

## Role of Guidance and Counseling Strategies in the Retention of Teenage Mothers in Primary Schools in Mumias Sub-County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** The Ministry of Education in Kenya put in place the return to school policy guidelines to ensure that girls who got pregnant while in school are given a second chance to continue with studies. Guidance and Counseling was also put in place to address issues teenage mothers face while in schools. The study question was to what extent guidance and counseling teachers used various strategies to address psychological distresses girls faced in schools? The study was based on Maslow Motivational theory showing how various strategies were used by guidance and counseling teachers in the retention of teenage mothers in schools. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 89 schools. While saturated sampling was used to select 280 teenage mothers and one Sub-County Education Officer. Simple random sampling was used to select 24 deputy Head Teachers and 24 Guidance and Counseling Departmental Heads for the study. Questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis guide were used to collect data. Findings revealed that, in addressing psychological distresses, use of peer counselors was the key strategy, followed by seminars and workshops on learners' performance, while the least strategy was giving proportionate assignments to learners. It was recommended to have more trained peer counselors and seminars on religious issues and train more counselors. Findings may serve as a revelation to psychological challenges faced by teenage mothers in schools and also add new knowledge to existing literature on the retention of teenage mothers in schools.

**Key words:** Counseling, guidance, influence, retention, teenage mother

### 1. Introduction

The existence of teenage motherhood in schools has been cited as a constraint in the elimination of gender disparities in education and in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education and gender equality in education by 2015 (United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2000). A survey on underlying causes of high school drop out by the US department of education (2001) indicated that one of the reasons for young people dropping out of school was teenage pregnancy, which was estimated at 13.6%. Another report by UNESCO, (2003) on "save the children" indicated that, teenage pregnancy is a major drawback to educational attainment. It further reported that in industrialized countries there are fewer incidences of teenage pregnancies as compared to developing countries. It further reported that 31% of all school dropout cases among girls were due to early childbearing.

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The Ministry of Education (MoEST, 2004) reported that gender disparities were observed in performance, access, retention, transmission and achievement in all educational levels in Kenya. Studies done by Mesch (2000) indicated that girls suffer a lot when it comes to retention and access to education at all levels. Lessware (2006) report indicated that attitude of the teachers and learners, who are not parents, stigmatize teenage mothers which impacts negatively on their educational achievement.

Based in Portland, Europe, Kurt (2008) recommended that a good counselor can profoundly affect a student's motivation to stay in school. He further noted factors that influenced teenage mothers' school dropout included; lack of friends, failure, feelings of inadequacy, serious emotional conflicts, stigmatization and marginalization. American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2004) policy pointed out that school counseling programmes are important in assisting students achieve optimal personal growth, acquire positive social skills and values, set appropriate career goals and realize full academic potential to become productive and contributing members of the world. Further, a school counselor is expected to interact with students in academic support services, peer education programmes and crisis management to enable them complete their studies (ACSA 2004). In Nigeria, Counseling services was to be offered to the affected girl and her guardian or parent. Further, an introduction of flexible modes of study provided additional opportunities for teenage mothers and was detrimental for the continued motivation and academic success of the teenage mothers (FAWENA, 2001).

In Kenya, reports from Family Planning Association of Kenya (FPAK) indicated that there is a high rate of adolescent fertility. The FPAK estimated 1 in 10 teenage mothers' drop out of school (FPAK, 2000). In another report, it was indicated that although the rising age of marriage having led to an overall decline in adolescent fertility in Kenya, the proportion of births among teenagers that occur before marriage and lead to school dropouts is increasing (Demographic and Health Survey (DHS, 2003). Further, a research by KDHS indicated that there was close relationship between pregnancy among school going girls and school dropout even with the return to school guidelines of the ministry of education. The survey proposed that to solve the problem it required guidance and counseling approach that involves dealing with all the causes, which are compounded by an insensitive school culture characterized by gender stereotyping, heavy workload for the girls and sex exploitation (KDHS, 2003). Another survey on Teenage Pregnancy and Education (2010) indicated that Parenthood is a leading cause of school dropout among teen girls (KDHS, 2003).

Mumias Sub-County is not an exception from teenage mother drop out in primary schools. A study carried out in Shianda division, Mumias Sub-County in Kenya, by Western Focus Community Organization (WEFOCO) in Education, revealed that 483 girls dropped out of schools in 2009 out of them 263 were teenage mothers. Further, the study indicated that female students are the most disadvantaged people since they are expected to be house-women or to look for any kind of employment to support their families. They often get engaged into commercial sex business and contracted sexual transmitted infections, or early pregnancy that contribute to dropping out of school in early age (Wefoco, 2010).

Recognizing the negative impacts of teenage pregnancy on girls education, the ministry of education in Kenya put in place the return to school policy guidelines in 1994 which was revised in 2003 to ensure that girls who become pregnant while still in school got a second chance. The guidelines have however been challenged in many way.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The situation is not different in Mumias Sub-County where some teenage mothers cannot access and participate in free primary education. Reports from Mumias Sub-County Education Office indicated that in 2011 and 2010, about 375 (24%) and 302 (21%) teenage mothers who had gone back to school to learn dropped out of school. In 2009 and 2008, the numbers were reported to be 263(17%) and 269 (17%) respectively. This was estimated to be about 21% as the annual dropout rate for teenage mothers in primary schools. The dropout rate is higher when compared to 18% dropout rate for the whole of Western Province (MoEST, 2012).

The MoEST (2012) report further indicated that the enrolment of girls at class seven is usually almost equal to that of boys. However, more than 10% of the girls do not sit for Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam due to pregnancy, while some sit for the exam when already pregnant. Records at the Sub-County Education Office Mumias show that despite the Free Primary Education (FPE), there is an increase in primary school dropout rates (MoEST, 2012).

According to the Kamunge report (1988), guidance and counseling should help students in schools to be able to cope with various stresses they undergo and adjust accordingly to continue with their studies. It is against this background that there was need to carry out a study to establish guidance and counseling strategies used in primary schools in Mumias Sub-County, Kenya to ensure the retention of teenage mothers so that education for all may be realized. Education for all is beneficial as it is an investment in the human capital and development of human resource (Beker, 1964; Psachoropoulos & Woodhall, 1985).

## **3. Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. In this design, data was collected by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003). The study population was 311 teenage mothers in single sex girls and co-educational primary schools, 89 guidance and counseling heads of departments, 89 deputy head teachers drawn from the 89 primary schools and 1 D.E.O. The researcher used saturated sampling to select 280 teenage mothers, 80 deputy head teachers, 80 guidance and counseling teachers and 1 D.E.O. Purposive sampling technique was used to select teenage mothers because they were respondents with relevant information. Secondly, teenage mothers were not evenly distributed in the selected schools. From every sampled school 1 G&C and 1 deputy head teacher was purposively selected because they had relevant information concerning teenage mothers in the schools. Stratified random sampling technique was used to get a good representation of primary schools that were in stratus (mixed and girl) primary schools. The D.E.O was excluded from the pilot study since there is only one D.E.O in the Sub-County. All the respondents that participated in the pilot study were not included in the final study. In this study questionnaires, interview schedule and document analysis guide were used to collect data. To determine construct and content validity, first, the researcher came up with items related to research objectives. Second, the researcher analyzed the response from the pilot study and made necessary corrections on the tools to make value to the researcher. Thirdly, two experts from the department of Educational Psychology of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology ascertained face and content validity of instruments. Their comments were used to improve the validity upon which subsequent changes and modifications were made. To determine the reliability of the instruments test- retest method was used on the data collected during the pilot study. The test-retest method of assessing reliability of data involved administering the

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same instrument twice to the same group of respondents after a time lapse of four weeks between first test and the second test (Lipsely, 1990). Samples of 10% of participants were given questionnaires to fill. The researcher scored the two tests and recorded the results. The researcher set alpha = 0.5, power = 0.8 and effect size = 0.05 in tables for questionnaires, interview schedules for G&C teachers and Deputy Head teachers. A coefficient of 0.7 was considered acceptable as supported by Neuman (2000). The reliability coefficients for the questionnaires, interview schedules for guidance and counseling teachers and deputy head teachers were 0.77, 0.82 and 0.83 respectively.

#### 4. Result and Discussions

The results of the study were presented in tables of frequencies (f) , percentages, bar graphs and pie charts. Data was presented first by reporting the findings on the profiles of the respondents and secondly based on the objectives of the study. The data is in two forms; the qualitative data which was coded and reported according to the emerging themes and the qualitative data which was analyzed and presented using tables, bar graphs and pie charts. A total of three hundred and twenty nine (329) respondents took part in the study. This comprised of two hundred and eighty (280) Teenage mothers, twenty four (24) Guidance and Counseling Departmental heads, twenty four (24) Deputy Head teachers and ones Sub- County Director of Education. The teenage mothers were considered as the principle respondents in the study. However, deputy principles together with Guidance and Counseling teachers were also targeted to corroborate the findings.

**Table 1 Guidance & Counseling Strategies in Addressing Psychological Distresses (n = 280)**

STATEMENT	SA		A		U		D		SD		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Guidance and counseling teachers offer individual counseling to pupils who feel low.	6	2	18	7	23	8	76	27	157	56	280	100
Guidance and counseling teachers encourage peer counselors to talk to fellow pupils when they are under distress.	87	31	136	49	32	11	17	6	8	3	280	100
Guidance and counseling teachers recognize pupils' talents and abilities in school and reward them.	142	51	67	24	23	8	31	11	18	06	280	100
Guidance and counseling teachers conduct seminars and workshops to address pupils' academic performance.	79	28	124	44	4	1	44	16	29	10	280	100
Guidance and counseling teachers encourage school administration and other teachers to be friendly to pupils who do not perform well academically.	148	53	41	15	13	5	52	19	26	09	280	100
Guidance and counseling teachers invite trained counselors/guest speakers who share their personal experience.	67	24	122	44	13	5	58	21	20	07	280	100
Guidance and counseling through school administration encourage teachers to give assignments that pupils can be able to complete while in school.	31	11	48	17	11	04	133	48	57	20	280	100
Guidance and counseling teachers facilitate pupils by providing them with reading materials so that they don't look out for themselves.	27	10	31	11	49	18	77	27	96	34	280	100
Guidance and counseling teachers facilitate pupils with various learning activities, e.g., drama, music, debate to make them happier while in school.	74	27	96	34	42	15	45	16	23	8	280	100

Source: Researcher (2013)

As shown in Table 1, 24 (9%) of the respondents agreed that guidance and counseling teachers offer individual counseling to pupils who feel low, while 23 (8%) were undecided and 233 (83%) disagreed. Further, 223 (80%) of the respondents agreed that guidance and counseling teachers encourage peer counselors to talk to fellow pupils who are under distress while 32 (11%) were undecided and 25 (9%) disagreed. Concerning guidance and counseling teachers recognizing pupils' talents and abilities in school and rewarding them, 209 (72%) of the respondents reported that G&C teachers recognize and rewards them, 23(8%) were undecided and 49 (17%) disagreed. Two hundred and twenty three (80%) of the respondents reported that guidance and counseling teachers conduct seminars and workshops to address pupils academic performance while 4 (1%) were undecided and 53 (19%) disagreed. Whereas 189 (68%) agreed that guidance and counseling teachers encourages school administrators and other teachers to be friendly to pupils who do not perform well academically, 13 (5%) were undecided and 78 (28%) disagreed.

On guidance and counseling teachers inviting trained counselors/guest speakers to share their personal experiences, 189 (68%) teenage mothers agreed that their guidance and counseling teachers invite them, 13 (5%) were undecided and 78(28%) disagreed. On guidance and counseling teachers through school administration encouraging teachers to give assignments that pupils are able to complete while in school, 79 (28%) of the respondents agreed that they were give assignments that they were able to finish while in school, 11 (4%) were undecided and 190 (8%) disagreed. Further, 58 (21%) of the respondents reported that guidance and counseling teachers facilitate them with reading materials so that they don't look out for themselves, 49(18%) were undecided and 173 (61%) disagreed. Although 170 (61%) of the respondents agreed that guidance and counseling teachers facilitated pupils with learning activities such as drama, debate, music to make them happier while in school, 42 (15%) were undecided and 98 (24%) disagreed. From the responses there is a clear indication from teenage mothers in schools that guidance and counseling teachers are averagely addressing psychological distresses faced by teenage mothers in schools. The findings also concurs with Kamunge report (GOK, 1998) which states that guidance and counseling should help youths in schools to identify individual interests, needs and assistance they require, this enables them to face realities in the educational institutions and therefore have a duty to fully promote excellence and achievement. Further in Portland, Europe Kurt (2008) in his writing career on school counselors doing to stop Teen mothers' dropouts on strutting marketing and website content, he recommended in agreement with Kamunge report of 1998 in Kenya that a good counselor can profoundly affect a student's motivation to stay in school. The study further revealed that use peer counseling assists teenage mother retention in schools.

## **5. Views from Interview Guide**

Through an interview schedule for 24 guidance and counseling teachers and 24 deputy Head teachers, all respondents (G&C teachers) reported that they encourage other pupils, teachers and the school administration to be friendly to teenage mothers in the school. Majority (88.2%) of guidance and counseling teachers reported that they encouraged teenage mother learners' to seek assistance from their peers and from other teachers to help them come out of distresses. Some of the respondents 6 (25%) in this question answered confidently that they give advice to students, carry out personal and group counseling to deal with emotional distress and behavior difficulties such as stigmatization, anxiety and depressive feelings.

From the deputy Head teachers', (91%) reported that teenage mothers are offered both group and individual

counseling while only (9%) reported that they are offered less homework and reading materials to serve as an incentive to them. These findings concurred with Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) in their book where they noted that teachers give advice to students, carry out personal and group counseling to deal with issues of learners in schools.

The deputy Head teacher further revealed that they also use peer counseling and mass media as a methods to assist teenage mothers address psychological distress experienced. The findings of this study are in line with (Mwamwenda, 2004) who recommends that when time permits, teachers should have a chat with pupils on one-to-one basis. It also concurred with Meier (2003) who in his study indicated that guidance and counseling teachers have a crucial role to play in determining the value of the classroom-learning environment for enhancing their students' motivation, learning, and development (Shaljan, 2011)

## **6. Conclusion**

Findings revealed that, in addressing psychological distresses, use of peer counselors was the key strategy, followed by seminars and workshops on learners' performance, while the least strategy was giving proportionate assignments to learners.

## **Recommendation**

The study recommended to have more trained peer counselors and seminars on religious issues and train more teacher counselors.

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