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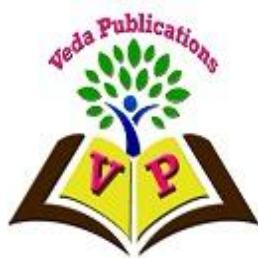
EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNSELLING SERVICES IN KENYAN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF KABIANGA.

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ABSTRACT



Kenyan universities are diverse and complex societies. They absorb students from diverse socio-economic, political, religious, culturally and morally oriented background among many. Although counselling is offered at the university, these students are faced with complex noticeable problems as they struggle to balance between academic, personal/social, vocational and career developments. The concern of this study was to investigate effectiveness of counselling services at University of Kabianga, main campus. The study specifically sought to determine the counselling services offered, qualification levels of counsellors, counselling skills of peer counsellors, counselling facilities and suggest ways of improving counselling at university of Kabianga. The researcher employed a case study design. The study established that educational, social, personal and vocational counselling was perceived to be effective. The quality of counselling services at the university was satisfactory and provided by a qualified counsellor. The study further established that peer counsellors had the requisite skills and training in counselling. However the study established that counselling offices and other counselling materials were not adequate. Counsellors were not adequate, and materials/ facilities required in counselling were inadequate. Among the recommendations the study made was: more counsellors need to be recruited by the university to match the student population, and peer counselling needs to be strengthened.

Keywords: Kenyan universities, university counselors, Students.

INTRODUCTION

In traditional African societies, counselling has been part and parcel of the society. The society has been held together by extended family unit, chieftaincy, taboos and various forms of initiation and close links with ancestors and elders (UNESCO,2001).Counselling was done by grandparents, elders, chiefs, aunts, uncles, spiritual and traditional leaders (Chirema,2004).Main focus of counselling was on issues of marriage, cultural values ,beliefs, customs & future roles (Makinde, 1993).

Due to the breakdown of extended family network in many parts of Africa, Western type of counselling has been introduced which is structured, formalized, and provided by trained and qualified personnel (Adegole & Culbreth, 2000; Chirema, 2007).

In western type of counselling, clients seek counselling services. The counselling service may be individual, group or family counselling. Structured, formalized counselling is based on strategies, techniques and skills in approach to helping the client. With economic change, globalization, technological advancement, physical and psychological change, stress and distress, social change and diversity, school guidance and counselling was introduced in most African countries to counteract these unprecedented phenomena (Cherishe,2004).Effective counselling services is vital for both students who deviate from expected norm and all university students (Mutie & Ndambuki as cited in Nyaga,2011).The government of Kenya recognizes that effective counselling services are necessary in all educational settings(GoK,2002).

Kenyan universities are heterogeneous and complex societies facing various challenges. Even though counselling has been introduced at the university to deal with students' challenges, it seems far from attainment and it's manifested in many ways. Unemployment of graduates poses greater challenges, accommodation and roommates issues at the university, drug experimentation, use and abuse; violence, personal identity, financial problems exhibited in common theft of items like cell phones and laptops, sexually transmitted infections & HIV/Aids, academic problems, personal, social and vocational challenges. Relationship formation, maintenance and conflict resolution remain a big challenge to students (Nation,2014;UoK, 2013; Wango, 2006& Nyagah, 2011).At the university of Kabianga, students face challenges which include drug abuse, pirating, theft, alcoholism, fighting among other issues(UoK,2013). Compounded by challenges, Kenyan government sought ways of solving the challenges as such guidance and counselling programmes were established in 1971 in the Ministry of Education, since academics could not produce a whole individual (Kamunge Report 1988).With rapid access to university education and its ensuing challenges, guidance and counselling is inevitable.

In various research findings (Gibson& Mitchell, 2008; Rao, 2011; and Maina 2014), it has been documented that well-being individuals have higher chances of leading and improving self, psychologically, emotionally, academically. They can socially influence and live an enhanced and autonomous life.

Students have diverse backgrounds and this diversity has its share of diverse problems. If these problems are not handled well students may have poor personal and social, psychological and academic adjustment leading to poor academic grades (Maina, 2014).

Sindabi (as cited in Kiaritha, 2006) notes that counselling in Universities should aim at helping the youth to achieve personal freedom, confidence and a healthy wholesome, while Moi University (2001) adds that counselling is aimed at bringing “a holistic person in a student, responsible, accountable, and of good character in future undertakings.” Biswalo, (2011) concurs that counselling in University setting helps students in the development of a healthy self-concept. The self-concept must be flexible as the person matures so that it can absorb and assimilate life experience (Austad, 2009). If counselling is provided in a holistic approach in academics, personal/social, vocational, occupational and career; an individual may become better adjusted, and be capable of confronting problems as they arise.

Students leaving home, to join university experience pain, detaching self from family dependence to living independently in a campus. At first they may feel helpless or indecisive when it comes to new friends’ selection, interpersonal relationships, new lecturers, examination requirements, dormitory or hostel securing, and its management among others. As such, they need counselling to deal with new set of issues (Kipnusu, 2001 and Kiaritha, 2006). In some other situations, some students who come from affluent families where servants do all the work for them including laundry. These students hire other students to do laundry for them and at times they pack dirty clothes and send home to be done by servants and send back to college. (Maina, 2014).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In the world over, students experience a myriad of problems which include social, academic, economic and personal issues both at institutions of learning and at home. Problems are more common during adolescence due to adolescents indecisiveness (Furbey & Beyth-Marom, in Steinberg, 2011). On realizing these problems, the Kenyan Ministry of Higher Education enlisted guidance and counselling programs in Kenyan universities to address student’s academic work, social adjustment, behavior change and modification, personal and career development and on psychological adjustment. Rao, (2011) opines that guidance and counselling aims at helping individuals to function efficiently and make intrinsically desirable adjustments. The program has been aimed at providing students with a wider knowledge useful in making informed decisions and developing positive attitudes towards life’s challenges. They are expected to overcome problems as they arise or face objectively their strengths and limitations (Cherishe, 2004). However, this seems to be far from being achieved, since university students continue to show disturbing behaviours such as substance abuse, poor sexual relationships, indecisiveness, examination anxiety, antisocial activity, poor time management, unprotected sex, partying problems, violence, stress, HIV/AIDS pandemic among other maladaptive behaviours (Wango, 2006; Kiaritha, 2006 and Ndambuki, 2011). At the University of Kabanga students’ problems include alcoholism, theft of items, unruly behaviours, relationship problems, and partying issues among many others (UoK, 2013). It’s on

this observation that there was a need to investigate the effectiveness of counselling services at University of Kabianga.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main concern of this study is to establish the effectiveness of counselling services at University of Kabianga as perceived by university counsellors, peer counsellors and students in relation to services offered at the university, resource availability, peer training levels, and give recommendations on how counselling could be improved at the university of Kabianga.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (i) Investigate the types of counselling services offered at University of Kabianga.
- (ii) Explore the qualification levels of university counsellors.
- (iii) Investigate the availability of counselling facilities at the university.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following questions:

- (i) Are educational, social, personal, career and vocational counselling services at University of Kabianga effective?
- (ii) What are the qualification levels of university counsellors?
- (iii) Which counselling facilities are available at the university?

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

It has been noted that despite the governments' goal of establishing guidance and counselling programmes in Kenyan Universities to help students curb their inadequacies, face their strengths and limitations objectively and make desirable adjustments, the same problems keep recurring, manifested in personal-social, educational, psychological distress, substance use and abuse, indiscipline, violence behaviours among others. It's on this basis that a research was carried out to establish the effectiveness and functionality of counselling at the University of Kabianga in dealing with challenges facing students. Moreover, the study had never been done at UoK being a newly chartered university.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Goal Setting Theory postulated by Locke and Lotham (2002). The theory describes that setting of goals is an effective way of improving performance and enhancing success at any given work. Individuals with clear goals are more likely to direct attention and effort to activities with relevant goals away from goal irrelevant activities hence demonstrating a capacity for independence. The theory was used since for any activity, goals that are set provide a road map to attainment of its aims. The same goals were used to gauge effectiveness of counselling and put in place alternative strategies for attainment of success. In counselling context, if counsellors establish clear goals, dedicate themselves and make commitment to helping students in problems then counselling can become a success. Establishment of clear goals motivates individuals to work and leads to better performance. Well defined goals appear to aid individuals discover and use efficient alternative strategies to handle their challenges. When individual counsellors set clear goals and benchmarks for carrying out their roles, there is a greater chance of succeeding and

making counselling effective and where challenge arises, better alternatives will be used. In academic point of view, successful achievement involves positive feedback loops between self-efficacy and goal commitment. As students experience successful goal achievement, self-efficacy increases, which in turn enhances goal commitment and motivate individuals to achieve. Those students facing challenges and seeks counselling, and set goals to attain counselling by making serious commitments are more likely to change their behaviour and attain a self-fulfilling life. Feedback is enhanced by clarifying desired outcomes and specifying the path to goal completion and establishing benchmarks or targets for goal attainment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The model that was used in this study focused on the variables involved in determining the effectiveness of counselling services at the University of Kabianga's main campus on the development of students' skills which include educational, social/personal, and vocational skills.

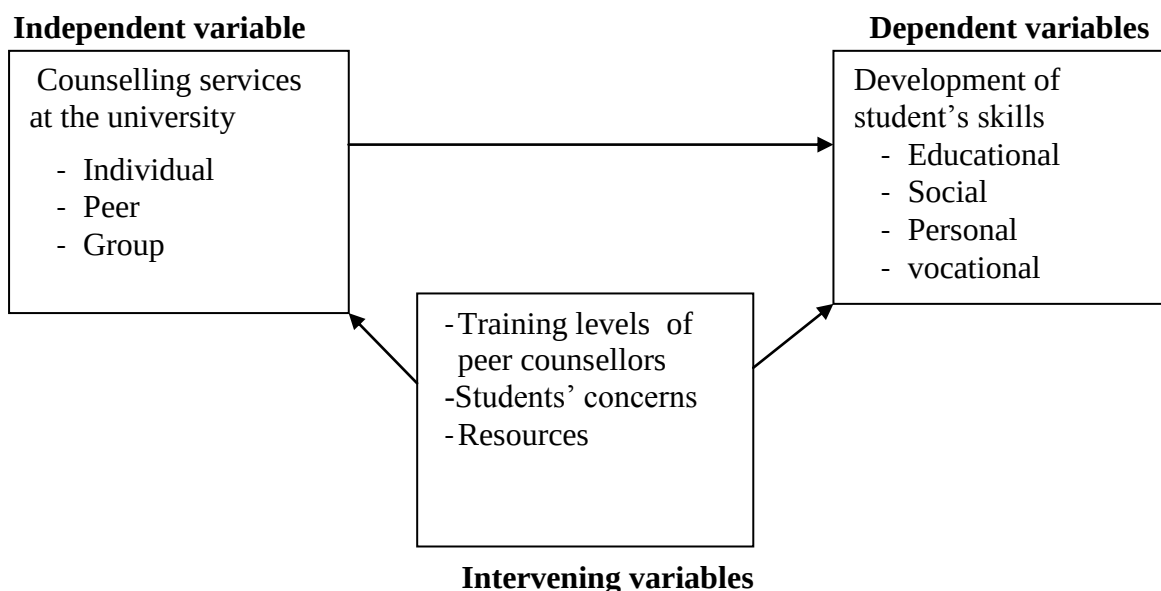


Figure1: A Conceptual Framework showing the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Counselling services at the university form the independent variable. Development of students' skills forms dependent variables. The provision of effective counselling services to the students by the counsellors leads to the achievement of educational, social, personal, and vocational skills. In this study the intervening variables included training levels of peer counsellors, resources and students' concerns. Intervening variables will influence both independent and dependent variables.

The study adopted a case study design. A case study is an in-depth investigation of an individual group, institution or phenomenon or particular case (Mugenda, 2003 and Houser, 2009). This study was concerned with getting insight of the effectiveness of counselling at the University of Kabianga since the counsellee, counsellors and the institution cannot be

separated from its context. The study sought to gain insight of various types of counselling services offered at the university and their impact in the development of educational, personal, social and vocational skills by the students. The design was used because of its strength as a means of exploring, explaining and describing the context within which counselling is offered.

The target population of this study consisted of all 1241 third and fourth year undergraduate students at University of Kabianga, main campus, 15 peer counsellors and 2 university counsellors at University of Kabianga.

Table 1 Response on Perception of Effectiveness of Personal and Psychological Counselling

Item	A		UN		D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Resolves personal problems on sexual relationships.	258	87.2	19	6.4	19	6.4
Deal with home and family issues	265	89.5	18	6.1	15	4.4
Handles stress and anxiety	283	95.6	11	3.7	2	0.7
Development of relating skills with peers	247	83.4	10	3.4	39	13.1
Handle and overcome fear	189	63.9	51	17.2	56	18.9
Provide information on self-identity and self esteem	251	84.8	34	11.5	11	3.7
Helps students become self-driven	231	78	41	13.9	24	8.1
Handle situational problems knowledgeably	239	80.7	31	10.5	26	8.8

As shown in Table 1, a majority 258(87.2%) of the respondents agreed that counselling services assisted in resolving problems of sexual relationships. In contrast, 19 (6.4%) were undecided, as compared to 19(6.4%) who disagreed that the services were able to resolve problems of sexual relationships. The findings show that a majority of the students had a positive view of counselling as a tool for resolving problems of sexual nature. In the research findings, issues of sexual nature is dealt with in personal counselling (Santrock, 2010; Rao, 2011 & Makinde, 1993). Sexual problems that may be faced by students include related

effects of premarital sex which may culminate to unwanted pregnancies, diseases and other sexually transmitted infections and HIV& AIDS (Steinberg, 2011 & S.Kim and Boody 2005). The data results in Table 1 above on the service dealing with home and family issues 265(89.5%) of the respondents agreed, compared to 18(6.1%) who were undecided. Another 15(4.4%) disagreed that counselling helped them handle home and family issues. Data results reveal that personal counselling assist them deal with family and home issues. The support from this counselling suggests that students find relieve from counselling when faced with challenging problems in their day to day activities. This is supported by a study documented by (Chireshe, 2007 and Makinde, 1993) that counselling assist students deal with home and family issues. The provision of counselling not only assist students on personal level but also cope and develop appropriate skills in handling situational and family crisis.

In regard to personal counselling handling stress and anxiety, Table 4.3.7 above indicates that 283(95.6%) agreed and another 11(3.7%) of the respondents were undecided of the service handling their anxiety and stress. However 2(0.7%) disagreed on the service handling stress and anxiety. The almost unanimous positive response that personal counselling assist in handling stress and anxiety is a clear indication that the service is vital to clients undergoing challenging experiences in life. In addition social counselling facilitates, relieves and supports an individual in stress and anxiety (Rao, 2011).It is seems that counselling can facilitated redemption of otherwise insurmountable challenges.

As shown in Table 1 above in the question that sought to know if counselling leads to development of relating skills with peers a majority 247(83.4%)of the respondents agreed, compared to 10(3.4%) who were undecided. In addition, 39(13.1%) disagreed on the service leading to development of relating skills. The positive response by the students that personal counselling helps in development of relating skills with peers concurs with research findings by UNESCO(2000). In addition research findings by UNESCO (2000) shows that personal counselling assist student deal with such concerns as decision making, relationship formation and maintaining the same relationship.

The data results in Table 1 indicates that 189(63.9%) of the respondents agreed, in comparison to 51(17.2%) who were undecided on the personal counselling handling fear and overcoming it. However, 56(18.9%) of the respondents disagreed that the service helped them handle fear and overcome it.

The given Table 1 shows that a majority, 251(84.8%) of the respondents believed that personal counselling provided information on self-identity and self-esteem, in comparison to 34 (11.5 %) who were undecided. However, 11(3.7%) disagreed that counselling informed on self-identity and self-esteem. The findings illustrates that personal counselling services are informative on leading individuals understand themselves and develop self-esteem. Rao (2011), posits that personal counselling equip students with necessary skills leading to personal development and growth that is in self-esteem, identity, and self-confidence. The findings further suggest that students believed that personal counseling played a major role in their life long personal picture.

As indicated in Table 4.3.7 a majority 231(78%) of the respondents agreed that personal counselling assisted them become self-driven while 41(13.9%) were undecided. In addition, 24(8.1%) disagreed on the service assisting them becoming self-driven. As indicated the service is confirmed by a majority of students that it guides them to becoming self-driven. When individuals are self-driven ability to attain greater goal targets are high. As shown in Table 1 on the question that sought to know whether counselling assists students handle situational problems knowledgeably a majority 239(80.7%) of the respondents agreed, compared to 31(10.5%) who were undecided. Another 26(8.8%) disagreed of the service providing them with skills of handling situational problems. The data results show that students believed that counselling is vital equipping them with knowledge of handling situational problems. This supports the roles suggested by Mitchell (2008), that counselling serves in assisting learners get knowledge and insight in overcoming problems and other crisis.

From the results of study a majority of students perceived personal to psychological counseling as effective.

Student positively noted that personal psychological counseling deals with personals problems of sexual relationships home family issues stress and anxiety development of relating skills with peers .

They further noted its effective in providing information on self -identity and esteem help students because self –driven and help them handle situational problems wisely.

These findings support the study by Corey (1991) that personal psychological counseling help student better understanding themselves in the dealings with presents and further decisions. Competent counsellors providing students counselling will help student adjust and develop personal growth leading to positive self - concept which enables them deal with personal maladjustment (Nyaga2011). A study by Rao (2011) further notes that effective psychological counseling equips students with skills for development of relating skills self- identify and self - esteem .

The general view of the study is that personal\ psychological counseling enhances students adjustment to various challenging situations. They reported that service was effective in dealings with anxiety and stress and personal sexual problems (UNESCO, 2000)

FINDINGS

Based on the results of this study, the following are the major findings

- i. University of Kabianga provides various counselling services. At the University the following types of counselling are provided: educational, personal, vocational and career, social, spiritual, marriage, health. Major types of counselling provided are educational/academic counselling, personal and social counselling, and vocational/career counselling. The other types of counselling were provided but at minimal level perhaps indicating the urgency of need. It was established that educational, personal/social, vocational and career counselling were effective.

- ii. The qualification level of university counsellors were at doctorate level with vast experience in handling counselling issues at University level. Peer counsellors had relevant skills and training to handle fellow students.
- iii. The University had counselling office though it serves various roles including housing roles of University Chaplain, and student affairs. The office appeared to be congested. However, counselling resources namely books, adverts, magazines sensitization and aware posters were inadequate.

Counselling plays a very important role in the lives of individuals both on those facing or not facing problems. The main role of counselling is to help individuals facing challenging problems identify those issues and learn to deal more effectively with them (Makinde, 1993). Moreover the counselling services help students cope make effective and appropriate decisions and actions in life (Brammer & Shostrom, 1997).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at finding whether counselling services offered at Kabianga University was effective. In the study questionnaires were issued to undergraduate students. In addition interview was conducted before university counsellors and peer counsellors.

1. It was found that various types of counselling are provided at University of Kabianga. Major types of counselling offered includes educational, personal/social, vocational/career counselling are offered.
2. Most students seek counselling in these major areas of counselling. Other types of counselling services offered at the University includes spiritual, marital/marriage, and health counselling.
3. The university has well trained and qualified counsellors and trained peer counsellors.
4. It was further established that the University has a counselling office situated between lecture halls and hostels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident from the study that various types of counselling are offered at the university. Educational, personal and vocational counselling attracts many students seeking help. Generally counselling was perceived to be effective in handling student's concerns. Further it was established that qualified counsellor provided counselling services to students. Counselling resources/facilities were found to be generally inadequate. Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made.

- i. There is need to enhance personal/social counselling. These services will help students to develop various personal and social skills which will enable them to cope with University life and beyond. In addition, spiritual, marital/marriage, and health and financial counselling need to be enhanced and strengthened.
- ii. There is more need for the University administration to employ more University student counsellors to match the increasing number of students and cases as well. This will further close on the recommended Counsellor -student ratio.

- iii. There is need for the University management to increase spacious and specific offices that will provide counselling services. There is need to equip these offices with adequate counselling resources for successful counselling

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