

An Assessment of Guidance and Counseling Teachers' Preparedness in Offering Effective Services in Public Primary Schools in Kikuyu Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract

The current problems facing the Kenyan pupil require Guidance and Counseling (G&C) teachers to be knowledgeable about psychological and behavioral interventions, both at the preventive and responsive levels. Despite the fact that Kikuyu Sub County public primary schools record high incidences of pupils' absenteeism, alcohol and drugs abuse, psychosocial and teenage sexuality issues, G&C activities are very minimal. The main purpose of this study was to assess the G&C teachers' preparedness to offer effective services in public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The study target population comprised of 31 G&C teachers, 439 teachers and 31 head teachers from 31 public primary schools. All the 31 G&C teachers were sampled through census technique, 93 class teachers through purposive sampling and nine head teachers were sampled through simple random sampling. Data was collected through G&C teachers' questionnaires, class teachers' questionnaires, and head teachers interview guide. Quantitative data was analyzed by the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and summarized in frequencies, percentages, bar charts and inferential statistics (chi square). The study found that though there was a high need for guidance and counselling in psychosocial and sexuality issues. Most of G&C teachers had no formal training in counselling, had high work load and no programme structure. Almost all the schools had no essential resources such G&C office and vital reference books. In addition the support from stakeholders was wanting. It was recommended that the government should recognize school counseling as a profession in its own right, harmonize the training of G&C teachers to have a common curriculum and accreditation body, and come up with a unified ethical code for school counsellors. All stakeholders such as the county government, national government and parents should view G&C as an essential component in education and not as an auxiliary and as such fund the programmes.

Key Words: *Guidance and counseling services, Guidance and counseling teachers, Guidance and Counseling teachers' preparedness*

1. Introduction

The concept of developmental guidance was conceived in early 20th century in USA. From its inception through the 1950s, the focal point of guidance in a school setting was vocational education and training. Heavily influenced by the industrial revolution and world war, the concern of counselors and teachers alike was to prepare students for life after high school (Muro & Kottman, 1995) as cited in Toto (2014). From a guidance perspective specifically, that meant

steering students to careers that best fit their abilities and goals. During the Great Depression in the 1930s the need for assessment of worker abilities and aptitudes became paramount as well as helping the jobless masses to cope with personal issues (Myrick, 1997). In the 1930s through to World War II psychologists continued with research to develop some theories to explain and solve the various psychosocial problems. However, the influence of Carl Rogers and humanistic theory made the biggest impact on school counseling in the years after WWII (Romano, Goh & Wahl, 2005).

Developmental guidance gradually grew through 1950s to incorporate the molding of students' attitudes and behaviors. This growth was given more impetus by the students' unrests and indiscipline in America and Europe in late 1960s and early 1970s. The increased freedom of choice in general public as well as students during that time, culminated to many students grappling with not only conflicts arising from personal problems of a general nature, but specific problems regarding their new attitudes towards sexuality, drugs and other social issues of similar magnitude. It was thus inevitable for Guidance and counselling to grow in order to counteract the situation (Oyieyo, 2012). In its contemporary state, guidance has grown to include counseling, planning, placement, referral, consultation and advocacy (Martin & Robinson, 2011).

Toto (2014) observes that guidance and counseling was formally introduced in Kenyan schools in 1971 to cater for students' social, personal, psychological, educational as well as vocational issues. Prior to 1971, Guidance and Counseling services in schools mainly concentrated on career guidance. The introduction of Guidance and counseling in schools was followed by publishing of a Guidance Councilors' Handbook in 1977 (revised, 2009), a Careers Guide Book for Schools in the year 1999 (revised 2007) and a directive that each school establish a department that deals with Guidance and Counseling (G&C) services (MOE, 2007, 2009).

The need for effective G&C programmes in schools became even more urgent after the use of corporal punishment in schools was banned under legal notice 56/2001 (Republic of Kenya, 2001a) and instead teachers were directed to use other corrective measures where G&C was to take the centre stage. This ban nullified the legal Notice No. 40 of 1972, which had established the use of corporal punishment. The ban of corporal punishment was in line to United Nations Human Rights Universal Declaration (1948). The ban was further affirmed by Children's Act (2001), Kenya Constitution (2010) and Kenya Education Act 2013, in which the rights of students or any other person against any form of torture and persecution are emphasized (Republic of Kenya, 2001b, 2010, 2013).

In cognition of the importance of G&C in schools the MOE through the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and Education Standards and Quality Assurance Council (ESQAC) have embarked on professional development of school counselors through seminars and workshops. However, recent studies reveal varied results in regard to effectiveness of G&C programmes in schools. Owino and Odera (2014) conducted a study aimed at finding the constraints affecting attitude of teachers towards practicing guidance and counseling in primary schools in Kisumu west Sub County. Among other things it was found that most teachers were not trained in G&C, teachers were overloaded with work in schools that left them exhausted to practice G&C, there

was little time for teachers to practice G&C in schools, there were in adequate facilities/resources for G&C in schools, and above all parents were not willing to support teachers in Guiding and counseling of their children when required.

Most of the pupils in Kenya education system are sexually active before they finish their primary course (Kalinga, 2010) and it is therefore, unfortunate that most studies and efforts to assist the adolescents cope with changes at puberty stage are most often directed to secondary school level students. Thus, not only do primary school pupils deal with pressing academic issues but also struggle with their own maturational body changes. In addition, they are bombarded with confusing inconsistency among adult views and media information. Lai-Yeung (2014) advances that teenagers need to get the best possible preparation to enable them to cope well with their sexual development and to avoid the most obvious pitfalls.

In Kenya, the primary school curriculum exposes learners to gradual knowledge on sexuality through subjects such as science and religious studies. Also through social media, peers and parents, pupils get a lot of information on sexuality. However, unguided exposure to sources of sexual education such as mass media, peer, relatives, among others leads to irresponsible sexual behaviour such as pre-marital sex and multiple sex partners, which consequently lead to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies (Kalinga, 2010). On the other hand, a well-guided and directed education is expected to lead to desired sexual perception and behaviour such as responsible friendship, avoiding premarital sex, abstinence among others. It is therefore critical for G&C teacher to supplement what the pupil learn in class and intervene to correct misinformation from different sources of sexual education if the desired behaviour is to be achieved. In addition, an effective G&C programme should offer guidance on some controversial topics such as premarital sex, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), abortion, masturbation, prostitution, homosexuality, and rape.

The current study focused on Kikuyu Sub County which borders Nairobi County. According to Kikuyu Sub County Education Officer (SCEO), Kikuyu Sub County as an extension of Nairobi city, is not only becoming a cosmopolitan rapidly but also bearing the brunt of social evils such as substance abuse, prostitution, teenage indulgence in premarital sex and same sex relationships. In such an environment pupils are bound to have issues ranging from simple to complicated ones in which friends, parents, and teachers who are considered as lay helpers will offer little or no help. A school counselor who is equipped with professional training, theory, and ethical standards in counseling will be of great assistance. The current study sought to assess the G&C teachers' preparedness in offering effective services in public primary schools in Kikuyu sub county, Kiambu County, with a view of bringing to the fore the areas that need intervention.

2. Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research design. Kothari (2009) explains that descriptive surveys in social sciences aim at fact-finding of the state of affairs as they exist at present by collecting, collating and analyzing available evidence in order to make informed inferences.

Further, descriptive survey design is useful in the collection of original data from a population that is too large to observe directly. The design was appropriate since the study aimed at assessing the G&C teachers' preparedness in offering effective services to learners by examining the conditions already in existence such as teachers' competency, professional development, experience, teaching load and self-efficacy in guidance and counseling. The study was conducted in Kikuyu Sub County, Kiambu County, Kenya. Being adjacent to the metropolitan Nairobi County, Kikuyu Sub County is fast transforming from a predominantly one ethnic group hub to a cosmopolitan hosting people from varied ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds. According to Kikuyu Sub County Education officer, the cultural diversity accompanied by different religious beliefs has made school guidance and counseling an intricate affair (MOEST, 2017). It calls for a paradigm shift from the traditional approach to a more liberalized approach geared to accommodate the learners' diversity. The study targeted all the schools 31 teachers in charge of G&C programmes, 439 teachers and 31 head teachers from the 31 public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub County. G&C teacher is entrusted in running the G&C programme in the school and thus was a key respondent in the current study. Apart from G&C teachers, class teachers are also mostly involved in pupils' issues at class level and thus were considered key respondents in the study. Head teachers being the school managers, have the responsibility of overseeing implementation of G&C programmes and accord the G&C teacher the necessary support. Through census sampling technique, all the 31 G&C teachers were selected for the study. Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009) postulate that 10% to 30% of the population is sufficient for reliable findings. The researcher sampled 21% of the remaining 439 teachers to get 93 teachers. From each of the 31 schools, three teachers were selected. Class teachers of class 6,7 and 8 were purposefully selected since they deal with pupils at a stage where they are highly likely to encounter conflicting issues in regard to their academic work, sexuality and psychosocial. Further, 30% of the 31 head teachers were sampled to be interviewed. Thus, nine head teachers were selected through simple random sampling to take part in the study. Data were collected through the G&C teachers' questionnaire, class teachers' questionnaire and head teachers' interview schedule. All the respondents were assured of anonymity and had liberty to withdraw from the study.

3. Results

All the head teachers were available for interview, 30 G&C teachers filled and returned the questionnaires while 78 class teachers filled and returned their questionnaires. The study found that 20 G&C teachers constituting 66.7% were female. Similarly, female class teachers (60.3%) were more than male teachers (39.7%). This implied that public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub County were dominated by female teachers. It was however, established that most schools had a particular male or a female teacher who was supposed to be consulted in case a pupil was not comfortable in sharing some issues with the school G&C teacher. Most of the sampled head teachers were male (77.8%) indicating that the headship appointment was yet to attain gender parity.

3.1 Teachers' Highest Level of Professional Training

The study also sought to establish teachers and head teachers' highest level of professional training. Most of educational programmes in Kenya have a unit on school administration and guidance and counselling of students. Thus, the more programmes one has undergone through the more exposure to these courses and the more likely to handle guidance and counselling issues. Table 1 shows the findings.

Table 1
Respondents' Highest level of Professional Training

Highest level of Professional Training	Category					
	G/C Teachers		Class Teachers		Head Teachers	
	F	%	F	%	f	%
P1 Certificate	21	70.0	43	55.1	4	44.4
Diploma	4	13.3	14	17.9	2	22.2
Bachelor's Degree	4	13.3	16	20.5	2	22.2
Post graduate	1	3.3	5	6.4	1	11.1
Total	30	100.0	78	100.0	9	100.0

As shown in Table 1, all respondents were professionally trained. However, most of the G&C teachers (70.0%), class teachers (55.1%) and head teachers (44.4%) were P1 holders. This implied most of G&C teachers required in service training in order to be more competent in their work. Nonetheless, some teachers had advanced to diploma, bachelor's degree and post graduate level.

3.2 Respondents Teaching Experience

The study also sought to establish teachers and head teachers teaching experience. Figure 1 shows the distribution of teaching experience.

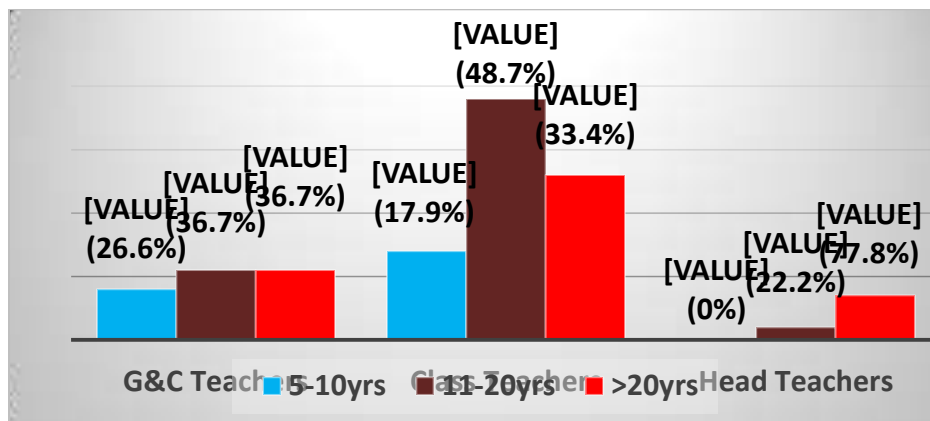


Figure 1 Teaching Experience of the Respondents

As evident in Figure 1, most of the G&C teachers (73.4%) and class teachers (82.1%) had an experience of over 10 years in teaching. Further, almost all head teachers had an experience of over 20 years. This implied that most of the teaching personnel in Kikuyu sub County public primary schools had a long experience and could tap into their rich experience to fast track some common guidance and counseling issues in their schools.

3.3 Guidance and Counselling Teachers' Experience as a Counsellor

An employee prowess is greatly enhanced through experience. Thus, the study sought the teacher counselor's experience as a counselor. Figure 2 depicts the findings.

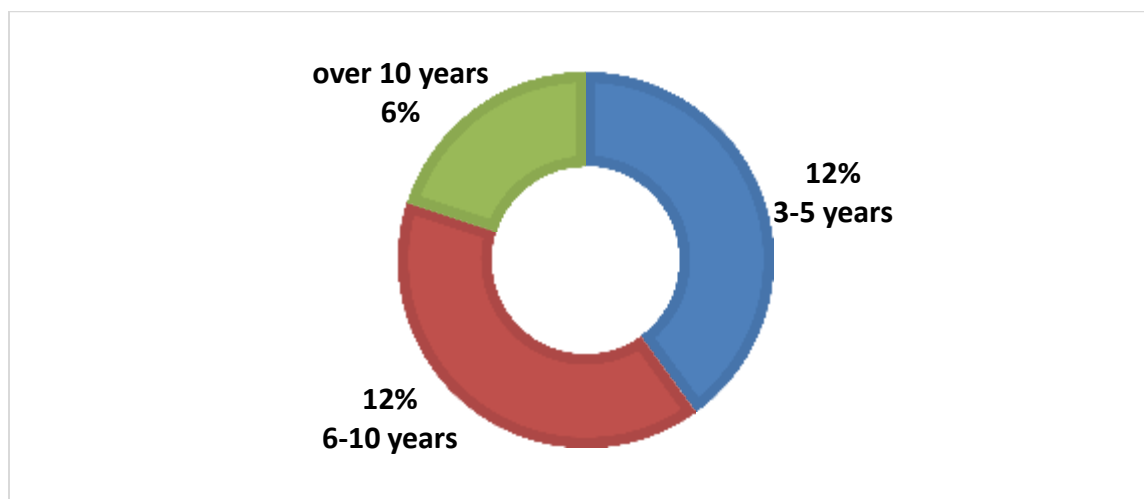


Figure 2 G&C Teachers Experience as Counsellors

It was evident from Figure 2 that most of the G&C teachers (80%) had a long experience of six years and above. However, long experience without the appropriate skills and knowledge in guidance and counseling may not enable one to offer effective services.

3.4 Training in Guidance and Counselling

The second item in this section required the G&C teacher to indicate whether they were formally trained or not. The results showed that 60.0 % of teachers' counsellors indicated that they had been trained while 40.0 % of counsellors had no formal training. The trained teacher counsellors were further required to indicate the level of formal training received. Figure 3 depicts the findings.

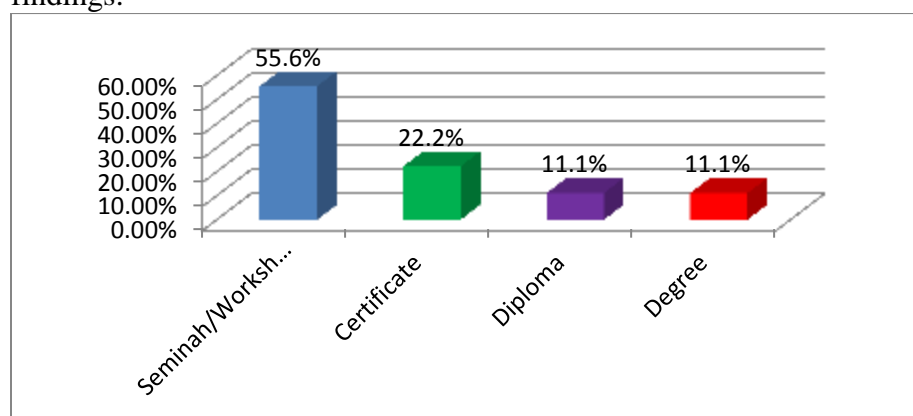


Figure 3 Levels to which G&C teachers have been trained

As evident from Figure 3, most of the teacher counselors (55.6%) who indicated that they had been trained got their skills through seminars and workshops. Four teachers constituting 22.2% had a certificate in guidance and counseling, 11.1 % of teachers had a diploma while 11.1 % of teachers had a degree in education with a concentration in guidance and counseling. Thus, only 43.4 % of teachers had formally undergone through content matter and examinations in guidance and counseling.

3.5 Frequency of Guidance and Counselling In-service Attendance

In order to keep abreast with the dynamic field of guidance and counseling, it is imperative for the G&C teacher to attend workshops and seminars organized by government and NGOs. The study sought to establish the number of INSETS the G&C teacher had attended in the last two years. Figure 4 shows the teachers response.

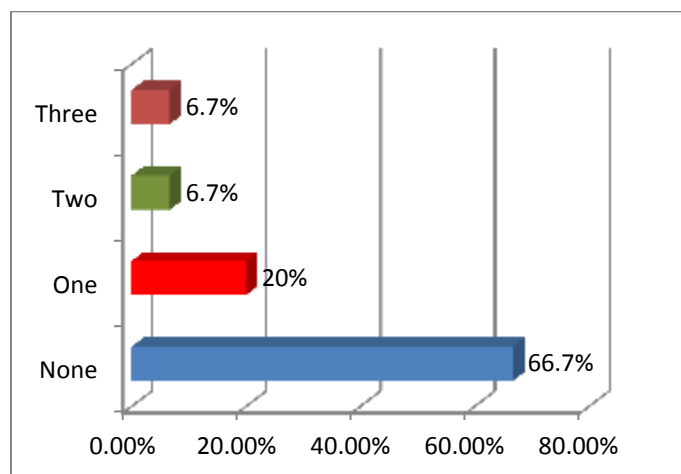


Figure 4 Frequency of guidance and counseling inset attendance

Figure 4 show that most of the G&C teachers (66.7%) did not attend INSET on guidance and counseling in the last two years. Lack of INSET for two years is a long duration with possible negative implications. Teachers fail to benefit from the research evidence based strategies in dealing with pupils issues in psychosocial, academic and sexuality. Thus, though some G&C teachers had undergone formal professional training, they were deficient in updated information and hence not well prepared to deliver effective G&C services to their clients.

3.6 Mode of Appointing Teacher Counsellors

A clear job description and role identity can have a great influence a person's output. Additionally, the mode of appointment and the appointing authority can determine the office bearer commitment and self-initiative. In view of that, the study sought to establish how the appointment of teacher counsellors was done in Kikuyu Sub County public primary schools. Table 2 shows the various ways in which G&C teachers were appointed.

Table 2

Mode of Appointing Teacher Counsellors

	Frequency	Percent
Letter of appointment by school head	4	13.3
Verbal appointment by school head	19	63.3
Proposal by other staff members	2	6.7
Offered self as a volunteer	5	16.7
Total	30	100

Table 2 shows that majority of G&C teachers (63.3%) indicated that they were appointed by their head teachers verbally while four teachers (13.3%) were appointed through a head teacher's letter. Teachers who volunteered themselves constituted 16.7 % while only 6.7 % were proposed by other staff members. It was noteworthy that there was no teacher counsellor appointed by the

TSC. Lack of official appointment, job description and role identity are known to hamper guidance and counselling teachers' self-efficacy and work output.

3.7 Guidance and Counselling Teachers' Teaching Load

In order for the G&C teacher to meet the demands of the assigned role, additional duties should be assigned with precaution. The teacher counsellor needs time for group and individual counselling, preparation time and time to review different cases before the forthcoming individual sessions. The current study therefore, sought to establish the teaching load of G&C teachers in public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub County. Figure 5 shows the G&C teachers response on their teaching load.

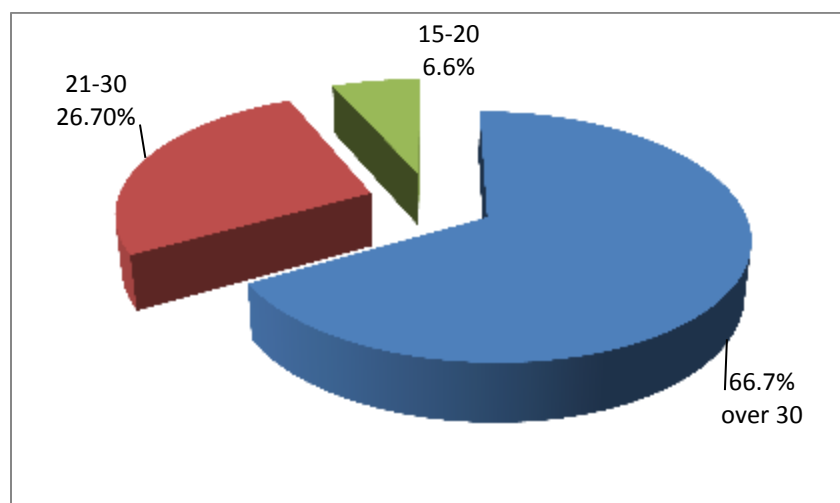


Figure 5 Guidance and Counselling Teacher Work Load

As evident in Figure 5, most of the G&C teachers were teaching over 30 lessons per week and over six lessons per day. This implied that most of the G&C teachers were exhausted by the end of the day to be effective in guidance and counselling. The teaching load allocated should be informed by several factors including the school population, the number of assistants and the prevalence of G&C caseload. The G&C teachers' heavy work load was further aggravated by the fact that most schools had a population of 600 pupils and above. However, the study also established that in some schools, there existed a fully-fledged counselling departments manned by several teachers from both genders.

3.8 G&C Teacher Competence and Preparedness in Various Issues-Self Rating

In order to establish the G&C teachers' self-efficacy their preparedness and competence in guiding and counselling pupils in various issues that pupils encounter, teachers were required to rate themselves on a scale of 1(below average) to 5(excellent). Table 3 depicts the results.

Table 3

G&C Teachers' Self Rating on various Issues encountered by Pupils

Guidance and Counselling Issues	G&C Teachers' Self Rating							
	Excellent		Good		Average		Below Average	
	f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Academic	-	-	22	73.3	8	26.7	-	-
Social interactions	-	-	16	53.3	14	46.7	-	-
Pupil/parent relationship	-	-	12	40.0	18	60.0	-	-
Adhering to school rules	8	26.7	16	53.3	6	20.0	-	-
Career	-	-	13	43.3	17	56.7	-	-
Boy/girl sexual relationship	6	20.0	18	60.0	6	20.0	-	-
Homosexuality	-	-	-	-	16	53.3	14	46.7
Masturbation	-	-	-	-	18	60.0	12	40.0
Alcohol and drug abuse	-	-	3	10.0	16	53.3	11	36.7
Suicidal tendencies	-	-	-	-	11	36.7	19	63.3
Trauma and shock	-	-	-	-	12	40.0	18	60.0
Grief and loss	-	-	-	-	25	83.3	5	16.7

Table 3 shows that only a few teachers rated themselves as excellent and only in adhering to school rules (26.7%) and boy/girl relationship (20.0%). Further, all the G&C teachers rated themselves as either good or average in academic, social interactions, pupil/parent relationships, and career. However, G&C rated themselves as either average or below average in homosexuality, masturbation, alcohol and drug abuse, suicidal tendencies, trauma and shock, and grief and loss. This implied that G&C teachers have low efficacy in a number of pertinent issues that are potential issues among the school going youth in Kikuyu Sub County.

In an open ended item where teachers were requested to comment on the areas they felt they were least competent to handle, the comments were varied. Most of teachers indicated that they felt inadequate to handle those issues and they could only be tackled by experts in those fields. It is through teachers' affiliation to professional bodies that can give them a chance of acquiring specialized knowledge on areas such as alcohol and substance abuse, trauma, shock, grief, aberrant sexual behaviours and others. Unfortunately, all except two (6.5 %) G&C teachers in Kikuyu Sub County indicated that they were not affiliated to any counselling body.

3.9 Extent to which G&C was needed to Handle Various Issues

Having established G&C teachers' efficacy in tackling pupils various issues, the study further sought to establish the extent to which guidance and counselling services were needed in areas such as discipline, academic, sexuality and others. In doing so, the researcher established the mismatch between the need and what the teachers could effectively handle. In addition, G&C teachers' responses and class teachers' responses on the same issues were subjected to Chi-square test (χ^2 test) of independence to determine whether there was a significant relationship. Table 4 shows the outcome of the analysis.

Table 4:

Rating of G&C Services Need in Various Pupils' Issues

G&C Issues	Very high need		High need		Moderate need		$\chi^2 O$	$\chi^2 C$	Comment
	GT	CT	GT	CT	GT	CT			
	f	f	f	f	f	F			
Academic	5	10	15	60	10	8	9.39	5.99	Significantly related
Vocational	5	11	6	11	19	56	10.71	5.99	Significantly related
Discipline	15	12	10	13	5	53	4.89	5.99	No relationship
Psychosocial	7	18	16	15	6	55	4.72	5.99	No relationship
Alcohol & substance abuse	6	11	8	16	16	51	9.85	5.99	Significantly related
Sexuality	18	11	6	11	6	56	4.47	5.99	No relationship

$df = 2$, $\alpha = 0.05$, n for G&C teachers = 30, n for class teachers = 78

Key: GT-Guidance and Counselling Teacher, CT-Class Teacher, $\chi^2 O$ (Observed or Calculated chi square value), $\chi^2 C$ (Critical chi square value), df = degrees of freedom

From Table 4, it was evident that 15 (50%) G&C teachers and 60 (76.9%) class teachers indicated that there was a high need for guidance and counselling in academic. This need could well be catered for by G&C teachers since as earlier noted in Table 4, 73.3% of them perceived their capability as good. The corresponding observed chi-square value was 9.39 which was greater than the critical value (5.99) showing that G&C teachers and class teachers' views on the pupils' G&C needs in academic work in public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub County concurred. Likewise, there was a concurrence in views regarding the extent to which guidance and counselling was needed in vocational issues. Majority of class teachers (63.3%) and G&C teachers (71.8%) felt that there was a moderate need for guidance and counselling in vocational issues ($\chi^2 O > \chi^2 C$). While most of G&C teachers indicated that there was a 'very high need' (50%) and others 33.3% 'high need' for guidance and counselling in discipline issues, 68% of class teachers felt that the need was only 'moderate'. The resulting $\chi^2 O$ was less than $\chi^2 C$ showing that the two categories of respondents had different views. Similarly, while most of the class teachers indicated a moderate need for guidance and counselling in psychosocial issues, most of G&C teachers felt that there was a high need. It was possible that, as G&C teachers handled the pupils' issues in discipline and psychosocial issues, they were able to fathom the magnitude of these issues among learners better than class teachers hence the discrepancy in their rating. The need for guidance and counselling in regard to alcohol and substance abuse was rated as moderate by both category of respondents. The observed chi square value showed that the views of G&C teachers and class teachers were significantly related.

Over 70% of class teachers indicated that there was a moderate need for guidance and counselling in pupils' sexuality issues while 60% of G&C teachers felt that there was a very high need. The disparity in their opinion was also confirmed by the smaller value of chi-square which showed that there was no relationship at 95% confidence level. This difference was possible due

to the fact G&C teachers were likely to be contacted by pupils with different issues unlike the class teachers whose area of jurisdiction was mostly confined to the class members. It was thus, unfortunate that though there was a very high need for guidance and counselling services for sexuality issues among public primary pupils in Kikuyu Sub County, most of the G&C teachers were least prepared in these particular areas as earlier found in section 3.6.

3.10 G&C Teacher Handling of Pupils' Punishment

Being a G&C teacher can sometimes conflict with other roles in a school. For instance, a pupil who has just been punished by a teacher might not be very receptive to teacher (therapist) genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and empathetic understanding as espoused in Rogerian client-centered therapy theory. Further, the punishment action might jeopardize the smooth stage one (the story) takes off in the Egan's skilled helper model (Egan, 1994). At Stage I, the emphasis is to build a nonthreatening counseling relationship and enable the client explore their situation and finally focus on some specific issues. The study, therefore, sought to find out whether the G&C teachers in Kikuyu Sub County get involved in pupils' punishment and whether there were any conflicts in executing the two roles.

All the G&C teachers indicated that they did administer punishment to errant pupils. However, in regard to the conflict that arose for being a disciplinarian and a counselors, 66.7 % of G&C teachers indicated that they found no conflict while 32.3 % of G&C teachers found the roles conflicting. One of the teachers explicated that most of the pupils in the wrong expected the G&C teacher to forgive them and further to empathize with their situation. A counselor should be a role model and be firm with pupils in adhering school rules. However, the punishing role sometimes conflict with guidance and counseling role.

3.11 Guidance and Counselling Programme Time Schedule

The study also viewed G&C teacher preparedness as a function of how the guidance and counseling's Programme sessions are planned and executed in a school. Regular guidance and counseling sessions prompts the G&C teacher to conduct research in search of material for presentation. In addition, pupils are likely to be more open and present issues encountered at home and school to the school G&C teacher as a result of constant interaction. On the other hand, when guidance and counseling sessions are rare, the possibility of pupils identifying with the G&C Programme as a source of solution to their problems becomes remote.

The study first sought to establish whether guidance and counseling is assigned a specific time in class time tables. Sixteen G&C teachers constituting 53.3% affirmed that a specific time was scheduled in the time table while 46.7% indicated to the contrary. The interviewed head teachers shed more light on the same issue and indicated that most schools scheduled Tuesday after classes as time for clubs, societies or guidance and counseling. Some class teachers also did some guidance and counseling in the morning and after lunch as they took roll call. The study

further sought to establish the G&C teacher frequency of conducting group guidance and counselling. Figure 6 shows the results.

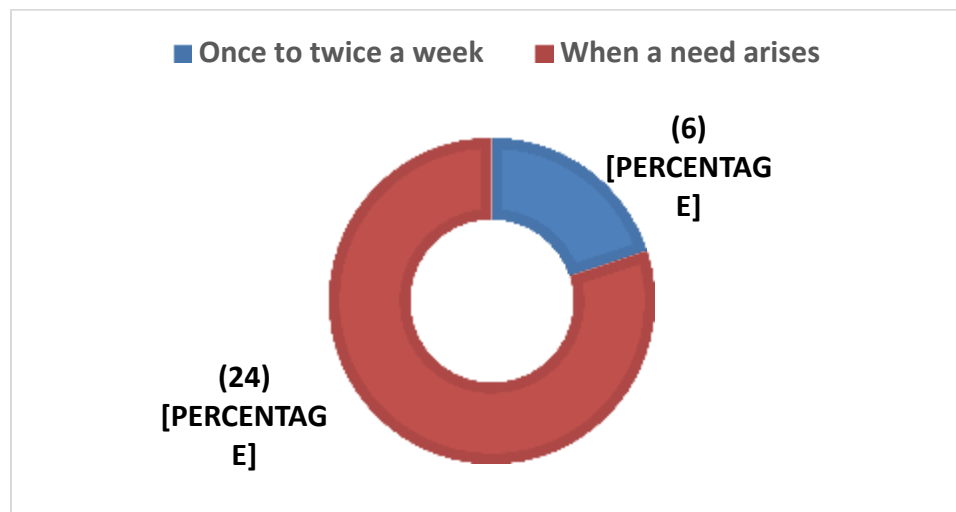


Figure 6 Frequency of Conducting Group Guidance and Counselling

It was evident from Figure 6 that most of the G&C teachers conducted group sessions only when a need arose. This implied that, despite the scheduling of G&C session in the time table in some schools, sessions did not happen on weekly basis unless there was an issue at hand. In order to realize effective services, group guidance sessions should be based on research, planned and delivered on weekly basis. Teachers should aim at equipping pupils with skills and knowledge which can help them to avoid the various pitfalls prone to young people such as premarital sex and drugs abuse as opposed to seeking solutions after the damage has occurred. Similarly, over 80 % of G&C teachers indicated that they meet pupils for individual guidance and counselling services when the need arises. Individual sessions depended on the number of pupils who voluntarily seek the assistance and the number of pupils' referrals from teachers and the head teacher. When teachers were requested to indicate how often they refer pupils for counselling, most termed the event as rare and mostly for those who were bereaved. Most of the interviewed head teachers indicated that their referrals were mainly related to discipline issues. In summary, it was deduced that considering that most schools had a population of more than 500 pupils, the case load for G&C teachers was very low. This implied that both pupils and teachers did not regard guidance and counselling services as a channel to seek solutions to various challenges that learners encountered.

4. Discussion

Most of the G&C teachers were female constituting 66.7%. This implied that the leadership in guidance and counselling programmes in public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub County were dominated by women. This finding was similar to Munyao (2018) who found that teacher

counselors in Matinyani Sub County public primary schools had a notable gender disparity since there were (82.9%) females and only (17.7%) males. Similarly, Wambui (2015) noted a gender disparity of 7 to 3 in favor of secondary school female teacher counselors in Githunguri Sub County in Kiambu County. Katz (1996) as cited in Wambui (2015) notes that presence of more female G&C teachers in a mixed gender school may present some challenges as boys feel uncomfortable when confiding to female teachers. Further, Salgon, Ngumi & Chege (2016) posit guidance and counselling programme dominated by females contributes to low presence of the boy child in seeking counselling services. Thus, G&C programmes should be handled by a team of female and male teachers in order to cater for both boys and girls. However, Wesonga, Munyau and Tarus (2016) study found that female teachers had more positive attitude towards guidance and counselling services in schools as compared to males and further postulated that females are considered more helpful and generous in offering assistance and emotional support. They also observed that women are more likely than men to enter occupations in the “helping professions” such as guidance and counselling and above all the disparity was a reflection of the gender composition of teacher counsellors both nationally and internationally, as evidenced in a national survey of school counsellors (College Board Advocacy and Policy Centre 2012), which found out that more than three-quarters (77 %) of school counsellors globally were women.

The study aimed at assessing the extent of G&C teachers’ preparedness by first establishing their experience as counselors and the professional training they had received. In reference to Figure 2, most of the G&C teachers (80%) had a long experience of six years and above. However, for effective guidance and counseling services, appropriate skills and knowledge are essential. While lay helpers such as parents and teachers are guided by personal solutions and common sense, projections of their own solutions, and over-involvement, a trained G&C professional will invoke the appropriate approach with often positive results (White & Kelly, 2010). Furthermore, a lay helper is prone to boundary problems and prone to expressing sympathy as opposed to empathy (Bernard & Goodyear, 2008).

Eighteen G&C teachers constituting 60.0 % indicated that they had been trained while (40.0 %) had no formal training. Of the trained teachers, 10 had gained their skills through seminars’ and workshops, four had certificate, and two had diplomas while two had degree certificates in guidance and counselling. The finding was similar to Owino and Odera (2014) finding that most teachers in Kisumu West Sub County public primary schools were untrained in guidance and counselling (52.8%) followed by workshop trained (18.3%), certificate (12.2%), diploma (9.8) while there were no teachers with degree (0%). The finding was also found to be in line with Oketch and Kimemia (2012) finding that unlike the American School Counsellor Association (2012) that puts the minimum requirement for becoming a school counsellor at master’s degree, the Kenya school G&C teacher credentials range from non-degree certificates to a master’s degree depicting lack of clear standards of training and clinical experience. This has resulted in school counsellors with significant disparities in their training and practice. Similar studies have also cast aspersions on the quality of training and the competence of the G&C course tutors in Kenya. Oyieyo (2012) found that teachers did not cover sufficient content in guidance and counselling during their teacher training due the fact that teachers also have to undertake courses for two teaching subjects during their teacher-training program. Paisley and Hayes (2003)

reiterates that transforming counsellor education from an individually-oriented approach to include a systems-oriented approach would require a broadening of the curriculum by, for example, adding new content related to schools and communities as systems.

As noted by Wambu and Wickman (2016), most instructors lack school counseling experience and are not in regular contact with practicing school counselors; a situation seemingly akin to the United States in the field's early years (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). Additionally, many instructors have a background in educational psychology and counseling psychology, but are not counselor educators. Furthermore, counselor preparation curricula are loaded with non-counseling courses, have conflicting and varied theoretical orientations. Training of G&C teachers in Kenya has also been faulted in that supervision of trainees is inconsistent and that training is largely theory-based, with little practical (experiential) learning involved (Oketch & Kimemia, 2012; Waititu & Khamasi, 2010; Wambu & Fisher, 2015). In order to oversee an effective G&C Programme, it requires school counselors who are well equipped not only with a strong knowledge base but also with strong clinical skills obtained through experiential training (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012). It is therefore absurd that some training programs in Kenya do not require school counselors-in-training to participate in either practicum or internship in a school setting. The lack of clinical skills in a school setting is a great barrier to service delivery by school counselors in Kenya.

Most of the G&C teachers (66.7%) did not attend INSET on guidance and counseling in the last two years. Lack of INSET for two years is a long duration and especially when 40% of the G&C teachers had no other formal training. In a similar study conducted in Nairobi County, Orege (2011) found that 77% of G&C teachers rarely attended career workshops and seminars and thus limiting their competence in career guidance related information. This may be due to lack of awareness of the importance of workshops/seminars as avenues for experience sharing and updating of career related information or because the opportunities are not availed to them. It is through seminars/workshops and interaction with resource persons that teacher counsellors could keep abreast with the fast changing counselling field.

In regard to G&C teacher's appointment, majority of G&C teachers (63.3%) were appointed by their head teachers verbally, 13.3% of them were appointed through a head teacher's letter, and 16.7% volunteered themselves while 6.7% were proposed by their fellow colleagues. The finding was a major departure from Munyao (2017) finding where majority of G&C teachers were proposed by their fellow staff members to be in charge of G&C programme while only one indicated to have been appointed formally the head teacher. Cognate to the study, Njoka (2007) observation that in primary schools, teachers are appointed by the school principal to provide counselling services based on personal qualities as opposed to professional training. Lack of official appointment, job description and role identity are known to hamper guidance and counselling teachers' self-efficacy and work output.

Most of the G&C teachers were teaching over 30 lessons per week translating to over six lessons per day. This implied that most of the G&C teachers were exhausted by the end of the day to be effective in guidance and counselling. Further, the high work load coupled with the school high

population leaves the G&C teacher at crossroad. The finding concurs with several other studies done in Kenya that most of the G&C teachers have high workload of at least 30 lessons (Ajowi & Simatwa, 2010; Cheruiyot & Orodho, 2015; Munyao, 2017). According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2003) the student-to-school counselor ratio in schools should be about 250:1 and cautions that beyond this ratio, a teacher counselor is hindered from implementing effective programs.

Most of G&C teachers rated themselves as either good or average in academic, social interactions, pupil/parent relationships, and career. However, G&C rated themselves as either average or below average in homosexuality, masturbation, alcohol and drug abuse, suicidal tendencies, trauma and shock, and grief and loss. This implied that G&C teachers have low efficacy in a number of pertinent issues that are potential issues among the school going youth in Kikuyu Sub County. This finding corroborates Wambu and Wickman (2016) finding that while most G&C perceive themselves as capable of handling pupils issues in academic, social interaction and pupil/parent relationship, they had training gaps in specific areas such as substance and drug abuse, grief and crisis intervention, trauma and debriefing of trauma, multicultural counselling, HIV/AIDS counselling, family counselling, counselling children with special needs, human sexuality, career counselling, and spirituality in counselling.

Having established G&C teachers' efficacy in tackling pupils various issues, Table 4 shows the finding on the extent to which guidance and counselling services were needed in areas such as discipline, academic, sexuality and others. In doing so, the researcher established the mismatch between the need and what the teachers could effectively handle. Both class teachers and G&C teachers concurred that there was a high need for guidance in academic work. They also concurred that the guidance and counselling need for vocational issues was moderate. However, while class teachers considered the need for guidance in sexuality issues as moderate, G&C teachers indicated that there was a high need. The high need for guidance in sexuality issues among primary school pupils had also been noted by Munyao (2017) and Owino and Odera (2014). Thus, there was a mismatch between the high need for guidance and counseling in sexuality issues and the G&C teachers efficacy to handle these issues. It therefore emerged that most of the G&C programmes in Kikuyu Sub County did not have the capacity to handle effectively pupils' sexuality issues such as homosexuality, lesbianism, premarital sex and abortion. One of the head teacher disclosed, thus:

I know issues about homosexuality, lesbianism, cyber romance exist in our schools to some extent especially in boarding section...but since most teachers are at a loss on how to go about it, the issue is ignored and we assume parents are best to deal with it....furthermore most head teachers are keen to protect the name of their schools.

With reference to Figure 6, most of the G&C teachers conducted group sessions only when a need arose. This implied that, despite the scheduling of G&C session in the time table in some schools, sessions did not happen on weekly basis unless there was an issue at hand. The study finding was similar to Wambui (2015) who found that in most of the secondary schools in

Githunguri Sub County, counseling of students was only possible when, and as need arose. The finding was also similar to Kemei (2004) that most of the schools under study had no specific time allocated for Guidance and Counselling Services. Students' responses to a question on when they go for counselling services showed that they only go for counselling when they have a problem. Similarly, Ondima et al., (2012) observed that G&C teachers are not sufficiently relieved from their teaching duties to have adequate time to devote to G&C; they argued that teacher counsellors are overburdened with heavy work. Conversely, Reynolds & Cheek (2002) as cited in Owino and Odera (2014) note that in America effective school counsellors reduce non- counselling duties in order to do their core business.

In order to realize effective services, group guidance sessions should be based on research, planned and delivered on weekly basis. Teachers should aim at equipping pupils with skills and knowledge which can help them to avoid the various pitfalls prone to young people such as premarital sex and drugs abuse as opposed to seeking solutions after the damage has occurred.

5. Conclusion

Most of G&C teachers in Kikuyu Sub County public primary schools lack formal training in guidance and counselling. Most of them are appointed by head teachers verbally and lacked role identity. They rarely get an opportunity for professional development, have high work load of over 30 lessons and low efficacy in dealing with contemporary issues such as sexuality, alcohol and substance abuse, aberrant sexual behaviour, shock, trauma, grief and loss. Considering the upsurge of sexuality issues and incidences of families affected by life threatening diseases such as cancer, diabetes and hypertension, it is unfortunate that G&C teachers lacked knowledge and skills to offer appropriate services. In order to discharge effective G&C services, the G&C teacher should be well prepared in terms of training, role identity, constant professional development and appropriate work load among others. First, school counseling should be recognized as a profession in its own right, rather than a service ancillary to other educational programs. In this case the role of the teacher counselor should be explicit to all stake holders. Secondly, the training of counselors in Kenya should be harmonized and be based on clearly defined competencies as opposed to the current situation where teacher counselors are trained at different levels with varied curricula. Further, the curriculum for school counselors should include both theory and experiential training.

The government should also come up with a unified ethical code for school counsellors. The current ethical code developed in 2012 by the Kenya Counselling and Psychological Association (KCPA) does not meet the specific school needs. For instance, teacher counsellors need to be equipped with the principles on how to solve ethical dilemmas such as maintenance of confidentiality in pupil information. The school management committee should be proactive and sponsor G&C teacher for constant updating of knowledge in both government and private institutions.

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