Prevalence of Anxiety Related Disorders among Girls' Secondary School Students in Selected Public Schools in Dagoretti North Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the prevalence of anxiety related disorders among girls' secondary school students in selected public schools in Dagoretti North sub County, Kenya. Descriptive research design was used. The target population was 1,260 girls studying in the girls' schools in the Sub County aged between 13-18 years. A sample of 200 participants was selected using simple random sampling technique. The study found that the prevalence of anxiety related disorders in the study were: panic disorder (84%), separation anxiety disorder (82%), GAD (41.5%), social anxiety disorder (35%), and school avoidance (56%). Further, the study found out that the prevalence of moderate depression and low self-esteem among the secondary school students was 11% and 14% respectively though the levels of panic, GAD, separation anxiety, social anxiety and school avoidance were all statistically significant ($p<0.05$) within the sampled population. The study concluded that though anxiety is a common mental disorder among adolescents, the high prevalence especially among girls is a pointer to a critical gap that needs to be addressed. The study recommended that secondary school students need a professional support to deal with their psychological challenges.

Keywords: *Prevalence, Anxiety Related Disorders, Girls' Secondary School Students*

1.0 Introduction

Anxiety is a subjective state of fear, apprehension, or tension in an extremely fearful or threatening situation (Hartmann, 2014) which affects students cognitively, behaviorally and psychologically (Sharma, Kumar & Sarin, 2016). Research has shown that the increasing number of students faced with problematic anxiety is worrying and the situation is made worse by the fact that these students are receiving limited attention (De Wit *et al*., 2011; Miller, Gold, Laye-Gindhu, Martinez, Yu & Waechtler, 2011). With the rampant cases of problematic

behaviours among students in girls' schools, one may easily link these behaviours to the existence of anxiety disorders.

As the high school students transit from one stage of development to another, anxiety may impact them negatively (Costello, Copeland & Angold, 2011) hence preventing them to achieve the developmental milestones as desired. Anxiety among high school students may be as a result of the presence of other psychological disorders (Essau, 2003), high levels of anxiety among parents (Pereira, Barros, Mendonca & Muris, 2014), uncertainties during the transition (De Wit, Karioja, Rye & Shain, 2011) among other causes. Whichever the source of anxiety, the high prevalence of anxiety disorders remains a nightmare in the halls of our high schools that warrant investigation.

A study conducted by Ramagopal, Narasimhan and Devi (2016) on the prevalence of anxiety and depression among adolescents in India revealed that thirty-five percent (35%) of the adolescents suffered from anxiety and depressive disorders. Another study done in Egypt by Fawzy and Foud (2017) indicated a high rate of 65% mental health problems generally those of emotional nature such as anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. In Kenya, a study done by Osborn, Wasil, Venturo-Conerly, Schleider & Weisz, 2019), revealed that Kenyan youths reported depression symptoms and anxiety within the school context.

It is most likely that students faced with high levels of anxiety experience problems with the information processing systems. Such students may find it difficult to store and retrieve information taught (Nelson & Harwood, 2011). It has been pointed out that as the levels of academic achievements improve, the students' anxiety levels reduce (Sharma, 2016). This shows that anxiety has a negative effect on academic achievement. The situation is made worse when anxiety co-occurs with other disorders.

Due to the negative impact of anxiety disorders, creating awareness and treating of the anxiety disorders can be a good step towards reducing comorbidity among mental health disorders (Miller, Laye-Gindhu, Bennett, Liu, Gold, March, Olson & Waechtler, 2011) besides offering adolescents protection from the stressors that are frequent during that stage of life (Leikanger, Ingul & Larsson, 2012). If students are treated with these anxiety disorders, they would be able to function more effectively and focus more on academics, experience a reduction of behavioral problems, improving school attendance, and their relationship with others at large (Bostick & Anderson, 2009).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Anxiety disorders among high school students have been on the rise in the recent decade. Though anxiety disorders affect both boys and girls, studies have shown that there exist gender differences in the prevalence of anxiety. Though a study by Ghandour, Sherman, Vladutiu, Ali, Lynch, Bitsko & Blumberg (2019) showed that boys are most likely to suffer from anxiety more than girls, it is worrying that this trend is changing (Khesht-Masjedi, *et al*. 2019). Given the comorbid nature of anxiety disorders, students in this state may find it difficult achieving their academic goals (Chege, Munene & Oladipo, 2015).

The socio-demographic characteristics among students in high schools and the prevalence of anxiety disorders may relate. This is because students in Kenyan secondary schools come from different family set-ups and anxiety disorders may be precipitated by the family background, socio-economic status of the family, marital conflicts, among other variables (Njagi, Migosi & Mwania, 2014).

Although the government has done a considerable effort to address issues on anxiety among secondary school students, there exists a gap in the anxiety disorders among girls' high schools in Kenya. It is such a disturbing trend of why girls behave the way they do in secondary schools

in Kenya. Limited documentation of studies on anxiety disorders among girls in secondary schools in Kenya exists. This study, therefore, investigated the prevalence of anxiety disorders especially among girls' high schools in Kenya.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the prevalence of anxiety disorders among girls in girls' secondary schools in selected public schools in Dagoretti North sub-County.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 The Attribution theory

The Attribution theory is concerned with how ordinary people explain the causes of behavior and events. It was developed by Benard Weiner (1935). According to the Attribution theory, students need to feel in control over the outcome of the different tasks they engage in. Students who feel more in control over the outcome have more motivation to complete the different tasks assigned to them (Lim, 2007). When students are faced with anxiety, they need to understand the origin of this anxiety. By doing this, they will feel in control.

According to this theory, causes of success or failure can be external or internal, stable or unstable, and controllable or uncontrollable. This is the same as anxiety where anxiety can originate from the external environment or internal environment destabilizing an individual student. Internal reasons are something that the student has been involved in e.g. failing to perform well in examinations. External reasons can be issues such as a harsh school environment or home environment. Stable causes are expected to occur again, and unstable causes are changeable. Controllable causes are something a student can change to reduce his anxiety, but uncontrollable causes are believed to be unchangeable. Girls tend to focus more on ability and other internal factors while females tend to focus on effort and external factors (McClure, Meyer, Garisch, Fischer, Weir & Walkey, 2011).

Attribution Theory focuses on two types of goals, learning goals and performance goals. Students who have learning goals are students who want to learn more and work hard to succeed. Students who have learning goals can see failure as a motivator. For students with performance goals, failure is anti-motivation. These students are normally very anxious. Most students do not want to try carrying out a task if they anticipate failure (Vockell, 2015).

The Attribution Theory suggests a relationship between students' sense of control over the outcome of their tasks and the level of motivation to succeed. Students can also develop self-handicapping due to very high levels of anxiety (Vockell, n.d.). Students who self-handicap are convinced that success will not happen and will not do anything to try for success. Self-handicapping hinders motivation.

The main strength of this theory is that it can be used to explain the difference in motivation between high performing and low performing students. Students that are classified as high achievers believe that failure is considered to be caused by bad luck and is not their fault. Its main weakness is in its ability to be used to blame other students and avoid personal convictions. For instance, in a school setting, low achievers avoid activities that lean towards success because they tend to doubt their abilities or skills. They presume that accomplishments are related to luck or other factors beyond their control, not themselves.

2.2 Empirical Review

There is a possibility of several socio-demographic factors relating to the different levels of anxiety among secondary school students. Some of these factors include age, gender, family background, year of study, birth order, among others. Regarding age and anxiety, a study done in Tanzania among secondary school students by Kambuga (2016) found out that 84.8% of the school adolescents aged 16-18 had experienced anxiety while 15.2% of the same age had never experienced anxiety. Additionally, 40% of the students aged 19-22 had experienced anxiety whereas 60% of the same age had not. This is an indication that anxiety is influenced by the age of a student.

The same study found out that 90% of the female students had experienced anxiety in school life while 10% of the female students had never experienced such a situation. 73.8% of the male students indicate having experienced anxiety in their school life while 26.2% had never experienced it. This implies that female students were more prone to anxiety prevalence compared to male students.

Another study by Assari (2014) revealed that if not treated early, anxiety can lead to impaired peer relations, missed schools, substance use and anxiety disorder in adulthood. This means that the relationship of a student with peers, school attendance, and substance use directly influenced the levels of anxiety among secondary school students.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population was 1,260 girls studying in the girls' schools in the Sub County aged between 13-18 years. One national school and one extra county school were sampled from the three girls' schools in Dagoretti sub-County. A sample of 200 participants was used. Analysis included descriptive statistics which comprised of mean, standard deviation, variance and percentiles. Inferential analysis using Karl Pearson Moment correlation analysis was also conducted to test the strength of the relationship between the variables through the generation of the Pearson correlation coefficient (r). Tables were used to present responses for further analysis and facilitate comparison.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 The Prevalence of Anxiety Disorder among secondary School Students

The study sought to investigate the prevalence of anxiety disorders among girls in selected Girls' secondary schools in selected public schools in Dagoretti North sub-County. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Prevalence of Anxiety Disorder among secondary School Students

Type of Anxiety Disorder	Frequency (n)	Prevalence (%)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	83	41.5
Panic Disorder	168	84
Separation Anxiety Disorder	164	82
Social Anxiety Disorder	70	35
School Avoidance	128	56

Table 1 presents findings on the prevalence of anxiety disorders among girls in selected Girls' secondary schools in selected public schools in Dagoretti North sub-County. The table shows that the prevalence of panic disorder and separation anxiety disorder was 84% and 82% respectively. The prevalence of GAD, social anxiety disorder, and school avoidance were 41.5%, 35%, and 56% respectively. The finding of this objective is a clear indication that

anxiety-related disorders are very common among secondary school students. The findings too may be used to explain why secondary school students have been involved in cases of student unrest and an overall decline in academic performance has been witnessed in Kenya in the last two years.

To investigate further on the different types of anxiety-related disorders, a multivariate analysis was run and the findings were presented in tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Grand Mean of the different Anxiety-Related Disorders

Dependent Variable	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Respondent's level of panic disorder	9.130	.308	8.522	9.738
Respondent's level of generalized anxiety disorder	8.010	.195	7.625	8.395
Respondent's level of separation anxiety disorder	7.420	.198	7.030	7.810
Respondent's level of social anxiety disorder	6.345	.189	5.972	6.718
Respondent's level of school avoidance	3.310	.147	3.021	3.599
Respondent's level of depression	1.415	.048	1.320	1.510
Respondent's level of self esteem	2.035	.040	1.957	2.113

Table 2 presents findings on the grand mean of the different anxiety-related disorders among the respondents. The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents in the sampled schools met the criteria for all of the anxiety-related disorders except depression and self-esteem which were within the normal range. Tests of between-subjects effects done revealed results presented in table 3.

Table 3: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Respondent's level of panic disorder	16671.380	1	16671.380	876.602	.000
Respondent's level of generalized anxiety disorder	12832.020	1	12832.020	1682.217	.000
Respondent's level of separation anxiety disorder	11011.280	1	11011.280	1407.604	.000
Respondent's level of social anxiety disorder	8051.805	1	8051.805	1125.854	.000
Respondent's level of school avoidance	2191.220	1	2191.220	510.135	.000
Respondent's level of depression	400.445	1	400.445	860.986	.000
Respondent's level of self esteem	828.245	1	828.245	2626.416	.000

Table 3 presents the ANOVA results for the main effect of our within-groups factors. The findings show that levels of panic, GAD, separation anxiety, social anxiety, and school avoidance were all statistically significant ($p<0.05$) within the sampled population.

4.2 Discussions

The study sought to find out the prevalence of anxiety disorders among girls in selected Girls' secondary schools in selected public schools in Dagoretti North sub-County. This study found out that the prevalence of anxiety-related disorders in the study on the different types of anxiety disorders were: panic disorder (84%), separation anxiety disorder (82%), GAD (41.5%), social anxiety disorder (35%), and school avoidance (56%).

The study's findings are in line with those of Kambuga (2016) which pointed out that 90% of the female students had experienced anxiety in school life while 10% of the female students had never experienced such a situation. Just like in this study, female students were more prone to anxiety hence recording the high figures.

The high prevalence of anxiety in this study supports the findings of Assari (2014) that had revealed that if not treated early, anxiety can lead to impaired peer relations, missed schools, substance use, and anxiety disorder in adulthood. Some students in this study didn't feel happy about their current school and indeed they were involved in substance abuse.

5.0 Conclusion

This study findings show a revelation on the state of anxiety and anxiety-related disorders among the students in secondary schools. Though anxiety is a common mental disorder among adolescents, the high prevalence especially among girls is a pointer to a critical gap that needs to be addressed. Anxiety has its comorbidity with other disorders hence treating anxiety will lead to reduced levels of depression and other disorders. This will likely enable the learners to get settled and gain focus toward achieving their educational goals. Failure to address anxiety is a catastrophic endeavor that will cost the tender learners in the secondary schools their quality of life and a bright future. To address the declining academic performance therefore, the state of mental health of secondary school students needs to be addressed.

6.0 Recommendations

The rising levels of anxiety among secondary school students need to be addressed urgently because of the comorbidity of anxiety. Managing anxiety is most likely to lead to higher academic achievement. Secondary school students need to be psycho-educated on the self-management of anxiety. All secondary schools need to have qualified counseling psychologists who will help the students to deal with the rising number of psychological disorders. There has to be a change in government policy where all students joining form one are required to attend a fixed number of personal therapy sessions to deal with their psychological issues before commencing their studies. National schools should encourage their students to participate in other leisure activities within the school besides working very hard to score high grades. The parents need to work hard and improve their economic status so that they ensure adequate provision of educational resources and the personal effects of their children.

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