



TEACHER COUNSELLORS' PERCEPTION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER COUNSELLING SERVICES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NAKURU EAST SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Teacher counsellors and other educationists have come up with ways of managing discipline. Some of the ways of dealing with student indiscipline are by preventing it as well as teaching appropriate behaviour and coping skills. Peer counselling has been adopted as one of the methods of behaviour management. The purpose of this study was to establish the perceptions of the teacher counsellors on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in the management of discipline in public secondary schools in Nakuru East sub-county, Kenya. The study was guided by the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) that posits that learning occurs in a social context within a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment and behaviour. The study used a descriptive survey research design. The population under the study comprised 19 teacher counsellors from 19 public secondary schools in Nakuru East Sub-county. The 19 secondary schools were stratified as follows: single-sex (boys and girls) and co-educational schools then simple random sampling was used. The census method was used in selecting the teacher counsellors. Teacher Counsellor Questionnaires (TCQ) were used to collect data. The instruments were pilot-tested in one public secondary school using two teacher counsellors to establish the validity and reliability of the instruments. The scale measuring teacher counsellors' perception had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.907. The questionnaire items were considered to be reliable after yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics that included frequencies and percentages. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used in the analysis. Teacher counsellors gave an aggregate effectiveness rating (mean = 2.56). Based on these findings, the study concludes that peer counselling services have a moderate effect in the management of discipline in public secondary schools in

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Nakuru East. The study concluded that teacher counsellors and peer mentors in high schools should get professional training in counselling and supervision of peer counsellors. The evaluation of peer counselling is rarely done and this maintains the persistent status quo of inefficiency in peer counselling in high schools. The study recommends that to improve the effectiveness of peer counselling, the relationship between teacher counsellors and peer counsellors should be enhanced and the training of peer counsellors be improved.

Keywords: peer counsellors, student discipline, teacher counsellor

1. Introduction

Discipline is the willingness to accept rules and regulations laid down for guidance and the ability to act in accordance with the expectations of the individual by society (Temitayo *et al.*, 2013). Students' misconduct in the classroom interferes with teaching and learning which is thought to be the precursor to later school dropout and similar social outcomes. Indiscipline has been reported such as in India, the Republic of Korea, Swaziland, and the United States. These include *inter alia*, not doing their homework, coming late to class, writing in a textbook, making noise in class, and absenting themselves from school (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2017). Lack of discipline in school makes it difficult to teach effectively. When there is no effective teaching in schools the goals of education will not be achieved. Much time is spent on indiscipline cases and less time is spent on teaching. This means that the contents are not completed, thus students' inadequate preparation for the examinations and learning (Nakpodia, 2010; Alemayehu, 2012 & Oluremi, 2012).

The root causes include gender and social norms and wider structural and contextual factors such as income inequality, deprivation, marginalization and conflict. It is estimated that 246 million children and adolescents experience school indiscipline in some form every year. Available data from Europe, North America and Australia suggests that bullying is the most common form of school indiscipline (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017). The available data on indiscipline reveal that about half of public middle and high schools reported at least one incident of physical attacks, fights (without a weapon), theft, larceny, or vandalism. Although there was a decrease in weapon carrying, 8% of students in 9th to 12th grade continue to report having been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property. Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) (2015) reports that there were cases of indiscipline in the United States of America (USA) whereby students were either arrested or suspended. According to the report between 27% and 41% of student enrolment were referred to law enforcement while between 31% and 39% were subjected to a school-related arrest. Between 31% and 42% of students were suspended or expelled. Indiscipline is also experienced in Brazil, China, Jamaica, Korea, Philippines, Sweden,

Canada, Finland, Chile and Mexico. There is clear evidence of inter-school rivalry and conflict, student indiscipline and insecurity stemming from poor family relations (UNESCO, 2015).

In Africa, indiscipline cases vary from one country to another. Temitayo (2013) indicates that students' indiscipline is a prevailing problem affecting schools in Nigeria and it is a major problem among students of public secondary schools. Temitayo also notes that indiscipline is a concern to schools and parents and to fellow students, whose education may be adversely affected. Therefore, disruptive behaviour cannot be ignored and schools must tailor a well-understood sound discipline policy. In Zimbabwe, for example, such indiscipline results in emotional and psychological trauma for children and adolescents. The cases of indiscipline in Zimbabwean secondary schools are very widespread, ranging from minor cases like late coming, bullying and stealing to major cases like rape, murder and drug abuse (Ncube, 2013).

Peer counselling services were introduced globally to curb the gaps that arose from guidance and counselling by teacher counsellors. Discipline is managed by the use of peer counselling services globally, which is achieved through coaching and training students. They are trained in basic listening and helping skills of problem-solving and decision-making (Borders & Drury, 1992; Myrick, 1989; Lapan, 2001; Bett, 2013). It was pioneered in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1990 by Netta Cartwright, the school counsellor at a Midlands Secondary School, who trained students in basic listening and co-counselling skills as a critical part of the school's anti-bullying policy (Zubinet *et al.*, 2006). Students seek counselling services to assist in finding solutions to the multitude of problems facing them in the modern globalized world.

The Peer Approach Counselling by Teens (PACT) was found to be working in other countries hence (GoK, 2009) recommended that peer counselling services be introduced in education and training institutions throughout the country. The peer counsellors could be entrusted with the task of disseminating the knowledge, skills and attitudes they had learnt and acquired to their peers in the school and the community (UNESCO, 2000). GoK (2001) recommended that peer counselling services be set up in every school and that peer counsellors be given the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to assist other students who may require guidance and counselling services. The development plan (1997-2000) also recommended that counselling be enhanced in learning institutions. In response to this, Peer Education and Counselling Clubs (PECC) have been established in schools and training colleges (Jemutai, 2013). Despite the establishment of peer counselling services in schools, serious cases of indiscipline were still reported in schools raising concerns as to whether peer counselling services take place and in the right way (Choge *et al.*, 2011).

According to Bett (2013), peer counselling is viewed as an interactive relationship within age groups aimed at influencing positive change. The peers discussed their problems amicably without getting involved in bad behaviour hence being able to manage their behaviour. In Meru, Kenya, it was established that the selection of peer

counsellors as good role models was an element of an effective peer counselling programme in realizing positive behaviour change (Kamore &, Tiego 2015). Marchetta (2011) revealed that peer counsellors are viewed by teacher counsellors as of great help concerning substance abuse, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy and socializing isolated students. Peer counsellors enable teacher counsellors to have more time with students with severe problems (Lapan 2001) as cited in Bett and Sigilai (2013). Kamore and Tiego (2015) established that teacher counsellors do not offer supervision services and most are incompetent in peer counsellor's supervision training.

Bett and Sigilai (2013) in their study found out that peer counselling services have been established in many public secondary schools in Kenya though the teacher counsellors have a negative perception of peer counselling services in maintaining discipline in schools. However, peer counselling services have been used to reduce school dropout rates as well as help students to utilise their leisure time well. Guidance and counselling were to be strengthened at the peer level with the setting up of peer counselling services groups in every school and the peer counsellors being given the necessary skills and knowledge (Kiprof *et al.*, 2015).

Research has shown that peer counselling is more effective, especially in adolescence. Through peer counselling services, the peer counsellors help the students to socialise hence creating an atmosphere of sharing and acceptance. Gladding (2004) observed that peer interactions enable both peer counsellors and students to experience increased self-esteem and a greater ability to deal with adolescence-related problems. Chireshe (2013) indicated that peers assist parent's happenings in the management of discipline in order to promote and publicise the service which they offer. They may be assigned as "buddies" to peers who have been referred by teacher counsellors concerned that they are for example lonely or neglected by classmates. Peer counsellors are assigned to a class at set times to act as a support system to the teacher counsellor. In others, they will help children with learning difficulties or those who seem to have low self-esteem. Kigotho (2011) indicates that peer counsellors help to create a social network for fellow peers with emotional and behavioural difficulties. In some cases, groups of young people who have experienced the same or similar difficulties are allowed in peer counselling services to share feelings such as anger or guilt and explore areas of particular sensitivity, such as being lonely or rejected by peers.

Most secondary school teacher counsellors in Kenya have high teaching workloads and limited time to adequately serve all the student clients in schools (Nyamwaka *et al.* 2013). Therefore, peer counselling services have been established in schools to assist school counsellors in handling a variety of counselling needs among students (Marangu, Bururia & Njunge, 2012). The peer counselling services relationship, which exudes warmth, understanding and similarity of experiences plays a unique role in behaviour change among students because the clients are likely to model after the peer counsellors by readily adopting their supposedly effective coping skills and problem-solving strategies. Therefore, this study sought to establish the perceptions of the teacher

counsellors and students on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in the management of discipline among secondary school students. The purpose of this study was to establish teacher counsellors' perceptions on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in the management of discipline in public secondary schools in Nakuru East sub-county.

2. Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objective:

- To determine teacher counsellors' perception on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in the management of discipline among secondary school students in Nakuru East sub-county.

2.1 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research question:

- What is the teacher counsellors' perception of the effectiveness of peer counselling services in the management of discipline in secondary school students in Nakuru East sub-county?

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design it sought to explain, determine and report the way things are. Mugenda and Mugenda (2013) defined a descriptive survey as an attempt to collect data from population members in order to come up with the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. This design could be used in explaining and exploring the status of two or more variables at a given time. This is because during the study the researcher did not manipulate peer counselling services to bring about students' and teacher counsellors' perceptions of its effectiveness in the management of discipline of secondary school students.

The study was carried out in Nakuru East sub-county in Nakuru County, Kenya. Nakuru is both an agricultural as well as a business area attracting people of diverse social, cultural, and educational background. It consists of Biashara, Flamingo, Kivumbini, Menengai and Nakuru East. These locations were chosen since it has a clear distribution of the schools across all the geographical characteristics found in Kenya. The population of the study was drawn from the teacher counsellors. The 19 teacher counsellors from the 19 public secondary schools participated in the study. The researcher used all the 19 secondary school teacher counsellors.

The data was collected using the teacher counsellors's questionnaire (Appendix A). The tool was designed by the researcher. The Teacher Counsellors Questionnaire (TCQ) has two sections. Section A carries background information while section B has information on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in the management of

discipline. Likert-type of items were used to measure perception. These five scales were used to measure levels of agreement or disagreement on a continuum from Very Effective (VE); Effective (E); Moderately Effective (ME) Somewhat Effective (SE); Ineffective (I) and self-scoring questions. The response carried 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 scores for a favourable statement and the reverse for unfavourable statements. The supervisors and psychology experts from the Department of Psychology, Counselling and Educational Foundations in Egerton University scrutinized the questionnaires to establish the face and content validity of the questionnaires aligning the items to objectives. A pilot study was done which helped determine the reliability of the instrument, improving the reliability of the instruments and in adjustment of the instruments where necessary. A pilot study was conducted in Naivasha Sub-County using 30 students from one public secondary school. This was conducted to provide the required information in the pre-test and establish the time taken to administer the instruments to make necessary modifications and adjustments on questionnaires before data collection in the field. The reliability coefficient was estimated by using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis was based on themes which were derived from the study objective:

- To determine teacher counsellors' perception on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in the management of discipline among secondary school students in Nakuru East sub-county.

4.1 Respondents' Background Information

The study examined the background information of respondents including the teachers' gender and school type, and students' encounters with peer counselling services. This information was important in determining the representativeness of the sample as well as the capacity of the respondents to provide the information needed in the study. Table 1 presents the results.

Table 1: Respondents' Background Information

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Teacher Counsellors' Gender	Male	10	52.6
	Female	9	47.4
School Type	Boys only	10	2.9
	Girls only	219	63.3
	Mixed schools	117	33.8

Results in Table 1 shows that 10 teachers representing 52.6% of the sample of teacher counsellors were male while the remaining 9 representing 47.4% of the sample was female. The results suggest that there are almost as many male teacher counsellors as female teachers counsellors across the secondary schools in Nakuru East. This is unlike

in the study by Kanga (2017) which found that the majority of teacher counsellors in public boarding secondary schools in Nairobi, Kitu were female even in boys' schools.

4.2 Teacher Counsellors' Perception on the Effectiveness of Peer Counselling Services

The objective of the study was to determine teacher counsellors' perceptions on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in the management of discipline in public secondary schools. To address this objective, the sample of teachers was presented with a set of 23 statements related to peer counselling and were asked to rate the effectiveness of each on a five-point scale: 5= Very Effective 4= Effective, 3= Moderately Effective, 2= Somewhat Effective, and 1= Ineffective.

Table 10 presents the results.

Table 2: Teacher Counsellors' Perception on the Effectiveness of Peer Counselling Services

SN	Statement	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	S.D
B1	The rapport between me and the peer counsellor is	19	21.1	47.4	15.8	15.8	0.0	2.26	.991
B2	I would rate peer counsellors' willingness to confer with me regarding students in my class as	19	26.3	36.8	21.1	15.0	0.0	2.26	1.046
B3	I would rate the selection of peer counsellors in my school as	19	26.3	36.8	15.8	15.8	5.3	2.37	1.212
B4	I would rate the support of peer counselling services by the school administration as	19	42.1	26.3	15.8	15.8	0.0	2.05	1.129
B5	Peer counsellors training in my school is	19	21.1	31.6	36.8	10.5	0.0	2.37	.955
B6	Time allocated for peer counsellors' sessions in my is	19	21.1	15.8	36.8	15.8	10.5	2.79	1.273
B7	I would rate the financial support by the school management towards peer counselling services as	19	0.0	42.1	36.8	15.8	5.3	2.84	.898
B8	I would rate the availability of peer counselling services in my school as	19	10.5	31.6	47.4	5.3	5.3	2.63	.955
B9	Group and individual peer counselling services are provided to students in my school	19	15.8	31.6	31.6	15.8	5.3	2.63	1.116
B10	I feel the way peer counsellors are selected in my school is	19	15.8	31.6	42.1	5.3	5.3	2.53	1.020
B11	I feel the resources in the form of books on peer counselling services in my school is	19	15.8	15.8	47.4	15.8	5.3	2.79	1.084
B12	I feel that peer counselling services interactions in my school to reduce indiscipline cases is	19	5.3	31.6	42.1	15.8	5.3	2.84	.958
B13	I would rate confidentiality during peer counselling services sessions as	19	21.1	36.8	21.1	10.5	10.5	2.53	1.264
B14	I feel peer counselling services' efforts to reduce the frequent occurrence of student unrest is	19	10.5	47.4	31.6	10.5	0.0	2.42	.838
B15	I feel trained personnel who are normally	19	26.3	21.1	26.3	10.5	15.8	2.68	1.416

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	invited to train peer counsellors in my school are								
B16	I would rate peer counselling services in behaviour change as	19	5.3	57.9	15.8	15.8	5.3	2.58	1.017
B17	I would rate peer counselling services' effort to reduce students' anxiety as	19	0.0	57.9	21.1	15.8	5.3	2.68	.946
B18	I feel that the facilities utilized during peer counselling service sessions are	19	5.3	52.6	26.3	10.5	5.3	2.58	.961
B19	I would rate the effort by peer counsellors to reduce illicit boy/girl relationships as	19	26.3	15.8	31.6	21.1	5.3	2.63	1.257
B20	I would rate the effort by peer counsellors to reduce drug and substance abuse among students as	19	21.1	31.6	31.6	15.8	0.0	2.42	1.017
B21	I feel that peer counsellors' ability to impart time management skills to other students is	19	15.8	36.8	31.6	10.5	5.3	2.53	1.073
B22	I feel students' active participation during peer counselling services is	19	21.1	15.8	31.6	15.8	15.8	2.89	1.370
B23	I would rate the accessibility of peer counselling services rooms in my school as	19	31.6	15.8	21.1	21.1	10.5	2.63	1.422
	Aggregate Teacher Counsellor Perception Score	19						2.56	.776

Table 10 indicates that on average, teacher counsellors perceive the rapport between them and peer counsellors to be somewhat effective (B1, mean = 2.26). The standard deviation is less than 1 (SD = 0.991) suggesting that there was no major dispersion in respondents' views from the average position. These findings imply that teacher counsellors perceive the rapport between them and peer counsellors to be less effective. This is likely to reduce the impact of peer counselling services on students' discipline. This perception can be a major hindrance on the effectiveness of peer counselling services. Similarly, teacher counsellors rated peer counsellors' willingness to confer with them regarding students in their class as somewhat effective (B2, mean = 2.26, SD = 1.046). However, the standard deviation implies that the respondents held divergent views on this issue.

Regarding school input, the sampled teacher counsellors rated the selection of peer counsellors in their school as somewhat effective (B3, mean = 2.37, SD = 1.212). This result implies that most teacher counsellors in public secondary schools are not impressed by the process used to select peer counsellors. This finding is congruent with the study by Munyasya et al. (2020), who found that one of the challenges hampering the effectiveness of peer counselling programmes in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-County is unpopular and poor criteria for selecting students to be assigned the peer counselling roles. The teacher counsellors also rated the support of peer counselling services by school administration as somewhat effective (B4, mean = 2.05, SD = 1.129). In addition, the teacher counsellors rated peer counselling training in their school as somewhat effective (B5, mean = 2.37, SD = .955). These results imply that most of the teacher counsellors perceived the process of selecting peer counsellors, the support provided to peer counsellors, and the training of peer counselling within their schools to be below

par. If this is the case, the situation is likely to diminish the impact of peer counselling services on students' discipline.

On the other hand, the teacher counsellors rated the time allocated to peer counselling (B6, mean = 2.79, SD = 1.273) and the financial support towards peer counselling by the school management (B7, mean = 2.84, SD = .898) as moderately effective. In addition, respondents expressed that trained personnel who are normally invited to train peer counsellors in their school (B15, mean = 2.68, SD = 1.416) are moderately effective. Furthermore, respondents felt that the facilities utilized during peer counselling services sessions (B18, mean = 2.58, SD = 0.961), active participation during peer counselling services (B22, mean = 2.89, SD = 1.370) and the accessibility of peer counselling services rooms in their school (B23, mean = 2.63, SD = 1.422) are moderately effective. These results suggest that the teacher counsellors perceive the time and finances allocated towards peer counselling services to be reasonable. This is likely to have a positive effect on the effectiveness of peer counselling services to address children's disciplinary challenges.

Regarding the structure of peer counselling services, the teacher counsellors rated the availability of peer counselling services (B8, mean = 2.63, SD = .955), provision of group and individual peer counselling services in their school (B9, mean = 2.63, SD = 1.116), and confidentiality during peer counselling services sessions (B13, mean = 2.53, SD = 1.264) as moderately effective. In addition, the teacher counsellors felt that the resources in the form of books on peer counselling services in their school (B11, mean = 2.79, SD = 1.084) and that peer counselling services interaction in their school to reduce indiscipline cases are moderately effective (B12, mean = 2.84, SD = .958). These results showcase that most teachers perceive peer counselling services in their schools to be effectively structured. This is likely to have a positive effect on the effectiveness of peer counselling services in managing school discipline.

Teacher counsellors rated peer counselling services in behaviour change (B16, mean = 2.58, SD = 1.017), peer counselling services' effort to reduce students' anxiety (B17, mean = 2.68, SD = .946), an effort by peer counsellors to reduce illicit boy/girl relationship (B19, mean = 2.63, SD = 1.257) as moderately effective. Moreover, the teacher counsellors rated the peer counsellors' ability to impart time management skills to other students (B21, mean = 2.53, SD = 1.073). These results suggest that most of the teacher counsellors perceive peer counselling to be moderately effective in managing different elements that contribute to student discipline such as anxiety and coupling. However, the teacher counsellors rated the effort by peer counsellors to reduce drug and substance abuse among students (B = 20, mean = 2.42, SD = 1.017) as somewhat effective. This result implies that most of the teachers had reservations regarding the effectiveness of peer counselling in managing drug and substance abuse behaviour among students.

The aggregate teacher counsellor perception mean score was 2.56, which means that on average teacher counsellors rated the effectiveness of peer counselling in their schools in managing discipline as moderate. This statistic implies that while the teachers

perceive that the peer counselling services have had some impact on managing discipline in their schools, they believe that there is still room for improvement. More impact can be achieved if certain aspects of peer counselling services can be improved.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the findings, the study reached the following conclusions teacher counsellors perceive the effectiveness of peer counselling in managing discipline in public secondary schools in Nakuru East as moderate. From the teachers' point of view, the schools have excelled in terms of enhancing the participation of students in peer counselling, enhancing the interactiveness of peer counselling services, and providing financial support towards peer counselling. Areas that the teachers felt had major deficiencies and needed major improvement include rapport between teacher counsellors and peer counsellors and engagement of teacher counsellors by the peer counsellors.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions, the study makes recommendations that the counselling departments within public secondary schools should cultivate a close working relationship between the teacher counsellors and peer counsellors. One area of deficiency perceived by the teacher counsellors was that there was a lack of rapport between them and peer counsellors. To address this challenge peer counsellors should be trained on how they can engage teacher counsellors in resolving students' challenges without compromising the confidentiality of students who seek help from them. Peer counsellors should be trained on how they can deliberate on cases with teacher counsellors without compromising the trust of students who confide in them.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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