

# **Headteachers' Role in Enhancing Guidance and Counselling of Students on Drug Abuse in Public Secondary Schools in Nyeri and Mbeere Districts**

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## **Abstract**

The issue of drug abuse is a major headache to societies and authorities around the world. No nation has been spared from the devastating problem caused by drug abuse. In Kenya for instance, there is indiscriminate use, abuse and dependence on drugs of various types in secondary schools creating a great concern to everybody. Despite massive efforts at research and public education, drug abuse remains a subject about which there exists great confusion and uncertainty. Drug abuse has been identified as a major cause of indiscipline, unrest, violent strikes, massive school dropouts and poor examination performance in secondary schools. Drug abuse has previously been treated as a discipline problem leading to use of punitive methods to control it. Its prevalence however has led to some extent to substitution of punitive approaches with client-friendly ones such as guidance and counselling to control the vice. But despite the use of guidance and counselling to control drug abuse especially in secondary schools, the vice still persists implying that there is a discrepancy in the way it is offered and practiced. Hence, the need for concerted efforts by all stakeholders, headteachers included, in a bid to strengthen guidance and counselling for effective drug abuse control. This study therefore sought to establish the roles performed by headteachers (in an attempt to correct the prevailing discrepancy) to enhance guidance and counselling of students on drug abuse which was its main purpose. The study aimed at achieving the following objectives: determining the roles played by headteachers in enhancing guidance and counselling of students on drug abuse; identifying the problems (constraints) faced by headteachers in enhancing guidance and counselling of students on drug abuse; establishing possible solutions to these problems; finding out other roles played by stakeholders to complement guidance and counselling of students on drug abuse; and identifying other methods commonly used in secondary schools to complement guidance and counselling in the control of drug abuse. The study was guided by the following research questions: what are the roles played by headteachers to enhance guidance and counselling of students on drug abuse?; which problems (constraints) do headteachers face while performing these roles?; in what ways can these problems be solved?; how do other stakeholders of the school complement the headteachers' role of enhancing guidance and counselling of students on drug abuse?; and which other methods do secondary schools commonly use to complement guidance and counselling in the control of drug abuse? The study was based on the role theory and a descriptive survey design was employed. The selected sample consisted of 32 headteachers. A questionnaire, interview schedule and observation checklist were used as the research tools. Data was analyzed and presented descriptively. The findings revealed that most headteachers (96.9%-100%) performed the following four major roles to enhance guidance and counselling of students on drug abuse: setting up guidance and counselling unit; equipping the unit with relevant facilities; incorporating pastoral services in the school guidance and counselling programme; and serving as a role model in drug abuse control. The major problems experienced by headteachers while performing these roles revolved around scarcity of financial, human and material resources. The major solutions suggested to close the scarcity gap was provision of these

resources. The headteachers and guidance and counselling departments collaborated with the church, parents, teachers, peer counsellors, school management, DEOs and provincial general hospitals in enhancing drug abuse control. Punishment, close supervision and inspection of suspicious cases of drug abusing students, parental and peer counselling, restricting students from going to drugs infested places, suspension and expulsion of serious drug abuse cases from school and referring such cases to psychiatrists were other methods commonly used to complement guidance and counselling in drug abuse control. The study made the following recommendations among others: Exploring diverse ways of raising funds to be used in promoting drug abuse guidance and counselling activities; heightening up public sensitization campaigns to enlighten the society on the causes, symptoms and effects of drug abuse on the youth and the society at large; encouraging high level of collaboration among all stakeholders in drug abuse control; and amending the Education Act and TSC code of regulations to off-set some or the entire teaching load from teacher counsellors so that they can have adequate time at their disposal to attend to guidance and counselling needs of students.

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