Contributions of Peer Counselling on the Learners' Social Adjustment in Boarding Secondary Schools in Kericho County

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Abstract

Peer counselling among adolescents in secondary schools enhances learners' adjustment to challenges they experience during their social development. The study focused on the contributions of peer counselling on learners' social adjustment in boarding secondary schools in Kericho County, Kenya. The study objective was to establish the influence of peer counselling on learners' social adjustment in boarding secondary schools. Social Cognitive theory by Albert Bandura and Social Development theory by Lev Vygotsky guided the study. The study-generated data from 12 schools, among 398 students and 48 peer counsellors selected by simple random sampling. Additionally, 12 heads of guidance and counselling and principals were included. The study ustilised convergent parallel mixed methods research design where data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussion. Quantitative data was analysed by descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data was thematically analysed through selective coding. There was a positive influence of (β=0.594) on learners' social adjustment. The study concludes that peer counselling has a positive influence on learners' social adjustment. The study therefore recommended that schools should use peer counselling. Sensitization of principals, teachers and heads of guidance and counselling on the benefits of Peer counselling on learners' social adjustment is necessary.

Key words: Establishing, Contributions, Peer Counselling and Social Adjustment

Introduction
Balluerka *et al* (2016) argued that peer-to-peer relationship contributes both positively and negatively to the psychological well-being of young people. Additionally, Allen *et al* (2019) confirmed that much as learners in secondary schools are undergoing substantial physical growth, they are equally bumping into new situations and responsibilities. Again, Peer connectedness are good indicators of adolescents' portrayal of school belonging.

Furthermore, Uslu and Gizir (2016) established that peer connection play a vital role in satisfying the desire to belong and feel related as they socialize. Supportive and integrative intimate relationships help adolescents feel like they belong at school. In secondary schools, peer counselling can have positive contributions to learners in encouraging them to be responsible for their lives by avoiding problems by being calm when angered. This can be very effective especially when secondary school environment is conduicive. Peer counsellors help is more practical to learners because they do things together and learn from each other (Bii *et al*, 2016). While learners are in school, they create a mini society as they interact with students from different backgrounds. Peer counsellors socialise with their colleagues in class, games and in dormitories therefore avoiding negative peer pressure (Panda, 2020).

Objective of the Study

To establish the influence of peer counselling on learners' social adjustment in boarding secondary schools.

Hypothesis of the Study

H_o. Peer counselling has no statistically significant influence on learners' social adjustment

Literature Review

Students in secondary schools in Kenya face a myriad of challenges, which are social, economic, physical, and psychological that emanate from both the families and the school. This causes social adjustment challenges in and out of school evidence by school dropout, negative peer pressure, drug abuse, embracing teamwork and absenteeism from school.

School dropout

Maintaining peace and harmony in the school entails adjusting to new norms and ideals. It is getting along with the other students in the classroom (Srivastava, 2018). The school is a natural social environment where students spend the majority of their time socializing and engaging with one another (Belle, 2017). Likewise, Ambayo and Ngumi (2016) attested that peers influence each other positively or negatively. A well-coordinated peer counselling can lead to reduction of school dropout among learners. Equally, Bledsoe 2002 in Njagi & Mwania (2017) verified that the richest and the poorest countries experience the problem of school drop out in equal amounts. Similarly, Ouma *et al* (2017) confirmed some students drop out of school due to poverty leading to inability to buy some essential necessities lack exercise books, early pregnancies and early marriages.

Learners who are unable to maintain positive relationships with their classmates and administrators, as well as those who detest school and lessons, are more likely to be absent or drop out. Illness, academic failure, and learning disabilities can cause students to miss school or quit out. Their circle of friends, poor social habits and girl/boy relationships also influences students' absenteeism and dropping out of school, and time spent on the internet. Administrators' negative approach toward students drives them to miss school and eventually quit out (Sahin et al, 2016).

Learners tend to receive more support when they are in supportive school climate Connolly & Corcoran, 2016 in Wang *et al*, (2021). Verbal persuasion refers to social encouragement that

persuades individuals that they have what it takes to succeed. They avoid focusing on their doubts by working hard. When there is a significant role model impressing on an individual that they are capable of anything and can face any challenge, they retain this belief. This helps in motivating individuals now and in the future (Forsythe, 2019).

Negative Peer Pressure

Peer rejection in adolescence is a major cause of delinquency. Peer pressure may produce in adolescents positive or negative results. When it produces negative outcomes, it implies that the pressure is but to conform and be involved in criminal activity not in line with societal norms. Peer pressure becomes the strongest stimulus on adolescents in terms of drug abuse, cigarette smoking, premarital sex, violence and other criminal activities in secondary (Esiri, 2016).

 In social settings such as schools, adolescents exposed to different sets of peers may differentially affect their behaviour. Adolescents are motivated to select and retain relationships with peers who involve in similar levels of a particular behaviour like prosocial behavior, aggression (Byrne, 1971 in Coleman, 2020). Peer pressure is a solid determiner in school setting. To improve the positive effects of peer pressure, it is paramount to examine this concept to avert the negative effects on learners for their psychological developments (Toraman & Aycicek, 2018).

Modelling occurs if the observer attends to the model and picks on relevant stimulus. Retention will take place if the observer remembers all the significant aspects of the model's behaviour. Reproduction occurs when the observer retains, rehearse and later perform the behaviour correctly that is being modelled. Motivational process occurs when the incentive to attend, retain and perform certain behaviour is through the anticipation of reinforcement or punishment (Kay & Kibble, 2016). Learners can observe and model peer counsellors social and academic adjustment during class discussion, games or free time.

Learners can observe their peers succeed because of persistent effort and model the behaviour (LaMorte, 2019). When a person looks at a model, they can lessen previous negative information, learn new values, and learn how to use the environment and objects from the model in a good way (Alkaya & Metin, 2015 in Kilinc et al, 2018). Learners are capable of achieving most of their goals if they observe and model peer counsellors. As they observe the confidence of the peer counsellors when tackling assignments, they can equally model them as they are doing their assignments.

The social environment of an individual influences behaviour. The environment has the capacity to facilitate or the ability to hinder a behaviour of a learner. Learning would be very difficult if individuals had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. The mental state and motivation determine whether a behaviour is learned or not (Cherry, 2019). Peers interacting with the learners influences whether the learner choose what is good or evil. If the environment of the learner is aggressive, the learner will become aggressive.
According to Pontz (2018) in the real world, peer pressure may be much more delicate since this increase during adolescence and the desire to feel normal drives it. Learners can model the observed behaviour from peer counsellors like confidence, learning to say no to drugs, drug abuse and dropping out of school. On the other hand, Maria (2019) confirmed that for a student to achieve

positive results in socialisation, his /her significant others must work with the school in the same direction especially, to overcome the possible dramatic episodes in adolescence.

Drug Abuse

How students socialize in school will influence how they socialize as adults. Socialization is critical to children at every developmental level. Schools must provide ample time for learners to interact socially (Bailey, 2015). Further, Maureen and Arrika (2019) clarified that social adjustment problems in secondary schools include absenteeism from classes and school dropout, going back home before closing hours and not interacting with their mates or participate in-group activities and bully their mates.

Student absence, according to Denean (2017), is an issue when it reaches severe levels. It is a well-known fact that pupils will skip school due to unforeseen situations. When student absence becomes common and permitted to continue, it becomes an issue for both individual students and schools. Building strong interactions with a student also boosts attendance, according to Patnode et al (2018). Adolescents who hang out with people who engage in deviant behavior such as absenteeism, drug use, and alcohol abuse are more likely to do the same. If students have a large number of friends who are more prone to skip school, they may have a bigger problem with absenteeism as well (Durborow, 2017).

 Attendance at school is an essential element in academic success. Students who go to school on a regular basis do well in school (Sekiwu et al, 2020). Supportive environments and empathy positively influence reduction of drug use in an adolescent (Hardy, 2020). According to social cognitive theory, if adolescent behaviour in peer contexts is sending a positive social signal to their peers, they copy the behaviour. Exposing teenagers to environment where peers detest drug abuse increases their chances to avoid drug use especially if the reward are positive (Ciranka & Bos, 2019).

Embrace Teamwork

Teamwork in the classroom teaches pupils the fundamental skills of cooperating as a group to achieve a shared purpose. It brings together a number of qualities that students can find useful later in their careers, such as teamwork, negotiation, and consensus. In teamwork, students must decide who will be in charge of different aspects of a project and work together to complete delegated assignments by using one another's strengths (McQuarrie 2018). Efficiency extends beyond individual achievement to unified class targets that peer counsellors can successfully achieve.
Admittedly, Vygosky1978 in Kurt (2020) enforced that for active learning to take place in the classroom, collaboration between the more knowledgeable learners and learners' guidance should take place. However, Janssen and Wobbles (2018) established that students' lack of collaborative skills such as providing and receiving help, respecting opposing perspectives, giving elaborate clarifications, and negotiating prohibited them working effectively in groups. Some peers contributed most, while others did less, and some made no effort to finish their own tasks. The collaboration focuses on giving learners chances to work as a team, to develop interpersonal skills, to develop self-awareness and be aware of others (Poth, 2018).

School Absenteeism

Socially supportive environment increases sense of integration and reduce loneliness as it connects students to peers leading to better outcome in their self-efficacy (Friswold-Atwood, 2018). In rural school, there close connection and meaningful relationships between a counsellor, the counsellee and their families than urban school counselling (Morrissette in Lane, 2018). Whereas exempted absenteeism when a learner could be ill is non-problematic and unwarranted absenteeism is an issue of serious concern that affects many schools. School absenteeism comprises of school refusal. School absenteeism can worsen over time from acute, into regular and even permanent absenteeism in the form of dropping out of school (Gubbels *et al* 2019).

Adolescents who hang out with people who engage in deviant behavior such as absenteeism, drug use, and alcohol abuse are more likely to do the same. If students have a large number of friends who are more prone to skip school, they may have a bigger problem with absenteeism as well (Durborow, 2017). Attendance at school is an essential element in academic success. Students who go to school on a regular basis do well in school (Sekiwu et al, 2020). Associates of an adolescent influence largely his or her social adjustment to the school. Administrators and heads of guidance and counselling are vital in guiding both peer counsellors and learners on dangers of associating with wrong groups.

Equally, Cole 1991 in Schmidt (2019) found that when students collaborate with their classmates, they socially adjusted, which fosters progress, or they suffer social ineptitude, which may lead to despair. A vicarious experience involves observing others or comparing one's self to group norms (Morris & Usher in Brouwer, 2018).

Methodology

The study adopted pragmatic paradigm that intrinsically echoes the researcher's beliefs about the world that he or she lives in and wants to live in (Zukaukas *et al*, 2018). Pragmatic approach belief is that, there are existing problems whose complexity studies uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Kivunja, & Kuyini, 2017). The researcher used Convergent parallel mixed methods research design where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analyzed separately, and then compared the results to check if the findings confirmed or contradicted each other (Pardede, 2018).

The sample consisted of 398 students, 48 peer counsellors who are students, 12 heads of guidance and counselling and 12 principals. The researcher stratified the sampling to categorize the research site into five zones according to the sub counties in Kericho County. The study apportioned two schools to Buret, Kipkelion and Londian sub counties because they had slightly fewer students whereas Ainamoi and Belgut sub counties were each apportioned three schools since their populace was slightly higher. Simple random sampling was used to select 435 students. To select the 48 peer counsellors, purposive sampling was done. The heads of guidance and counselling of each visited school and principal were also purposively selected.

The data was generated using questionnaires for the students, focus group discussion for the peer counsellors and interviews for the heads of guidance and counselling and principals. The questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from the students. The questionnaire contained items, positively worded for the respondents' feelings towards influence of peer counselling on learners' social adjustment. The researcher used focus group discussion to collect qualitative data from the peer counsellors from five main questions. A principal advantage of focus group discussion was that it yielded a large amount of information over a relatively short period (Nyumba

et al, 2018). The researcher used face-to-face Interviews to collect information from the principals and heads of guidance and counselling. The purpose of the interview was to get opinions and ideas from the heads of guidance and counselling and principals on influence of peer counselling on learners' social adjustment. Quantitative data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The study presented qualitative data from the focus group discussion and interview schedule using thematic analysis.

Results and Discussions
Data collection was by using questionnaires from students, focus group discussion from peer counsellors and interview schedule from heads of guidance and counselling and principals.

Descriptive Statistics on Learners Social Adjustment
The objective of the study was to establish the influence of peer counselling on learners' social adjustment in boarding secondary schools. To answer this objective, the researcher generated the following aspects reflecting learners' social adjustment: school dropout, negative peer pressure, drug abuse, and embrace teamwork and school absenteeism as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics on Learners Social Adjustment

Social Adjustment Aspects	Agreed		Moderately Agreed		Disagreed		Mean	SD
	F	*%*	*F*	*%*	*F*	*%*		
1. School Dropout	296	74.4	25	6.3	77	19.4	3.83	1.31
2. Negative peer pressure	311	78.2	41	10.3	46	11.6	3.99	1.09
3. Drug abuse	324	81.4	27	6.8	47	11.8	4.10	1.11
4. Embrace teamwork	327	82.2	26	6.5	45	11.3	4.08	1.10
5. School absenteeism	247	62.0	51	12.8	100	25.1	3.53	1.34
Mean							3.91	0.86

Note. N=398
On the first aspect of social adjustment, most of the respondents, 296 (74.4%) agreed that the peer counsellors help learners in reducing school dropout, 25 (6.3%) moderately agreed and only 77 (19.4%) disagreed (M=3.83; SD=1.31). The results show that a high number of respondents supported that peer counsellors help in reducing school dropout. Wang *et al* (2021) confirmed that peer support play and significant role in the development of an adolescent. Equally, Forythe (2019) expounded that according to social cognitive theory; social encouragement in this case through persuasion from peer counsellors can help students to accept that they have what it takes to succeed. When they observe others completing school without dropping out amidst challenges, they will be encouraged to become persistent despite the challenges.
The researcher obtained a similar pattern of results in qualitative findings during the focus group discussions:
There is a kitty used to help the needy students. Students are normally encouraged to come with extra items by the administration for the needy learners. This helps in reducing stealing among students and school dropout. It also reduces the feeling of some students feeling different from others or inferiority. As a role model, I tell my peers openly when they make mistakes that lead to expulsion from school (Extract, Focus Group Discussion, 2020).

The researcher observed a similar result during the face–to-face interview with the principals and heads of guidance and counselling:

Peer counsellors are quite helpful in solving some social issues. They are able to identify needy students. School heads, and teachers learn most of the social problems emanating from home and school affecting students from peer counsellors. These has helped a great deal in reducing school dropout (Extract, Interviews, 2020).

On the second aspect of social adjustment, Table 13 confirmed that most of the respondents 311 (78.2%) agreed that peer counsellors helped to prevent negative peer pressure, 41 (10.3%) moderately agreed and 46 (11.6%) disagreed (M=3.99; SD=1.09). These results show that majority of the learners agreed peer counsellors help learners prevent negative peer pressure. Overall, these findings are in line with Maria (2019) confirmed that for a learner to achieve positive results in socialisation, his /her significant others must work with the school in the same direction especially, to overcome the possible dramatic episodes in adolescence. According to social cognitive theory, Pontz (2018) confirmed that learners could model the observed behaviour from peer counsellors like confidence and learning to say no to drugs, drug abuse and dropping out of school. Peer cousellors can be encouraged to help their peer to look for like-minded friends who feels the same way they do in a particular situation.

During focus group discussion, some of the peer counsellors gave the following feed backs:

I encourage my peers who have friends of the opposite sex to have relationships with marked boundaries for there is consequences in every step one takes. I tell them to learn from the experiences of others. I tell my peers to be wise in relationships. I have also told them I have a boyfriend but I do not give to him 100% of myself since I know the consequences of over indulging in boy-girl relationship (Extract, focus Group Discussion, 2020).

I tell my friends to respect and value themselves for whom they are. I tell them to honour themselves by being too scarce from boys to earn respect from others. I have helped a classmate who told me she does not know how to sleep alone because she was used to sleeping with her boyfriend at home and the parents were not even aware. I informed her of the dangers of having boyfriends while still in school. I tell my peers to be real with themselves and that there is no need of behaving as though they come from very wealthy families just to please their friends and to be envied (Extract, Focus Group Discussion, 2020).

Face-to-face interviews were produced similar results:

They are helpful because they talk to learners about danger of engaging in intimate relationship with opposite sex and the consequences of such relationships. Peer counsellors are very helpful in reducing negative peer pressure. Peer counsellors help when shaping their peers' characters and to adapt good morals. They encourage their peers to avoid behaviour like stealing and engaging in drug and substance abuse (Extract, Interviews, 2020).

An interesting comment came out one of the interviews on influence of peer counselling in preventing peer pressure: *our school has greatly embraced peer counselling. We have developed a programme where peer counsellors are involved in the mentorship and psychosocial support of their peers. The programme covers a variety of topics relating to their studies and school adjustment. Teenage pregnancy has greatly reduced in our school and our girls have become more serious with their studies as revealed in their improved performance* (Extract, Interviews, 2020).

On the third aspect of social adjustment, Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents 324 (81.4%) agreed that the peer counsellors help learners avoid drug abuse, with 27 (6.8%) moderately

agreed and only 47 (11.8%) disagreed (M=4.10; SD=1.11). From these results, it reveals that majority of the participants supported that peer counsellors help learner avoid drug abuse. These results concur with Hardy (2020) who verified that supportive environments and empathy positively influence reduction of drug use in an adolescent. Along with that, social cognitive theory in Ciranka and Bos (2019), confirmed that if adolescent behaviour in peer contexts is sending a positive social signal to their peers, they copy the behaviour. Exposing teenagers to environment where peers detest drug abuse increases their chances to avoid drug use especially if the reward are positive.

The During the focus group discussion, peer counsellors commented that: *During the open forum, learners talk openly about the negative effects of drugs and there is always a positive change* (Extract, Focus Group Discussion, 2020).

Additionally, Table 1 shows that on the fourth aspect of social adjustment, most of the respondents 327 (82.2%) agreed that peer counsellors encourage learners to embrace teamwork, 26 (6.5%) moderately agreed and 45 (11.3%) disagreed (M=4.08; SD=1.10). These findings revealed that majority of the participants agreed that peer counsellors encourage learners to embrace teamwork. These findings agree with Vygosky1978 in Kurt (2020) who verified that for active learning to take place in the classroom, collaboration between the more knowledgeable learners with peers should take place. Similarly, Poth (2018) confirmed that the collaboration focuses on giving learners chances to work as a team, to develop interpersonal skills, to develop self-awareness and be aware of others. In addition, McQuerret (2018) added that teamwork in the classroom instills to students the essential skills connected with working as a collective unit toward a common goal. From the literature and the findings for teamwork to be realised, collaboration between the peer counsellors and the learners is very vital.

Peer counsellors gave the following during the focus group discussion: *Peer counsellors are helpful in team building to the form one students. They help them to fit into high school setting. I always encourage my fellow students to embrace teamwork and the importance of sharing whenever there is group discussions. Many of my peers have appreciated the importance of working as a team in class and even during manual work. I encourage my peers to embrace teamwork because of the benefits they reap because of teamwork like becoming more knowledgeable, sharing of ideas and building confidence of a student* (Extract, Focus Group Discussion, 2020).

Lastly, on the fifth aspect of social adjustment, Table 1 revealed that most of the respondents 247 (62.0%) agreed that peer counsellors help learners in reducing school absenteeism, 51 (12.8%) moderately agree and 100 (25.1%) disagreed (M=3.53; SD=1.34). From these results, it is clear that majority of the learners' support that peer counsellors help learners to reduce school absenteeism. Cole, 1991 in Schmidt (2019) verified that when learners cooperate with peers, they become socially adjust fostering growth, or they experience social incompetence, which might lead to despair. This will reduce school absenteeism. Bandura's theory in Brouwer (2018) confirmed that vicarious experiences is likely to be high when observer identifies with the model leading to reduce school absenteeism.

Learners' Social Adjustment Factor Analysis
On the social adjustment, construct the factor analysis showed one component with Eigen values greater than 1.0 and the total variance explained was 52% as shown in Table 2. The Kaiser-Mayor Oklin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of 0.795 indicating sufficient inter-correlation, while

the Bartlett's Test of sphericity was significant (Chi-square 460.458, p=0.001). There was no item deleted and renamed social adjustment for further analysis.

Table 2

Social Adjustment Rotated Factor Matrix on Measurement Items

Survey items	Component
	1
1. School dropout	.725
2. Negative peer pressure	.758
3. Drug abuse	.729
4. embrace teamwork	.625
5. School absenteeism	.759
KMO	.795
Approx. Chi-Square	460.458
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (P<0.001) df=10	
Eigenvalues	2.600
% of Variance	52.005

Note. Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis. 1 component extracted

Regression Analysis on Influence of Peer Counselling on Social Adjustment

The regression coefficient summary explains the nature of the influence of independent variable and the dependent variable and test hypothesis of the study. A linear regression model explored the effect of peer counselling on learners' social adjustment. The R^2 represented the measure of variability in learners' social adjustment that peer counselling accounted for.

From the model, $R^2 = 0.223$ shows that peer counselling accounted for 22.3% variation in learners' social adjustment. The peer counselling predictor used in the model captured the variation in the learners' social adjustment as shown in Table 3. The adjusted R square of 0.221 depicts that the peer counselling explained the variation in learners' social adjustment by 22.1%.

Table 3

Model Summary on Peer Counselling and Learners' Social Adjustment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.472[a]	.223	.221	.75707	.223	113.800	1	396	.000	

Note. Predictors (Constant), Peer counselling

Analysis of Variance on Peer Counselling and Learners' Social Adjustment

The study used Analysis of variance to check whether the model could forecast the result better than the mean, as seen in Table 4. The regression model that used peer counselling as a predictor was important (F=113.800, p value =0.000), indicating that peer counselling has a substantial impact on learners' social adjustment.

Table 4

Peer Counselling and Learners' Social Adjustment Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	65.226	1	65.226	113.800	.000[b]
1	Residual	226.972	396	.573		
	Total	292.197	397			

Note. a. Dependent **Variable:** Social Adjustment

      b. Predictors: (Constant), Peer Counselling

Peer Counselling and Learners' Social Adjustment Coefficients

In addition, the study generated β coefficients in order to test the hypothesis under study, Table 5. The β-value for peer counselling had a positive coefficient, depicting positive influence on learners' social adjustment as summarized in the model as:

$Y = 1.524 + 0.594X_1 + \varepsilon$ …………………………….…………… Equation 4.2

Where: Y = Social adjustments, X = peer counselling, ε = error term.

Table 5

Peer counselling and Learners' Social Adjustment Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
	(Constant)	1.524	.227		6.726	.000
1	Peer Counselling	.594	.056	.472	10.668	.000

Note. Dependent Variable: Social Adjustment

The study had hypothesised that there is no significant relationship between peer counselling on learners' social adjustment. From the findings peer counselling had significant influence on learners' social adjustment (β=0.594 and p value<0.05). Therefore, an increase in peer counselling leads to an increase in learner's social adjustment. The study therefore rejected the null hypothesis (**Ho₂**).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Peer counselling has led to growth in learner's social adjustment. The inferential statistics was in consistent with the descriptive and qualitative results. This led to the conclusion that peer counselling has a positive influence on learners' self-efficacy in boarding secondary schools.The school administration should ensure that all the students undergo peer counselling during their enrolment to assist them to adjust socially and emotionally to the boarding secondary schools' environments.

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