

## Abstract

Adopting counselling strategies such as peer, group, life skills and mentorship programmes has enabled secondary schools to reduce effects of low self-esteem, low self-confidence and low self-efficacy among orphaned and vulnerable. However, most orphaned children typically do not have access to counselling services and mentoring programs which might help them cope with their circumstances and keep their focus on their studies. This lack of support systems may make it more difficult for them to overcome the obstacles they face. This study sought to establish the influence of principals' counselling strategies on the psychological well-being of orphaned students in public secondary schools in Makueni County. Founded on the theory of psychological well-being, the study employed a descriptive correlational research design. The study targeted 1,979 respondents, including principals, teacher-counselors, and orphaned students from 393 public secondary schools. The sample size was 333 respondents selected through stratified and purposive sampling techniques. Data collection involved questionnaires for teacher-counselors and structured interviews for principals and students. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, particularly Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, facilitated by SPSS. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, providing narrative insights. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and data confidentiality, were rigorously followed. The findings show that there is a significant relationship between counselling strategies and the psychological well-being of orphaned students. The study found that the presence of counselling sessions in schools, dedicated counselling centres, and competent peer counsellors plays a pivotal role in positively influencing the psychological well-being of orphaned students. The study recommends that principals should prioritize the availability of counselling services within schools and ensure that teacher-counsellors are well-equipped through capacity building to provide guidance and support to students, especially orphaned ones. Furthermore, the government, through the Ministry of Education, should develop and implement policies that specifically address the psychological well-being of orphaned students within the education system by ensuring the availability of counselling services and mentorship programs.