

CHALLENGES FACING TEACHER COUNSELLORS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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INTRODUCTION

- Research carried out in Wareng District, Rift-valley on challenges facing teen mothers in secondary schools in Kenya reflected that the teen mother challenges emanate largely from lack of professional counselling.
- Though guidance and counselling departments exist in schools with at-least one teacher counsellor per each school, counselling in schools continues to pose challenges to teacher counsellors.

BACKGROUND

- Studies in counselling reflect teen mothers as special children belonging to special populations that require special counselling (MOE, 2003; Archer J. and Cooper S.,1998)
- For effective counselling, teacher counsellors should be trained adequately to handle these special populations (Hough, 2002)
- Teacher counsellors however, lack professional preparedness to handle them.
- Focus is also mainly on normal children with normal school problems like academics

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- Consequently, counselling in schools does not adequately address teen mothers' challenges despite their re-admission.
- Therefore, teen mothers in schools continue suffering emotionally, socially, academically and psychologically.
- The teen mothers become traumatized and sometimes drop out of school again or they end up as social misfits leading to poor performance

Methodology

- Descriptive survey was used with questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion
- The research targeted teacher counsellors, one per every sampled school, head teachers and teen mothers .
- There was a respondents' ratio of 58% male to 42% female and 75% of total respondents had a counselling experience of six years and above.
- None had a degree or diploma in counselling

FINDINGS

- That in each school, there was between one and five teen mothers and 70% of them had dropped out of school
- That no counselling mechanisms were in place in schools to ensure retention of the teen mothers in school before and after delivery
- That the few who attended counselling had very unique problems while majority of them avoided counselling altogether.

- That teacher counsellors are not aware of special populations like teen mothers or policies like the teen mother return-to-school policy
- They face opposition from head teachers in their counselling endeavours
- They lack avenues like legal procedures that should assist them address sensitive matters related to their clients' challenges
- They cannot reach out to those who drop out of school

- All the teacher counsellors claimed that they had difficulties dealing with teen mothers and other special children
- Teen mother support groups and welfare clubs and related activities are non-existent in the schools
- That counselling departments have not adequately handled the students' challenges adequately

Teen mother challenges

- Parents deny them a second chance
- Temptation to abortion of the baby
- Fear and anxiety before and after delivery
- Withdrawal from peers for feeling 'too old'
- Rejection and discrimination in school
- Denial for re-admission in former schools
- Gossip, rumours and propaganda
- Sexual harassment by teachers and peers
- Fatigue and absenteeism
- Challenges of parenting

TEACHER COUNSELLOR CHALLENGES

- They lack professional preparedness
- Clients are inaccessible due to ignorance, fear and intimidation
- There is lack of support from head teachers, parents and colleagues
- Facilities for counselling are sometimes inadequate and or inappropriate
- Effective counselling fails due to faulted counselling processes
- Undermining by colleagues
- Gossip and rumours

CONCLUSION

- Teacher counsellors are not adequately prepared to handle special cases
- Collective responsibility in counselling is lacking
- Refresher courses and workshops to boost counselling are hardly available
- Teacher counsellors remain isolated
- Change and management of change should be effected in students' challenges
- If professional counselling is not put in place in schools, education goals and vision 2030 cannot be realized

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Rigorous training and in-service for teacher counsellors is necessary
- Professional counsellors should oversee counselling
- School managers should enhance counselling by recognition and support of teacher counsellors
- Support groups and clubs should be established to sensitize and support special groups
- Motivation and incentives for successful counsellors

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