Students’ Perception of the Influence of Guidance and Counselling Services and Academic Performance in Baringo Country, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of students of the influence of guidance and counselling services on academic performance in Baringo County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to investigate the perception of students on the various guidance and counselling services and determine the perceptions of students on the influence of guidance and counselling on academic performance. The study was guided by the self-perception theory. The ontology was constructivist. The epistemology was interpretivist. The research method was qualitative. The research design was phenomenology. Samples of 12 secondary schools, 130 students, 12 teachers were selected. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and interview guides were used to generate data. The data was thematically analyzed. The study major findings were that students perceived guidance and counselling services positively and that they had contributed significantly to their academic performance. The study recommends that there is need to further develop and strengthen guidance and counselling in Baringo County Secondary Schools and develop a theory to guide this process, informed by increased cases of indiscipline and truancy among students.

Keywords: academic performance, baringo county, guidance and counselling, student exception

I. INTRODUCTION

Deviant behaviour in secondary schools continues to be a matter of great concern globally; though it is a more worrying concern in developing countries like Kenya (Adegun, 2013; Masese, Nasongo & Ngusu, 2012; Carra, Esterle & Hedibel, 2009; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2002). Besides, although deviance as a phenomena varies from one country to another, deviant acts in a school environment include truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity, dodging class, riots, smoking, vandalism, fighting, reporting late for class and insulting, resistance to change, to mention a few (Agboola & Salawu, 2011; Njoroge, Onduso & Thinguri, 2014). Moreover, these acts negatively influence the learning and teaching process as they undermine the purpose of education (Agboola & Salawu, 2011; Torrente & Vazsonyi, 2012). Consequently, in secondary schools, deviant behaviour is caused by an interaction of different factors; (Brady, 2006; Mbuthia, 2013; Newman, 2004; UNODC, 2005. (Republic of Kenya (ROK), 2006; Simatwa, 2012; Hirschi, 2002) posit that although deviant behaviour may show a small degree of specialization, there is a strong tendency for persons who engage in one type of delinquent behaviour to engage in other types as well. The researchers observed that it was imperative that deviance is examined as a phenomenon with multifaceted causes (Nabiswa, 2017).

Research has well established the indispensable role that guidance and counselling plays in the life of students. Significantly, one of the roles is to improve the mental health and reduce psychological disturbances (Egan, 2002; McGuiness, 1998). Chireshe (2011) avers that guidance and counselling services impart students with life skills, attitudes and values that enable them to solve problems and make sound decisions thereby helping students address the social, psychological and emotional problems they experience. Moreover, he further claims that guidance and counselling received by students result in a decrease in cases of poor discipline among students and reduced dropout rates. Furthermore, in a study carried out in Haramaya University in Ethiopia showed that about 42% of the participants acknowledged that guidance and counselling services are always helpful in minimizing or alleviating students’ academic, vocational, social and personal problems (Seyoum, 2011).

Help seeking attitudes are also influenced by awareness of the provision of guidance and counselling services (Mwangi & Otanga, 2015). Moreover, in Kenya, the importance of creating awareness of guidance and counselling services has been noted (Mwangi, 1991). Furthermore, studies have also shown that awareness of such programs determines students' attitudes and whether they are utilised. In addition, Nyingi (2014) found students from public schools to be more aware of guidance and counselling services than their counterparts in private schools. Additionally, though most students were not informed of the importance of guidance and counselling,
they rated it highly. Moreover, Gitonga (1999) posits that majority of the sample were aware of the existence of guidance and counselling services. Besides, Rutondoki (2000) found out that although students generally have a favourable attitude towards counselling related services, only a few have a basic awareness of what opportunities are offered. Moreover, in the study, it also emerged that some students did not seek help because they felt capable of solving their issues or getting help from their friends. Similarly, Nyokabi and Thinguri (2015) reported that majority of students knew of existing programs and had positive attitudes towards them.

Furthermore, contradictory findings have been reported on the benefits of guidance and counselling services in Kenya (Gitonga, 1999; Nyamwange, Nyakan & Ondima, 2012) found out that students did not consider counselling necessary in schools. Moreover, they overwhelmingly reported a negative attitude towards guidance and counselling programs. Contrastingly however, students felt that available counselling resources were inadequate to meet their counselling needs. Likewise, negative attitudes towards guidance and counselling has been explained in the literature as due to the lack of value attached to guidance and counselling from students’ own perspective and ability to solve own problems or with peers (Muema & Kiilu, 2013), and fear of being seen with a counsellor and fear of the lack of confidentiality (Gitonga, 1999).

Gender has been reported as playing a significant role in determining attitude towards seeking help. Good and Dell (1989) reported that there appears to be distinct differences in help seeking tendencies between the two sexes as two-thirds of all clients seeking psychological help are female. They hypothesised that one possible reason why men are more hesitant to use counselling services is adherence to traditional gender role. Seeking psychological help would be seen as admitting failure, weakness and defeat. However, Ojenge and Muchemi in Ibrahim, Aloka, Wambiya and Raburu (2014) found out that most girls did not believe in the counsellors for lack of privacy in the counselling rooms. Research shows that secondary schools in Kenya have established guidance and counselling departments (Ndirang’u, 2007). Moreover, this could possibly be because of the stringent measures that have been put in place by the Quality Assurance Officers from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST). However, the guidance and counselling services face a number of challenges. Additionally, a research by Auni, Songok, Odhiambo and Lyanda (2014) indicates that the poor social adjustment in schools was as a result of the challenges faced by the guidance and counselling departments. Besides, they note that majority of the heads of department do not have adequate training that would help them to handle the varied issues affecting students in schools since the short term workshops and seminars that the majority of them had attended were not sufficient in empowering them to effectively guide and counsel students. Likewise, the guidance and counselling teachers also had other responsibilities in schools with heavy subject loads and therefore not able to run the programme well. Furthermore, the same study also reported that some students had a poor attitude towards the programme and were not willing to confide in teachers doubling up in the guidance and counselling activities and being a member of the disciplinary committee.

Mutie and Ndambuki (2004) emphasize the need to introduce and strengthen the guidance and counselling services in schools and colleges so as to meet the varied needs of students. Furthermore, a number of reasons have been given for this. Ndondo (2004) points out that some students engage in antisocial behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse and irresponsible sexual behaviour. Consequently, this is seen to result from lack of knowledge on how to manage leisure time on the part of the students and it has led to a decline in moral integrity. Besides, the need for guidance and counselling services could also be due to the ever-growing complexity of the society and the people have to learn how to cope with accompanying challenges (Biswaio, 1996). Moreover, it should be noted that despite the manifold benefits of guidance and counselling services, studies that have investigated the secondary school students’ perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling services on their school adjustment have been inconclusive.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to investigate students’ perception of the influence of guidance and counselling and academic performance in Baringo County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore the perceptions of students on the various guidance and counselling services.
2. Determine the perceptions of students on the influence of guidance and counselling on academic performance

III. METHOD

A. Participants

To answer the research questions, the author sought views from the students and teachers. A total of 142 respondents participated in the study as illustrated below in Table 1. Interviews were used to collect data from the teachers and focus groups discussions were held for the students in the sampled secondary schools in Baringo County.

| TABLE I: THE SAMPLE SIZE |
|--------------------------|
| Sample Group            | Sample Size |
| Students                | 130         |
| Teachers                | 12          |
| Total                   | 142         |

IV. MEASURES AND PROCEDURE (S).

Data was generated using semi-structured interviews from the teachers and FDGs for the students. Although semi-structured interviews rely on pre-formulated questions for guidance, they also allow respondents to talk freely about those things that are of interest and importance to them (Baker & Foy, 2008). Data was analyzed thematically. According to Sargent (2012) thematic analysis is a data reduction and analysis approach whereby data is segmented, categorized, summarized, and constructed in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set. Braun and Clarke (2013) describe thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data”, and they prescribed the following six steps: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report.
V. RESULTS

A. Student perception of guidance and counselling services

The students and teachers from the six sub-counties in Baringo County participated in the study through focus group discussions and interviews where they were asked questions regarding the influence of guidance and counselling services at their respective schools. The findings indicated that students sought counseling services regularly when faced with challenges, that adequate sensitization was conducted by teacher counselors and peers counselors, motivational speakers and counselors are regularly invited by some schools, students were willing to find solutions to their concerns, there were no teacher counselors in some schools at the county courtesy of understaffing, some schools lacked adequate guidance and counseling infrastructure and that students had a positive attitude towards guidance and counseling.

These findings indicated that students who rated guidance and counselling as good generally perceived it as having a more positive influence on the various activities that they engaged themselves in. These findings are consistent with the urge from various stakeholders of education to introduce, strengthen, and recommend guidance and counselling services to students. In addition, guidance, and counselling services have been recommended in all schools and colleges because of its manifold benefits (Gachathi, 1976; Kamunge, 1988; Ominde, 1964). One of the benefits is that guidance and counselling services are reported to have a high level of impact on students’ social as well as emotional adjustment (Gatua, 2012) as well as improved academic performance (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997).

B. Student perception on the influence of guidance and counselling on academic performance

The students and teachers from the six sub-counties in Baringo County participated in the study through focus group discussions and interviews where they were asked questions regarding the influence of guidance and counselling services and academic performance. The findings of the study indicated that; there was improved attendance and participation in class, their attitude towards learning improved, students were able to define their academic goals, assignments were done and submitted on time, there was improved desire to attend and participate in lesson discussions, improved desire for research in the library to enhance attainment of educational goals and objectives and improved academic performance across the teaching subjects. These findings revealed that students have positive perceptions on the influence of guidance and counselling services on academic performance in Baringo County Secondary Schools. Similar findings that those participants who rated guidance and counselling services as poor scored a lower mean scores (M=2.18 and SD =SD=0.77) on perceptions on the influence of guidance and counselling services on academic adjustment as compared to those who rated the services as good (M=2.90 and SD=0.29) (Kanus, 2014). This may be attributed to the fact that students’ academic counselling needs may not have been met in a situation where implementation of the guidance and counselling services is poor. The implication of the findings is that some schools may not have heeded the call for the implementation of functional guidance and counselling departments in schools (Mutie & Ndambuki, 2004). It is also possible that due to the teacher counsellors’ workload, the teacher counsellors barely have time to avail themselves for counselling services as noted by Ndirangu (2007). It is also possible that some teacher counsellors are under pressure to produce a good mean in their subjects and therefore barely get time to attend to their additional duties of guiding and counselling students. It is also common knowledge in Kenya that guidance and counselling is not examined, so it is likely to be ignored by the teachers and students. Students’ academic challenges need to be addressed fully and the best way to do it in schools is through academic guidance and counselling. When this is done the learners are likely to excel academically and be better prepared for future careers (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997).

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