

## **INTERVENTIONAL MEASURES FOR THE CONTROL OF PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES TO PROMOTE ACADEMICS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MIGORI COUNTY –KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

With the prevalence of psychosocial issues in the world at large, learning institutions have been so much hit by this menace since the young generation who are the adolescents form the largest population and are normally faced with a number of challenges. Parents, teachers and education stakeholders are on the watch to ensure that the students attain better academic results forgetting the crisis that the students encounter during their study periods in schools. Most of the schools have resorted to the implementation of other strategies like punishments, introduction of resource persons in schools, a lot of revision and provision of resources with the aim of controlling the psychosocial issues in the lives of the students and this has done very little. However, there is limited information on whether interventional measures have been established as the best remedy for the control of psychological and social issues which have impacted negatively on the academic performance of the learners in the public secondary schools specifically in Migori County. One of the key objectives of the study was to explore on the measures that could best be used to control the prevalence of psychosocial issues in the public secondary schools in Migori County .This paper qualitatively explores measures that will enable the students to adjust psychologically and socially to enable them adjust academically .The study findings challenges the parents ,teachers, administrators and other stakeholders to embrace the measures as the most beneficial measures for academic improvement. The findings may assist the government, non-governmental organizations and professional school counselors to allocate more personnel and policies for the control of the psychosocial issues in the public Secondary schools.

Key words: intervention, measures, control, psychosocial issues, academic promotion, secondary schools, Migori, Kenya

### **INTRODUCTION**

Psychosocial interventions are defined as any intervention that that emphasizes psychological or social factors rather than biological factors (Ruddy and House 2005).This definition allows for the inclusion of psychological interventions and health education as well as interventions with a focus on social aspects such as social support. Interventions with a physiological component in addition to psychosocial component like physical exercise groups can also be considered. In different settings like in schools, psychosocial intervention can appear in any format thus in groups or individuals as long as they are stipulated and programmed to the problem to be solved (World Health Organization,2004)

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The interdisciplinary concept of mental health promotion can be exclusively regarded as the promotion of positive mental health by improving the social, physical and economic environment that determines mental health. On the other hand it could be regarded as the primary, secondary or

tertiary prevention of mental health with the main focus to decrease to minimal occurrence, prevalence and re-occurrence of mental disorders (World Health Organization; 2004). Psychological problems such as behavioral, emotional and educational problems are highly-prevalent among students and can severely interfere with their everyday functioning. Only a few of the students with such problems receive mental health care. In A study conducted among the Dutch children, in about 3000 children, only 30% of the children with behavioral and emotional problems had been referred to mental health services in the year's programs before the assessments were done. It is thus evident that attention needs to be given to the students early enough since delayance would lead to severity which gives a lot negative impacts on the academic achievement and developments to the students during their studies (World Health Organization 2004).

In the Netherlands, statistics of 1988 showed that preventive child healthcare is one of the most important low threshold services for the early detection of psychosocial problems in children. The preventive health care is given for free and without condition to all children living in the Netherlands. This service is provided by the community physicians and health workers working in the medical facilities (child health professionals (CHPS)). The services are publicly funded preventive programs i.e. screening, vaccinations and health education and promotion for all children from birth to 19yrs. It is thus a reflection that at age 19 years, most of the students who will be spending their 4-6yrs in the secondary education shall have benefited. All these programs are focused towards the prevention of health and psychosocial problems that might interfere with the students' academic achievements.

The assessments consists of a general physical examination including standardized screening procedures and an interview with parents or with older children themselves concerning their physical, psychosocial problems. The assessments take about 10 minutes and at the end of the assessments, the CHP decides whether there is any need for counseling follow-up or referral. If CHPS identify more serious problems they always decide to refer the child and the parents to other professional services as they don't offer curative care themselves (Rudy 2005). Globally, 1 out of 10 which is 20% adolescents encounters at least one behavioral problem. Half of lifetime mental disorders begin before the age of 14yrs and 75% begin by the age of 14yrs (WHO 2004). Studies in Canada and USA have shown that mental health is an issue that requires attention and therefore should not be taken for granted by health and education professionals (WHO 2004).

Muzamil et al. (2009) assert that in developing countries, such as Nepal and other South Asian Countries Scenario of mental health and its care system is worse than compared to developed countries. There is lack of mental assistance being offered to the children and adolescents during their key phase of socialization and this may lead to mental health consequences that may remain throughout life and reduce the capacities of society's socio-economic productivity (WHO 2001).

Brugman et al. (2011) assessed the degree to which physicians and nurses working in preventive child health care (child health professionals [CHPs] could position themselves to identify and manage psychosocial problems in children, In addition the researchers also opted to determine its association with parent-reported behavioral and emotional problems, socio-demographic factors, and general and mental health history of children. The CHPs observed, examined the children and interviewed the parents during their routine health assessments. It was however noted that the Child Health Professionals (CHPs) did not identify any psychosocial problems in 43% of these children and therefore undertook no action. The report also further

showed that CHPs referred one or more psychosocial problems in 25% in children with serious parent –reported problem behavior. Other child factors associated with CHPs' identification and referral were post treatment for psychosocial problems, life events, and academic problems. After adjustment for these, socio demographic characteristics did not predict referral. The CHPs identified psychosocial problems in school-aged children frequently and undertook actions for most of them. Screening for psychosocial problems may be a promising option to reduce these problems, but accurate identification should be enhanced since some are salient and may at times go unnoticed during the times they are being screened.

Sung, Puskar and Sereika (2016) evaluated the coping levels of rural adolescents and gender differences of coping strategies and psychosocial factors. A cross-sectional study was carried out. A convenience sample of 72 students attending a rural high school in southwestern Pennsylvania was obtained. Subjects completed the Coping Response Inventory-Youth (CRI-Y), the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI), the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorder (SCARED), the Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADS), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Significant gender differences were found for psychosocial factors of depression, self-esteem, and anxiety. Several significant relationships were observed between coping strategies and psychosocial factors of rural adolescents. Additionally, using content analysis, seven categories were determined based on the content of the open-ended question on the CRI: familial factors, peer relationships .These rural adolescents endorsed higher levels of avoidance coping than normative samples. Rural adolescents reported many problems needing proper coping skills in their everyday lives.

Kimani, (2015) identified psychosocial challenges faced by the learners and came up with counseling interventions to be used by all education stakeholders in Njoro sub county of Nakuru county, Kenya. The researcher used descriptive survey design because of its suitability in gathering precise information concerning current status of phenomena and to draw valid conclusions from the facts discovered. The target population comprised 51,775 people while the accessible population comprised 10,200 learners in all the inclusive Primary Schools in the Sub County, 10 Education Officers and 40 Teachers. The data was collected from the respondents and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively .The study revealed that learners in inclusive Primary Schools have diverse special needs, face psychosocial challenges such as withdrawal which require well programmed guidance and counseling services in their schools and even at home by their parents. The study concluded that psychosocial challenges exist among learners with special needs and that counseling interventions have not been put fully resulting to minimal effects on the learners. Some of these problems are normally ignored by the administrators and are viewed as intentional yet they are not The other recommendation for the challenge was identified as the integration of counseling services in all subjects, better remuneration for the available counselors and employment of trained staff and adjustment of education policies to meet learners' needs. The above discussed views have a lot of weight that if they were to be put in use then our students would not face a lot of psychosocial problems in our schools .The schools do not have adequate personnel to address the needs of the learners .It is often a wonder to find that in a school with a population of over 1000 pupils or students, there is only one teacher counselor who can effectively handle the students problems or sometimes none at all.

According to Kourkoutas, and Wolhuter (2013), there is need for early detection of these problems at home and in school especially in the preschool. This could only be achieved if the level of interaction between the teacher and the pupil is very cordial. Discipline cases could be dealt with if attention is paid to the psychic dynamics and the social context behind the poor discipline. The researcher therefore concludes that there is even need for spiritual intervention for proper pupil

social functioning as there is likelihood of behavior modification a component discussed in the churches being enhanced.

It can be claimed that poor psychosocial development of students is reflected with sound academic performance. Physical health and adequate social, emotional and psychological health are the best ingredients for proper academic achievement upon the availability of psychosocial support mechanisms Rudy (2005) observes that there is ultimate contribution that helps to reduce the risk of psychosocial and behavioral problems, violence, crime, Teenage pregnancy and misuses of drugs in schools.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The psychosocial issues are on the increase as is manifested by the continued lamentations and experienced myriads of crisis in the learning institutions. In developed countries, mental health is accorded much attention to enable the students adjust mentally thus enhancing improved academic performance. However, there are minimal efforts to document psychosocial interventional measures as information and policy guidelines in the schools in Migori as an alternative measures for the improvement of academic performance. The focus of this study was therefore to establish some of the interventional measures for the control of psychosocial issues primarily aiming at improving the academic standards in schools.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to;

To establish the prevalence of psychosocial issues affecting students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Migori County, Kenya.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The objective of the study was to;

Identify the interventional measures for the control of the psychosocial issues impacting on the student's academic performance in public secondary schools in Migori County, Kenya.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study used descriptive survey design which is used to gather information as it is during the study period. Kothari (2011) observed that the main aim of descriptive survey design is the description of the state of affairs as they exist. The objective in this study was to be analyzed qualitatively to realize the findings.

#### **LOCATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was carried out in Migori county Secondary Schools. The county is in the former Nyanza province of southwestern Kenya. The county is located in Western Kenya and it borders Homabay County to the north, Kisii County to the North East, Narok County to the East and South East, Tanzania to the South and South West and Lake Victoria to the West. The County has a population of 917170 and covers an area of 2597km<sup>2</sup>. The County has a density of 358 per square kilometers and 43% of the populations live below the poverty line. The sub counties in the county are Awendo, Rongo, Nyatike, Uriri, Kuria East, KuriaWest, Suna East and Suna West. The economic activities mostly found in this county are mining, fishing, and farming especially tobacco,

sugarcane and maize farming, which are the common agricultural produce from this region and are the leading cash crops in this region.

### THE STUDY POPULATION

Kothari (2008) describes a population as the entire group of individuals, events and objects having common observable characteristics. A target population is that population to which a researcher wants to generalize the result of a study. Target population is the population within the area of study and which the researcher intends to study. The population of this study consisted of 187 secondary schools, 187 guidance and counseling teachers, 187 principals and 26350 Form three students from Migori county secondary schools. Migori county schools were suitable for the study since it experiences mass student failures to score grades for university admissions.

### SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES.

Several authors have different meanings of this concept but Mugenda and Mugenda (2009), defined sampling as the selection of research participants from an entire population, and involves decisions about which people, settings, events, behaviors and or social processes to be observed. Kothari (2008) also states that sampling is the selection of some part of an aggregate or totality on the basis of which a judgment or inference about the aggregate or totally is made. Therefore, a sample should be able to represent the population adequately (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). The researcher used saturated, stratified and simple random sampling to select the study sample. Stratified sampling technique was used to select public secondary schools and were stratified into four categories; National, Extra County, County schools and Sub county schools. This kind of sampling aided the researcher to have enough representation of all the participants according to their category of school. For the selection of the National schools saturated sampling was again used since they were few in the county. Kothari (2004) and Creswell (2017) support the use of saturated sampling because it is also a non-probability sampling procedure in which all members are selected since they are able to provide useful information for the study.

The researcher also employed Simple random sampling to select 30% of the form three students participants. Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) postulate that simple random sampling is preferable because it ensures that a desirable representation from various schools i.e. principals, guidance and counseling teachers are catered for. In addition, a formula recommended by Fisher, Laing and Stoeckel (1983) was used to calculate the number of selected form three students on the basis of their gender and the type of secondary schools. Therefore, 379 form three students were included in the study. The formula is highlighted below and used to calculate the number of form three students;

$$n = \frac{Z^2 P \cdot q}{e^2 (N - 1) + Z^2 P \cdot q}$$

n= required sample size

P= proportion of population with the required characteristics of the study.

q= proportion of population without the required characteristics of the study (1-P)

N= total population

e= accuracy level required. Standard error=10%

Z= Z value at the level of confidence of 95%=1.96

$$n = 1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 \quad 26350$$

$$0.05^2 \times 2349 + (1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5)$$

$$n = 0.9604(26350)$$

$$\frac{\quad}{65.87257(0.9604)}$$

$$n = 0.960(26350)$$

$$\frac{\quad}{66.8329}$$

$$n = 0.9604(394.266895)$$

$$n = 379.$$

**Table1 : Sample size of F3 Students**

School category	Target population of schools	Target population of F3 students	Sample size of F3 students
National schools	2	540	8
Extra county schools	24	5760	83
County schools	32	9570	138
Sub-county schools	129	10480	150
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>26350</b>	<b>379</b>

## INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data for the study was collected through interview schedules, self-structured questionnaires and focus group discussions. The questionnaires and focus group discussions were designed based on the research objectives, research questions and the literature review.

## VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENTS

Items were constructed based on the research objectives and the research questions. These items were viewed by the research committee to ensure that reliability of the research instruments was achieved. To achieve validity, the questionnaires, interview schedules guide and the focus group discussion which is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields results after repeated trials, a pilot study was carried out. Piloting was done in two secondary schools within Awendo Sub County which is one of the counties in Migori County.

## DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES.

Permission was obtained by the researcher from the school of Graduate Studies of Rongo University to conduct a field research. The researcher request having been approved and permitted, then proceeded and sought a research permit from the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and this was done before embarking on the study. The researcher then made courtesy calls to the County Director of Education and also the Sub County Directors OF Education-all within Migori County., to seek their permission before the commencement of the study. A prior visit to the principals of the sampled schools was done to ensure appointments were booked on when to administer the instruments. After approval of research proposal and research instruments, the researcher went to the field and collected data from

the key respondents after receiving an introduction letter from the school of Post graduate studies and Research Department, Rongo University. The researcher administered the questionnaire to randomly selected schools through the heads of the sampled schools. The entire questionnaire had covering letters stating the purpose of the study. The researcher at this stage introduced the questionnaire and stressed its confidential nature. Teachers were instructed to return the completed questionnaires to the researcher. The researcher then collected the completed questionnaires from the sampled field personally. This was done by moving round the selected schools. The administration of the questionnaires took between 45 minutes to 1 hour, interview schedules took between 30 to 45 minutes. The focus group discussions took at most 1 hour. The whole data collection process took at least two months.

### **METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

Creswell (2017) point out that upon the collection of data, there is need for data editing to identify and eliminate errors that might have been made by the respondents. This step enables the completeness of all the questions if answered accurately and if at all the respondents took their time to interpret instructions and questions uniformly. The obtained data from interviews, documentary analysis and focus group discussions were analyzed qualitatively.

### **RESULTS**

The results captured were based on the respondents views on the interventional measures to manage the prevalence of psychosocial issues impacting on the students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Migori County.

#### **Demographic Information of the Respondents**

The study involved Principals and teachers who were Heads of Guidance and Counseling Department. The interviewed principals and teachers' logistics is outlined in table 2;

**Table 2: showing principals and teachers interviewed**

Respondents	Targeted no.	Interviewed	Return rate
Principals	56	30	53.57%
Teachers (G&C) heads	56	30	53.57%

Table 2 summarizes the return rate of the principals and teachers who were Heads of Guidance and Counseling Department in the sampled schools. The findings showed that out of 56 principals and teachers, only 30 (53.57%) and 26 (46.43%) availed themselves to be interviewed. The research adopted the number as quite representative as is supported by Manson (2010) who supports that an extremely large number of participants to be interviewed might be cumbersome and suggests, that anywhere from 5 to 50 participants as adequate.

#### **Students Questionnaire Return Rate**

The study was designed to establish the views of the students in relation to the influence of the psychosocial issues on their academic performance. Table 3 shows the summary of return rate of questionnaires from the student respondents and reveals that the questionnaires were adequate for the study.

**Table 3: Questionnaire Return Rate**

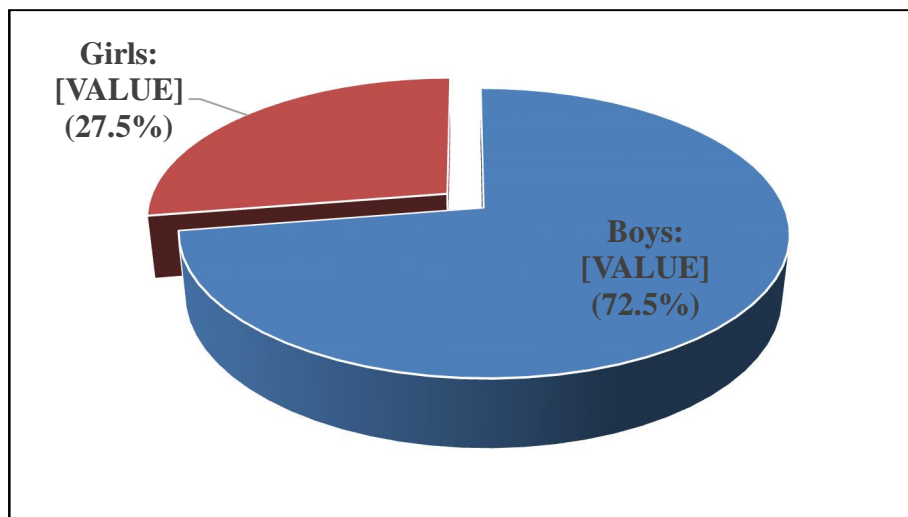
Respondents	Questionnaires administered	Questionnaires returned	Return rate (%)
Students	379	327	86.3

Source: Survey data (2018)

The targeted population of the form threes totaled 379 students. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the students and out of this population, a total of 327 of the respondents returned their questionnaires, translating to an overall response rate of 86.3%. Creswell (2014) recommends that a response rate of 50% is adequate, 60% is good and 70% and above is excellent for analysis and reporting on a survey study like in this case. Based on this assertion, the current study's response rate of 86.0% was therefore excellent; it was sufficiently representative of the target population. The recorded high response rate was attributed to the fact that the questionnaires in this study were personally administered by the researcher to the respondents, who were pre-notified of the intention of the study. It was also due to extra efforts that was made in form of visits to the respondents to fill-in and return the questionnaires, the researcher made follow up calls to clarify queries as well as prompt the respondents to fill the questionnaires.

### Demographic Information of the Students.

The study sought to investigate the background information of the students who took part in the study, which was considered necessary for the determination of whether they were representative enough in terms of their demographic characteristics for the generalization of the results of the study. The demographic information investigated includes gender, age, class, religion and whether the students were in boarding or day school.



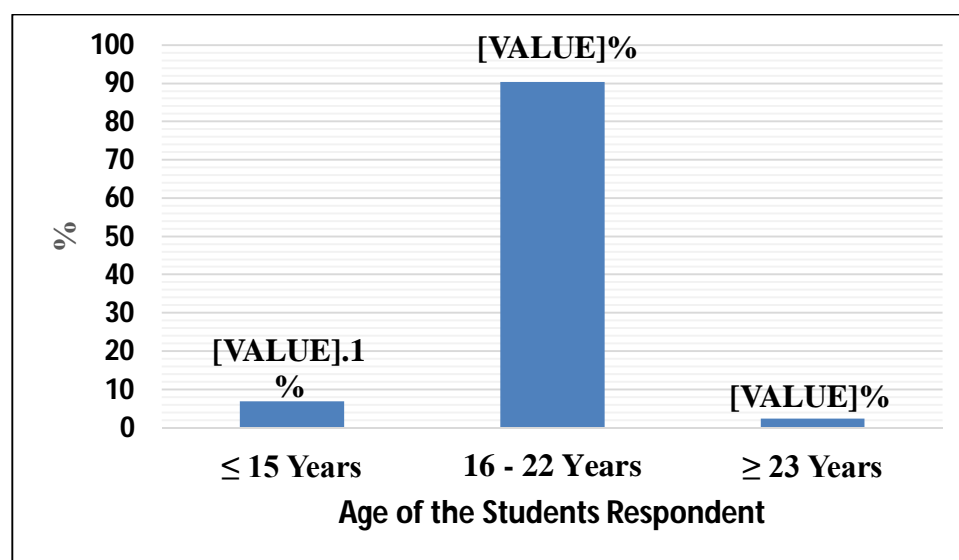
*Figure1. shows the summary of the gender distribution among the student respondents.*

Source: Survey data (2019)

**Figure 1: Gender Distribution of the Students**



From Figure 1, it is evident that a majority of the respondents were boys (72.5%), with female students being only (27.5%) of the student respondents, implying that there was gender disparity in terms of secondary school student enrolments in Migori county. This finding was in line with the report by Basic Education Statistical Reports (2014) which had indicated that gender parity had not been fully achieved in secondary schools in Kenya. In addition, the finding was close to the recent survey conducted by UNICEF (2018) which established that in Kenyan secondary schools, majority of the students enrolled in secondary schools were male. However, it was noted that all the gender was represented in the study, indicating that generalization of the results was appropriate.



*Figure 2: Age Distribution of the Respondents (n=327)*

**Source: Survey data (2019)**

On the ages, majority of the students who took part in the survey were aged between 16 and 22 years, this was not surprising because the study targeted students from form three; usually most of the students in form three are about 16 and 17 years of age. However, other age groups were also represented in the study, making generalization of the results applicable.

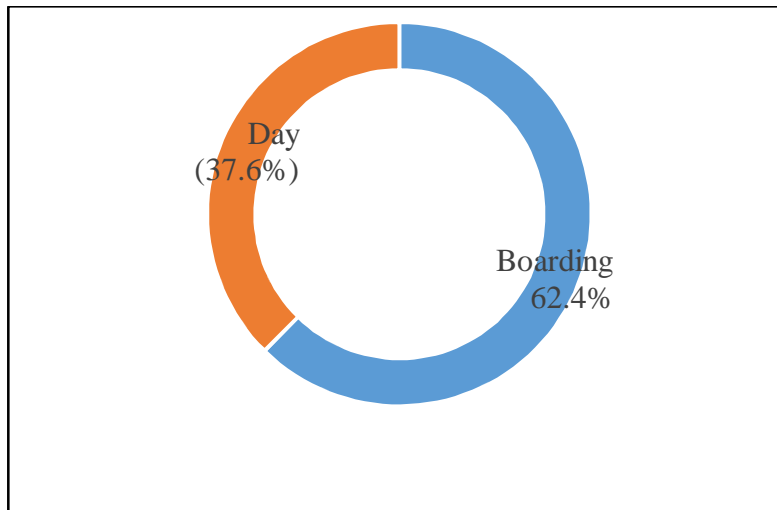
*Table 4: Respondents' Religion (n=327)*

Frequency	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Catholic	120	38.8	36.7
Protestant	129	39.4	76.1
Muslim	62	18.6	80.4
Others	14	.6	81.0
Pagan	2	19.0	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

**Source: Survey data (2019)**

The study sought to establish the religion of the respondents. The results of their responses revealed that majority of the respondents were either Catholics (38.8%) or Protestants (39.4%). However,

other religions were also represented in the study, with close to a fifth (18.6%) of them being Muslims.



*Figure 3: Type of Respondents' School (n=327)*

**Source: Survey data (2019)**

On the type of secondary schools of the student respondents, the results of the survey established that although majority 62.4% of them were in boarding schools, a significant proportion of them were in day secondary schools. This reflects the fact that the sampled students' background mirrored the characteristics of target population and the results of the survey could easily be generalized in Migori County with very minimal precaution.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The primary objective of the study was to identify some of the interventional measures that if implemented could help address the prevalence of the psychosocial issues of students in secondary schools in Migori County. This objective was analyzed qualitatively and the views of the respondents are here below discussed and presented as follows:

### **Provision of counseling services in schools**

Analysis from the focus group discussion schedule went ahead to establish the student opinion on interventional measures to psychosocial issues. Most of the students felt that the provision of counseling services in schools would help them out of difficult situations which they might have been influenced into without determining consequences on their academic achievement. The following comments were raised from different participants and reported by one of them that:

*"Little did we know you can be talked to in a polite way and reveal to a counselor everything in your deepest part of the heart? In fact, parents are forceful and never take time to understand what we experience at home and at school. With the closeness and understanding and attention accorded during counseling, it is evident that impossibilities become possible. Not even one student is poor academically; all of us can pass if one is close to us. Furthermore, we cannot be involved in unwanted or uncalled for behaviors while we are in school"* (participant 5 FGD 8)

Another principal had the following to say;

*“The students who normally go for counseling sessions have shown improvements in their academic adjustments and would always attest to the others of the importance of therapies”*(PR 16)

Similarly, the HOD guidance and counseling of one of the girl’s secondary schools commented that;

*“Girls are always happy when teachers are very close to them. They feel free to disclose their problems to teacher counselors and have shown a lot of improvements in their class work especially when they have to work on difficult concept”*(HOD 22)

The study findings declared that students at times get involved in undesirable behaviors because of lack of therapy in their lives. Parents do not have counseling skills and it is for this that their children cannot open up to share with them their challenges. Baker and Gerler (2001) in America reported in their study that school counseling programs had significant influence on discipline problems. They continued to comment that students who participated in school counseling program had significantly less inappropriate behaviors and more positive attitudes towards school than those students who did not participate in the programmes. In addition group counseling provided by school counselors significantly decreased participant’s aggressive and hostile behaviors.

Study findings from documents analysis guides from Guidance and Counseling records from one of the secondary schools also revealed that guidance and counseling had helped in the modification of the behaviors and characters of learners hence improving their academic standards. Information gathered from the major occurrence book diagnosed revealed that a learner had bought petrol and had threatened to burn down the school. The student had been notorious for creating chaos in class and becoming disruptive while others are studying. The guardian also reported to the school administration that the learner was suspected to be involved in cult. In addition, the learner was defiant at home, would bring poor results, refused to undertake household chores and would sleep away from home whenever he felt to do so.

The student went as far as spending most of his time with age mates who had dropped out of school. It was disgrace to the guardian. However, the learner received guidance and counseling services from school and finally changed positively and academically. He showed a lot of improvement and surprised the others when he emerged in top twenty in the end term exams.

Saket (2014) observes that all academic institutions should contribute to the total educational process directed to the development of personality of youthful students unfortunately; most learning institutions in Migori County are unable to assist students to confront this monster of academic anxiety. Bala and Shaafu (2016) postulate that counseling inculcates academic focus and promotes healthy school life in student through mitigating against failure, drop- out and wastage, hence efforts towards ensuring equity, retention and high completion rates have not yielded expected returns.

### **Provision of trained/ professional counselor teachers**

Qualitative interviews established that counseling therapies and understanding of theories of counseling enhanced self-esteem among the learners. The learner’s psychosocial issues are quite complex and needs a deeper understanding on the skills and approaches for them to be managed. Counseling experience would be a remedy and availability of the counseling services should be advocated for in the learning institution. One respondent remarked:

*“Most of the teachers appointed to offer counseling services in the schools seemingly do not have the necessary qualifications and experiences to diagnose the occurrence of the psychosocial issues in our schools. Our schools are understaffed and the same*

*teacher responsible for guidance and counseling is overloaded with other teaching duties in different classes. when the teacher of guidance and counseling finishes teaching at the end of the day he or she is exhausted and will not be ready to listen to and help students who might have issues to be discussed” (PR, 8)*

The excerpt of PR 8 above suggests that guidance and counseling in some schools is handled by quacks, thus people without qualities and expertise. At the same time this teacher has other duties at school to perform and thus they have limited time for the attention of the learner’s psychosocial needs. A similar view was shared by another respondent who believed that guidance and counseling is done haphazardly in the schools According to one of the principals, the following were the comments;

*“The government has to be blamed. The school is seriously understaffed; you would find a school with four classes. The TSC teachers are 4 including the principal. How possible would it be for the appointed guidance and counseling teacher to take time listening to the student’s problems at the expense of syllabus coverage. It is impossible additional teachers are needed in fact teachers specifically meant to offer psychotherapy in the school to be posted to schools and be exempted from teaching duties so as to give students time for their challenges to be listened to this would help them cop and form strategies for their problems before it is too late” (PR, 25.)*

In one of the day secondary schools in the sample, the students did not realize the impact of counseling in their lives as they believed teachers only advised and forced their will on them. In one of the focus group discussions the following were the remarks of one of the participants;

*“Our teachers don’t want to listen to us when we are in trouble, and the best that can be done to you is to be punished even if the problem is never so complex. Furthermore, even if you share an idea which looks confidential, you would be surprised to hear the same problem being talked to by other teachers” (participant 2 FGD 14)*

The excerpts from the above respondent suggested that guidance should not be done by chance since it is a process. The government should provide personnel with well-equipped skills or provide professionals whose main duty is the provision of counseling and not teaching as this denies them time to devote to counseling issues. The counselors need to be well equipped with all the counseling skills and ethical values i.e. confidentiality and anonymity among others. These counseling qualities would ideally help students develop trust and security as they solve conflicts in their daily lives. This too was supported by Mwangi (2014) study in Kenya who reiterated that counseling contributes to positive attitude towards self-discipline and good value and therefore needs good time for its provision. However, Yaworski (2012) study in the United States contends that even though teachers have been trained on non-violent methods of managing behavior and how to implement the strategies because classrooms still go through a myriad of behavior problems.

In Kenya Wambu and Wickman (2011) commented that despite the presence of school counselors in most schools, their role is unclear to the consumers of counseling services. A majority of school counselors still have teaching responsibility over and above counseling duties. The dual responsibility leaves the school counselor with very limited time to provide counseling services to the students. Wambu and Wickman (2011) continue to observe that guidance and counseling in Kenya mainly focuses on responsive services where school counselor deal with issues referred to them by the principals or teachers. The counseling is only offered during break time, Lunch, games time and after school. This is very insufficient.

Further study interviews from respondents confirmed that guidance and counseling was a commendable remedy or interventional measure for the student's psychosocial issues in modifying the behavior of learners. They managed to get rid of unwanted habits and to acquire desirable ones. Especially in day schools, boy- girl relationship is rampant but most students who had been involved in such unhealthy practices changed after receiving guidance and counseling services.

In addition, students who were guided and counseled continuously controlled their level of engagement in undesirable/maladaptive behavior, as was observed by one respondent:

*"In our school, guidance and counseling is very instrumental for the students who engage in boy- girl relationship. They have experienced behavior modification as a result of being given direction and being sensitized that the uncalled for/ premature relationships end up in futility"* (HOD, 22)

The reflections of HOD 22 imply that guidance and counseling enable the students to adopt healthy relationship between boys and girls in the school. Ruso (2014) study in America supports that having personal conversation with students shows them that their feelings are valued. Osakwe (2012) study in Kenya also agrees that teachers should pay attention to emotional, social and psychological incompetence of their learners. However, Dodge (2011) study in America disagrees that schools have their own doctrines which are cultural, ineffective and these are used methods to manage student behavior, and there is need to change to current researched methods and interventional measures. Auni, Ong'unya and Jepchirchir (2014) also concur that counseling has not contributed positively towards student's social adjustment due to ineffective strategies which are being implemented.

### **Regular academic clinics**

Further qualitative findings from principals gave other suggestive ways for helping students go through the psychosocial issues while at school and at home. One of the principals responded that;

*"As a school, the best we can do is to organize for academic clinics where parents are invited to school. During such meetings parents would be discussed with the challenges of their sons and daughters. We hope the parents who do not have time to help their children may see the dire need of being very close to their children to understand their needs"* (PR, 11)

In other secondary schools the teachers confirmed the importance of regular academic clinics organized in schools either termly or based on class levels as this would enable the student's problems be shared and strategies sought before the challenges are worsened.

Further scrutiny of the interventional measures revealed that there was need for total involvement from all stakeholders and the community at large. The following respondent remarked;

*"It is very complex to understand the issues of our adolescents. Parents think they are right when indeed they have done very little in shaping the behaviors of their children. Being harsh has never helped. It is important for the parents to attend meetings called in schools to discuss academic challenges of their sons and daughters (PR 23). Communities to organize for the community based support groups where the students are given mentors. The churches also should not be neglected and should provide spiritual counseling to the youths. I believe through such measures, at least the students will be at school with opened sights to bear the challenges they face in life."* (PR, 17)

The above comments were also supported by most of the guidance and counseling departmental heads. A respondent remarked;

*“Parents think the teachers should know every student’s problem. The whole burden is thrown to the teacher and the indeed the best is to start at home, church and the community at large from where the students come from. If churches are genuine, they should be offering spiritual guidance to the youths. Through this, it would be very easy for students to undergo a quick and responsive therapy” (GC, 4)*

In the focus group discussions, the students discussed interventional measures for the psychosocial issues and a participant remarked;

*“The teachers should not think that when we study during games time in pairs thus male and female student that we are discussing unhealthy relationships. Let the students be made aware that they are sisters and brothers and above all the spirit of competition should be enhanced between the boys and girls. Moreover, some girls are even brighter in some subjects than the boys and thus being very close to one another would promote attitudes of some of us toward some studies. Let the guidance and counseling teachers remain confidential on the issues we take to them. In fact, you could be having a relationship which is unhealthy but once counseled, it becomes sad the next day you hear about it on parade being commented on at the assembly by the principal. Students get demoralized, becomes emotional and this may encourage them to continue with undesirable behaviors” (participant 4, FGD 5)*

Another Principal also commented

*“Let the parents help their sons and daughters by checking assignments, help them counsel and give guidance. However, some students have claimed that absence of farther posed a big challenge towards their success since the mother who remains the sole provider for the family needs do not get time to establish the challenges of their children. If it were better the single parents would also play their roles in children behavior modification” (PR, 30)*

From the above excerpts, it is very clear that students need help from home, community and school. In addition, the church should be at the epicenter in the provision of emotional, psychological and spiritual support to the youths. Kimani, (2015) reiterated that one of the recommendations that would help in the effective provision of counseling in the schools is proper infusion of guidance and counseling services in the taught disciplines. Besides this there is need for better remuneration to trained staff. These measures were perceived as motivational factors which would bring the spirit of selfless service delivery to the students especially in the public secondary schools across the eight sub counties of the county.

## **SUMMARY**

The findings of this suggested that there is need of setting up counseling centers in schools where students’ problems and issues could be addressed. The study also revealed that there was need for some levels of professionalism in the provision of counseling. The use of quacks has done very little to handle the student’s problems. From the study findings it was also observed that the government has not done much to equip the schools with adequate counselors who should be relieved from teaching duties. Interviews between the researchers and the principals indicated that academic clinics should be organized and parents involved so that they express the challenges they experience with their sons and daughters. The research findings from qualitative analysis found out that there was need for the community based support groups where the students should be exposed to. The study also found out that the churches should be involved in the provision of spiritual counseling to the youths.

## **CONCLUSION**

With the increase of psychosocial issues which have continually resulted to dismal academic performance in schools in Migori County the study concluded that, interventional measures should be sought by the educational administrators and other stakeholders. Some of these measures that can address the psychosocial issues include provision of counseling services in schools, provision of trained/ professional counselor teachers and regular academic clinics.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study the following recommendations were made;

- i. Schools should focus on the psychological, cognitive, social and the mental growth of the learners in school system before other strategies are put in place to boost the academic performance of the students.
- ii. The government should ensure adequate provision of professional counselors meant to cushion the students' academic challenges in the learning institutions in the country.
- iii. Churches, NGOs and the society should come out and be involved in the provision of psychosocial, psychological support to the students with the aim of assisting them become high academic achievers

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