Guidance and Counseling as A Predictor Variable in Managing Students’ Discipline in Kenya; an Investigation of the Role of Peer Counsellors in Public Secondary Schools in Matungulu Sub County Machakos County

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**Abstract:**
School discipline is a serious challenge facing schools globally. With banning of corporal punishment in 2001 in Kenya, Guidance and Counseling (G&C) has been promoted as an alternative approach to managing students’ discipline. However, growing evidence suggests that G&C services are faced with challenge and therefore, they are ineffective in addressing students’ discipline. The study investigated guidance and counseling as a predictor variable in managing students’ discipline in Kenya; focusing mainly on the role of peer counselors in public secondary schools Matungulu Subcounty in Machakos County. The study was guided by the following research objectives: Establish the extent to which Availability of Peer Counseling services influences management of discipline; Determine influence of Criteria used for selecting peer counselors on management of discipline and Determine the extent to which Training of peer counselors influences their role in managing discipline in public secondary schools. The study was guided by Client Centered Theory advanced by psychologist Carl Rogers (1940). The study employed descriptive survey design. It targeted all (35) public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county, all (35) school heads, all (35) heads of counseling units and all (2,864) form three students. Simple random sampling was used to sample 11 (10.0%) schools and 286 (10.0%) form three students. All (11) the school heads and all (11) heads of counseling units of the participating schools were purposively sampled. In total, 308 respondents were sampled. Data was collected using questionnaires for school heads, heads of counseling units and students. Additionally, an observation checklist was used. The study found that peer counseling interventions face a number of challenges such as poor and unpopular selection criteria of students to be assigned peer counseling roles. The study further found that students selected to be peer counselors were not trained on counseling skills and that head teachers and G/C teachers did not supervise the peer counseling process to ensure the counselors observed the counseling rules and ethics. Supervision, the study concludes that G&C services in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county are ineffective to address students’ discipline. The study
recommends that the students’ body should be involved in selection of peer counselors to build trust. Those selected to be peer counselors should be trained and frequent follow up made by school administration.

**Keywords:** Peer counseling, discipline, guidance, counseling, public schools

**Background to the Study**

Education is essential for the development of a society. Indeed, the more educated the people of a society are, the more civilized and well-disciplined the society might be (Rafiq, Fatima, Sohail, Saleem & Khan, 2013). In recognition that discipline can influence academic outcomes, Guidance and Counseling (G&C) is used to promote students’ discipline. Initially, it began as a movement that started in America at the beginning of the 20th century as a reaction to industrial revolution (Toto, 2014). At the time, the purpose of G&C in schools was to prevent problematic behavior, develop character and relate vocational interests to curriculum subjects. School counselors did not exist, rather, teachers used a few minutes of their day to day to provide students with vocational guidance. In its contemporary state, guidance has grown to include counseling.

Guidance is defined by Narayana (2002) as the assistance given to an individual in making intelligent choices and adjustment. On the other hand, Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) define G&C as an interaction process co-joining the counselee, who is vulnerable and who needs assistance and the counselor who is trained and educated to give this assistance. Additionally, Mboya (2015) defines counseling as a learning process carried on a simple one – to – one social environment in which the counselor, professionally competent in relevant psychological skills and knowledge seeks to assist the client using appropriate methods to become happier and a more productive member of the society. From the foregoing definitions, it is clear that G&C requires specific skills of the counselor and the right attitude of the counselee.

Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) concur that society itself cannot function without the exercise of discipline. They observe that using G&C to promote discipline must continually be practised if people are to work harmoniously for the achievement of common purpose. On the same note, Salgong, Ngumi and Chege (2016) stress that teachers and schools have the responsibility of ensuring that each pupil matures steadily along his own personal line. The rationale behind offering G&C services in schools is informed by the belief that it can help students to resolve their physical, emotional and social difficulties and hence improve their discipline.

Use of G&C to manage students’ discipline is widespread in many countries. In the United States of America (USA), G&C has been used to remedy students’ indiscipline and has made a significant progress (Gysbers, 2001). Gysbers further says that schools, families and communities request assistance from counselors to prevent students from being involved in many difficulties such as joining gangs, dropping out of school, becoming teenage parents, using drugs and participating in or becoming victims in acts of violence. On the same note, Deidra (2013) study in America established that Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) contribute positively to student behavior and maintains effective student behavioral support. The study has therefore provided evidence that G&C interventions can be used as a tool for managing students’ discipline and therefore the need for the present study.

According to Clay (2002), many students in China are addicted to video and computer games as a result of loneliness, depression and social uneasiness all attributable to China’s One Child policy that has been in place since 1979. The policy dictates that each family should have one child and as a result, children experience loneliness. As a consequence, Thomason and Qiong (n.d) report that truancy from school and suicides are common discipline challenges among students. They also observe that the country has set mental consultation offices in schools to offer guidance and counseling services to students who
need help, with a focus on maintaining school discipline.

Uzoamaka (2013) reports that schools in Nigeria use G&C services to address students’ truant behavior which is a major discipline challenge cutting across every stratum of the educational system. Even though the G&C services are used to manage students’ discipline, the report observes that G&C services are inadequate and have been identified as one of the major factors responsible for truancy among students in secondary schools. The report further notes that G&C services are faced with numerous challenges ranging from inadequate facilities, negative student attitudes to insufficient budgets. This implies that G&C has not successfully solved indiscipline in Nigeria. This study set out to establish the level of adequacy of G&C services on students’ discipline in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county.

The need for formal G&C in Uganda schools was realized in the 1960s, when the Ministry of Education then established the office of Career Guidance at its headquarters in Kampala. Nyan (2014) reports that school G&C in Uganda is used to address a vast array of student problems ranging from personal, discipline, and academic, social to career issues. Guidance and counseling services in Ugandan schools have also been strengthened to help students with emotional needs; particularly those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. However, according to the Ministry of Health estimates for 2015, HIV incidences among adolescents remain high (Uganda AIDS Commission, 2017). It can therefore be concluded that use of G&C to combat the HIV scourge among students has not been successful.

Gwirayi (2011) maintains that discipline in schools should not only be used as an intervention measure to remedy incidences of students’ misbehavior but should also be an in-built predisposition that fortifies students’ assenting, self-directing and conforming behaviour that supports them adopt affirmative values to cultivate enduring discipline for the individuals’ entire life. On the same note, Kelly (2017) posits that teachers and school administrators have a social burden to maintain student discipline that will help them to attain an educational foundation necessary to build a successful, independent life and careers. Where there is no discipline, there is no order and the result is chaos. This is in line with Kimotho, Njoka and Gitimu (2019) assertion that being disciplined requires a person to be honest, hardworking, strict adherence to established rules and regulations and internalization of social norms and values that govern a particular society. Therefore, it is important to maintain discipline because it is an essential ingredient for smooth functioning of schools and society at large.

Indiscipline is a wide spread phenomenon. Yagi (2008) reports that bullying and school refusal are major indiscipline cases in Japan. Similarly, A US national survey on indicators of school crime and safety prepared by Rober, Kemp, Rathbun and Morgan (2014) for National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) showed that there were about 1,364,900 non-fatal victimizations in schools including 615,600 thefts and 749,200 violent victimizations, 89,000 of which were serious violent victimizations. On the same note, Mwaura and Thinguri (2015) report that in American schools, about 45% of the teachers leave teaching profession annually citing students’ indiscipline as the main cause. On the same note, Thomason and Qiong (n.d) report that truancy from school and suicides are common discipline challenges among students in China.

African countries have not been spared in relation to school indiscipline. In Nigeria, the government ordered the closure of all colleges of technology after the students decided to boycott classes as reported in a study by Miriti (2012). Similarly, Sima (2010) recorded that schools in Tanzania are grappling with indiscipline challenges such as truancy, sexual harassment and bullying; those relating to orphanhood and vulnerability to dependence; Those facing HIV/AIDS infected and affected students; and relationships ranging from the parent-
child relationship to the teacher-student relationship and the relationship among students.

Guidance and Counseling in Kenya has grown out of the need to address discipline problems in schools (Ajowi & Simatwa, 2010). The Ominde Report noted that every Kenyan child has a right to G&C services (Republic of Kenya, 1964). Additionally, the Gachathi Report stressed the need for all teachers to be trained to provide G&C services (Republic of Kenya, 1976). The report further recommended that G&C be taught through subjects like Religious Education as well as Social Education and Ethics to enable the schools promote the growth of self-discipline among students. Despite these recommendations, G&C services have failed to meet the needs of students (Wambu & Fisher, 2014). A special audit committee appointed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to probe cases of school fires in public secondary schools during the second term of 2016 established that disciplinary processes did not conform to the Basic Education Act 2013 provisions and that some schools were still administering corporal punishment instead of G&C which is recommended by the Act. It can be therefore concluded that G&C services in Kenya have not been used successfully to address students’ indiscipline and therefore, there was need for this study.

A study by Cheloti and Gathumbi (2016) reported that drug and substance abuse, peer pressure, youth rebellion, and lack of proper guidance are the main challenges facing schools in Kenya. Another study by National Crime Research Centre (2017) conducted in 16 counties in Kenya showed that proliferation of indiscipline across schools and lack of effective G&C support services in schools were responsible for recurrence of student unrests and violence in the second term of 2016. On the same note, Wanzala (2018) reports that there were 483 and 416 incidences of schools’ unrests in 2016 and 2017 respectively in Kenya which led to the closure of schools and disrupted learning. Students’ indiscipline has serious implications to the economy and security of a country. This study was conducted in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county and sought to assess the role of peer counselors in managing students’ discipline.

Peer Counseling (PC) has been introduced in many countries as a strategy to strengthen G&C services so as to help manage students’ indiscipline. According to Bett (2013), PC is G&C services offered by students to their peers. Chireshe (2013) opines that students are more likely to accept and feel at home with counseling information validated and dispensed to them by their peers than they would receive from trained professionals whom they may often consider as out of tune with the needs of the younger generations. Bururia, Marangu and Nyaga (2014) explain that PC involves training a selected cross-section of students to act as helpers and active listeners to their fellow students. It can therefore be concluded that selecting the right students who can act as role models to the other students and training them may contribute to the success of PC interventions in managing students’ discipline.

**Study objectives**

The study was guided by the following objectives:

i. Establish the extent to which Availability of Peer Counseling services influences management of discipline in public secondary schools.

ii. Determine influence of Criteria used for selecting peer counselors on management of discipline in public secondary schools.

iii. Determine the extent to which Training of peer counselors influences their role in managing discipline in public secondary schools.

**Statement of the Problem**

The Basic Education Act 2013 in Kenya stipulates that schools shall offer guidance and counseling services to correct discipline in schools (Republic of Kenya, 2013). However, according to a report from Matungulu Sub-County Quality Assurance and Standards Office (2017), cases of truancy, laxity and negative influence, sneaking away from school, arsonist tendencies, bullying and sneaking electronic
communication devices into schools are prevalent in the Sub-county. The report further indicates that there has been increase in students’ unrests in Matungulu Sub-county. For example, between 2011 and 2014, three schools were burnt by students; while in 2017, students of some schools walked out of school to present their grievances to the County Director of Education at Machakos. This is an indication that G&C services offered in Matungulu Sub-county are ineffective in resolving students’ problems. A study on the influence of guidance and counseling on students’ discipline had not been conducted in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county and therefore, there was need for the current study.

Significance of the Study
The findings of this study may help the Ministry of Education, in the formulation of policies relevant to the management of students’ behavior in public secondary schools. School heads can use the study findings to assess the effectiveness of strategies used to curb students’ indiscipline and to identify effective ways of selecting and training peer counselors. The findings of the study may be used by the school Boards of Managements (BOM) to understand the challenges facing implementation of G&C services. The findings of the study may be useful to Teachers’ Service Commission (TSC) to establish the adequacy of teacher counselors in schools and post some to schools that lack the service.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Peer Counseling and Students’ Discipline
Bett (2013) defines peer counseling as G&C services offered by students to their peers. Chireshe (2013) opines that students are more likely to accept and feel at home with counseling information validated and dispensed to them by their peers than they would receive from trained professionals whom they may often consider as out of tune with the needs of the younger generations. According to Burururia et al (2014), peer counseling (PC) involves training a selected cross-section of students to act as helpers and active listeners to their fellow students. The core of PC programme is a curriculum which addresses skill building in communication, problem solving and decision making. Most schools however are not able to identify the right students who can act as role models to the other students and be trained as peer counselors. This study assessed the selection and training criteria of peer counselors and their influence on other students in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county.

According to Mulwa (2014), peer counseling is one of the alternative disciplinary methods that could be used to manage students’ discipline in learning institutions. In peer counseling, students identify with their peers and address problems at home and at school which may include substance abuse and career planning. Mulwa elucidates that peer counselors: assist in identifying students with problems and making referrals to the school counselors; enables students to discuss freely and express personal problems about parents, the authority and themselves in a free and frank manner; and provide information that the adults would normally not be prepared to discuss. As a consequence, peer counselors are able to identify students with problems long before they escalate into indiscipline problem and therefore provide a solution.

Global perspective of peer counseling and students’ discipline
In America, peer counselors are trained in basic listening and helping skills of problem-solving and decision-making. According to Lepan (2001), peer counselors are selected by asking students to give names of two students to whom they would go if they had a personal problem. Students with the highest number of votes receive PC training. Peer counselors are used to: orient new students to the school; listening to peers who have concerns; providing outreach activities; and refer ‘their’ clients to school counselors. It can therefore be concluded that PC in American schools is effective in addressing students’ discipline.

Peer counseling is used in Iran to impart sexual health knowledge. Hatami, Kazemi and Mehrabi (2015) carried out an intervention study on the effect of peer
education in school on sexual health knowledge and attitude in girl adolescents in high schools of Isfahan, Iran. The results showed that the scores of knowledge and approach were improved in the intervention group after the trainings; but the control group showed no significant difference after the trainings. It can be concluded that peer counseling can influence students’ social behavior. The influence of PC in promoting students’ discipline requires to be established hence there was need for this study.

Regional perspective of peer counseling and students’ discipline

Although Zimbabwean schools use peer counseling to strengthen G&C services, PC services face many challenges. Chireshe (2013) carried out a study to establish the status of peer counseling in some Zimbabwean secondary schools. The results showed that most of the peer counselors were not trained hence they lacked counseling skills. Further, the study results revealed that peer counselors faced numerous other challenges including peer counseling underrating, resistance and discouragement from other students, and lack of faith by other students. This could suggest that peer counseling was not effective in influencing behavioral change, and therefore there was need for the current study to investigate the influence of peer counseling on students’ discipline.

Peer counseling is also used in Ugandan schools to provide help and information to students. However, Kabasansi, Ross, Otor, Baucer and Samber (2009) established that training peer counselors in Uganda is an expensive project hence most schools do not have trained peer counselors to handle student’s problems (Aloka, Atieno, Mobegi, Odongo & Ongoro, 2016). It can therefore be concluded that due to lack of training of peer counselors, peer counseling has not helped in discipline management. This study probed whether peer counselors in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county were equipped with skills so as to be able to address students’ discipline.

Peer counseling and students’ discipline in Kenya

Peer counseling is used in Kenyan secondary schools to strengthen G&C services. Several official reports such as the Kamunge and Koech reports recommend that peer counseling services be established in all educational institutions to motivate the youth to express their desire to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS and other social and psychological problems (Republic of Kenya, 1988; 1999 respectively). According to Arudo (2008), peer counselors are Para-professionals selected from the group to be served, trained, and given ongoing supervision to perform some key function generally performed by a professional. He states that such natural helpers when provided with counseling skills may be of greatest assistance where authority and professional services may be inadequate or not readily available. In the same vein, Arudo (2008) argues that students are likely to contact fellow students when they are experiencing problems and concerns before they approach their teachers especially on matters they consider embarrassing. He additionally notes that in some schools in Kenya where peer counseling interventions have been more successful, selection is done by the students, while in a number of schools, class teachers pick the candidates.

A report by Kenya Institute of Education (2004), now Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, notes that peer counseling in Kenya has proved to be successful in reducing drug and substance abuse as well as risky sexual behavior. The report further observes that peer counseling is an important tool in enhancing positive behavior change among students. A MOE (2009) report on the other hand reveals that peer counseling has a supplementary role in that it has been adopted as one good strategy that would be of benefit in helping the students in need of counseling owing to the large student population in schools and the low number of teacher counselors. According to the report, the content of peer counseling training covers three areas: information about the policies, procedures and organization of the program; ethical and legal considerations such as confidentiality; and ways of establishing support networks and sources of
support and limitations of the program including signs which indicate when professional help is needed and the procedure for referral.

Kute (2014) undertook a cross-sectional study to assess students' attitudes towards peer counselors in students discipline in secondary schools in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used to select 10 head teachers, 10 Heads of Department of Guidance and Counseling, 110 peer counselors and 300 form two and three students. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data. The study findings showed that a good number of students represented by 76% indicated that peer counselors had helped them to improve their discipline in secondary schools. However, another 95.33% of them noted that peer counselors should observe confidentiality. From the response, it was evident that students valued confidentiality. This was in line with Mutembei (2006) assertion that most of the students value confidentiality due to the fact that they do not wish to be seen to be having issues or problems to sort out.

Further, the study results showed that 31 peer counselors had not received any formal training and out of the 79 that were trained, 11 were trained by their colleagues. It is possible lack of uniformity in the training process accounted to lack of confidentiality and poor handling and client structuring of referrals to heads of departments of guidance and counseling in their schools. However, according to the findings of the study, it was clear that in case peer counselors were offered more training opportunities then students would have more faith in them hence improve discipline. The study concluded that the few identified issues that could have led to misgivings on students' part such as confidentiality could easily be solved by such training.

Kamore and Tiego (2015) investigated the four pillars of effectiveness of peer counseling programs in public secondary schools in Meru South Sub-county. The study employed a descriptive survey research design and purposive sampling to include 25 teachers in charge of G&C and 196 peer counselors. Questionnaires were the main data collection instruments. On selection of peer counselors, the study established that majority were selected by teacher counselors. On training of peer counselors, the study results showed that majority of them were not adequately trained.

Aloka, Mito, Osodo, Osodo, Raburu (2016) carried out a study on the role of peer counselors in the promotion of students’ discipline in Ugunja Sub-county. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study results showed that peer counseling had helped students to improve on various aspects of discipline as follows: understand themselves and their fellow students; improve on time management and classroom behavior; establish secure school environment; and develop their self-image. This study provides evidence that peer counseling has been successful in Ugunja Sub-county in managing students’ discipline. This study explored the influence of peer counseling in managing students’ discipline in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county.

Kelly, Odongo, Mobegi, Aloka and Nyareki (2016) carried out a study on the influence of peer counselors training on their effectiveness in addressing risky sexual behaviors among students in public secondary schools in Kisii Central Sub-County. The study adopted ex-post facto research design and sampled 322 students, 317 peer counselors and 6 secondary schools using stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The study results showed that peer counseling has positive impact on students’ social adjustment in the schools where it existed. Further, the study findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between peer counselors’ training and their effectiveness on counseling. However, the present study sampled 286 form three students, 11 school heads and 11 heads of counseling units and therefore did not take responses from peer counselors.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study was premised on Client Centered Theory advanced by psychologist Carl Rogers (1940). The theory states that people are capable of self-healing
and personal growth which leads to self-actualization. Rogers (1940) believes that the counselor creates an atmosphere which enables the client to understand him/herself. The theory proposes a counseling approach that is non-directive implying that the teacher counselor should allow the student to lead discussions and should not try to steer the student in a particular direction. According to Carl Rogers, teacher-counselors should possess three key qualities: Genuineness – ability to share his/her feeling honestly so as to help teach the student develop this important skill; Unconditional positive regard – to be able to accept the students for who they are and display support and care no matter what the student is facing or experiencing; and empathetic understanding – the counselor needs to be reflective, acting as the mirror of the student’s feelings and thoughts so as to allow the student to gain a clearer understanding of their own inner thoughts, perceptions, and emotions. The teacher counselor can apply this theory by creating an enabling environment for students to express themselves, open up, realize their potential and hence meet their goals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The study employed descriptive survey research design. The target population was 35 public secondary schools with a population of 35 school heads, 35 heads of G&C and 2,864 form three students. This study targeted form three students in the Sub-county since they had considerable knowledge of their schools and that they would also be available as opposed to form four students who could be busy preparing for their national examinations. The study sample was 308 distributed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School category</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>School Heads</th>
<th>Heads of Counseling Units</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls' Only</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys' Only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaires and a checklist were used to collect data and analyzed using descriptive statistics. All ethical considerations were observed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION
The study yielded to a total response rate of 93.8%. On the gender considerations, of school heads, the study found that majority of school heads represented by 63.6% were male while 36.4% were female. These findings reveal a high gender disparity in favor of men in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county. The findings also show that majority of heads of guidance and counseling units (HCU) represented by 70.0% were female while 30.0% were male. The findings could imply that female teachers are preferred to head G&C departments than their male counterparts. The findings agree with a study by Kinyanjui (2013) on gender dimensions in guidance and counseling among students in public secondary schools conducted in Githunguri District of Kiambu County that revealed that there are more female teacher counselors than men. As consequence, the study further reported that more female students were seeking G&C services than their male counterparts. It can therefore be argued that the gender of the counselor has a significant influence on utilization of G&C services by students.

Peer Counseling and Students’ Discipline
The first objective sought to determine the extent to which peer counselling influences students’ discipline in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county. In order to achieve this objective, the study sought opinions of school heads and heads of G&C
on several aspects of peer counselling such as; whether their schools embrace peer counselling, their assessment on effectiveness of peer counselling interventions, whether peer counsellors are competitively selected, trained and supervised. Further, the study sought students’ views on peer counselling such as; availability of peer counselling, criteria of selecting peer counsellors and their assessment on the role of peer counselling in promoting students’ discipline. It was important to investigate all these aspects of peer counselling because researchers (Lepan, 2001; Chireshe, 2013; Kute, 2014; Bururia et al., 2014; Mulwa, 2014) have discerned that effective peer counselling interventions involve peer counselors who are competitively selected by fellow students, trained and supervised. Sections 4.4.1 through 4.4.5 present the analysis.

**School Heads Assessment of Peer Counseling**

School Heads were asked to rate peer counseling interventions in their schools. They were presented with 6 statements to rate against a 5 – item likert scale that included Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Results are presented in Table 2

**Table 2: School Heads Assessment of Peer Counseling Interventions (n=11)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My school embraces peer counseling</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counseling is effective in my school</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counselors are selected competitively</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We train peer counselors to be effective</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counselors are effective in discharging their mandate</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has a mechanism of supervising peer counselors</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (Percentage)</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that all School heads indicated that their schools embrace peer counseling. Majority of school heads represented by 18.2% who strongly agreed and 63.6% who agreed affirmed that peer counseling is effective in their schools. Similarly, majority of school heads represented by 9.1% who strongly agreed and 63.6% who agreed also indicated that peer counselors are effective in discharging their duties. On the contrary, only a few of school heads represented by 9.1% who strongly agreed and 18.2% who agreed indicated that peer counsellors are competitively selected in their schools. On training, less than half of school heads, as indicated by 19.1% who strongly agreed and 36.4% who agreed, indicated that their schools train peer counselors. On whether peer counselors are effective in discharging their mandate, majority of school heads represented by 9.1% who strongly agreed and 63.6% who agreed believe they are effective. On supervision of peer counselors, only few school heads represented by 9.1% who strongly agreed and 18.2% who agreed indicated that their schools have mechanism for supervising their peer counselors. Overall, more than half rated their peer counseling interventions as effective as indicated by 15.2% who strongly agreed and 43.9% who agreed.

**4.4.2 Heads of Counseling Units Assessment of Peer Counseling**

Similarly, the questions in Table 2 were triangulated to Heads of Counseling Units. The results are presented in Table 3
Table 3: HCU Assessment of Peer Counseling Interventions (n=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My school embraces peer counseling</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counseling is effective in my school</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counselors are selected competitively</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We train peer counselors to be effective</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counselors are effective in discharging their mandate</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school has a mechanism of supervising peer counselors</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (Percentage)</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that not all schools embrace peer counselling although majority of HCU represented by 20.0% who strongly agreed and 60.0% who agreed indicated that their schools embrace peer counselling. The results contradict the responses given by school heads who indicated that peer counseling is offered in all schools. Majority of HCU represented by 20.0% who strongly agreed and 40.0% who agreed rated their peer counselling interventions as effective. These findings seem to agree with responses from school heads whose majority were of the view that peer counselling interventions in their schools are effective. Majority of HCU represented by 10.0% who strongly agreed and 60.0% who agreed indicated that peer counselors in their schools are competitively selected. However, these findings disagree with responses from school heads in Table 4.8 which show that it is only a few of them represented by 9.1% who strongly agreed, and 18.2% who agreed, affirmed that peer counselors are competitively selected in their schools.

On training of peer counselors, few HCU represented by 30.0% who agreed indicated that peer counselors are trained in their schools. These findings tend to agree with responses from school heads which indicated that less than half of school heads, as indicated by 9.1% who strongly agreed and 36.4% who agreed, affirmed that their schools train peer counselors. Majority of HCU represented by 10.0% who strongly agreed and 60.0% who agreed affirmed that peer counselors are effective in discharging their Mandate. These findings agree with similar findings from school heads which indicated that majority of them represented by 9.1% who strongly agreed and 63.6% who agreed believe that peer counseling in their schools is effective.

On supervision of peer counselors, only a few HCU represented by 10.0% who strongly agreed and 30.0% who agreed indicated that their schools have mechanism for supervising their peer counselors. These findings agree with responses from school heads where a few of them represented by 9.1% who strongly agreed and 18.2% who agreed affirmed that their schools have mechanism for supervising their peer counselors. Overall, more than half of HCU rated their peer counseling interventions in their schools effective as indicated by 11.7% who strongly agreed and 46.7% who agreed. The overall rating seems to agree with the overall assessment of peer counseling interventions as rated by school heads. For instance, more than half of them rated their peer counseling interventions as effective as indicated by 15.2% who strongly agreed and 43.9% who agreed.

Responses of Students on Availability of Peer Counseling
Students were probed as to whether their schools have peer counselors so as to confirm responses from school heads and Heads of Counseling Units. Responses from students are presented in Table 4.
Table 4: Availability of Peer Counseling Services in Schools as reported by Students (n=268)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Counseling Offered</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from Table 4 show that majority of students represented by 73.9% affirmed that their schools had peer counselors while 26.1% indicated that their schools had no peer counselors. The findings disagree with responses from school heads who indicated that peer counseling was offered in all schools but agree with responses of HCU which indicated that there are few schools which do not offer peer counseling. According to Arudo (2008), peer counselors are natural helpers when provided with counseling skills they may be of greatest assistance where professional G&C services may be inadequate or not readily available.

Criteria used to select Peer Counselors in Schools

The study was also interested in establishing how peer counselors are selected in schools. Students who indicated that their schools had peer counselors were asked to state how peer counselors are selected in their schools. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Criteria used to Select Peer Counselors as reported by Students (n=190)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PC Selection Criteria</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voted by fellow students</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected by teacher counselor</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected by the principal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary through joining club</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results show that majority of students who confirmed that peer counseling is offered in their schools represented by 65.3% indicated that peer counselors are selected by their teacher counselors. In some other fewer schools: peer counselors are selected by fellow students as represented by 18.4%; peer counselors join peer counseling clubs as indicated by 13.7%; and selected by school heads as indicated by 2.6%. These findings indicate that it is only few 18.4% of students who indicated that peer counselors are competitively selected in their schools. The findings agree with results from Table 2 where few of school heads indicated that peer counselors are competitively selected but disagree with results from Table 4.9 where majority of HCU affirmed that peer counselors are competitively selected in their schools.

Research has shown that involvement of students in selecting peer counselors is crucial and desirable. A study by Chireshe (2013) on status of peer counseling carried out in some Zimbabwean secondary schools showed that peer counselors faced numerous challenges such as underrating, resistance, discouragement and lack of faith by other students due to lack of involvement of students in their selection. Kamore and Tiego (2015) stress that young people tend to respect, trust and support peer educators whom they have selected. The findings of this study that reveals that majority of peer counselors are not selected by fellow students could suggest that peer counselors in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county may be experiencing approval challenges.

Students’ Assessment of Peer Counseling Interventions

The study further sought students’ views on their assessment of various aspects of peer counseling interventions. The results are presented in Table 6.
Table 6: Students’ Assessment of their Peer Counselors (n=198)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer counselors are good at instilling discipline</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We respect peer counselors because we elect them</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We trust peer counselors with our confidential information</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counselors in our school are well trained</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counselors are better than teachers when handling discipline</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can confide to a peer counselor all my problems</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students prefer talking to peer counselors than G&amp;C teachers</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean (Percentages)</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings show that the percentage of those who strongly agreed and those who agreed that peer counselors are good at instilling discipline was the same at 34.3% implying that majority of students believe that peer counseling can promote students’ discipline. Also, the percentage of those who strongly agreed and those who agreed that they respect peer counselors because they elect them was the same at 11.1%. This implies that it is only very few students who respect peer counselors because they elect them at 11.1%. This finding is in line with Kamore and Tiego (2015) argument that young people tend to respect, trust and support peer educators whom they have selected.

Asked whether they could trust peer counselors with their confidential information, majority of them represented by 33.8% who strongly agreed and 27.3% who agreed indicated that they trust peer counselors with their confidential information. According to Furhmann (1986) cited by Bett (2013), adolescents are more likely to disclose their secrets to their peers than to any other person. On whether peer counselors are adequately trained to handle disciplinary problems, only less than half represented by 22.7%

Who strongly agreed and 25.8% who agreed indicated peer counselors in their schools are well trained. The findings agree with responses from school heads and HCU reported in Tables 2 and 3 respectively which indicated that few schools have trained their peer counselors. It can be concluded that peer counselors in majority of public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county are not trained. For effective peer counseling interventions, peer counselors who are Para-professionals need to be trained (Arudo, 2008).

The results further show that it is only few students represented by 20.2% who strongly agreed and 19.7% who agreed indicated that peer counselors are better in handling discipline than teachers. This finding could reveal the extent to which failure to train peer counselors adversely influences their effectiveness. A study by Auni, Songok, Ong’unya and Nabwire (2014) on determinants of guidance and counseling programme in addressing students social adjustment in secondary schools conducted in Siaya District of Kenya revealed that peer counselors lacked skills to use due to lack of training.

Only few students as represented by 18.7% of those who strongly agreed and 19.7% who agreed can confide their secrets to their peer counselors. Although majority of students indicated that they can trust their peer counselors with their confidential information, it is clear that it is only a few of them who can confide their secrets to them. This admission by students that they cannot confide their secrets to their peer counselors could reveal existence of deep...
rooted suspicion among students on the ability of peer counselors to keep confidential information which points to lack of training.

It appears students do value the level to which their issues are treated with confidentiality. For instance, a study by Kute (2014) on assessment of students' attitudes towards peer counselors in students discipline in secondary schools conducted in Kisumu Municipality of Kenya revealed that majority (95.3%) of students indicated that peer counselors should observe confidentiality. This is in line with Mutembei (2006) assertion that students who are at adolescent are very particular about their self-image which greatly impacts on their self-esteem and they thus value confidentiality due to the fact they do not wish to be seen having problems to sort out.

More than half of students indicated that most students prefer talking to peer counselors about their problems than their G&C teachers. According to Bett (2013), peer counseling is an appropriate method in behavior modification because when students informally get together to share ideas, they form a peer group where there is an interactive approach and hence participative learning. Peer group learning is particularly important because it creates a more informal atmosphere which promotes a free exchange of ideas. This could explain why majority of students indicated that most students prefer talking to peer counselors about their problems than their G&C teachers.

**DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

**Peer Counseling on Students’ Discipline**

The first objective sought to determine the extent to which peer counselling influences students’ discipline in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county. On whether peer counselling interventions are offered in all schools, the views collected from school heads in Table 2 indicate that they are available in all schools. However, the responses disagree with those of HCU in Table 2 and students in Table 3 where 80.0% and 73.9% of them respectively affirmed that peer counseling is embraced in their schools.

Although the findings show that peer counseling is available in many schools as per HCU and students views, it is evident that there are few schools (26.1%) which do not have these services.

Some school heads who gave contradicting information might have done so for fear of being reprimanded by MOE since it is a MOE requirement that every school must have a functional G&C department and a teacher counselor. This is because several official reports such as the Kamunge and Koech reports recommend that peer counseling services be established in all educational institutions to motivate the youth to express their desire to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS and other social and psychological problems (Republic of Kenya, 1988; 1999 respectively). Nevertheless, the study has established that peer counseling interventions are promoted in majority of public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county. The findings that peer counseling interventions are not available in all schools agree with a study by Auni, Songok, Ong’unya and Nabwire (2014) on determinants of guidance and counseling programme in addressing students social adjustment in secondary schools conducted in Siaya District of Kenya which found that peer counseling interventions were only available in 64.2% of sampled schools.

On the effectiveness of peer counseling interventions, majority of school heads (81.8%) and HCU (60.0%) in Tables 2 and 3 respectively agreed that they are effective. Further, majority of school heads (72.7%) and HCU (70.0%) in Tables 2 and 3 respectively agreed that peer counselors are effective in discharging their mandate. Similarly, majority of students (68.6%) in Table 4.12 indicated that peer counselors are good at instilling discipline. From these findings, it is clear that majority of school heads, HCU and students recognize the fact that peer counselors can be effective in promoting discipline. The findings agree with a report by Kenya Institute of Education (2004) which observes that peer counseling is an important tool in enhancing positive behavior change among students.
Majority of students in Table 6 represented by 61.1% agreed that they could trust peer counselors with their confidential information while 22.0% disagreed. The finding agrees with Arudo (2008) who stated that peers share many things in common, have their own language code and trust each other more. Further, 58.5% of students in Table 6 agreed that they prefer talking to peer counselors about their problems than their G&C teachers while 31.4% disagreed. The findings reveal that more students would prefer talking to peer counselors about their problems than their G&C teachers. This finding is in agreement with Arudo (2008) assertion that students contact fellow students when they are experiencing problems and concerns before they approach their teachers especially in matters they consider embarrassing.

On selection of peer counselors, only a few of school heads 27.3% in Table 4.8 indicated that peer counselors are competitively selected in their schools. However, majority of HCU represented by 70.0% in Table 3 indicated that peer counselors in their schools are competitively selected. On the other hand, majority of students represented by 65.3% in Table 6 indicated that peer counselors in their schools are selected by teacher counselors while a few represented by 18.4% indicated that they are competitively selected by fellow students. While the views of the school heads and students agree that peer counselors are not competitively selected in most of the schools, it is evident that HCU gave incorrect information. The HCU appear to be defending their departments from any blame because they are aware that students should be allowed to select their peer counselors but that is not always the practice. It is evident from the findings that in majority of public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county, peer counselors are not competitively selected. This could be due to the fact that the HCU fear students may select popular students who could be indisciplined.

Lack of involving students in selecting their peer counselors seems to affect their approval by fellow students. For example, only 22.2% of students in Table 6 indicated that they respect peer counselors because they elect them. This shows that majority of peer counselors who are appointed by teachers as per Table 5 are not approved by fellow students. The finding that majority of peer counselors are not competitively selected by their fellow students but they are selected by their teacher counselors agree with a study by Kamore and Tiego (2015) on the four pillars of effectiveness of peer counseling programs in public secondary schools conducted in Meru South Sub-county that established that majority of peer counselors were selected by teacher counselors.

Kamore and Tiego (2015) stress that young people tend to respect, trust and support peer educators whom they have selected. A study by Chireshes (2013) on status of peer counseling carried out in some Zimbabwean secondary schools showed that peer counselors faced numerous challenges such as underrating, resistance, discouragement and lack of faith by other students due to lack of involvement of fellow students in their selection. The findings of this study that reveal that majority of peer counselors are not selected by fellow students could suggest that peer counselors in public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county may be experiencing disapproval and trust challenges and hence concern as to their ability to address disciplinary problems.

On training of peer counselors, responses of school heads (45.5%) and HCU (30.0%) in Tables 2 and 3 respectively indicate that few peer counselors in majority of schools are trained. On the other hand, only less than half of students (48.5%) in Table 6 indicated that peer counselors in their schools are well trained to handle disciplinary problems. The findings from students responses agree with school heads and HCU that majority of peer counselors are not trained. The findings agree with a study by Chireshes (2013) on status of peer counseling conducted in some Zimbabwean secondary schools which showed that most of the peer counselors were not trained hence they lacked counseling skills.

The findings further agree with similar findings from Kamore and Tiego (2015) study that revealed that majority of peer counselors was not adequately
trained. A report by MOE (2009) recommends that the content of peer counseling training to cover three areas: information about the policies, procedures and organization of the program; ethical and legal considerations such as confidentiality; and ways of establishing support networks and sources of support and limitations of the program including signs which indicate when professional help is needed and the procedure for referral.

The results in Table 6 further show that it is only few students represented by 39.9% who agreed that peer counselors are better in handling discipline than teachers. It is evident that lack of training impacts negatively on the ability of peer counselors to handle disciplinary problems. It is also clear from the findings that peer counselors in majority of schools in Matungulu Sub-county are not trained. The findings agree with Kamore and Tiego (2015) study that reported that lack of adequate and quality training was a major identified reason for ineffective peer counseling interventions.

On supervision of peer counselors, only less than a third of school heads in Table 2 represented by 27.3% and 40.0% of HCU in Table 3 affirmed that their schools have mechanism for supervising their peer counselors. From these findings, it is evident that few schools have put in place mechanism for supervising their peer counselors. These findings agree with Kamore and Tiego (2015) study on the four pillars of effective peer counseling program conducted in Meru South District that revealed that it is only 12% of schools that were supervising their peer counselors. Arudo (2008) maintains that peer counselors who are Para-professionals should be given ongoing supervision to perform some key functions generally performed by a professional. Lack of supervision can therefore challenge their ability to offer effective G&C services that can promote students’ discipline.

To summarize the key findings of this objective, the study established that peer counseling interventions are promoted in majority of public secondary schools in Matungulu Sub-county. However, it is noted from the findings that peer counseling interventions are faced with challenges such as: poor selection of peer counselors; lack of training; and lack of supervision. As a consequence, the study has established that peer counselors are not good at handling disciplinary problems. The students also seemed to raise ethical issues when majority of them indicated that they could not confide their secrets to their peer counselors. Lack of involving students in selecting their peer counselors was found to impact negatively on approval of the peer counselors. This brings into question whether students would get any help from peer counselors that they disapprove. From the foregoing, it is clear that peer counseling interventions in majority of schools in Matungulu Sub-county are ineffective to promote students’ discipline.

The findings that peer counseling interventions are ineffective in addressing students discipline agree with a study by Chireshe (2013) on the status of peer counseling conducted in some Zimbabwean secondary schools that established that peer counseling interventions were faced by a number of challenges and were therefore ineffective in promoting students discipline. The findings of the study also agree with a study by Kamore and Tiego (2015) on the four pillars of effectiveness of peer counseling conducted in public secondary schools in Meru County that established that peer counselors were ineffective in addressing students’ disciplinary problems because they were poorly selected and not trained.

However, the results disagree with Aloka et al (2016) study on the role of peer counselors in the promotion of students’ discipline in Ugunja Sub-county. The study results showed that peer counseling had helped students to improve on various aspects of discipline as follows: understand themselves and their fellow students; improve on time management and classroom behavior; establish secure school environment; and develop their self-image. The findings further disagree with Kelly et al (2016) study on the influence of peer counselors training on their effectiveness in addressing risky sexual behaviors
among students conducted in public secondary schools in Kisii Central Sub-County. The study results showed that peer counseling had a positive impact on students’ social adjustment in the schools where it existed. It is noted in the two studies that peer counselors were competitively selected, trained and supervised while in the present study, peer counselors were poorly selected, not trained and not supervised.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigated guidance and counseling as a predictor variable in managing students’ discipline in Kenya; focusing mainly on the role of peer counselors in public secondary schools in Matungulu sub county in Machakos County. Although the study established that peer counseling interventions are available in nearly all the schools, the study concludes that the services face a number of challenges. On selection of peer counselors, the study concludes that they are not competitively selected by students, as is required, in majority of schools. The study concludes that peer counselors are not trained in majority of schools and these impacts negatively on their effectiveness to address students’ discipline. The study also concludes that peer counselors are not supervised in majority of schools. Therefore, peer counseling has not had an influence on students’ discipline.

The study therefore recommends that;

i. School heads and Heads of Counseling Units should allow the students to select respected students as peer counselors so as to enhance trust from them.

ii. School heads should ensure peer counselors are trained to enhance their effectiveness.

iii. School heads should ensure peer counselors are supervised so as to enhance their effectiveness.

REFERENCES


[34.] Salgong, Kipkemboi. V., Ngumi, Chege (2016). The role of guidance and counseling in enhancing student discipline in secondary schools in Koibatek District.


