



Approaches to Guidance and Counselling and its Benefits to Youth: Kenyan Urban Experience

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Abstract

The role of Guidance and Counselling in society today is a vital tool for the empowerment and liberation of youth. However, its benefits in relation to its potential in youth empowerment have not fully been tapped. The main aim of this study was to examine the approaches used in Guidance and Counselling among the youth in one youth vocational training institute in urban set up in Mombasa, Kenya. The study further sought to establish the benefits of Guidance and Counselling among the youth in the institution. Mixed research design was used in the study. The design was found appropriate since it allows use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The sample included Forty students, and two counsellors. In total, there were forty two respondents. Random and purposive sampling procedures were employed. Random sampling procedure was used to collect data from youth while purposive sampling procedure was used to arrive at the youth counselors. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the youths who were the key respondents in the study. Interview guide on the other hand was used to collect data from the youth counsellors. The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data from the youth questionnaire were analyzed with the help of SPSS and presented using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data collected with the help of interview guide were analyzed using a qualitative data analysis technique and reported in a narrative form. The study revealed that the key approaches used in Guidance and Counselling among counsellors in the institution included listening, empathy and unconditional acceptance approaches. Further, the study established that Guidance and Counselling is an important youth empowerment tool, which is beneficial to the youth in terms of creating self-awareness, promoting good relationship and improving self-esteem. The study recommends training of more youth counsellors at institutional and community level and promotion of peer guidance and counselling programs which have potentials of building a strong youth counselling foundation upon which many other well grounded benefits can be realized.

Keywords: Youth Guidance and Counselling, Youth counselling approaches, Youth counselling benefits, Youth Empowerment, Plight of youth, Youth issues

1. Introduction

The growing number of social problems affecting the lives of African youths has been a great concern among the educators. This has led to a determined approach towards making their education systems play a much more active and positive role in promoting the growth and development of the young people entrusted to their care (Lomofsky & Lazarus, 2001).

Beekman (2008) points out that youth are the backbone to a sustainable development of a nation. As such, nations ought to invest greatly on the issues affecting the young people in areas of nation building. Further, institutions ought to be put in place to ensure the young people's needs are put into perspective. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) broadly highlight that the ever growing complexity of society, coupled with social problems and the rapid development of science and technology, place heavy demands on education. The school, as an important social institution, is required to adapt quickly to changing patterns, and help prepare young people for tomorrow's challenges (Marx, 2006). The role of counselling in education set up provides a vital tool for the empowerment and liberation of the youth.

Etounga-Manguelle (2000) explains that the African society today has evolved from its traditional structures that addressed the ways in which people dealt with life. Traditionally, the passage of rite were understood and used to induct the young into adulthood. However today, the customs and formation of young people have been left to the media and peers. In our busy town life, parents have no close follow up of their children due to the emerging challenges facing our world today including poverty, single parenthood, drugs, unemployment, family conflict, divorce and many others. Since the youth are faced with numerous challenges, there is a need for accompanying counsellors in guidance and counselling framework to substitute the previous structures of the traditional setting (Friedman, 1990).

Amidst the changing trends and demands of the contemporary society especially in urban set up, the need for guidance and counselling especially for the youth has become paramount in order to promote their total well-being and facilitate the achievement of life aspirations. It is essential in youth development agenda to help youth to discover their identity and their place in the society in order to better their situation amidst rapid changes in society. Examining Guidance and Counselling approaches and its benefits could therefore help in providing the ground for the key interventions that can be adopted to help the youth to cope with the ever increasing demands of the contemporary society.

2.0 Methodology

Mixed research design was used in the study. The design was found appropriate since it allows use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2003). The design was useful in terms of leading to the findings that highlighted the approaches to Guidance and Counselling and its benefits to the urban youth.

The target population included students and counsellors in one selected Youth Vocational Training institution in Mombasa. The sample included Forty (40) students, and two (2) counsellors. In total, there were forty two (42) respondents. Random and purposive sampling procedures were employed. Random sampling procedure was used to collect data from the youth while purposive sampling procedure was used to arrive at the two youth counselors.

Questionnaire was used to collect data from the youths who were the key respondents in the study. Interview guide on the other hand was used to collect data from the youth counsellors. The questionnaire consisted of three main parts. Part one covered background characteristics of youth including sex, age bracket, education level and employment status. Part two consisted of items on the approaches to Guidance and Counselling. Part three covered items on the benefits of Guidance and Counselling to youths. Interview guided gathered data on the background characteristics of the counsellors, approaches to Guidance and Counselling and its benefits to the youth.

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data from the youth questionnaire were analyzed with the help of SPSS and presented using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data collected using interview method were analysed using content analysis approach and reported in a narrative form (Stake, 1999). This mixed approach played a complimentary role and enriched the analysis and presentation of the finding of the study.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

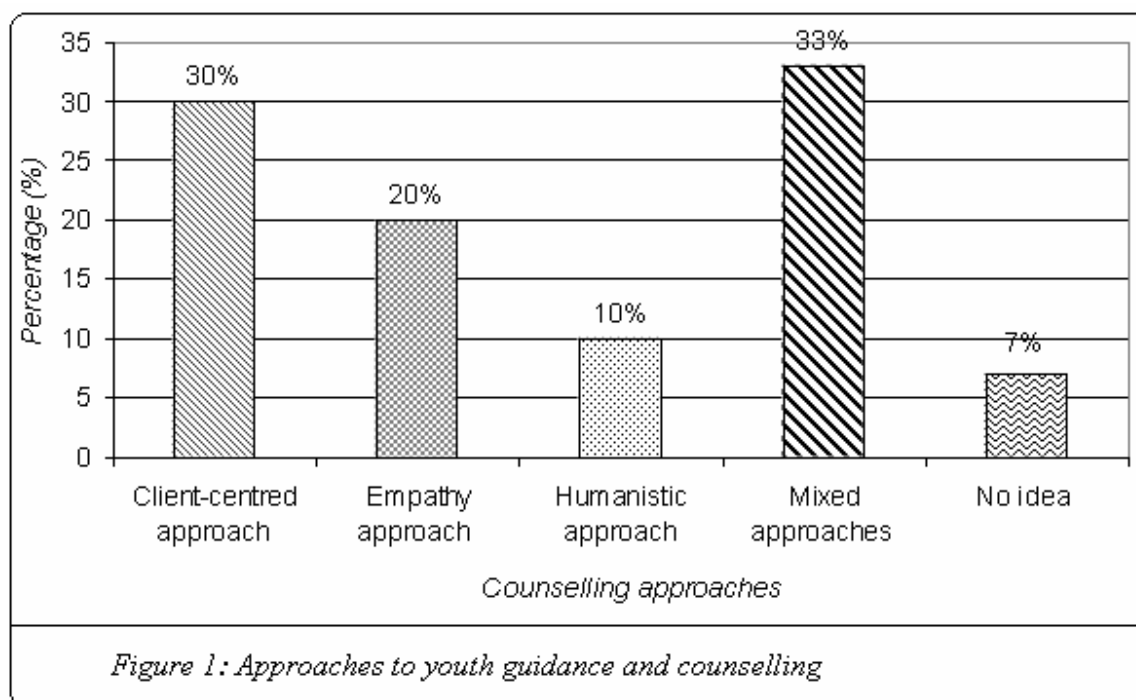
Distribution of the youth by sex showed that 52.5% of them were female while the remaining 47.5% were male. The study struck good representation of both sexes. Half of the youth were aged between 21-25 years; another half of them were aged between 26 and 35 years. Concerning education level, 50% of them had attained primary school education; 47.5% had secondary education. Only a handful of them, 2.5% had attained tertiary level education. In terms of job placement, only 19% of them had formal employment while 14.3% had temporal form of employment 66 % had no form of employment.

One of the counsellors was 32 years of age with a certificate in guidance and counselling while the other was 27 years of age with no prior counselling qualifications just appointed due to practical experience and familiarity in the area.

3.2 Approaches to Guidance and Counselling

The study sought to determine the key approaches that youth counsellors used in offering guidance and counselling in the study institution. The youth was asked to indicate which

approaches their counsellors used. They were provided with the following approaches to choose from: listening techniques, empathy and unconditional acceptance.



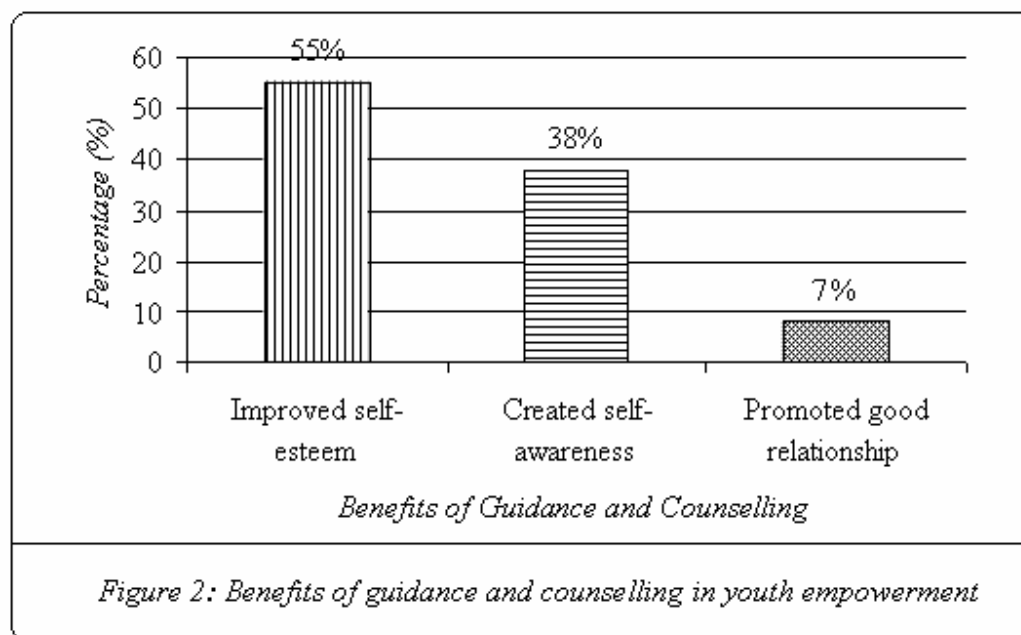
As shown by Figure 1, 30% of the youth who took part in the study, client-centred approach was used by the youth counsellors in the institution. Another 20% of them indicated that some youth counsellors used empathy approach. A few others, (10%) indicated that some counsellors used humanistic approach in counselling.

A third of the youth, (33%) indicated that the counsellors used all the three approaches among others which are commonly used in Guidance and Counselling. Only 7% of them indicated that they were not aware of the kind of approaches that are used in Guidance and Counselling.

When the Counsellors were interviewed, they pointed out five broad approaches that they mainly used in counselling the youth. These included client-centred, psychodynamic, humanistic, cognitive and behaviourist approaches. Person-centred approach, one of them went on to explain, is based on the ideas of Carl Rogers and is widely used with, and particularly suited to, young people because of its understanding of conflict between the 'real self' and the 'self-concept' and the positive experiences provided for clients through 'empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard.'

3.3 Benefits of Guidance and Counselling in Youth Empowerment

In order to establish the benefits of Guidance and Counselling in empowerment the youth, the youth were asked to point out the benefits of seeking the services. They were asked whether guidance and counselling: improved self-esteem, created self-awareness and promoted good relationship (See Figure 2).



Majority of the youth, 55% indicated that counselling improved their self-esteem and self-discovery. Slight over a third of them, 38% admitted that Guidance and Counselling created self-awareness thus providing self mastery and confidence to counter life's challenges. The remaining 7% indicated that it promotes good relationship among their colleagues and cements relations among their families.

When the counsellors were asked about the benefits of counselling, they explained that the process of guidance and counselling was beneficial in the sense that it assisted the youth in the institution to focus on their particular concerns and development issues, while at the same time exploring solutions to addressing their life specific problems. The two counsellors also confirmed that through guidance and counselling, the youth in the institution were able to make career and life choices, cope with crisis and thereby able to work through inner feelings of conflict thus improving relationships with others.

4. Discussion

This study established that there are various types of counselling approaches that counsellors use in the counselling process. The key one as pointed out by the counsellors was client-centred approach. This approach is better suited to work with the youth since it

a non directive form of counselling and explores personal development issues such as relationships and other related life challenges ranging from abuse or coming to term with loss. However this approach may not offer strategies for an individual to move on. Therefore transactional analysis which is an active directive form of counselling where the counsellor teaches the client the model of counselling and analyses the clients past, sometimes as far back as their childhood or REBT which is an active directive form of counselling where the counsellor teaches the client the model of counselling and techniques that the client can use to change their irrational thoughts and replace them with more useful thinking can be adopted (Dryden & Mytton, 2005).

Guidance and Counselling is an important tool which serves a vital role in maximizing success among youth (Lapan, Gysbers & Kayson, 2007). Through Guidance and Counselling leadership and collaboration, urban youth counsellors promote equity and access to meticulous educational experiences and also create an environment safe for learning in safeguarding the well being of all members of the learning institutions (Smith & Sandhu, 2004). Majority of the youth (55%), who took part in this study, indicated that Guidance and Counselling was indeed beneficial in the sense that it helped them to improve their self-esteem. This implies that sustained quality Guidance and Counselling remains a powerful youth empowerment tool that can boost youth's inner drive, sense of self-worth and meaning in life.

The findings of the study are consistent with observation made by other scholars about the benefits of guidance and counselling to youth. Hughes and Gration (2006) highlights the following benefits: youths are given solutions on how to deal with psychological problems which might affect their studies and are advised on how to cope with different situations facing them, it also helps with behaviour change on youths with disciplinary challenges. It has also been found to help bridge the communication gap between the youth and the authority figures and most importantly providing an avenue for the youth to be guided on career choices and how to best achieve their goals. Sultana (2004) further adds that guidance and counselling help to build confidence and to empower individuals as well as making them aware of new career possibilities, including civic, leisure, learning and work opportunities and promotes the balance of life and work.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The study concluded the following:

Although the majority of youth who took part in the study recognized the benefits of counselling, lack of full grasp of its benefits can be an impediment to their very growth and realization of their potentials.

Client-centred approach to guidance and counselling is just but one of the traditional counselling techniques. Thus, there is need to employ contemporary well-mapped

guidance and counselling approaches that can suit particular needs of an urban youth in higher institutions of learning.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

The counsellors to be capacitated through undergoing training on various youth counselling approaches in order to ensure that guidance and counseling is effective in helping the urban youth to address their issues

To re-map the traditionally defined guidance and counselling approaches used in institutions to suit the dynamics of youth in an urban set up today.

Promotion of peer guidance and counselling programs which have potentials of building a strong youth counselling foundation upon which many other well grounded benefits can be realized.

Learning institutions in the urban setting to set up self awareness programs through which urban youths can find an avenue to discover their inner selves and potentials that lie deep within them.

5.3 Recommendation for further studies

Since this study was limited in its scope, another study could be undertaken to examine the role of guidance and counselling for the youth in a rural set up in a developing economy's perspective. Such a study could respond to the question of "what is the implication of guidance and counselling for a youth in a rural set up in a developing economy?"

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