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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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ABSTRACT

Secondary school students in Kenyan schools experience many problems which they are unable to handle on their own and most of them are reluctant to seek counselling. This necessitated this study's 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 attitudes towards counselling and students' gender. 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 from the sampled schools selected using stratified sampling method. Data was collected through administration of a questionnaire for students in the sampled schools. In data analysis, the t-test was used in testing hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study findings showed that, Nairobi County secondary school students had a more negative attitude towards guidance and counselling than those in Nyeri County. Further findings were that there was no significant gender difference in attitudes towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour and students sought guidance and counselling from teacher counsellors. This study therefore recommends that, students to be enlightened on availability of guidance and counselling services in order to utilize them in prevention and solving problems before they go out of hand.

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INTRODUCTION

Secondary School students are faced with many problems, including psychological, social, vocational and educational most of which they are unable to solve on their own. They therefore need assistance in handling these problems. Guidance and counselling programme if well implemented can assist adolescents in problem solving. However, previous research has shown that students do not seek help from teacher - counsellors and other potential help providers despite increased cases of indiscipline, strikes and violence in our schools which in some cases has resulted in loss of life. Some ugly incidences of indiscipline are when dormitories were set ablaze in Nyeri and Endarasha high schools. In addition, the banning of expulsion and canning of students by the Ministry of Education has only left the school administrators with a few options (Republic of Kenya, 2001, Kenya Gazette Notice, 2001). There is therefore need to ensure that secondary school students seek counselling. Some of the factors identified as

influencing guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour are gender and attitude towards guidance and counselling. Loo (2001) found out that adolescents in schools were not seeking professional psychological help for their personal problems despite a greater awareness of counselling services available in the community and schools. Another study by Suradi (2010) on psychological help-seeking attitudes among Malaysian college and university students similarly revealed that students generally do not seek help from counsellors, as only 49.6% of the respondents indicated they seek counselling help.

In relation to attitudes towards guidance and counselling, previous researches show mixed results with some noting a positive attitude towards counselling while others indicated a negative one. Ubana (2008) in her research study on the attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services in Yakurr local government area of Cross River State concluded that students attitude towards guidance and counselling services was negative and that the geographical location of the school had no significant influence on students' attitudes toward guidance and counselling services (A. N. Ubana, Cross River University of Technology,

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Nigeria, Attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services in Yakurr local government area of Cross River State). In yet another study of factors affecting guidance and counselling, got similar findings that there were no effective guiding and counselling services being offered in secondary schools due to the negative attitude towards guidance and counselling (C. K. Anyona, Kenyatta University, Kenya, A comparative study of counseling needs of adolescent boys and girls In Kenyan secondary school). Another study by Nyamwange, Nyakan and Ondima (2012), on a study of assessment of challenges facing secondary school guidance and counselling teachers in Nyamira district, found that 56.2% of the students used in the study did not consider counselling necessary in the schools which implies that they view guidance and counselling negatively.

However, Mokogi (2008) study on factors influencing guidance and counselling in secondary schools in Ogembo Division indicated that students had a positive attitude towards guidance and counselling and also their teacher counsellors. This was inferred from the responses by students on some items on the questionnaire such as, on whether teaching and learning atmosphere can be improved by guiding and counselling with 89.3% of the respondents giving a yes response, on whether guidance and counselling can assist students in choosing subjects and future career, 93.8% of the respondents said yes, and on whether guidance and counselling programme is necessary in their school, 96.7% of the respondents responded to the affirmative.

In relation to attitudes towards guidance and counselling, previous researches show mixed results with some noting gender difference and others no gender difference in attitudes towards guidance and counselling. Female students have been found to have a more positive attitude towards seeking counselling help as compared to their male counterparts (O.R. Odah, Virginia Polytechnic of State University, USA, Predictors of attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help among Kuwait university students).

Other research findings concluded that sex of the student has no significant influence on students' attitudes toward guidance and counselling services A. N. Ubana, Cross River University of Technology, Nigeria, Attitude of secondary school students towards guidance and counselling services in Yakurr local government area of Cross River State). (Mohd *et al.*, 2010), also had similar findings in their study on secondary school students' reluctance in seeking counselling where the results indicated that the gender of the students did not affect their willingness or reluctance in seeking counselling services.

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 gender

and attitude towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour 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 to be 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.

The instruments used in collecting data a set of questionnaires. The instrument helped the researcher in getting information on students' attitudes towards guidance and counselling, gender differences in attitudes towards guidance and counselling and demographic characteristics of the students. Some parts of the students' questionnaire were the adaptations of the Attitudes towards Seeking Psychological Help Scale (ATSPHS) by (Fischer and Farina, 1995) which is a standardized scale for measuring attitudes towards seeking counselling help. The other part of students' questionnaire was 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).

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 t-test was 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.

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 establish whether students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties seek guidance and counselling help.
- ii) To compare students' attitudes towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.
- iii) To compare gender differences in attitudes towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour among students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

The research hypotheses of this study were as follows:

Ho₁. There is no statistically significant difference in student's attitude towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

Ho₂. There is no statistically significant gender difference in attitudes towards guidance and help- seeking in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

Students' Guidance and Counselling Help-seeking Behaviour

This objective was key in establishing whether public secondary school students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties seek guidance and counselling help.

Objective 1: To establish whether students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties seek guidance and counselling help

To address this objective, students were asked to indicate the frequency in which they sought counselling in relation to social problems, psychological problems, educational problems and vocational problems. According to Figure 1, more students from Nairobi County sought counselling on social problems as compared to those in Nyeri County.

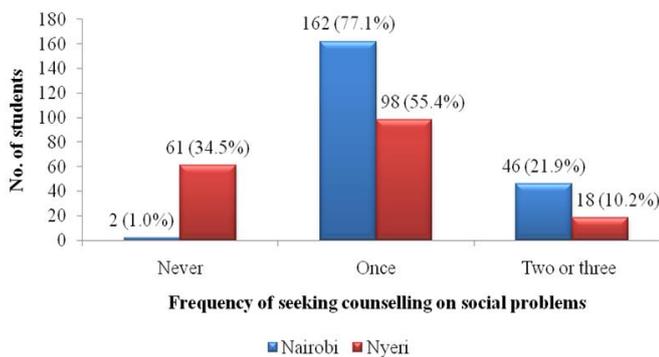


Figure 1. Seeking counselling help on social problems

Figure 2 indicates that more students from Nyeri than Nairobi County never sought counselling on psychological problems. Figure 3 indicates that more students from Nyeri than Nairobi County never sought counselling on educational problems. The

findings showed that significantly more students (94.2%) from Nairobi County sought counselling compared to those students (62.1%) from Nyeri County. Figure 4 indicates that more students from Nyeri County never sought counselling on vocational problems and more students from Nairobi County sought counselling on vocational problems once, twice or thrice. However, more than 50% of respondents in both Nairobi and Nyeri Counties had sought counselling on vocational issues from their teacher counsellors.

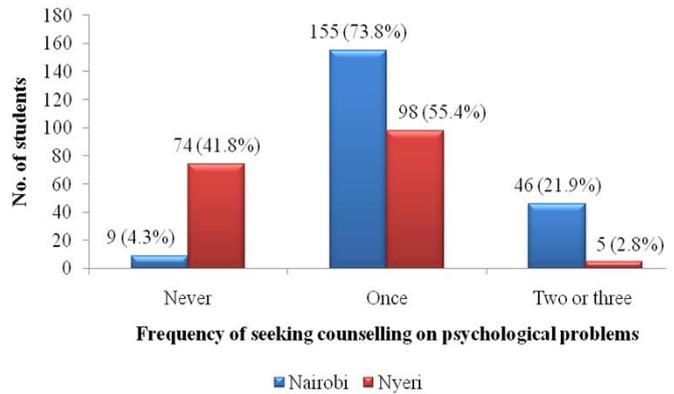


Figure 2. Seeking counselling help on psychological problems

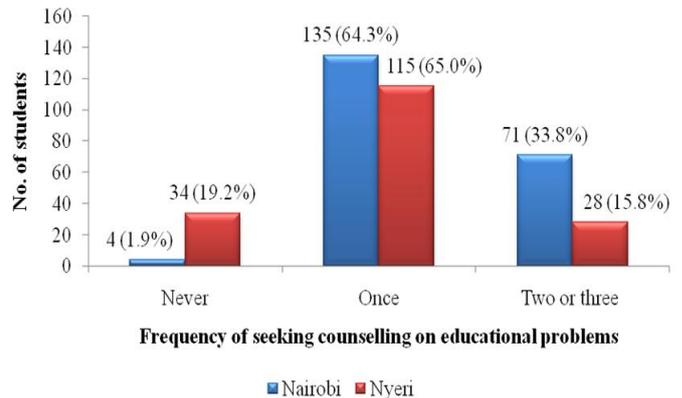


Figure 3. Seeking counselling help on educational problems

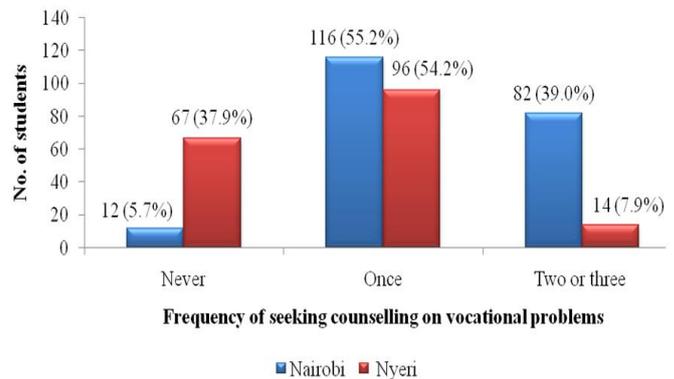


Figure 4. Seeking counselling help on vocational problems

Students' Attitudes towards Guidance and Counselling

Objective 2: To compare students’ attitudes towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties

The researcher compared attitudes towards guidance and counselling among public secondary school students in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties using Attitudes towards Seeking Psychological Help (ATSPHS) by Fischer and Farina (1995). The results of the analysis revealed that students from Nairobi County obtained higher mean score on the scale compared with the students from Nyeri County. The difference in mean scores illustrated that the two groups differed in their attitude towards seeking psychological help. Results in Figure 5 illustrate that majority (67.2%) of the students from Nyeri County had a positive attitude towards seeking psychological help while majority (72.9%) of the students from Nairobi County had a negative attitude towards the same.

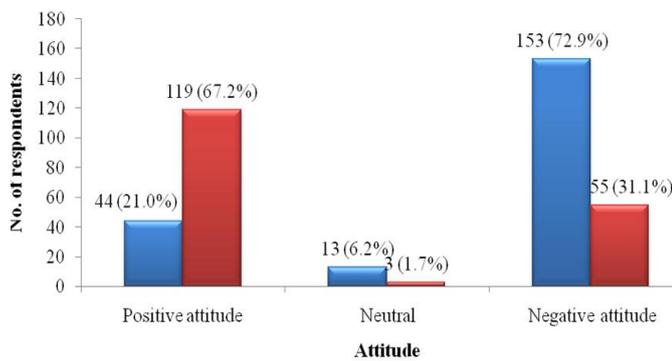


Figure 5. Students’ Overall Attitudes toward Seeking Guidance and Counselling Help

Table 1. The t-test Results on Students’ Attitudes towards Seeking Psychological Help in Public Secondary Schools in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties

The t-test statistics	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	11.009	385	.000*	11.09	1.007
Equal variances not assumed	10.441	244.636	.000	11.09	1.062

*Significant at $p < 0.05$ level

Table 2. Independent Samples t-Test on Gender Differences in Attitudes towards Guidance and Counselling Help-seeking Behaviour

T-test statistics	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.852	385	.065	.18	.099
Equal variances not assumed	1.852	384.867	.065	.18	.099

Not significant at $p < 0.05$ level

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant difference in public secondary school student’s attitude towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties

The researcher conducted the t-test statistic to establish whether students from Nairobi and Nyeri Counties differed in their attitudes toward seeking psychological help. The t-test statistic in Table 1 revealed that there was a significant difference in attitudes towards seeking psychological help among students from schools in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties, ($t=11.009$, $df=385$, $p=0.000$). As reflected in Figure 5, majority (72.9%) of the students from Nairobi County had a negative

attitude while majority (67.2%) of the students from Nyeri County had a positive attitude. The null hypothesis of the study that was stated as; there is no statistically significant difference in public secondary school student’s attitude towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties was rejected. The conclusion made was that; there is a significant difference in public secondary school students’ attitudes toward guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant gender difference in attitudes toward guidance and counselling help-seeking behavior among students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties

The researcher further tested gender differences in attitudes towards guidance and counselling help-seeking behaviour among public secondary schools students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties, the mean scores obtained by male and female students on the scale measuring their attitude towards seeking psychological help were compared. As shown in Table 2, the t-test statistics indicates that there was no significant gender difference in attitudes toward seeking psychological help among the students, ($t=0.684$, $df=385$, $p=0.494$). This shows that both male and female students do not differ in their attitudes towards seeking psychological help and therefore the second hypothesis of the study that was stated as; there is no statistically significant gender difference in attitudes towards guidance and help-seeking behaviour among public secondary school students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties was accepted.

DISCUSSION

Public secondary schools students in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties sought counselling when they encountered social, psychological, educational and vocational problems. The high incidences of experiencing different types of problems may have contributed to the students counselling help seeking behaviour for them to overcome the challenges they encountered. Also students in Nyeri had a positive attitude towards guidance and counselling and their counterparts in Nairobi County had a negative one. The negative attitude among students from Nairobi County could be as a result of

peer influence. Since Nairobi is an urban area, there is a likelihood of those students already with a negative attitude succeeded in changing other students who had a positive attitude. However, Nyeri being a rural area, the effect of peer influence may not be significant and therefore those with a positive attitude towards seeking counselling retained it. Finally there were no gender differences in attitudes towards guidance and counselling in the two counties. These results may be explained from the fact that the students used were aware of existence of help providers in schools and therefore any gender felt that it was necessary to get assistance from the teacher counsellors when in a problematic situation.

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