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The Role of Teacher Counselors in Promoting Discipline among Students in Public Secondary Schools in Ugunja Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of teacher counselors in promoting discipline among students in public secondary schools in Ugunja Sub-County, Kenya. The study was guided by the Assertive Discipline Approach Theory and the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 36 principals and 3500 students in the sub-county. Simple random sampling was used to select 12 principals. The Table of Krejcie and Morgan was used to select 246 students from public secondary schools. Data were collected using questionnaire and interviews. Face validity of the instruments was ascertained by the experts from the Department of Psychology and Educational Foundations of Jaramogi Odinga Oginga University of Science and Technology. Piloting was done to obtain reliability. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, and percentages. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study findings indicated that teacher counselors have an important role of assisting and maintaining order in school through disciplinary interventions. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the government should employ trained teacher counselors in schools and that regular refresher and in service courses on guidance and counseling should be provided by government.

Keywords: Teacher counselors, promoting discipline, public secondary schools

1. Introduction

Guidance and counseling programs in secondary schools have been introduced to assist students overcome challenges they experience at home and at school. Nziramasanga (1999) states that because of many pressures imposed on the family, parents tend to have little time with their children to give them the necessary guidance. Guidance and counseling is a process of helping individuals discover and develop their educational, vocational and psychological potentialities and achieve some level of personal happiness and social usefulness in society. In Kenyan secondary schools, students are in school most of the time throughout the year. This means that it is the guidance and counseling teachers who are tasked with the important duty of shaping their character. UNESCO (2002:2) indicates that, "African adults have become more concerned with earning money and are less occupied with many traditional practices that formerly contributed to the upbringing of young people". Rapid sociological changes emanating from modernization and urbanization stress students. Gitonga (2007) laments that due to educational and economic challenges they have to grapple with; parents are left with no time to positively parent their children. The result is permissive parenting style, which has its toll on the growing child. Permissive parenting style has no rules or limits. Guidance programs for secondary school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social, vocational and academic difficulties of adolescent students. This is to complement learning in the classroom and also enhance academic performance/achievements of students. Guidance plays a vital role in preventing educational, personal, social, mental emotional and other similar problems among secondary school students. In Ugunja sub county, there are numerous cases of students burning dormitories and other forms of indiscipline in the secondary schools. It was therefore important to establish the role of teacher counselors in promoting discipline in public secondary schools in the sub county.

2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to find out the role of teacher counselors in promoting discipline among students in public secondary schools in Ugunja Sub-County.

3. Literature Review

This chapter covered the role of guidance and counseling in promoting discipline in various parts of the world, African countries and eventually narrowed down to Kenya. Hayes and Morgan (2013) carried out a study in Mainland UK and Northern Ireland on the nature, scope and context of the practice of guidance and counseling teachers in post primary

schools and identified the counseling models and practices employed by guidance counselors, the issues with which students present for counseling, the proportion of time which guidance counselors devote to counseling and to counseling individual students, the challenges were context, management, training, support, and resources, that guidance and counselors face in carrying out their counseling role, how guidance counselors employ referral, where students are referred, the policies on counseling that exist in schools, the context within which guidance counselors work, including management, training, support and resources and the ways in which guidance counselors gauge their work performance.

In the study, Hayes and Morgan (2013) carried out post primary schools in developed countries while the current study will be carried out in a developing country, Kenya. It also concentrated on the role of guidance and counseling on promotion of discipline among students in secondary schools in Ugunja Sub-County, Kenya. A number of recently published studies have been concerned about issues of counselor self-care and particularly, compassion, fatigue and burn-out.

Stapleton (2014) carried out a study on elementary teachers' expectations and perceptions of school counselors in USA, using qualitative study explored the expectations and perceptions elementary teachers have on school counselors. Participants were current or past students in an elementary education graduate program at a Southeastern university. The participants responded to an open-ended online survey that consisted of questions that focused on the demographics of their schools and the expectations and perceptions they had of the school counselor's roles and responsibilities pertaining to both academic achievement and student behavior. Although responses varied, the data suggests that there was substantial concern regarding the time and availability of the school counselor, implications of the use of counselors as school standardized testing administrators, and respondents' desires for school counselors to focus on the severe emotional and behavioral needs of students.

Stapleton (2014) study was qualitative in nature while the present study was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Moreover, the reviewed study used online surveys while the present study used interviews as well as questionnaires. The reviewed study was done in the USA, while the present study was carried out in Ugunja Sub-County, Kenya where such a study has not been done.

Similarly, Laura and Kuhn (2006) examined high school students' perceptions of the role of teacher counselors and the functions associated with those roles. A 20 item questionnaire was administered to students at two urban high schools. The questionnaire instructed the students to rate the importance of 15 school counselors' roles. Furthermore the students rated the importance of non-counseling functions that counselors perform for example administration and registration. Overall, the students rated the five counseling roles as important, indicating few non-counseling functions as important, demonstrating that misconception of school counselors' role still exist.

Laura and Kuhn (2006) used questionnaires which were completed by students at two urban high schools in USA, as questionnaires were completed by students in 12 public secondary schools in both rural and urban areas in Ugunja Sub-County Siaya County in Kenya in the present study. The study sampled 15 school counselors while the current study sampled 12 teacher counselors. Laura and Kuhn (2006) also rated the importance of non-counseling functions as performed by teacher counselors whereas the present study focused on the role of teacher counselors in the promotion of student discipline.

The study carried out by Lambie, Hagedorn, Bryce and Kara (2010) showed that many professional school counselors in the USA can perform their counseling work with empathy and flexibility while at the same time giving attention to boundary-setting and self-care. A classical experiment by McLeod (2008) explains how a group of individuals can influence somebody in making a decision. Suhttleworth (2008) noted that the Asch experiment was designed to test how peer pressure would influence the judgment and individuality of a test subject to conform to the majority. It was found out that people frequently followed the majority judgment, even when the majority was wrong. It was further noted that people often accept to be influenced just for the desire to achieve a sense of security within a group that is of a similar age, culture, religion, or educational status. Any unwillingness to be influenced carries with it the very risk of social rejection and this is what young people fear most (Dewey, 2008). The study done by Dewey (2008) did not look at role of peer influence on promotion of student discipline which the present study intends to do.

Yaghambe (2013) carried out a study on effectiveness of physical punishment including the corporal punishment policy in managing school. The study was conducted in 10 secondary schools accounting for 50 teachers and 104 students. A descriptive qualitative methodological approach was largely followed, using semi structured questionnaires: interviews and observations to collect data. Quantitative tabulation of some data was only used prior to qualitative exploration. The findings suggested that the use of physical and corporal punishment method was often degrading to students and less effective. A wide range of abuses of students' rights was noted.

Yaghambe (2013) examined the effectiveness of physical punishment including punishment policy in managing schools in Tanzania while the present study established the role of guidance and counseling services in promoting discipline among students in public secondary schools in Ugunja Sub-County Kenya. Yaghambe (2013) in the study was conducted in 10 schools with 50 teachers and 104 students as respondents whereas the present study used 12 principals, 12 teacher counselors and 246 students as respondents. The present study used interview schedule which the reviewed study did not use.

In Zimbabwe, a school counselor has to keep an eye on the guidance and counseling services in order to remain both relevant and effective. He effectively conceives and implements services designed to address the educational needs of students and provide students with study skills in order to cope with secondary school work (Madhuku, 2005). Madhuku (2005) posited that for guidance and counseling services to be truly effective, teachers, counselors and administrators must work together with a common goal in mind. Counselors have a clear perception of their function, but those

perceptions may be very different than that of teachers, as well as administrators, students and parents. Madhuku (2005) further added that for effective comprehensive developmental guidance to take place, cohesion and cooperation among everyone in a school system must exist.

In Zimbabwe, school counselor has a role to assist students in making friends and to sustain friendships. They also assist adolescent students in understanding themselves, overcome the socio-psychological problems caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Madhuku, 2005). In Uganda, the counselor's duties include assisting students who are maladjusted, annoyed, unhappy and frustrated. They also help the students with their normal physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. The students are taught about physical changes in their bodies and communication skills to help them develop friendships and relate more effectively to their peers, parents and teachers (Mukama, 2010).

Samoei (2012) in a study on the role of guidance and counseling in management of student discipline in secondary schools in Londiani District, Kericho County, Kenya established that the guidance and counseling teacher is a very important person in the delivery of guidance and counseling services in educational institutions and is also in-charge of planning and development of the guidance and counseling programs. The G&C teacher identifies needs of the individual students and develops plans for action. Samoei (2012) established that the guidance and counseling teacher co-ordinates the various aspects of guidance and counseling program as well as evaluating those program. The teacher-counselor handles issues related to student's appraisal, student's education and vocation, discipline and students welfare and also helps the individual students to grow up in social behavior. However literature search on studies on role of teacher counselor in Ugunja Sub-County indicated no such study has been done which this study intended to address.

Ajowi and Omboto (2013) in a study on preparedness of teachers to maintain discipline in the Absence of Corporal Punishment in Bondo District Kenya set to find out how the teacher managed student discipline in public secondary schools in Bondo District. The study used survey research design and targeted 40 public secondary schools. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 3 boy schools, 2 girls and 8 mixed secondary schools for study. A total of 13 secondary schools were sampled. Saturated sampling was used to select all the 13 head teachers, 13 deputy head teachers and 13 heads of guidance and counseling. 26 classroom teachers were selected by simple random and convenient sampling technique, while the students were stratified per class and then 780 of them were selected based on simple random sampling from forms 2, 3 and 4 classes. Form 1 class did not participate in the study because they had just reported in school. Questionnaires, in-depth interview schedules and school documents on discipline were used to collect data.

The present study however was descriptive in nature and was carried out in Ugunja Sub-County where such a study had not been done as revealed by literature review. The current study filled the gap of the population in that while Ajowi and Omboto (2013) study excluded Form One students, this study involved all students in public secondary schools in Ugunja Sub-County, Kenya.

The study by Ajowi and Omboto (2013), it could be deduced that counselors assist students in achieving appropriate personal adjustment and in the development of adequate interpersonal relationships, while the present study sought to establish whether school counselors in Ugunja Sub-County performed the above functions in the promotion of discipline by establishing how they did it and what effects this had on the effectiveness of their counseling services.

In Kenya, majority of school counselors are teachers of religion who are appointed by the head teacher on ad hoc basis to "take care" of the counseling needs of students (Republic of Kenya, 2012). They lack training in basic counseling skills and expertise to use computers and the internet (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Election on the basis of religious inclinations and age instead of competence makes guidance and counseling program to function inappropriately. The literature reviewed paid little attention to the fact that there can be holiday training and capacity building courses on guidance and counseling intended to improve the performance of teachers in the execution of guidance and counseling services. This study sought to establish the training competence of secondary school guidance and counseling teachers in Ugunja Sub-County since there is no such documented data from the literature reviewed.

4. Research Methodology

This study used descriptive survey design. According to Kothari (2011) descriptive research is a systematic collection and analysis of data in order to answer questions concerning current status of a program, project or activity. Face validity of the instruments was ascertained by the experts from the Department of Psychology and Educational Foundations of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology. Piloting was done to obtain the instruments reliability. The population of the study comprised of 36 principals and 3500 students in the sub-county. Simple random sampling was used to select 12 principals. The Table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used to select 246 students from public secondary schools. Questionnaire were used to collect quantitative data on students' opinions on the role of guidance and counseling services on promotion of discipline and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, and percentages. The questionnaire had closed ended items. Qualitative data were collected from the principals using interviews. The interviews took approximately 30 minutes for each principal and the researcher audio-recorded the responses from the interviewees. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

The study adopted six phases of thematic analysis as indicated in Table 1.

Phase	Description of the Process
Familiarization yourself with data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data noting down initial ideas
Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
Reviewing the themes	Checking if themes work in relation to coded extracts and the entire data set. Generating a thematic map of the analysis
Defining and naming the themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definition and names for each theme
Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, extracts, relating back the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Table 1: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Source: Braun and Clark (2006)

Interview schedule was used to probe the respondents' opinion. It has advantages such as the reliability of the information being high, it gives in-depth information about particular cases, it is systematic, it is time saving, it is comprehensive, besides the data collected being quantifiable (Oso and Onen, 2009). The instrument was administered to the Principals to probe on issues relating to their opinion on the role of guidance and counseling services in promoting discipline among public secondary school students in Ugunja Sub-County, Kenya.

5. Findings and Discussion

The research objective was to find out the role of teacher counselors in promoting discipline among students in public secondary schools in Ugunja Sub-County. To explore this objective, the researchers developed a questionnaire premeditated to investigate the roles of teacher counselors in promoting discipline among students in secondary schools. In exploring this construct, items were constructed relating to concepts which were essential components of the role of teacher counsellors, according to the students' perceptions. They were Likert-scaled item type questions, in which respondents choose from 5-point score; Extremely Important (5), Very Important (4), Important (3), somewhat important (2) and Not important (1). The students' were asked to rate the importance of each item according to their perception of a teacher counsellor's role in promoting discipline among the students in school. The results of their responses were summarized in percentage frequencies and discussed in response to the research question: "How does teacher counseling help in promoting discipline among students in public secondary schools? The computed percentage frequencies of the responses from the students on role of teacher counsellors' in schools were as shown in Table 2.

Questionnaire Items	EI	VI	I	SI	NI
Gathering information on student academic progress to make sure that all students are selecting challenging classes.	38.92	7.19	22.16	8.98	22.75
Bringing local business people into the school to help all students learn more about jobs and careers	38.74	21.21	13.94	7.27	18.79
Bringing specialists from the community into the school to help students who are having personal problems that interfere with their school work. Example: Eating disorders specialists	45.96	9.32	22.98	19.25	2.48
Starting new programs to help all students with any personal problems that can interfere with doing well in school. Example: A program on teen pregnancy prevention for the entire school.	19.33	23.33	30.67	8.00	18.67
Gathering information on all students who are having personal problems to make sure they get the help they need ¹ .	16.97	21.21	19.39	1.82	40.61
Assisting in maintaining order in the school through disciplinary intervention.	16.36	51.52	1.82	12.12	18.18
Assisting in registration and scheduling.	30.30	33.94	13.33	13.33	9.09
Providing all students with a safe place to talk about problems with academics	29.09	37.58	14.55	18.79	0.00
Helping all students make contacts with local business people to develop their understanding of different careers.	40.00	49.09	3.64	7.27	0.00
Encouraging all students to select classes that will challenge them.	53.09	32.10	14.81	0.00	0.00
Providing all students with a safe place to talk about personal/social problems. Example: fights with parents and/or friends.	40.27	52.35	4.70	0.00	2.68

Questionnaire Items	EI	VI	I	SI	NI
Working with teachers, principals, and parents to help all students do well in school.	10.91	56.36	20.61	0.00	12.12
Assisting all students in choosing college or career paths that are right for them.	20.61	27.88	26.67	0.00	24.85
Starting new programs to help all students obtain knowledge about college or careers Example: College and Career Fairs, Guest Speakers.	37.97	13.29	21.52	2.53	24.68
Assisting in special education services	59.69	13.18	9.30	12.40	5.43
Starting new programs to help all students do better in school. Example: after school study skills class, Saturday morning test preparation class.	38.30	8.51	18.44	0.00	34.75
Talking with teachers or parents about personal problems that students are unable to solve on their own.	23.08	16.92	33.85	11.54	14.62
Gathering information on students who need after school jobs and finding ways to get these students part-time work.	19.15	36.88	16.31	11.35	16.31
Administering achievement tests	16.13	12.10	29.03	0.00	42.74
Maintaining student records and files.	18.92	14.41	14.41	10.81	41.44

Table 2: Students Perceptions on the Roles of the Teacher Counselor

The findings of the study in Table 2 revealed that teacher counselor is a very important person in the matters that are core to character development and molding of student's values which are geared towards discipline of the students. More than two thirds (67.88%) of students respondents had a perception that teachers counselors has an important role of assisting in maintaining order in the school through disciplinary interventions. This finding is in agreement with Samoei (2012) who highlighted that guidance and counseling teacher coordinates various aspects of guidance and counseling program as well as evaluating those programs. Teacher-counselor handles issues related to students' appraisal, students' education and vocation, discipline and students welfare and also helps the individual student to grow up in social behavior. In the place of corporal punishment that had been banned in Kenyan schools guidance and counseling in schools has secured a central place in helping to maintain discipline. Ajowi and Omboto (2013) are in agreement with this finding as they observe that guidance and counseling when employed work well in place of corporal punishment in maintaining discipline among students.

Majority (66.67%) of the students felt that teacher counselors' provided all students with a safe place to talk about problems with their academics was very important. On the same note, 92.62% of the students also had a perception that it is very important for teacher counselor to provide all students with a safe place to talk about personal/social problems such as fights with parents and/or friends. In fact 40.27% the students rated this role as extremely important and another 52.35% of them felt this role was very important. It also emerged that a good number of students had a perception that teacher counselor's important roles should include talking with teachers or parents about personal problems that students are unable to solve on their own, as was noted by 73.85% of the students who believed teacher counselors should be to help in solving problems the students are unable to solve on their own. This is in concurrent with Madhuku (2005) who observed the teacher counselors are expected to identify needs of the individual students and develop plans for action. Besides the social and emotional aspects of the students, majority of the respondents argue that the guidance and counseling department should also impact on the academic achievements of the students. The findings are in agreement with Samoei (2012) that teacher-counselor handles issues related to student's appraisal, student's education and vocation, discipline and students welfare and also helps the individual students to grow up in social behavior but not leaving behind academic achievement. 87.88% of students identified working with teachers, principals, and parents to help all students do well in school as an important role for the teacher counselors. Nearly all the students rate teacher counselor role of guidance on subject choice as very important role. Whereas over half (53.09%) of the students felt that it was extremely important role, 32.10% of them said it was very important and another 14.81% observed that it was just important for the teacher counselor to involved in students subject choice. Bano and Ahamed (2013) also agree with this finding by observing that the purpose of G & C is to ensure that each student acquires knowledge necessary for success in school and life by focusing on the success of each individual student. Similarly, Oye (2012) is in concurrent with this study. He stated that the essence of incorporating G & C into the school system was to eliminate overwhelming ignorant of many young people on their choices of career prospects and personality maladjustment among the school children. The finding is also in concurrent with a study by Khan, Murtaza and Shafa (2012) who established that teachers have a vital role to guide and counsel students for their careers, they voluntarily act as informal counselors guiding students in their choices of subjects and career paths.

The findings of the study revealed that, although slightly more than fifth (22.75%) of the students felt that teacher counselor's role should not involve in gathering information on student academic progress, a good number (46.11%) of them perceived the counselors' involvement on academic progress to make sure that all students are selecting challenging subjects of students as key. Since the finding showed that majority (85.33%) of the students felt that it was important that counselors should initiate new programs to help students with any personal problems that can interfere with their academic well-being in school for example, a program on teen pregnancy prevention for the entire school. To enhance academic achievement in school many (55.28%) students felt that teacher counselors should also be involved in bringing

specialists from the community into the school to help students who are having personal problems that interfere with their school work such as eating disorders. This is concurrent with Ajowi and Omboto (2013) who established that teacher counselors play a vital role in maintaining discipline among students in the absence of corporal punishment.

The findings of this study revealed that teacher counselor was perceived to be in-charge of planning and initiating of the counseling activities and programs in the school. Teacher-counselor are also expected to co-ordinate the various aspects of guidance and counseling program in the school as well as to evaluate those programs. 38.30% of the student argued that it was extremely important that the teacher counselor should be able to start new programs, such as after school study skills class and Saturday morning test preparation class to help all students do better in school. This findings is in agreement with Madhuku (2005) who established that guidance and counseling services should be effective, and the teacher-counselors and administrators must work together to achieve a common goal.

However, 26.95% of them believed that although starting new programs was a crucial role for teacher counselor, it was not that extremely important role. Instead quite a number of them had a perception that teacher counselor's important role should encompass starting new programs to help all students obtain knowledge about college or careers. Nearly three quarters (73.71%) of the respondent argued that teacher counselors should organize college and career fairs and invite guest speakers knowledgeable and experienced on career issues. On the same footing, the findings of this study show that nearly ninety percent (89.09%) of the student respondents believed that an important role for the teacher counselors should involve helping all students make contacts with local business people to develop their understanding of different careers. Mapfumo (2005) agrees with the finding as he observes that school counselor should establish linkages with industry and commerce with neighboring institutions to enlighten students more on careers and career choices.

It also came out that although 18.29% of the respondents felt that it was not an important role for the teacher counselors to be bringing local business people into the school to help all students learn more about jobs and careers, nearly three out five (59.95%) of the students felt that this was a quite important role for the teacher counselor. It was therefore not surprising that nearly half (48.49%) of the students rated teacher counselors role of assisting students in choosing college or career paths that are right for them as a very important role. Just on the same note, gathering information on students who need after school jobs and finding ways to get these students part-time jobs was rated very highly by more than half (56.03%) of the students as a very important role of the teacher counselor.

However the findings of the present study indicated that a good number (41.44%) of the students felt the work of teacher counselor should be limited to helping the student identify their own challenges and make informed decisions on daily issues and should involve administrative duties such maintaining student records and files only 33.66% of the respondents felt that teacher counselors can overlap in their responsibilities. On the same note 46.11% of the students argued that although the teacher counselor has a role to play in academic development of the students, 42.74% of them had a perception that administering achievement tests for students do not fall in the docket of the teacher counselors. However, over two thirds (72.87%) of students agreed that teacher counselor has a very important in assisting in special education services and programs in school. Lambie et al (2010) concurred with this study by establishing that there was need for the teacher-counselors to carry out their role with empathy and flexibility while at the same observing boundary-settings and self-care.

The findings showed that teacher counselors played vital role in promoting discipline among students in public secondary school. This is in agreement with Samoei (2012) who established that the guidance and counseling teacher coordinates the various aspects of guidance and counseling program as well as evaluating those program.

Interview schedules with some school principals reported that, teacher counselors played an important role in promoting discipline in the schools. A report from Principal M observed that:

"Teacher counselors play a very important role in promoting discipline in the school. Teacher counselors can model students' discipline by discussing with them their problems. They get to the core of students' issues so as to understand why a student behaves the way he or she does. Some students need counseling in order to change their behavior."

This finding could be interpreted to mean that teacher counselors have a responsibility of streamlining the discipline of students in a school especially since corporal punishment was abolished. They help students to manage their time effectively, while overcoming psychological problems. This finding concurs with Madhuku (2005) who observed that, for guidance and counseling services to be truly effective teacher counselors and administrators must work together. Further the finding is in agreement with Mukama (2010) highlighted that students are taught about physical changes in their bodies and communication skills to help them develop friendship and relate more effectively with their peers.

6. Conclusion

The study concluded that teacher counselor is a very important person in the matters that are core to character development and moulding of student values which are geared towards discipline of the students and that teacher counselors have an important role of assisting and maintaining order in school through disciplinary interventions. The study also concluded that teacher counselor helped students on career choice and also to perform well academically in school. Similarly, the study concluded that teacher counselors provided students with safe place to talk about personal and social problems.

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Teachers Service Commission should employ trained teacher counselors in schools to enable professional guidance and counseling services in promoting student discipline in schools.

- Teachers counselors should enroll for regular refresher and in service courses on guidance and counseling should be provided by Government to enable them become relevant by having understanding on the current trends and new skills in promoting student discipline in school.

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