition, the study also found that peer counselling had been accepted as an important contributor to behaviour change among learners in learning institutions. Thus, it is noted that the implementation of peer counselling had been fully supported by the concerned stakeholders.

According to Mbugua (2006), among those schools that had peer counsellors, 51% of them were untrained. However, Wango (2006), noted that schools did not appear to have built on peer counselling foundation for majority of students did not seem to seek help from peer counselors. Out of the sampled schools 32(74%) had peer counsellors and 10

schools had trained or oriented peer counsellors into counselling while others did not have. The study recommended that schools should ensure that peer counsellors are trained to assist students. Thus, it is observed that in those schools where peer counselors were found, the school principals had implemented peer counseling and they could make use of the peer counselors. However, most schools could not make use of peer counselors because they did not have them. Hence, the need for this study in order to fill a knowledge gap.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the ex-post-facto research design. Ex-post-facto design is descriptive in nature where variables that exist have already occurred with non-intervention of the researcher (Best and Kahn, 2000). Since Kitui County is composed of many schools, the research design was used to establish the situation of students' discipline at the ground.

The target population for this study was 333 secondary school principals in Kitui County which were used as units of analysis. The sample size for this study was obtained by a stratified proportionate sampling procedure, simple random sampling and purposive sampling to obtain a sample of 101 respondents. Questionnaires were used in this study as tools for data collection. Instrument validity was established by pre-testing of data collection tools by a pilot study.

Instrument reliability was determined by a test-re-test technique through a pilot study which was carried out in 9 types of public secondary schools in Kitui County that did not participate in the main study. A time lapse of two weeks between the first and the second test was allowed. The Pearson's Product-Moment correlation(r) formula was used to correlate the pre-test and post-test results in order to determine the coefficient of reliability or stability (Best & Kahn, 2011).

Once data was collected, it was post-coded and analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Results of data gathered from closed ended and open items were reported in frequency distribution tables, cross tabulation tables and explanation of the findings were made based on themes. The Chi-square (χ^2) test was used in this study to establish the strength of association between the independent and the dependent variables. It was also used to test whether the observed and expected frequencies is significant or not. The test thus determined the degree of association between principal's implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method and students discipline. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. This was used to determine the significance of implementation of peer counselling in public secondary schools in Kitui County.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Principals' implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method and students' discipline

Peer counselling is an alternative disciplinary method that can be used globally to manage discipline of students in learning institutions. This study sought to establish the extent to which principals' implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method influences students' discipline. The results of cross tabulation table are as indicated in table 1.1 on principals' response on implementation of peer counselling in their school.

Table 1.1 Principals' responses on full implementation of peer counselling and students' discipline

		Students attended peer counselling				Total	
		Yes		No		Freque ncy	%
		Freque ncy	%	Freque ncy	%		
Full implementation of peer counselling in a school	Yes	35	67.3	17	32.7	52	100
	No	33	68.8	15	31.3	48	100
	No response	0	0	1	100.0	1	100
	Total	68	67.3	33	32.7	101	100

The study has established that full implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method in management of students' discipline is a principals' practice which acts as a key determinant in management of students' discipline in schools. This has been revealed by the principals' response in table 1.1 on students' attendance to peer counselling. From the finding, 67.3 per cent of the principals agreed that students attended peer counselling in their schools. This means that some of the principals had implemented peer counselling in their schools while others had not. According to Mulwa (2014), the implementation of peer counselling could have been effective in the presence of trained peer counsellors in schools. In schools where peer counselling had been implemented, the principals could use peer counselling to curb indiscipline cases among the students.

Mbugua (2006), emphasized on use of peer counsellors in schools to provide counselling to their fellow students. The findings are consistent with Wango (2006); Chireshe (2013); Marangu, Bururia and Njonge (2012), and Bett (2013), who noted the importance of peer counselling as an important contributor to behaviour change although not all schools had established peer counselling programs. Peer counselling had been accepted as an important contributor to behaviour change among learners in learning institutions. It was important in mentoring other students as they addressed issues related to the youth. This agrees with Mbugua (2006), who found that students were more comfortable opening up their concerns to peer counsellors than teacher counsellors.

However, the study also revealed that students who came from schools headed by the 68.8 per cent of the principals who said that they had not fully implemented peer counselling

as an alternative disciplinary method did not attend to peer counselling. This means non implementation of peer counselling programmes in their schools. This is consisted with Wango (2006) who found that students did not seek peer counselling. Other students said that they could not go to persons of the same age for they had nothing to tell them. David (1988), observed that for a peer counseling program to successfully establish itself, it must gain support of its participants including all decision makers and target groups to which its services will be directed. It is therefore observed that principals who had not implemented peer counselling in their schools could not make use of the peer counsellors in managing school discipline. However, to effectively use peer counselling in their schools, it is imperative for the school principals to fully engage all stakeholders pertaining the implementation of peer counselling for management of the discipline of students and win their support.

Chi-square (χ^2) test on implementation of peer counselling

A Chi- square test is an important test among the several tests of significance developed by statisticians. It can be used to test the significance of association between two attributes (Kothari, 2011). The Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to establish the strength of association between principals' implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method and students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kitui County. It was also used to establish the significance of association between full implementation of peer counselling and students' discipline in schools. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The results are as shown in table 1.2

Table 1.2 Chi-square test on full implementation of peer counselling and students' discipline

	Value	Df	P-value
Full implementation of peer counselling in a school	2.105	2	0.349

From the chi-square table 1.2, the p-value $0.349 > 0.05$ means that there is no significant difference between the principals who had fully implemented peer counselling and those who had not implemented peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method in their schools. This is because the two variables are different. That is, principals who had fully implemented peer counselling felt an effect on students' discipline while those who did not implement peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method felt no effect. Although this study indicated that there is no significant difference between full implementation of peer counselling and students' discipline, the study has established a weak relationship between full implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method and students' discipline with a p-value 0.349

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The direction of school discipline in schools could be determined by the disciplinary methods that school principals adopt to manage students' discipline in their respective schools; peer counselling being one of them for it could enhance problem solving abilities among students.

The study recommends implementation of peer counselling as an alternative disciplinary method and involvement of the concerned stakeholders in the implementation process for purposes of ensuring that they support and own up the program. Since peer counsellors could be better placed to create better rapport with their fellow students, they could help each other to better solve problems affecting them in schools.

REFERENCES

- [1] Best, J.W. & Kahn, J.V. (2000). Research in Education. (7thed). New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private limited.
- [2] Bett, J.C. (2013). The importance of promoting the value of the role of Peer counselling among Students in secondary schools. The international journal of Economy, Management and Social Sciences.2 (6) June 2013, pages: 477-484.
- [3] Carr, R. (1988). The city wide peer counselling program. Children and youth services review, 10(10): 217-232
- [4] Carroll, M.R. (1973). The regeneration of guidance: The school Counselor, 20, 355-360
- [5] Chireshe, R. (2006). An Assessment of the effectiveness of school Guidance and Counselling Services in Zimbabwean Secondary schools. PhD Dissertation. University of South Africa.
- [6] Chireshe, R. (2013). Peer Counselling in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools. Int J Edu Sci, 5(4): 349-354 (2013) Department of Psychology of Education, University of South Africa. Accessed 7 May, 2014.
- [7] Cowie, R. & Shrp, S. (1996). Peer Counselling in schools. a time to listen. London: D Fulton
- [8] David, A.D. (1988). Peer Counselling Project; University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
- [9] KIE (2004). Guidance and counselling. A teacher Handbook. Nairobi, Kenya institute of Education.
- [10] Kothari, C. R. (2011). Research Methodology Methods and Techniques. (2nded). New Age International Publishers: New Delhi.
- [11] Marangu, G.P., Bururia, N.D. & Njonge, T. (2012) Challenges Faced By Peer Counsellors in Their Effort to Effect Behaviour Change in Secondary Schools in Maara District, Kenya. American International Journal of Contemporary Research Vol. 2 No. 11; November 2012. Accessed 3 May, 2014.
- [12] Mbugua, S. M. (2006). Teachers and students attitudes to peer counselling in public secondary Schools in Starehe Division, Nairobi Province Kenya. M.Ed Research Project: Kenyatta University.
- [13] Mulwa, J.K. (2014) Effects of Principals' alternative disciplinary methods on students' discipline in public secondary schools in kitui county, Kenya. PhD thesis, University of Nairobi.
- [14] Ndichu, D. (2005). Guidance and counselling: Handbook for schools. Nairobi: Career Ventures.
- [15] Phillips, M. & Sturkie, J. 1993. Developing peer-counselling skills. Cambridge: Daniels.
- [16] Republic of Kenya (2001). Report of the Task Force on Students Discipline and Unrest in secondary schools. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.
- [17] Rutondoki, E. N. (2000). Guidance and Counselling. Makerere University, Institute of Adult and Continuing Education.

- [18] Tindall, J. A & Salmon-White, S. 1990. Peers helping peers, program for the preadolescent. Muncie, Indiana: Accelerated Development
- [19] UNESCO.(2002). Terms of Reference. The first International Conference on Guidance, Counselling and Youth Development in Africa, 22-26 April 2002. Nairobi, Kenya.
- [20] Wango, G. M. (2006). Policy and practices in guidance and counselling in secondary Schools in Kenya.PhD Thesis; University of Birmighan.
- [21] Wango, G. M. &Mungai, E. K. (2007).Counselling in school. A Handbook for Teachers.Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.
- [22] Were, N.M.W.(2003). Discipline guidance and counselling in schools. Nairobi Strong Wall Africa.