

ABSTRACT

Peer counselors play a crucial role in addressing students' problems in schools. However, despite their efforts to address substance abuse among students, the problem continues to be a common phenomenon in Kisumu Municipality secondary schools. According to the findings of a study conducted in 2005 on substance abuse in five major cities in Kenya, Kisumu leads the rest of the cities in the country. In 2009 alone 57.9% of students abused alcohol, 34.7% abused tobacco, 23.3% abused khat while 18.3% abused bhang. Records from the Guidance and Counseling offices in the municipality indicated that 171 students were counseled for substance abuse of which 39 were girls while 132 were boys. In 2011 the number of students counseled for substance abuse increased to 479 out of which 71 were girls and 408 were boys. It is believed that many other students abuse drugs without seeking counseling. This shows that the problem of substance abuse in the municipality is a serious challenge yet little is known on the role and challenges for peer counselors in addressing the abuse problem. The purpose of the study was to establish the role and challenges for peer counselors on substance abuse among public secondary school students in Kisumu Municipality. Objectives of the study were to; determine the role of peer counselors on substance abuse, determine counseling methods used in addressing substance abuse and finally establish challenges peer counselors faced in addressing substance abuse among students in public secondary schools in Kisumu Municipality, Kenya. The study was based on a conceptual framework showing how substance abuse among students is dependent on the role and challenges for peer counselors in addressing the problem. Descriptive survey design was adopted. Population of the study included 261 peer counselors, 31 heads of guidance and counseling and 31 deputy head teachers. Saturated sampling technique was used to select 235 peer counselors, 28 heads of guidance and counseling and 28 deputy principals. Instruments for data collection were questionnaires and interview schedule. Reliability of the instruments was established through a pilot study carried out among 26 peer counselors and 3 heads of guidance and counseling using test-retest method and the reliability coefficient index for peer counselors' questionnaire was 0.72 and that of heads of guidance and counseling was 0.74. Face and content validity of the instruments were established by experts from the Department of Educational Psychology, Maseno University. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency counts. Qualitative data was transcribed, put into various categories and reported in an on-going process as themes and sub-themes emerged. The findings of the study revealed that peer counselors help fellow students identify and face their problems, act as role models to fellow students, advise and counsel students, help students share their problems freely and provide information on the evils of drugs. The counseling methods peer counselors used were: individual and group counseling, peer education, video shows, drama, guest speakers and models while the major challenges faced were: inadequate resources, lack of training, inadequate time, mistrust, negative attitude and lack of parental support. It was recommended that school administration should provide adequate time, proper training and resources. Findings of the study may be of help to the Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission, administrators, parents, sponsors, teachers and students in creating awareness on the role and challenges of peer counselors in addressing substance abuse among students in public secondary schools.