

ABSTRACT

Teenage depression symptoms such as feelings of sadness, feelings of hopelessness, experiencing unexplained stomach aches and headaches, lack of interest in activities that one once liked, and drop in school performance are on the increase globally. This calls for the need to understand the risk factors related to the symptoms in teenagers. This will enable school counsellors and other care givers to deal with the symptoms on their onset before the problem affects the school teenager's personal, social, family and academic life. The present study therefore sought to determine the relationship between family related factors, teenager related factors, school related factors and social media related factors and depression symptoms among teenage students in public secondary schools in Embu County, Kenya. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study was 19,731 respondents. Purposive sampling method was used to select 15 heads of guidance and counselling departments while simple random sampling method was used to select 275 form three and form two students and 87 class teachers, giving a sample size of 377 respondents. Data was collected using questionnaires which were administered to students and class teachers, and an interview guide for the heads of guidance and counselling departments. Validity of the research instruments including the interview schedule was ensured through opinions and expert judgement of the university supervisors and other experts in research. A pilot study was conducted to improve on the reliability of the instruments. The reliability was estimated using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.885 and 0.846 was realized for the students' and teachers' questionnaires respectively. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 22.0. The research hypotheses were tested using linear regression at $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level. Qualitative data was analysed thematically in line with the objectives of the study. The study findings revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between family related factors and depression symptoms, a statistically significant relationship between teenager related factors and depression symptoms, a statistically significant relationship between school related factors and depression symptoms, and a statistically significant relationship between social media related factors and depression symptoms. The conclusion was that there was a statistically significant relationship between each of the four independent variables and depression symptoms among teenage students in public secondary school students. Of the four independent variables, school related factors were found to have the highest correlation while social media related factors were found to have the least correlation with depression symptoms. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education in conjunction with policy makers, school and religious leaders avail psycho-education interventions and sensitization programmes to teenagers' family members, teenagers, school administrators, counsellors and teachers on the relationship between the aforementioned factors and depression symptoms for possible prevention and detection of the said symptoms. Psychological intervention in form of counselling for those already experiencing depression symptoms was also deemed necessary to alleviate the symptoms and prevent aggravation of the same. The beneficiaries of the study would be MOE officials such as policy makers, curriculum developers, school administrators, guidance and counselling heads of departments and other counsellors, and teachers. Students were also expected to benefit through receiving the right kind of psychological intervention.