

ABSTRACT

Secondary school students form one admission promises success in the future to each of the students that enrol and join secondary schools. However, students' retention in secondary schools remains a global challenge. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to determine the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programme in enhancing students' retention in public day secondary schools in Nyahururu Sub-County, Laikipia County. The study was based on four objectives namely: to examine whether the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programme enhances students' retention, to find out whether teacher preparedness in guidance and counselling programme enhances students' retention, to determine whether the support given by the school administration to the guidance and counselling programme enhances students' retention and to examine whether the student gender receptiveness of guidance and counselling programme enhances students' retention. The study used *ex-post facto* research design and was guided by the Person-Centred Theory and Retention Theory. Data was collected from proportionately sampled schools from the 26-public day secondary schools in the 6 zones which had a target of form 4 students' population of 1855, 26 principals and 52 guidance and counselling teachers. Stratified sampling was used to determine the male and female students who were the primary respondents in this study while purposive sampling was used on the guidance and counselling teachers as well as the principals. A sample size of 341 participants was used in this study which comprised of 174 boys, 155 girls, 6 guidance and counselling teachers and 6 principals. Data was collected using questionnaires which were filled by the student respondents and guidance and counselling teachers. An interview schedule was administered to the principals by the researcher. The validity of the research instruments was ensured by establishing their face validity and were verified by the research experts in the School of Education in Laikipia University. Reliability of the research instruments was achieved through pilot study in 2 schools in the neighbouring county of Nyandarua yielding a reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha of 0.93. The data collected was sorted and analysed using SPSS version 24 applying qualitative and quantitative techniques. The study found that effectiveness of guidance and counselling programme enhanced students' retention by helping students deal with challenges affecting personal and social life as well as academic achievement. The study concluded that effectiveness of guidance and counselling programme is achievable by promoting teacher counsellor preparedness, support given by the school administration and encouraging student gender receptiveness of the programme. The findings might benefit the Ministry of Education in enhancing students' retention, school administrators in retaining students in school after enrolment, guidance, and counselling teachers in acknowledging the input of guidance and counselling programme towards students' retention, parents, and students by getting enlightened on support given in school to encourage students to remain focused in learning till completion of learning cycle.