

Influence of Peer Counselling on Management of Learner Behaviour in Public Secondary Schools in Baringo County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Peer counselling is increasingly recognised as a participatory approach to supporting positive learner behaviour in secondary schools, yet its effectiveness may depend on learners' experiences, institutional support and the quality of implementation. This study determined the influence of peer counselling on the management of learner behaviour in public secondary schools in Baringo County, Kenya. The study was guided by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which explains behaviour as a product of reciprocal interactions between individuals, their actions and the environment. The study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods descriptive survey design. The study targeted 176 principals, 176 teacher-counsellors and 31,400 learners. A sample of 146 principals, 146 teacher-counsellors and 380 learners, totalling 672 respondents, was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan sampling table. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and separate simple linear regression, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The principal showed the most favourable perception on peer counselling ($M = 3.77$), followed by teachers ($M = 3.58$), while students reported the least favourable perception ($M = 3.13$). Peer counselling significantly predicted learner behaviour management among teachers ($\beta = .177, p = .007$), but its influence was not statistically significant among students. Qualitative findings indicated that inadequate supervision, inconsistent implementation and cultural resistance to disclosure constrained effectiveness, particularly in boys-only schools. The study concludes that peer counselling has potential to support learner behaviour management but requires structured supervision, sustained institutional support and gender-responsive implementation.

Key Words: Behaviour management; Guidance and counselling; Learner behaviour; Peer counselling; Secondary schools.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, peer counselling is recognised as a school-based approach for supporting positive learner behaviour, social adjustment, conflict resolution and responsible decision-making (Butler et al. 2024). Its potential rests partly on the relatability of trained peers, who may be more approachable because they share similar experiences and developmental challenges (Deng, 2024). However, evidence across contexts indicates that behavioural outcomes are not uniform. In America, Jenner et al. (2021), in a randomized controlled trial involving 1,286 Grade 9 students in rural public schools in North Carolina, found no statistically significant positive effects of a cross-age peer mentoring programme on suspension, disciplinary referrals or detention, whereas Kilday and Ryan (2024) linked positive peer relationships with greater help-seeking and behavioural engagement. In Britain, Butler et al. (2024) found that the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme could improve knowledge, attitudes and willingness to intervene in harmful situations, while UK evidence also indicates benefits in social skills, confidence, participation and school connectedness. Together, these findings suggest that peer-based approaches may support behaviour, but outcomes depend on programme structure and implementation conditions.

Evidence from Asia and Africa similarly points to potential benefits under structured conditions. In Indonesia, Nurmastuti et al. (2026) reported significant improvement in assertive behaviour following structured peer counselling among 62 junior high school students, while Deng (2024) found that story-focused peer counselling among Chinese junior high school students improved sense of purpose and achievement motivation. In Nigeria, Ibrahim and Sakwain (2025) reported a significant effect of peer counselling on bullying behaviour and social-emotional adjustment among 200 students, whereas Ogunwole et al. (2025), examining peer support among youths in Nigeria and Benin Republic, found positive relationships with morality and academic-related outcomes. These studies collectively emphasise training, modelling, active listening, empathy, supervision and institutional support as conditions that may shape outcomes.

Kenyan evidence is also generally positive but indicates implementation constraints. Guyo et al. (2026), using data from 134 teachers in 13 public secondary schools in Isiolo North Sub-County, found a significant positive relationship between peer counselling programmes and student discipline management ($r = 0.359$, $p < 0.05$), although inadequate training and excessive reliance on teacher intervention constrained effectiveness. Mwangi and Nyabera (2024) similarly identified selection, induction, training and stakeholder involvement as important to discipline outcomes in Ainamoi Sub-County, while Kariithi et al. (2022) reported a significant relationship between student peer counselling and discipline in Kiambu County ($r = 0.476$, $p < 0.05$). Luti-Mallei et al. (2024) further identified student leadership as a link between learners, teachers and school administration that can support discipline and school governance. Thus, the literature converges on the importance of counsellor preparation, supervision, accessibility and institutional integration, while also showing that positive effects are not automatic.

The evidence therefore presents a mixed but coherent picture: peer counselling can provide social support, positive modelling, communication, conflict resolution and early identification of behavioural difficulties, but its contribution varies with implementation quality and stakeholder experience. Kenyan studies have examined peer counselling and student discipline in counties including Isiolo, Kericho, Kiambu, Machakos and Nakuru, but limited empirical attention has focused specifically on management of learner behaviour in public secondary schools in Baringo County. The current study therefore sought to examine the influence of peer counselling on management of learner behaviour in public secondary schools in Baringo County, Kenya, with emphasis on stakeholder perceptions, implementation conditions and the contribution of peer counselling to behaviour management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design within a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach.

Study area

This study was carried out in Baringo County, Kenya. Baringo County is one of the 47 counties in Kenya. Baringo County lies on latitude of $0^{\circ} 39' 59.99''$ N and Longitude: $36^{\circ} 00' 0.00''$ E. The County covers an area of 8,655 km². According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census the population the county has 666,763 with a population density of 61 people per square kilometer (KNBS, 2019). Baringo County is surrounded by several counties. To the north, Baringo shares a border with Turkana County, to the East, it neighbours Samburu County, to the west, it shares borders with Elgeyo-Marakwet County and West Pokot County, and to the north-west, it borders Uasin Gishu County.

Target population

The study targeted 31,400 Form Two to Form Four learners, 176 principals, and 176 guidance and counselling teachers from all 176 public secondary schools in Baringo County (Table 1). Form One learners were excluded because Grade Nine had transitioned to primary schools under the new CBE curriculum system. The population

distribution comprised 2 National, 22 Extra-County, 40 County, and 112 Sub-County schools (Baringo County Education Office, 2023).

Table 1: Target population

School Type	Target Population			
	Number of schools	Guidance and counselling Teachers in charge	Learners	Principals
National schools	2	2	4200	2
Extra County	22	22	7500	22
County	40	40	8400	40
Sub County	112	112	11300	112
TOTALS	176	176	31,400	176

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

Sample Size

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. From the four school-type strata, 2 National, 22 Extra County, 36 County and 86 Sub-County schools were selected, giving 146 schools, with one principal and one teacher-counsellor selected from each. For the 31,400 learners, a sample of 380 was determined and proportionately allocated across the strata. Thus, the planned sample comprised 672 respondents: 146 principals, 146 teacher-counsellors and 380 learners as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Sample Size

School Type	Sample Population			
	Principals	Teachers	Learners	
National schools	2	2	2	51
Extra County	22	22	22	91
County	36	36	36	101
Sub County	86	86	86	137
TOTALS	146	146	146	380

Sampling Procedures

Sampling was conducted in four stages using stratified and purposive procedures. The 176 public secondary schools were stratified by school category and sub-county, from which 146 schools were selected proportionately using simple random sampling through the lottery method. A sample of 380 learners was proportionately allocated across the four school categories and subsequently selected randomly from class registers. One principal and one teacher-counsellor were purposively included from each sampled school, yielding 146 principals and 146 teacher-counsellors, while ten principals were purposively selected for qualitative interviews to provide variation across school categories and sub-counties.

Research Instruments

The study used both the questionnaires and interview schedule to collect data from the respondents.

Data Collection

The researcher administered student, teacher and principal questionnaires, followed by interviews with the purposively selected principals. Completed instruments were reviewed, collected and prepared for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) and simple linear regression in SPSS Version 27 to determine the association between peer counselling and management of learner behaviour. The model was $Y = a + bX + e$, where Y represented management of learner behaviour and X represented peer counselling. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 significance level and 95% confidence level. Qualitative data from principals' interviews were analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method to provide contextual explanations of the quantitative findings. The qualitative analysis involved repeated reading of interview accounts, identification of statements relevant to peer counselling and behaviour management, condensation of meaning units, grouping of related meanings into categories, development and refinement of themes, and synthesis of the findings with the quantitative results. The analysis was conducted by the researcher; therefore, no formal independent intercoder-reliability coefficient was calculated. This is acknowledged as a methodological limitation. Credibility was supported through integration of the interview themes with the questionnaire findings across students, teachers and principals, providing qualitative-quantitative triangulation of areas of convergence and divergence.

RESULTS

Peer Counselling and Management of Learner Behaviour

The study sought to determine how peer counselling influences the management of learner behaviour in public secondary schools in Baringo County, Kenya.

Students' Perceptions of Peer Counselling Services

Table 3 presents students' perceptions of peer counselling services. The highest mean was recorded for the statement that peer counsellors are selected on clear criteria and guidelines ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.91$), followed by the view that peer counsellors understand how to maintain confidentiality ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.94$). The lowest mean was recorded for the statement that peer counsellors are well trained to support fellow students ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 0.85$). Students also gave a relatively low rating to the statement that talking to a peer counsellor is easier than talking to an adult ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.90$). The item on ongoing supervision recorded a mean of 3.05 ($SD = 0.90$), indicating responses close to the neutral midpoint. Other items recorded mean scores ranging from 3.10 to 3.45. The composite mean for peer counselling was 3.13 ($SD = 0.79$). Across the ten items, an average of 37.6% of students agreed or strongly agreed, 23.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 38.8% were neutral. The students therefore reported moderately positive perceptions of peer counselling services, although considerable neutrality and negative perceptions were evident on some aspects.

Table 3: Students' perceptions of peer counselling services (n=370)

Statement	Mean	SD	SD%	D%	N%	A%	SA%
Peer counsellors are well trained to support fellow students	2.55	0.85	10.0	36.8	42.4	10.0	0.8
Peer counsellors understand how to maintain confidentiality	3.55	0.94	1.4	11.6	31.9	40.5	14.6



Peer counsellors receive ongoing supervision	3.05	0.90	3.0	24.9	39.7	28.6	3.8
Peer counsellors are trained in active listening skills	3.45	0.88	0.5	14.9	33.5	41.1	10.0
Peer counsellors are trained in conflict resolution	3.24	0.88	1.1	18.4	42.4	31.4	6.8
Peer counsellors selected on clear criteria and guidelines	3.60	0.91	0.8	11.1	32.7	38.4	17.0
I feel more supported in handling personal issues	3.20	0.98	3.5	20.8	37.8	27.8	10.0
Talking to a peer counsellor is easier than talking to an adult	2.85	0.90	5.4	29.2	42.4	20.5	2.4
Peer counsellors are taken seriously by most students	3.25	0.84	1.4	15.9	44.6	32.4	5.7
Peer counselling programme reaches many students in this school	3.10	0.91	2.4	23.8	40.5	27.6	5.7

Teachers' Perceptions of Peer Counselling Services

Table 4 shows that teachers generally reported positive perceptions of peer counselling services. The highest mean was recorded for peer counsellors being trained in active listening skills ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.86$), followed by training in conflict resolution techniques ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.81$) and ongoing supervision and support ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.84$). The lowest mean was recorded for adequate support and supervision from the teacher-counsellor ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.84$), followed by students being comfortable seeking help from peer counsellors ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.81$). The item on whether peer counselling reaches and benefits many students recorded a mean of 3.49 ($SD = 0.77$). The composite mean was 3.58 ($SD = 0.81$). On average, 53.9% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the ten statements, 8.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 37.8% remained neutral.

Table 4: Teachers' perceptions of peer counselling services (n=135)

Statement	Mean	SD	SD%	D%	N%	A%	SA%
Peer counsellors are trained in active listening skills	3.78	0.86	0.0	5.2	32.6	41.5	20.7
Peer counsellors are trained in conflict resolution techniques	3.67	0.81	0.0	5.9	34.8	45.9	13.3
Peer counsellors receive ongoing supervision and support	3.65	0.84	0.0	8.1	31.9	46.7	13.3
Peer counsellors are selected based on clear criteria	3.56	0.81	0.0	7.4	40.0	41.5	11.1
The school has a structured peer counselling programme with clear guidelines	3.61	0.84	0.7	5.2	40.0	40.7	13.3
Peer counselling supports the school's efforts in addressing personal student issues	3.58	0.85	0.0	8.9	37.0	41.5	12.6
Most students are comfortable seeking help from peer counsellors	3.46	0.81	0.7	7.4	45.9	37.0	8.9

Peer counsellors are taken seriously by the student body	3.62	0.94	0.0	10.4	37.8	31.1	20.7
Peer counselling reaches and benefits many students in the school	3.49	0.77	0.0	8.9	38.5	47.4	5.2
Peer counsellors receive adequate support and supervision from the teacher-counsellor	3.38	0.84	2.2	9.6	40.0	43.7	4.4

Principals' Perceptions of Peer Counselling Services

Table 5 indicates that principals had generally positive perceptions of peer counselling services. The highest mean was recorded for the statement that the school has a structured peer counselling programme ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.77$), followed by the provision of necessary support and resources for peer counselling activities ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.85$). Adequate supervision of peer counsellors by teacher-counsellors recorded a mean of 3.77 ($SD = 0.98$). The lowest mean was recorded for the integration of peer counselling into the school's guidance programme ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.74$). The composite mean for principals was 3.77 ($SD = 0.80$), indicating generally positive perceptions of peer counselling services.

Table 5: Principals' perceptions of peer counselling services (n=140)

Statement	Mean	SD	SD%	D%	N%	A%	SA%
The school has a structured peer counselling programme	3.87	0.77	0.0	2.1	28.6	49.3	20.0
Peer counsellors receive proper training before they start working	3.74	0.82	0.0	6.4	28.6	50.0	15.0
Peer counsellors are adequately supervised by teacher-counsellors	3.77	0.98	1.4	8.6	24.3	42.9	22.9
Peer counselling is well integrated into the school's guidance programme	3.64	0.74	0.0	4.3	37.9	47.9	10.0
The school provides necessary support and resources for peer counselling activities	3.85	0.85	0.7	1.4	34.3	39.3	24.3

Triangulation of Perceptions on Peer Counselling

Table 6 shows differences in perceptions across the three respondent groups. Principals recorded the highest composite mean ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.80$), followed by teachers ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.81$), while students recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.79$). The corresponding proportions agreeing or strongly agreeing were 64.3% for principals, 53.9% for teachers and 37.6% for students. The results therefore indicate a consistent ranking in which principals reported the most positive perceptions, teachers reported moderately positive perceptions, and students reported the least positive perceptions of peer counselling services.

Table 6: Triangulation of perceptions on peer counselling

Respondent Group	N	Mean	SD	% Agree/Strongly Agree	Rank
Students	370	3.13	0.79	37.6	3rd
Teachers	135	3.58	0.81	53.9	2nd

Principals	140	3.77	0.80	64.3	1st
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Qualitative Findings: Principals' Perspectives on Peer Counselling

Thematic analysis of interviews with ten principals generated three major themes: peer counsellors as a bridge between students and teachers; the importance of training and supervision; and challenges in sustaining peer counselling programmes.

(a) Peer Counsellors as a Bridge Between Students and Teachers

Principals described peer counsellors as an important link between students and teachers. They indicated that peer counsellors could identify students experiencing personal or behavioural difficulties and facilitate early intervention. One principal stated:

"Students often find it easier to talk to their peers than to teachers. Peer counsellors are able to reach students who would never walk into a teacher's office. They are the first line of defense." (P03).

Another principal reported:

"Peer counsellors help us identify problems early. A student might not tell a teacher that they are being bullied, but they might tell a peer counsellor. That allows us to intervene before things escalate" (P06).

(b) Importance of Training and Supervision

The principals emphasised training and supervision as important components of peer counselling. They reported that peer counsellors required skills in listening, confidentiality, and referral of complex cases. One principal explained:

"Peer counsellors need proper training. You cannot just appoint a student and expect them to handle sensitive issues. They need to know how to listen, how to maintain confidentiality, and when to refer a problem to a teacher" (P02).

Another principal stated:

"We have a teacher-counsellor who meets with the peer counsellors every week. They discuss cases and the teacher provides guidance. Without that supervision, the peer counsellors would be lost" (P05).

(c) Challenges in Sustaining Peer Counselling Programmes

The interviews further identified turnover of peer counsellors, limited resources and inadequate student engagement as challenges. One principal stated:

"The biggest challenge is turnover. Peer counsellors are students, and they eventually leave. We have to constantly train new ones, and it's difficult to maintain continuity" (P08).

Another explained:

"Sometimes students don't take peer counsellors seriously. They see them as students, not as counsellors. And without the support of the wider student body, the programme doesn't work" (P03).

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings on Peer Counselling

The quantitative and qualitative findings showed both strengths and weaknesses in peer counselling. Students gave relatively high ratings to selection criteria and confidentiality but a low rating to peer counsellor training. The qualitative findings similarly identified training and supervision as important requirements for effective peer counselling. The quantitative results also showed that students did not strongly perceive peer counselling as

easier to access than adult counselling. This finding was complemented by principals' reports that some students did not take peer counsellors seriously.

The qualitative findings further indicated that peer counsellors were nevertheless perceived by principals as useful in identifying student problems and linking students with teachers. The findings therefore indicate that peer counselling programmes existed in the schools and were generally viewed positively by teachers and principals, but students expressed more reservations. The main areas of concern were peer counsellor training, approachability, supervision, student engagement and continuity of the programmes.

Coefficients for Peer Counselling

Table 7 shows that peer counselling was a statistically significant predictor of behaviour management among teachers ($\beta = .177$, $p = .007$). Among students, the relationship was positive but not statistically significant ($\beta = .062$, $p = .111$). Similarly, the relationship was not statistically significant among principals ($\beta = .012$, $p = .879$). At the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected for teachers but not rejected for students and principals. Thus, peer counselling had a statistically significant influence on behaviour management according to teachers' perceptions, but not according to students' or principals' perceptions.

Table 7: Coefficients for peer counselling

Group	B	Std. Error	B	T	p-value
Students	.049	.031	.062	1.596	.111
Teachers	.111	.041	.177	2.720	.007
Principals	.002	.011	.012	.152	.879

DISCUSSION

Peer Counselling and Management of Learner Behaviour

The findings demonstrated that perceptions of peer counselling varied substantially according to respondent group. Principals reported the most positive perceptions ($M = 3.77$), followed by teachers ($M = 3.58$), while students reported the least positive perceptions ($M = 3.13$). This difference is important because students are the primary beneficiaries of peer counselling services. The relatively lower student rating suggests that the existence of peer counselling programmes does not necessarily translate into strong confidence in their effectiveness among intended beneficiaries.

The students' relatively positive assessment of counsellor selection and confidentiality, alongside their low rating of counsellor training, points to a distinction between selection and competence. Students appeared to recognize that peer counsellors were selected through clear criteria but were less convinced that they subsequently received adequate preparation to perform their roles. This finding is consistent with Munyasya (2020), who reported inadequate training of peer counsellors in Matungulu Sub-County and limited supervision by head teachers and guidance and counselling teachers. Kariithi (2023) similarly associated the effectiveness of peer counselling interventions with adequate training and support. The present finding therefore suggests that selection procedures alone may be insufficient unless followed by systematic training and supervision.

The low student rating for the statement that talking to a peer counsellor is easier than talking to an adult is also significant. Peer counselling is commonly premised on the assumption that students may find peers more approachable because of their shared age and experiences. However, the present finding suggests that this advantage may not automatically occur. The qualitative findings provide a possible explanation, as principals reported that some students did not take peer counsellors seriously. Thus, the social proximity of peer counsellors may not be sufficient to create trust and accessibility where their competence, status or confidentiality is questioned.

The teachers' relatively positive perceptions indicate greater confidence in the functioning of peer counselling programmes. Teachers rated active listening, conflict resolution and ongoing supervision relatively highly. This finding is consistent with Kariithi (2023), who reported a positive relationship between peer counselling interventions and student discipline in Kiambu County. It also agrees with Osodo et al. (2016), who found that peer counselling contributed to student discipline, particularly where peer counsellors were trained and supported. However, the relatively lower teacher rating of support from teacher-counsellors suggests that supervision remains an implementation concern. This is consistent with Munyasya (2020), who reported inadequate supervision of peer counselling processes.

The principals' more positive assessment of peer counselling may reflect their broader institutional perspective. Their high rating of structured programmes, school support and supervision suggests that, from the administrative perspective, the basic structures necessary for peer counselling were present. Nevertheless, the relatively lower rating for integration of peer counselling into the wider guidance programme suggests that the service may not be fully embedded within the school's overall counselling system. Mulwa (2020) similarly reported positive perceptions of peer counselling among principals but found that implementation was not significantly related to student discipline. This indicates that institutional recognition of a programme does not necessarily guarantee behavioural outcomes.

The triangulated findings reveal a clear perception gradient, with principals most positive and students least positive. This pattern is consistent with Kariithi (2023), who found differences in perceptions of peer counselling among school stakeholders, and with Osodo et al. (2016), who reported more mixed student perceptions compared with those of school administrators. The divergence may partly arise because principals and teachers assess programme structures and implementation, whereas students experience the accessibility, credibility and usefulness of peer counsellors more directly. Consequently, the lower student rating provides an important indication that programme effectiveness should not be assessed solely from the perspective of implementers. The qualitative findings reinforce the importance of peer counsellors as a bridge between students and teachers.

Principals reported that peer counsellors could identify behavioural and personal problems at an early stage and facilitate intervention. This finding is consistent with Osodo et al. (2016), who found that peer counsellors could facilitate communication between students and teachers. The bridging function is particularly important where students may hesitate to approach adults directly. However, the present quantitative finding that students did not strongly regard peer counsellors as easier to approach suggests that this potential bridging function may not be fully realised in all schools.

Training and supervision emerged consistently as important conditions for effective peer counselling. The principals' interviews showed that peer counsellors require preparation in listening, confidentiality, referral and other counselling skills, while the quantitative findings showed that students questioned the adequacy of training. This convergence strengthens the conclusion that training is a critical implementation condition. Kamore and Tiego (2015) similarly reported inadequate training and limited supervision of peer counsellors, while Kariithi (2023) emphasised the importance of training and supervision for effective peer counselling.

The qualitative finding concerning turnover presents another challenge to programme sustainability. Because peer counsellors are students, they eventually leave school, requiring schools to recruit and prepare replacements. Kamore and Tiego (2015) also identified challenges associated with peer counselling, including inadequate preparation, criticism from fellow students and limited time for counselling activities. Continuous recruitment and training are therefore necessary if peer counselling programmes are to maintain institutional continuity.

The regression results provide further insight into the relationship between peer counselling and behaviour management. Peer counselling was a significant predictor of behaviour management among teachers ($\beta = .177$, $p = .007$), but not among students ($\beta = .062$, $p = .111$) or principals ($\beta = .012$, $p = .879$). The significant teacher result suggests that teachers perceived higher levels of peer counselling to be associated with better behaviour management. This is consistent with Kariithi (2023), who reported a positive relationship between peer counselling and discipline.

The absence of a statistically significant relationship among students is particularly noteworthy because students expressed reservations about peer counsellor training and approachability. If students do not perceive peer counsellors as adequately competent or accessible, the expected behavioural influence of peer counselling may be weakened. This finding is consistent with Mulwa (2020), who reported that implementation of peer counselling was not significantly related to student discipline.

The significant relationship reported by teachers but not by students or principals may also reflect differences in stakeholder exposure to the programme. Teachers are more directly involved in supervising peer counsellors and observing behavioural changes within the school environment. Principals, by contrast, may have less direct involvement in day-to-day peer counselling activities. The different regression results therefore demonstrate the importance of considering multiple stakeholder perspectives when evaluating peer counselling.

From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory, peer counselling could influence behaviour through observational learning, modelling and social interaction. However, the present findings suggest that such mechanisms may depend on whether peer counsellors are perceived as credible and competent models. The low student rating of peer counsellor training ($M = 2.55$) may therefore weaken the conditions required for effective modelling. In this context, peer counselling may operate more effectively through social support, communication and early identification of behavioural difficulties than through direct behavioural modelling.

The findings indicate that peer counselling in public secondary schools in Baringo County is moderately perceived but unevenly implemented. Teachers and principals expressed generally positive views, while students were more reserved. The evidence particularly highlights inadequate or insufficiently visible training, limited confidence in approachability, supervision concerns, student engagement and programme continuity. The significant regression results among teachers, together with the non-significant results among students and principals, further indicates that the influence of peer counselling on behaviour management is not uniform across stakeholder groups. Effective peer counselling therefore appears to require more than the establishment of peer counsellor programmes; it requires systematic training, continuous supervision, student confidence, institutional support and mechanisms for maintaining programme continuity.

Limitations

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the quantitative measures relied on self-reported perceptions, which may not correspond directly to observed learner behaviour or actual programme use. Future studies should incorporate objective behavioural indicators and programme-use records to assess whether perceived differences correspond to observable changes in learner behaviour. Second, social desirability bias may have influenced responses, particularly among principals who evaluated counselling arrangements within their own schools. Confidential administration of questionnaires can reduce this risk, but it cannot eliminate it. Third, the qualitative analysis was conducted by the researcher without an independent second coder; consequently, formal intercoder reliability was not established. Future studies could use independent coders and report intercoder agreement or another appropriate reliability procedure. Finally, the correlational design does not permit causal inference, and the non-significant student and principal regression results indicate that the observed association should not be generalised as a uniform behavioural effect.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that peer counselling is positively perceived by teachers and principals but less positively by students, and that its association with behaviour management differs across respondent groups. A statistically significant association was observed in teachers' perceptions ($\beta = .177$, $p = .007$), whereas the associations were not statistically significant among students ($\beta = .062$, $p = .111$) or principals ($\beta = .012$, $p = .879$). These findings therefore provide evidence of a stakeholder-specific association rather than establishing that peer counselling causes improved learner behaviour.

The findings further indicate that training, supervision, credibility, accessibility and programme continuity are important conditions for implementing peer counselling. Students' low rating of counsellor training ($M = 2.55$), limited confidence in ease of access, and qualitative evidence concerning student engagement and cultural

resistance to disclosure suggest that programme establishment alone may not ensure effective uptake. In line with Social Cognitive Theory, adequately trained and supervised peer counsellors may provide opportunities for modelling, social interaction and early identification of behavioural concerns, but the present study cannot determine the causal magnitude of these mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1). Schools should provide systematic and continuous training in active listening, confidentiality, communication, conflict resolution, referral and basic counselling skills.
- 2). Guidance and counselling teachers should provide regular supervision, mentorship and follow-up to ensure that peer counsellors perform their roles competently and ethically.
- 3). Schools should strengthen awareness of peer counselling, confidentiality and referral procedures to increase students' trust in and willingness to use peer counselling services.
- 4). School management should formally link peer counselling with the wider guidance and counselling system to ensure coordinated identification, referral and management of behavioural concerns.
- 5). Schools should establish mechanisms for regular recruitment, induction and replacement of peer counsellors to address turnover and maintain programme sustainability.
- 6). Future studies should combine self-reported perceptions with objective behavioural indicators and programme-use records to assess whether perceived differences correspond to observable changes in learner behaviour.
- 7). Schools, particularly boys-only schools, should strengthen culturally responsive approaches to disclosure by normalising help-seeking, reinforcing confidentiality and creating safe referral pathways that reduce concerns about stigma or loss of social standing.

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