

ISSN: 0975-833X

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
CURRENT RESEARCH

Vol.6, Issue 09, September - 2014



Impact Factor: SJIF : 3.845

Indexing: Thomson Reuters: ENDNOTE



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NYERI AND NAIROBI COUNTIES, KENYA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 20th June, 2014
Received in revised form
06th July, 2014
Accepted 02nd August, 2014
Published online 30th September, 2014

Key words:

Counselling,
Help-Seeking Behaviour,
Attitudes to Counselling,
Problem Severity,
Locus of Control.

ABSTRACT

Secondary school students are exposed to social, educational, vocational and psychological problems which they are unable to handle on their own. However, many students, instead of seeking counselling when they have problems, tend to keep them to themselves. This necessitated this study whose title was 'a comparative study of factors influencing guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour among public secondary school students in Nyeri and Nairobi counties, Kenya'. Some of the factors influencing counselling help seeking behaviour among secondary school students are student's locus of control and problem severity. The purpose of this study therefore was to find out if the same factors influence counselling help seeking behaviour, among public secondary school students in Nyeri and Nairobi counties and also if the identified factors differ in the two counties. The study employed ex-post-facto causal comparative research design. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to select schools and students who participated in the study. The respondents of the study were 387 students from 20 public secondary schools and 36 teacher counsellors from the sampled schools selected using stratified and purposive sampling methods respectively. Data was collected through administration of two questionnaires; for students and for the teacher-counsellors in the sampled schools. In data analysis, the chi-square was used in testing hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings were; an internal locus of control was associated with a more positive attitude towards guidance and counselling, and also an increase in problem severity, increased the likelihood of seeking counselling.

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INTRODUCTION

Guidance and counselling programme aims at assisting people to overcome their problems in life. According to Kenya Institute of Education (2004), guidance involves a process in which an expert educates a person to make responsible decisions so as to be able to handle challenges in his or her environment effectively. Mcleod (2003), defines counselling as a process which involves one person (the counsellor) helping another person (the client) to work through some difficulties or painful emotional, behavioural or relationship problem or difficulty. There guidance and counselling programme is an integral part of an educational system and is designed to address the physical, emotional, social, vocational and academic challenges faced by adolescent students. This is necessary because some problems the adolescents encounter place a great challenge on them and their effects might impair their overall development. Guidance and counselling programme if well implemented can assist adolescents in problem solving.

However, previous researches have shown that students in Kenyan schools do not seek help from teacher counsellors and other potential help providers despite increased indiscipline cases, strikes and violence which in some cases resulted in loss of life. Nairobi and Central Provinces are among regions where there are a higher number of students abusing different drugs, and drug use has been noted as a main cause of indiscipline and violence in secondary schools. Drugs exposure is also lower in rural than urban adolescents. Therefore there is a need to carry out a study in Nyeri (rural) and Nairobi (urban) Counties to try to establish if the ugly incidences reported in the areas could be attributed to students' failure to utilize guidance and counselling programme. Although research on factors influencing guidance and counselling help-seeking among adolescents has been done widely most of it has been done outside Kenya. There is also scanty data on comparing how these factors influencing guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour among adolescents in rural and urban areas particularly in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties. Some of the factors found to influence counselling help seeking behavior are locus of control and problem severity. Different studies have shown that as the severity of a problem increases the tendency to seek

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counselling help increases. Adolescents have been observed to perceive formal sources of help as more appropriate for severe symptoms of depression than informal sources such as friends and family. Therefore as adolescents experience a high level of impairment and distress, the more likely they access mental health services (M. Phillipa, Victoria University of Wellington, Young Peoples' Help-Seeking for Depression). Similarly, Adams and Bromley (1998) found out that, the severity of problems and the importance of seeking help as a coping strategy, determine the likelihood of an individual seeking help. Moghadam (2009) also found that the willingness to self-disclose to a counsellor and the severity of the problem were significantly related to willingness to seek help for the problem. The outcomes suggested that the more severe the problem, the more likely the students would seek counselling. However in some cases the adolescents will start by seeking informal counselling and only seek formal counselling as the last resort (Grinstein-Weiss *et al* 2005).

Studies have also noted that an individual's locus of control is an important determinant of a person's decision to seek counselling help. Locus of control is whether or not an individual believes that he or she has the personal resources to cope with a problem. The concept is used to classify people into two categories, those with internal locus of control and those with external locus of control. Individuals with a high internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own behaviour and actions while those with a high external locus of control believe that powerful others, fate, or chance primarily determine events (Rotter, 1954).

Internal or external locus of control would be relevant to a person's belief in their ability to make changes in their relationship which determine their adjustment in life. Fischer and Turner (1970) found that individuals with an internal locus of control had more favourable attitudes towards seeking professional help. Similarly, Davis (1996) concluded that individuals with an internal locus of control made more use and benefitted more from social support systems than do their external counterparts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used *ex-post facto*-causal comparative research design. It was appropriate because it is used to determine the relationship between variables and the nature of prevailing circumstances without manipulating the independent variables and also because manifestations have already occurred (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The design attempts to examine the extent to which one variable influences another. In the current study, the researcher compared student's locus of control against attitude towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties. The design further helped the researcher to examine the influence of severity of the students' problems and their tendency to seek guidance and counselling help in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties. In this case, the target population comprised of all the 61,324 students and all the teacher-counsellors in 116 public secondary schools in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties, while the accessible population comprised all the 30,112 students in form 3 and form 4 public secondary schools. The form 3 and 4

students were preferred as they had been in secondary school for an adequate period of time to have understood the guidance and counselling programme activities.

The study used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table of determining sample size from a given population. For a population of 61,342 according to the table a sample size of 382 was derived. The table gives the minimum sample and therefore the researcher adjusted the sample size upwards slightly to 400 to ensure that it's possible to divide the value among students in form 3 and 4 and also boys and girls in mixed schools. Stratified random sampling was used in selecting schools and students used in the study. Stratified random sampling is a procedure used when subjects are known to vary in some variables in the population (Salkind, 2000). The schools were divided into 3 strata namely girls' schools, boys' schools and mixed schools, while students were in two groups that is boys or girls. Twenty public secondary schools were selected which included 3 girls' and 4 mixed schools in both Nairobi and Nyeri Counties and 4 and 2 boys' schools in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties respectively. Thereafter 20 students in each school were selected, 10 from each form that that is form 3 and form 4. In cases of mixed schools 5 boys and 5 girls were selected from each form to obtain 10 students for each form. Two teacher counsellors in each of the sampled school were selected using purposive sampling to make a sample of 40. The two teacher counsellors in each sampled school with more experience in school counselling were used in the study because they had a higher chance of having been involved in guiding and counselling students and in better position to give better responses to the questionnaire.

The instruments used in collecting data were two sets of questionnaires one for students and the other for teacher counsellors. The instruments helped the researcher in getting information on students' locus of control, severity of the students' problem, demographic characteristics of the students, demographic characteristics of the help providers and seeking guidance and counselling help. Some parts of the students' questionnaire were the adaptations of the Attitudes Towards Seeking Psychological Help Scale (ATSPHS) by (Fischer and Farina, 1995) and the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale by (Rotter 1966), which are standardized scales for measuring attitudes towards seeking counselling help and locus of control respectively. The other parts of students' questionnaire and the teacher counsellors' questionnaire were designed by the researcher. The part of the students' questionnaire relating to students problems and students frequency of seeking counselling help had response format in a frequency-related 4-point likert scale (always=1 sometimes=2, rarely=3, never=4), ATSPHS a 5-point likert scale (strongly agree=1, agree=2, undecided=3, disagree=4, strongly agree=5) and in the case of the Internal-External Locus of control scale by Rotter (1966) there are only two choices (a and b) with each representing and internal or external locus of control. The data collected was processed and coded. It was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0. The *chi*-square and the *t*-test were used to test the hypotheses. This helped the researcher in determining whether to reject or accept the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The researcher further

used means, frequencies distributions, percentages and standard deviations in obtaining data relating to, severity of the students' problems, locus of control and seeking counselling help in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties.

RESULTS

The study was carried out with the purpose of comparing factors influencing guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour among public secondary school students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties. In order to achieve the goal of this study, the researcher was guided by the following research objectives and hypotheses.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- i) To examine the influence of perceived severity of the problem on decision to seek guidance and counselling help among students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.
- ii) To compare the of locus of control on students' attitudes
- iii) To compare the locus of control on students' attitudes toward seeking guidance and counselling help among students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties

The hypotheses of the study were as follows:

Ho₁. There is no statistically significant relationship between perceived severity of the problem and students' guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour when faced with various problems in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

Ho₂. There is no statistically significant relationship between students' locus of control and their attitudes toward seeking guidance and counselling help in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

relationship between problem severity and the frequency of seeking counselling help among the students, ($\chi^2 = 56.179$, $df=6$, $p=0.000$). Results showed that students experiencing problems occasionally were more likely to seek counselling more times compared to those rarely experiencing problems. The null hypothesis of the study that stated; there is no statistically significant relationship between perceived severity of the problem and students' guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour when faced with various problems in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties was rejected. It was therefore concluded that as the problem severity increases, the likelihood of seeking counselling help increases.

Table 2. The Chi-Square Test Results

Chi-square statistics	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	56.179	6	.000*
Likelihood Ratio	47.735	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	41.472	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	387		

*Significant at $p < 0.05$ level

Table 3. The t-test Statistics on Locus of Control and Help-seeking Behaviour Attitude

LOC data	N	Help-seeking attitudes mean score	Std. Deviation
Internal LOC	333	20.17	8.866
External LOC	54	23.40	5.620
t		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
t-test statistics	-2.566	385	0.011*

*Significant at $p < 0.05$ level

Table 1. Problem severity across frequency of seeking counselling help

Problem severity	Seeking counselling help						Total	
	Never		Once		Two or three times		f	%
	f	%	f	%	f	%		
Never	5	1.3	1	0.3	0	0.0	6	1.5
Rarely	30	7.8	108	27.9	6	1.6	144	37.2
Sometimes	14	3.6	179	46.3	37	9.6	230	59.4
Always	0	0.0	5	1.3	2	0.5	7	1.8
Total	49	12.7	293	75.7	45	11.6	387	100.0

Influence of Perceived Severity of the Problems on Decision to Seek Guidance and Counselling Help

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant relationship between perceived severity of the problem and students' guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour when faced with various problems in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

The results of this hypothesis are presented in Table 1 and 2. From Table 1, it was observed that the frequency of experiencing problem is compared with number of time counselling was sought. Majority of the respondents reported that they experienced problems rarely (27.9%) and sometimes (46.3%) and also had sought counselling once. The findings presented in Table 2 illustrate that there was a significant

Locus of Control and Students' Attitudes toward Seeking Guidance and Counselling Help

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference between locus of control and students' attitudes toward seeking guidance and counselling help in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

As shown in Table 3, the t-test statistics showed that there was a statistically significant difference ($t = -2.566$, $df = 385$, $p = 0.011$) in attitudes towards counselling help seeking behaviour among the students with internal and external locus of control. It emerges that students with an external locus of control obtained higher mean scores than those with an internal locus of control. The null hypothesis of the study that stated; there is no statistically significant difference between

locus of control and students' attitudes towards seeking guidance and counselling help in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties was rejected. It was therefore concluded that there was a difference in attitude towards seeking counselling help between internals and externals, with the internal locus of control being associated with more positive attitude towards seeking guidance and counselling help than those with external locus of control.

DISCUSSION

From research findings it was concluded that as the problem severity increases, the likelihood of seeking counselling help increases. The possible explanation of this scenario could be that as severity of problems increases there is a likelihood that the level of discomfort increases. Such an uncomfortable state may bring about a state of imbalance in the body. When level of discomfort is very high, a person may not have another option, but to reduce or remove it through seeking help. Another conclusion reached was that an internal locus of control was associated with more positive attitude towards seeking guidance and counselling help than the external locus of control. The explanation for these findings could be because a person with an internal locus of control would most likely be more inclined to participate in guidance and counselling. This is because of internals believing that something could be done to help in overcoming a challenging situation unlike the externals who may feel out of control and leave problems to sort themselves out.

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