

Title: Evaluation of early warning signs identification strategy in crisis intervention in the event of school arson, violence and strikes in Secondary Schools in Laikipia East Sub county.

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Abstract

The study sought to analyze the use of counselling strategies and crisis intervention in secondary schools in Laikipia East Sub-County. The study was limited to analyze the use of crisis resolution strategies in cases of school arson attacks, violence and strikes. Crisis victims in several schools such as Kyanguli have experienced tremendous emotional problems due to unresolved crisis which is mainly due to lack of victim processing the losses through counselling in debriefing and follow up sessions to restore normalcy. Eleven schools were randomly selected, the data collected was analysed using SPSS and presented using tables and figures. 195 respondents out of the expected 198 responded to the questionnaires. The study was carried out to analyze the use of counselling strategies in crisis intervention in secondary schools within Laikipia East Sub County. The study found out that Use of crisis resolution strategies are useful in crisis intervention, however the study found out that schools have not adopted the strategy in resolving crisis. The study recommended that schools should adopt training programs, where the peer counselors and school counselors are trained on the use of early warning signs to detect looming crisis and help the victims of school violence, arson and strikes come to terms with the loss through psychological counselling.

Statement of the problem

From a report by the Ministry of Education (2011), it emerged that most schools in Kenya have no capacity to handle emergencies, and are yet to even implement safety standards manual produced by the Ministry, besides no counselling strategies appear feasible leaving students in a state of psychological disequilibrium. Fires caused by students, violence, and strikes are among some of the major crisis experienced in our schools. Cases in point include Nyeri High School, Kyanguli and Bombolulu fires. In many instances no debriefing is done to the students, teachers and others affected by such losses. Neema Bakari, a victim of Bombolulu fire tragedy remembers what happened on that fateful day in tears. This is a case of unresolved grief (www.nation.co.ke).

Preparations by counsellors and the entire management to handle crisis seem break as described by Professor Kiyapi. In a statement by Professor Kiyapi (2011), Ministry of Education is coming up with a program to restore sanity in the institutions of learning. Schools management and some parents admit that some schools are sitting on a time bomb should there be an emergency. Counsellors' thus need to brace themselves for the tough times to offer crisis counselling. Prof Kiyapi, who admitted that the schools are facing a serious problem, said the measures are also aimed at curbing incidents of unrests that have dogged schools in the recent past as well as creating a safer living environment in schools. It is under this statement of the problem which indicates need for crisis interventions strategies in case of crisis occurrences in secondary schools that the researcher seeks to carry out a study on intervention strategies before, during and after arson attacks, school violence and school strikes.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the use of early warning signs identification as Counseling Strategy in Crisis intervention in cases of arson, strikes and violence in secondary schools. The crises may lead to students' psychological disequilibrium in secondary schools.

Objective of the study

To evaluate the use of e warning signs identification strategy in crisis intervention in secondary schools' arson, violence and strikes.

Significance of the study/ or Justification.

The study sought to assist the school administration maximize on the use of early warning signs crisis intervention strategy in cases of school arson attacks, violence and strikes. The study findings will help schools in formulating counseling strategies for crisis prevention and intervention. It will enlighten the school counselors in offering crisis intervention services more strategically and effectively.

Theoretical Framework

Crisis Intervention Theory.

Caplan and Lindemann are credited as pioneers in the field of crisis intervention. Their work began after a tragic event in Boston in 1942, the Cocoanut Grove nightclub fire, in which 493 people died. Lindemann treated many of the survivors of the nightclub fire and noted that they shared similar emotional responses, along with the need for psychological assistance and support (Lindemann, 1944). His work created awareness that many individuals who suffer loss experience pathological symptoms but have no specific psychiatric diagnosis. It was his contention that responds to sudden grief are normal and transient and need not be considered pathological. Lindemann theorized that "normal" responses to grief include preoccupation and identification with the deceased, feelings of guilt and expressions of hostility, disorganization in daily functioning, and somatic complaints (Janosik, 1984). In essence, his paradigm for crisis intervention included an individual who was in a

state of disorganization, brief therapy to assist the individual in working through grief, and ultimately restoration of equilibrium.

Caplan, 1964, expanded Lindemann's concepts by expanding their application to a wider field of traumatic events. According to Caplan, 1961 people are in a state of crisis when they face an obstacle to important life goals—an obstacle that is, for a time, insurmountable by the use of customary methods of problem-solving. A period of disorganization ensues, a period of upset, during which many abortive attempts at solution are made. What is important to note in Caplan's description is that the concept of crisis refers to an outcome of a precipitating event, not to the precipitating event itself. Similar to Lindemann, Caplan described the outcome, or the crisis, as the state of disequilibrium that the individual experiences.

These theories explain the importance of assisting victims of crisis and help cope and prepare for such occurrences. It can thus be used by school counsellors in understanding the need and importance of crisis intervention.

Crisis intervention model

The ACT model of crisis intervention developed by Roberts as a response to the September 11, 2001 tragedy outlines a three-stage framework: Assessment Crisis Intervention Trauma Treatment (ACT). This theory of crisis intervention integrates numerous assessment tools and triage procedures; Roberts' seven stage crisis intervention model and the ten-step acute traumatic stress management protocol creates one comprehensive model for responding to crisis that can be utilized in most all crisis situations. It is important to note that this should be followed as a guide not to be followed rigidly (A.R. Roberts, Crisis Intervention Handbook 2005).

The goal of the crisis intervention of Robert's ACT model is to resolve the client's presenting problems, stress, psychological trauma, and emotional conflicts.

This model can be used to enhance the crisis counseling strategies and crisis management for school counselors during crisis intervention. This model equips the counselor with knowledge on how to assess danger/safety for self and others, this means for the victim, counselor, and others who may have been affected by the trauma. Then the counselor is able to consider the physical and perceptual mechanisms of injury. Once injury is assessed the victim's level of responsiveness should be evaluated and any medical needs should be addressed. Each individual who witnessed or is experiencing a crisis should be observed to identify his or her signs of traumatic stress. After the assessment of the situation is completed the interventionist should introduce his or her self, state their title and role, and begin building rapport. Building this relationship allows for a more fluid approach to grounding the individual, this can be done by allowing him or her to tell his or her story. Again, the counselor is encouraged to provide support through active and empathetic listening, normalize, validate, and educate. Finally, the intervention specialist is to bring the person to the present, describe future events, and provide referrals as needed.

The models explain the steps followed by a counsellor in his bid to ensure the victims of a crisis are assisted to stabilize mentally and gets into normal operation. The model is very relevant to the study since it explains the various steps used to have a victim stabilize emotionally and mentally. The

model seeks to analyze the use of the crisis counseling strategy in ensuring the victims of school violence, arson and strikes are assisted to be stable emotionally and mentally.

Literature Review

Warning Signs identification strategy

In the United States Department of Education's *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide* (2000), intervention is segmented into intervention which takes place early and intervention which must be intensive. School counsellors are important contributors to both types of intervention strategies and, as with prevention, are often turned to for input and decisions.

Early interventions in the arena of school violence, arson and violence have been defined in the last few years with reference to early warning signs. Such signs are said to serve as possible indicators of problems for students who manifest them. The best approaches to interventions based upon the early warning signs approach emphasize that such signs must be understood in terms of both environmental and developmental contexts, these typically occur in conjunction with other signs, and can be identified as changes or departures from expected behaviours, but are not "predictors" of inappropriate behaviours, and must be addressed with a "do no harm" philosophy (US Department of Education, 1997). The nature of this approach lends itself to school counsellors as they typically are seen as having the training needed to identify the signs, are turned to in many schools to assist others with learning the signs, and are involved with developing and implementing interventions should signs be exhibited and interventions be warranted.

In some schools, counsellors are the entire intervention system; in others, they serve on some form of student assistance/support teams. In these latter situations, teams are activated when warning signs trigger a referral. The counsellor with other school staff evaluate the situation and develop intervention strategies which can range from conferencing with the student to referring the student to additional mental health services provided by school psychologists or other mental health professionals (US Department of Education, 1997).

An important component of this type of intervention involves working with parents. Just as the Idaho School Counsellor Association (1999) implies, counsellors need to view parents as stakeholders and must provide services and resources to them when appropriate. In terms of intervention, this may mean counselling the student and the parent together and working with both to address the signs that have been manifested. Developing a plan to address the signs, assisting with implementation through consultation and monitoring, and assessing the plan's impact may all be the responsibility of the school counsellor.

Early warning signs identification

According to Jefferson County Public Schools (2002), it is not always possible to predict behaviour that will lead to violence or disruptive behaviour. However, educators, parents and sometimes students can recognize certain early warning signs. In some situations and for some youth, different combinations of events, behaviours, and emotions may lead to aggressive rage or violent behaviour toward self or others.

From a research conducted by Jefferson (2002), most children who become violent toward self or others feel rejected and psychologically victimized. In most cases, children exhibit aggressive behaviour early in life and, if not provided support, will continue a progressive developmental pattern toward severe aggression or violence. However, research also shows that when children have a positive, meaningful connection to an adult whether it is at home, in school, or in the community the potential for violence is reduced significantly.

None of these signs alone is sufficient for predicting aggression and violence. Moreover, it is inappropriate and potentially harmful to use the early warning signs as a checklist against which to match individual children. Rather, the early warning signs are offered only as an aid in identifying and referring children who may need help. School communities must ensure that staff and students only use the early warning signs for identification and referral purposes, only trained professionals should make diagnoses in consultation with the child's parents or guardian. The following early warning signs are presented with the following qualifications. They are not equally significant and they are not presented in order of seriousness. According to Jefferson (2002), early warning signs include:

Social withdrawal. In some situations, gradual and eventually complete withdrawal from social contacts can be an important indicator of a troubled child. The withdrawal often stems from feelings of depression, rejection, persecution, unworthiness, and lack of confidence.

Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone. Jefferson (2002) has shown that the majority of children who are isolated and appear to be friendless are not violent. In fact, these feelings are sometimes characteristic of children and youth who may be troubled, withdrawn, or have internal issues that hinder development of social affiliations. However, research also has shown that in some cases feelings of isolation and not having friends are associated with children who behave aggressively and violently.

Excessive feelings of rejection. In the process of growing up, and in the course of adolescent development, many young people experience emotionally painful rejection. Children who are troubled often are isolated from their mentally healthy peers. Their responses to rejection will depend on many background factors. Without support, they may be at risk of expressing their emotional distress in negative ways including violence. Some aggressive children who are rejected by non-aggressive peers seek out aggressive friends who, in turn, reinforce their violent tendencies.

Feelings of being picked on and persecuted. The youth who feels constantly picked on, teased, bullied, singled out for ridicule, and humiliated at home or at school may initially withdraw socially. If not given adequate support in addressing these feelings, some children may vent them in inappropriate ways including possible aggression or violence.

Low school interest coupled with poor academic performance. Poor school achievement can be the result of many factors. It is important to consider whether there is a drastic change in performance and/or poor performance becomes a chronic condition that limits the capacity to learn. In some situations such as when the low achiever feels frustrated, unworthy, chastised, and

denigrated, acting out and aggressive behaviours may occur. It is important to assess the emotional and cognitive reasons for the academic performance change to determine the true nature of the problem.

Expression of violence in writings and drawings. Children and youth often express their thoughts, feelings, desires, and intentions in their drawings and in stories, poetry, and other written expressive forms. Over representation of violence in writings and drawings that is directed at specific individuals (family members, peers, other adults) consistently over time, may signal emotional problems and the potential for violence. Because there is a real danger in misdiagnosing such a sign, it is important to seek the guidance of a qualified professional such as a school psychologist, counsellor, or other mental health specialist to determine its meaning.

Uncontrolled anger. Everyone gets angry; anger is a natural emotion. However, anger that is expressed frequently and intensely in response to minor irritants may signal potential violent behaviour toward self or others.

Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behaviors. Children often engage in acts of shoving and mild aggression. However, some mildly aggressive behaviour such as constant hitting and bullying of others that occur early in children's lives, if left unattended, might later escalate into more serious behaviours.

Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes. All children have likes and dislikes. However, an intense prejudice toward others based on racial, ethnic, religious, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and physical appearance when coupled with other factors may lead to violent assaults against those who are perceived to be different. Membership in hate groups or the willingness to victimize individuals with disabilities or health problems also should be treated as early warning signs.

Affiliation with gangs. Gangs that support anti-social values and behaviours including extortion, intimidation, and acts of violence toward other students, cause fear and stress among other students. Youth who are influenced by these groups, those who emulate and copy their behaviour, as well as those who become affiliated with them may adopt these values and act in violent or aggressive ways in certain situations. Gang-related violence and turf battles are common occurrences tied to the use of drugs that often result in injury and/or death.

Inappropriate access, to and use of firearms and flammable materials. Children and youth who inappropriately possess or have access to firearms can have an increased risk for violence. Research shows that such youngsters also have a higher probability of becoming victims. Families can reduce inappropriate access and use by restricting, monitoring, and supervising children's access to firearms and other weapons. Children who have a history of aggression, impulsiveness, or other emotional problems should not have access to firearms and other weapons.

Serious threats of violence. Idle threats are a common response to frustration. Alternatively, one of the most reliable indicators that a youth is likely to commit a dangerous act toward self or others is a detailed and specific threat to use violence. Recent incidents across the country clearly indicate that threats to commit violence against oneself or others should be taken very seriously. Steps must be taken to understand the nature of these threats and to prevent them from being carried out.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive research design was adopted in the study it was the most appropriate since as it enabled the researcher to obtain information and describe the current state of counselling strategies used in crisis intervention in case of arson attacks, strikes bullying and conflicts in our secondary school can be played by the school. This design helped the researcher describe the dependent and independent variables.

Location of the study

This study was conducted in, Laikipia East Sub county-Kenya. The sub-county is located in the semi-arid lands of Rift Valley Province of Kenya. It is mainly inhabited by Kikuyu, Meru and Maasai ethnic communities. The researcher collected data from secondary schools within Laikipia East Sub County only. The study targeted principals or deputy principals, school counsellors, peer counsellors of the selected schools only.

Research Target Population.

The target population of this study included 560 peer counsellors, 35 school teacher counsellors and the 35 principals of the schools. Average age of the students will be 14-19 years, boys and girls. The teachers will be the professional School Counsellors in the schools. The school principals or deputy principals will also be included in the study because they facilitate the administration of the school and the counselling departments.

Findings

Are the warning signs identification strategies useful in crisis interventions in school arson cases, students' violence, and strikes?

The study sought to establish whether there are signs exhibited before School arson, strikes and violence. The respondents agreed that before any case of arson, strike and violence in schools there are signs exhibited by the students; out of 173 respondents, 163 agreed that there are some signs which are notable. This observation is in agreement with Jefferson (2002) who in his *Journal County public schools*, noted that educators, parents and sometimes students can sometimes recognise certain warning signs which may lead to aggressive rage or violent behaviour towards self or others. According to Jefferson (2002), most children who become violent toward self or others feel rejected and psychologically victimised.

The counsellors use the warning signs noted to respond to the looming crisis in the schools, they are able to predict a looming crisis using the students poor performance, this is the sign which can be used mostly followed by uncontrolled anger amongst the students, intolerance for differences, feeling of being victimised, social withdrawal and finally affiliation with gangs. These signs are notable amongst the students and peer counsellors and teacher counsellors have been using them in the schools to control the crisis. The findings are in agreement with Jefferson (2002) who observed that the signs can be used as an aid in identifying and referring children who may need help.

However, Jefferson notes that staff and students only use the early warning signs for identification and trained professionals should make diagnosis in consultation with the child's parents or guardian.

The study sought to find out other signs which can be used by the counsellors to predict a crisis; the respondents suggested that persistent anger, anxiety and sadness among the students, change of behaviour for example noisy class suddenly become calm, negative attitude towards teachers, peer pressure, lack of dialogue, physical violence towards others and use of drugs can also be used. The analysis found out that the warning signs identification strategy is not fully utilised in the school

Recommendations

1. The early signs which are there before a crisis needs to be noted and action taken to know the actual complains being raised by the students and check on the issue before the crisis eventually occurs.
2. Schools will be required to introduce training sessions for the peer counsellors to assists them acquire skills for crisis counselling as opposed to guidance which is normally the case.
3. The schools need to come up with forums where the students, teachers and administration will be meeting to discuss issues. In such forums feedbacks will be received from the various quotas and come up with amicable solutions to some of the problems being faced in the counselling department.
4. School counsellors need to be involved in safe school planning, students' assistance teams so as to help intervene when problems arise.
5. School counsellors to be trained in crisis intervention and be empowered to apply their skills and training in search a way as to prevent the undesirable from happening.
6. The Ministry of Education needs to develop an updated developmental school crisis training program that has a support structure needed to pursue intervention efforts at times of crisis in schools.
7. School counsellors and administrators need to work with other stakeholders such as parents and provide them with resources to be able to address early warning signs that have been manifested. Counsellors then develop a plan to address the signs and assist with implementation of the plans through consultation and monitoring and assessing the plans impact.

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