

Influence of Guidance and Counselling Programmes on Emotional Regulation Among Students in Public Secondary Schools in Westlands Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Emotional regulation is critical to students' development, influencing how they cope with stress, manage emotions and succeed in academic and social environments. However, there is limited empirical data on the influence of guidance and counselling programmes on emotional regulation among students in public secondary schools in Westlands Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to examine the influence of guidance and counselling programmes on emotional regulation among students in public secondary schools in Westlands Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was adopted targeting 10,072 respondents (9,647 students, 411 class teachers, and 14 H.O. Ds Guidance and Counselling) from 14 public secondary schools in Westlands Sub-County, Kenya. Using Proportionate stratified random sampling and purposive sampling, a sample of 385 participants was selected to ensure representation across schools. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. Piloting was conducted to test the instrument's reliability obtaining 0.835 and 0.815 reliability coefficients with students' and teachers' questionnaire respectively using Cronbach's alpha. Dependability of the qualitative tools was established through interviews that yielded consistent insights. Credibility was enhanced by cross-checking the interview data with questionnaire results to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness. Content and construct validity was ascertained through expert evaluation of the instruments. The findings revealed that guidance and counselling programmes moderately supported students' emotional regulation, though statistical tests showed no significant difference between teacher and student perceptions and qualitative data revealed gaps in implementation and staffing. The study concludes that Guidance and counselling programmes in the schools have a generally positive but limited and inconsistent influence on students' ability to manage their emotions effectively. The study recommends that Schools should strengthen guidance and counselling programmes by ensuring consistent delivery, adequate staffing, proper training and structured follow-up to enhance their effectiveness in fostering emotional regulation.

Keywords: Guidance and counselling programmes, Public Secondary school students, Emotional regulation, Westlands Sub-County.

INTRODUCTION

Students' mental health and academic performance are greatly influenced by emotional regulation, which helps students to track, manage and appropriately express their feelings in the face of adversity, (Gross, 2021). Adolescents in public secondary schools frequently deal with peer dynamics, financial hardships, and academic pressure. These difficulties can result in stress, low motivation, and poor performance if one lacks good emotional control abilities (Masten, 2023). Guidance and counselling programmes have been recognized globally as successful interventions that facilitate the development of these resilience-enhancing skills.

Guidance and counselling programmes are emphasized by Kenya's Ministry of Education as a crucial tactic for addressing students' psychosocial needs and providing them with flexible coping skills (Wambui & Kyalo,

2020). Public secondary schools in Nairobi County's Westlands Sub-County serve students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, many of whom deal with situations that can impair their emotional fortitude. Effective school-based guidance and counselling programmes can improve emotional regulation abilities like perspective-taking, positive refocusing and acceptance (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2022). These abilities in turn foster optimism and self-assurance.

Although the policy framework acknowledges the significance of these programmes, there is still a lack of research on their specific influence on students' emotional regulation, in urban Kenyan public schools (Ng'ang'a & Thinguri, 2020). Examining this influence is critical for enhancing programmes design and ensuring that interventions address the real obstacles that learners encounter. This study looked into how guidance and counselling programmes influence emotional regulation among students in public secondary schools in Westlands Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by Ungar's socioecological model of resilience. The research was conducted in Westlands Sub-County, an urban area characterized by wide socio-economic diversity and rising psychosocial stressors among school-going adolescents. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The study targeted a population of Forms 2,3 and 4 students, class teachers and H.O.Ds guidance and counselling in public secondary schools within the sub-county. Using proportionate stratified random sampling, a sample size of 385 students' participants was selected to ensure representation across schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select H.O.Ds guidance and counselling, class teachers were randomly selected and proportionate random sampling was used to obtain students respondents. A pilot study was conducted in a comparable school outside the study area to assess the effectiveness of the research instruments. Content validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability of the instrument was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha obtaining 0.835 and 0.815 reliability coefficients with students' and teachers' questionnaire respectively. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students and class teachers while interview schedule was used to collect data from H.O.Ds guidance and counselling. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (means, frequencies and percentages) and inferential analysis (One-way Anova) while qualitative data was analysed thematically using Nvivo software. Approval was sought from the Chuka University Ethics Committee and a research permit obtained from NACOSTI. Participants were informed of the study purpose before data collection. Confidentiality was upheld by not disclosing respondents' or schools' identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The response rate was calculated as the proportion of respondents who participated out of those invited. It is an important indicator of the study's reliability and efficacy. Table 1 shows the results of the empirical survey conducted during the project's first phase.

Table 1: Response Rate

Population group	Sample	Responded	Percentage Response
Students	360	350	97.2%
Teachers	20	20	100.0%
H.O.Ds guidance and counselling	5	5	100.0%
Total	385	375	97.4%

Source: Field Data (2025)

As shown in Table 1, the response rate for the study was 97.2% of students while that of teachers was 100.00%. The high response rates observed in the study suggesting effective engagement with the respondents. Several measures contributed to achieving this high response rate. The study ensured clear and consistent communication

about its purpose and importance, which helped motivate participants to engage. Deputy Head teachers coordinated administration of the questionnaires thereby creating a feasible environment that made participation easier and more accessible. Follow-up reminders encouraged completion of the questionnaires that were administered at convenient times such as during break time.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic information gives researchers insight into the characteristics of the respondents and allows them to examine how various demographic groups answered survey questions. The study captured gender and interaction of respondents with guidance and counselling programmes as shared elements, enabling comparison across groups. However, the student questionnaire includes personal and school-related variables (age, gender, class and school category), while the teacher questionnaire focused more on professional role and qualifications related to Guidance and counselling. These demographic factors are summarized in the next sections.

Age Distribution of Students

The age breakdown for the students was collected. Table presents the data obtained.

Table 2: Age distribution of Students

Age	N=350	%
13-14	85	24.2%
15-17	215	61.4%
18 and above	50	14.4%

Source: Field Data (2025)

The study sought to establish the demographic characteristics and guidance and counselling participation levels among students in public secondary schools. In terms of age distribution, a majority of the students (61.4%) were aged between 15-17, followed by those aged 18 and above years at 14.4%, and the youngest group, 13-14 years constituted 24.2%. This indicated that most of the participants were mid-adolescents, a critical developmental stage where emotional, social, and academic pressures were typically high, making guidance and counselling services particularly relevant

Gender Distribution of Respondents

The gender breakdown of participants in the survey was collected separately. The data obtained is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Students (n=350)		Teachers (n=20)	
	N	%	N	%
Male	150	43	8	40
Female	200	57	12	60
Total	350	100	20	100

Source: Field Data (2025)

The gender distribution of respondents, presented in Table3, shows that 57% of the student participants were female and 43% were male, while among teachers, 60% were female and 40% were male. This gender imbalance has implications for understanding emotional regulation among students in Westlands Sub-County. Research by Hadad (2025) suggests that female students are generally more likely to seek emotional support and engage in

guidance and counselling programmes compared to male students. This aligns with the current data, where a higher number of female students were found to seek emotional help. Conversely, the lower male representation may reflect a reluctance to engage with support services, highlighting a potential gap in how emotional regulation is developed and supported among boys.

The predominance of female teachers may also influence student access to emotional support as previous studies have shown that students often find it easier to approach female educators for guidance. This could further contribute to a gendered pattern in the use of guidance and counselling programmes. These findings are consistent with those of Olum and Ochieng (2020), who reported that Kenyan female students tend to adopt more adaptive coping strategies.

Distribution of Students by Category of School

As part of the demographic section of the questionnaire, learners were asked to indicate the category of school they attend. The distribution of responses is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of Students by Category of School

Type of School	Frequency	Percentage
National	102	29.2%
Extra county	167	47.7%
County	33	9.4%
Sub county	48	13.7%
Total	350	100.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The data shows that extra county schools accounted for 47.7%, national schools 29.2%, sub county schools 13.7% and county schools 9.4%. The higher representation of extra county and national schools is linked to their larger students' enrolments and broader catchment areas. County and Subcounty schools, having comparatively smaller populations contributed to fewer responses. Learners were asked their current class, the result is as shown in Table 5

Table5: Distribution of Students by Class

Class	Frequency	percentage
Form two	120	34.3%
Form three	125	35.7%
Form four	105	30%
Total	350	100

Source: Field data (2025)

The figures indicate a fairly even spread respondents across the three classes, with the form three having slightly higher proportion. This may be due to their steady attendance and engagement during data collection period. The relatively smaller share from form four could be linked to their heavier academic workload and preparation for national examination.

Attendance at Guidance and Counselling programmes

Students were asked whether they had ever attended a guidance and counselling programmes in their school. This question aimed to assess the level of direct engagement with guidance and counselling programmes among

learners, providing insight into the accessibility and utilization of support mechanisms within the school environment. The responses generated are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Attendance at School Guidance and Counselling programmes

Attendance	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	140	40.0
No	210	60.0
Total	350	100.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The data reveals that 40% of the students reported having attended guidance and counselling programmes, while the majority, 60%, had never participated in such programmes. This indicates that less than half of the learners have directly engaged with the guidance and counselling programmes offered in their schools. The relatively low attendance rate suggests potential barriers to accessing or utilizing Guidance and counselling support, such as lack of awareness, stigma, limited availability of services or perceived relevance. Given the important role, that Guidance and counselling plays in promoting emotional regulation and addressing students' psychological needs, this finding highlights a critical area for improvement. Schools in Westlands Sub-County may need to enhance efforts to raise awareness about the benefits of Guidance and counselling programmes, reduce stigma associated with seeking help, and ensure that guidance and counselling programmes are accessible and responsive to students' needs. Increasing attendance could contribute significantly to improving students' emotional wellbeing and academic performance.

Teachers' Training and Involvement in Guidance and Counselling Programmes

The study examined teachers' training and involvement in counselling programmes within secondary schools in Westlands Sub-County. This information provides important context for understanding the extent to which teachers are equipped and actively engaged in supporting students' psychological and emotional wellbeing. The results on teachers' training and referrals for guidance and counselling are presented in Table 7

Table 7: Teachers' Training and Involvement in guidance and Counselling programmes

Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Received training in counselling	Yes	12	48.0
	No	13	52.0
Referred students for counselling	Yes	15	75.0
	No	5	25.0

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings presented show that 48% of the teachers reported having received training in counselling, while 52% had not. Additionally, a higher proportion 75% of the teachers indicated that they had referred students for Guidance and counselling services, with only 25% stating they had not. These results show that while a some of teachers have received some level of training in guidance and counselling, a significant majority still lack formal preparation in this area. Despite this, a large proportion of teachers are actively referring students for guidance and counselling, which points to a general awareness of the importance of student wellbeing and the need for professional support. There is a need to expand guidance and counselling training for all teachers, especially class teachers who are often the first point of contact for students facing emotional or behavioral challenges. Enhancing teachers' skills would improve early identification and intervention for at-risk students. The high referral rate is encouraging, as it reflects a proactive approach among teachers toward supporting learners' mental health.

Influence of Guidance and Counselling Programmes on Students' Emotional Regulation

This section addresses the first objective of the study, which aimed to determine how guidance and counselling programmes influence student's emotional regulation among students in public secondary schools in Westlands Sub-County, Nairobi County. Data obtained to address this objective is summarized in Table 8

Table8: Guidance and Counselling Programmes and Emotional Regulation

Guidance and counselling programmes help one to;	Student Responses (n=350)						Teachers Responses (n=20)					
	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Accept feelings even when its hard	100(28.6)	152(43.4)	4(1.1)	49(14)	45(12.8)	2.39	4(20)	9(45)	3(15)	3(15)	1(5)	2.40
Do things they enjoy to take mind off negative feelings	94(26.9))	95(27.1)	92(26.3)	68(19.4)	1(0.3)	2.39	4(20)	9(45)	3(15)	3(15)	1(5)	2.40
Find something positive in difficult situations	50(14.3)	161(46.0)	119(34.0)	20(5.7)	0	2.31	6(30)	7(35)	1(5)	4(20)	2(10)	2.15
Remind self that problems do not last forever	94(26.9)	95(27.1)	89(25.4)	71(20.3)	1(.03)	2.40	3(15)	15(75)	1(5)	0	1(5)	2.05
Ability to easily overcome emotional challenges	110(31.4)	111(31.7)	37(10.6)	87(24.9)	5(1.4)	2.33	3(15)	14(70)	1(5)	1(5)	1(5)	2.15
Stay in control even when upset.	27(7.7)	246(70.3)	26(7.4)	25(7.4)	26(7.1)	2.36	6(30)	8(40)	2(10)	3(15)	1(5)	2.25

The results indicate that guidance and counselling programmes have a modest yet positive influence on the development of emotional regulation skills among students in public secondary schools in Westlands Sub-County. Across all the indicators assessed, both students and teachers provided responses that largely clustered around the lower end of the 5-point scale, with mean scores for students ranging between 2.31 and 2.40, and teachers' ratings between 2.05 and 2.40. The data shows that students generally agreed that counselling programmes help them in areas such as accepting difficult feelings (mean = 2.39), engaging in enjoyable activities to cope (mean = 2.39), and reminding themselves that problems are temporary (mean = 2.40). However, the relatively low mean scores suggest that the effectiveness of these programmes is limited or uneven across schools. Teachers echoed similar sentiments. Their responses showed slightly lower mean ratings, particularly in areas like finding something positive in difficult situations (mean = 2.15) and reminding oneself that problems do not last forever (mean = 2.05). These low scores may point to gaps in the consistency, accessibility, or delivery quality of guidance and counselling programmes. Overall, while the presence of guidance and counselling programmes seem to influence students' emotional regulation, the data suggest that many students are not fully

benefiting from the programmes. This may be due to under-resourcing, lack of trained counsellors, or insufficient integration of emotional regulation strategies into the guidance curriculum.

To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative data from interviews with H.O.Ds guidance and counselling provided corroborative insights. Many H.O.Ds guidance and counselling highlighted the challenge of inadequate staffing and limited professional training, which hinder the effectiveness of the programmes. One head counselor remarked:

“Most schools don’t have a full-time professional counsellor. The responsibility often falls on teachers who have other teaching duties and limited training in emotional guidance.” (Kerubo, O.I. 2025).

This supports the relatively low mean ratings (2.05 by teachers) regarding the ability of students to internalize messages like “problems don’t last forever,” pointing to a lack of expert led, consistent intervention.

The absence of private, well equipped counselling spaces was also cited as a barrier. A counselor noted:

“We sometimes lack a private room for sessions, so students don’t feel safe or free to open up. That makes it hard to engage deeply with emotional issues.” (Muigai, O.I. 2025).

This lack of appropriate infrastructure may explain why some students benefit only marginally, as reflected in mean scores like 2.39 for “accepting difficult feelings” and 2.40 for “reminding oneself that problems are temporary.”

Several H.O.Ds guidance and counselling expressed concerns about students not actively seeking guidance and counselling services. As one observed:

“Students often perceive counselling as something for those with serious problems. They shy away unless they are referred by a teacher, and even then, they may be reluctant.” (Njuguna, O. I. 2025).

This sentiment supports the idea that while guidance and counselling programmes are present, their utilization and reach are limited, thereby affecting their impact on emotional regulation development.

H.O.Ds also noted that the formal guidance curriculum tends to focus more on academic or behavioral issues than on emotional growth. One explained:

“There’s a lot of emphasis on academic guidance, discipline, and career choices, but less on emotional coping strategies. We need more structured content on how to deal with stress, sadness, or anxiety.” (Ouma, O.I. 2025).

This concern aligns with both students’ and teachers’ low mean scores, particularly in areas like finding positive meaning in adversity (students: 2.36; teachers: 2.15). Despite the challenges, a few H.O. Ds guidance and counselling reported notable improvements in students’ emotional regulation where counselling services were more structured and supported. One shared:

“In our school, we have weekly peer counselling sessions and access to a trained counselor. We’ve seen a gradual improvement in how students talk about their feelings and manage frustration.” (Mumbua, O.I. 2025).

Such experiences point to the potential of guidance and counselling programmes to foster emotional regulation if delivered effectively.

To determine the influence of school guidance and counselling programmes on students’ emotional regulation among students, one-way ANOVA was conducted. Results obtained are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: ANOVA Results Comparing Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Guidance and Counselling Programs' Influence on Emotional Regulation

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	0.323	1	0.323	1.50	0.221
Within Groups	78.50	368	0.213		
Total	78.823	369			

The results of the ANOVA test comparing students' and teachers' perceptions of the influence of guidance and counselling programmes on Students emotional regulation revealed no statistically significant difference between the two groups. The F-value was 1.50 with a p-value of 0.221, which is greater than the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This indicates that the observed differences in mean responses between students and teachers are not statistically significant and could be due to chance. These findings suggest that students and teachers generally share similar views on influence of guidance and counselling programmes on emotional regulation. While both groups may acknowledge some benefits of these programmes, the lack of significant variation implies that improvements or challenges in programme implementation are consistently perceived across stakeholder groups.

The findings resonate well with Kiptala and Kipruto (2021) findings from a study that investigated the perceptions of students on the influence of guidance and counselling services on academic performance in Baringo County, Kenya. The findings revealed that students perceived guidance and counselling services positively and these services significantly contributed to their academic performance. The study's results align with the current findings, highlighting the importance of guidance and counselling programmes in enhancing students' academic achievement and emotional well-being. Similarly, Simbolon and Purba (2022) evaluated the impact of school counselling programmes on student well-being and academic performance. The results showed that students who actively engaged in counselling programmes exhibited improved academic performance, increased attendance rates, and developed problem-solving skills, self-esteem, and self-confidence. These findings support the current study's results, emphasizing the critical role of guidance and counselling programs in fostering students' academic success and emotional development. The findings from this study suggest that guidance and counselling programmes moderately influenced emotional regulation among students in public secondary schools in Westlands Sub-County. Both student and teacher responses indicate that these programmes help students manage their emotions in various ways, although the degree of influence appears to be moderate rather than strong.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

The Objective sought to examine whether guidance and counselling programmes in schools influences students' ability to manage and regulate their emotions effectively. Quantitative results indicated a moderate positive perception among students regarding the influence of guidance and counselling programmes on emotional regulation. Mean scores suggested that students moderately agreed that Guidance and Counselling programmes influenced them to control their reactions in stressful situations. However, one-way Anova test results revealed no statistically significant difference between student and teacher perceptions on this influence, implying alignment in views, but also suggesting limited influence overall. Qualitative responses highlighted inconsistencies in programme implementation, lack of follow-up after guidance and counselling sessions and insufficiently trained personnel as key barriers to effectiveness. Teachers noted slight improvement in student behaviour and reduced instances of emotional outbursts. Students who actively participated in guidance and counselling sessions reported increased ability to stay calm under pressure and reflect before reacting. However, limitations such as understaffing, lack of privacy and inconsistent programme delivery hindered the full potential of guidance and counselling programmes.

The study concludes that in relation to emotional regulation, the study found that guidance and counselling programmes had a generally positive but statistically insignificant influence on students' ability to manage and modulate their emotions. Although some students reported that Guidance and Counselling programmes helped

them control their emotional reactions and reduce impulsivity, this experience was not uniform across the student population. The inconsistency could be attributed to irregular access to Guidance and counselling, varying quality of counsellor-student relationships or a lack of structured emotional literacy interventions within the programmes.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Chuka University Institutional Ethics Review Committee (Approval No.: NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812) and National Commission for Science and Technology (License No.: NACOSTI/P/25/4177102). All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, and written (or verbal) informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participant anonymity and confidentiality have been strictly maintained.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to participant privacy and confidentiality restrictions, but are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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