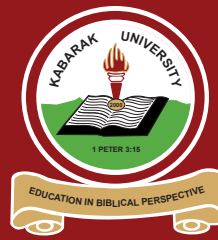




**KENYA UNIVERSITIES PROFESSIONAL
COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION (KUPCA)**



**KABARAK
UNIVERSITY**

Education in Biblical Perspective

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES**

**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE
IN PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH 2024**

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



OCTOBER 2024





KABARAK UNIVERSITY | Education in Biblical Perspective

About Us

Kabarak University is a Chartered institution of higher learning that provides holistic Christian-based quality education, training, research and outreach activities for the service of God and humanity. The University was established in the year 2000 by the 2nd President of Kenya, H.E. the Late Hon. Daniel T. Arap Moi, who was also the founding Chancellor. This was as a result of his visionary idea of setting up a Christian University that would meet the demand for higher education in Kenya and offer quality education based on strong moral principles.

Location

Kabarak University Main Campus is located 20 kilometers north of Nakuru City, along the Nakuru-Eldama Ravine highway in a serene, spacious and beautiful environment that makes it ideal for learning. The University has state-of-the art facilities for teaching, learning, research, accommodation, catering, and sports. The facilities are purpose-built to enhance intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth. Nakuru City Campus is located one kilometer from Nakuru CBD, along Prison Road, off Nakuru-Kabarnet Road.

Vision

To become a centre of Academic Excellence founded on Biblical Christian values.

Mission

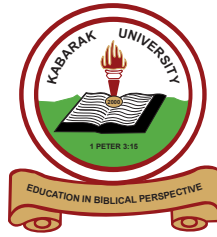
To provide holistic quality education, research and community outreach based on Biblical Christian values.

Philosophy

To provide quality education in Biblical perspective that transforms lives.

Core Values

- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Professionalism
- ✓ Patriotism
- ✓ Innovativeness
- ✓ Being Mindful of Others



KABARAK UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION,
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE IN PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Conference Theme:

Mental Health: A Fundamental Right for All

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

OCTOBER 2024

Kabarak University Moral Code

As members of Kabarak University family, we purpose at all times and in all places, to set apart in one's heart, Jesus Christ as Lord. (1 Peter 3:15)



Kabarak University is ISO 9001:2015 certified.

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KENYA UNIVERSITIES PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS ASSOCIATION (KUPCA)

Motto

Caring professionals.

Vision

A world-class universities professional counselling organization committed to the growth and development of humanity.

Mission

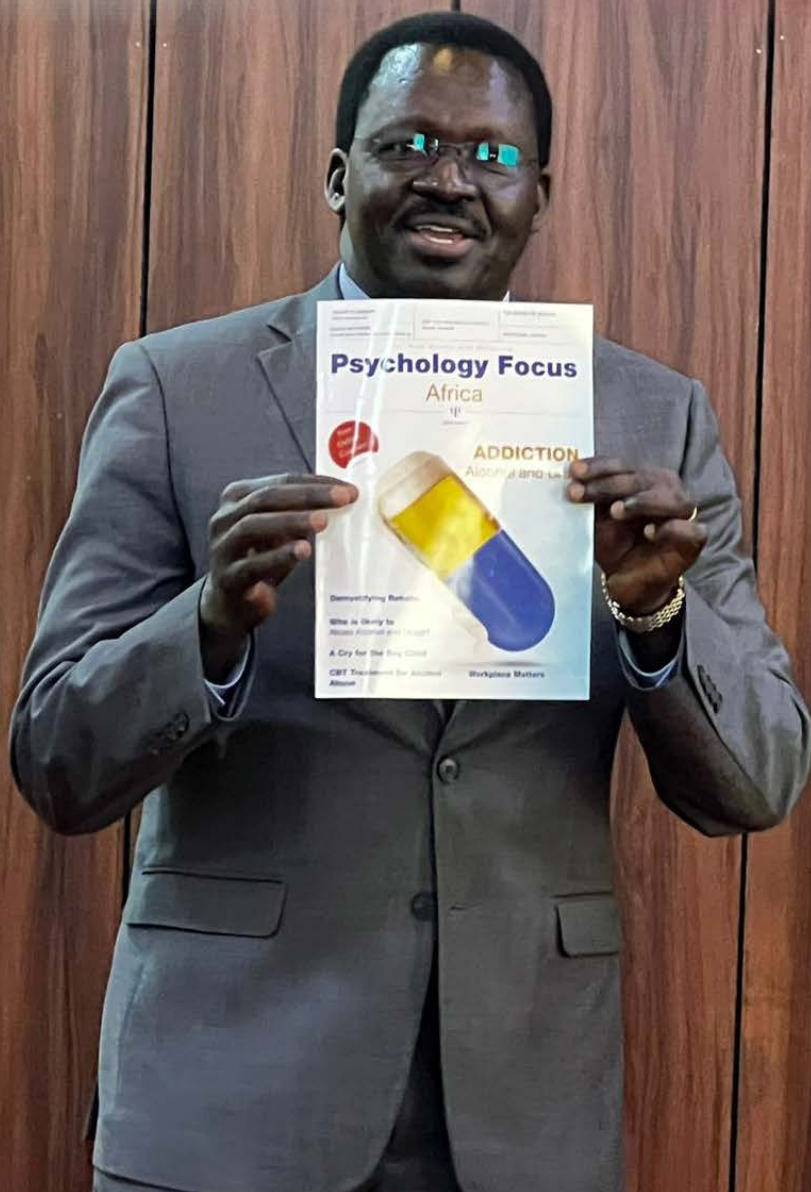
To provide and promote professional psychological well-being through counselling, proactive outreach programming, training, supervision, research and crisis intervention.

Kabarak University Moral Code

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VICE CHANCELLOR OF KABARAK UNIVERSITY

Prof. Henry Kiplangat, PhD, MBS, OGW



Distinguished guests, scholars, researchers, our partners and delegates: Good morning.

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you all to Kabarak University for this unique and important plenary session, where we converge to launch five international research conferences. Today marks a significant moment in the academic calendar of our university, and I am honoured to open this conference as we come together to explore, learn, and contribute to the wealth of knowledge that drives progress in our society. Please note that this is a continuation of our Annual conferences across the Seven Schools in our University. The School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, in which this conference is domiciled, happens to be closing a litany of conferences which have already happened in other schools in the university since the beginning of this year. Our Psychology and Mental Health Research Conference which for the first time has partnered with Kenya University Professional Counsellors Association is the last conference this year in a series of conferences that have run throughout the year.

Distinguished guests, esteemed researchers, professional counselors, and psychologists, it is both a privilege and a responsibility to stand before you today at this international conference as we gather to discuss an issue that affects millions around the world: mental health. More specifically, we are here to reflect on the theme, "Mental Health: A Fundamental Right for All." In recent decades, the global conversation around mental health has undergone a significant transformation. Where once stigma and silence prevailed, now we find increasing advocacy, research, and action. But despite our collective progress, there remains a fundamental truth that cannot be ignored: mental health is not merely a privilege for some - it is a human right, one that must be accessible and equitable for every individual, regardless of their circumstances. I am reminded of the broader context in which our work operates - a context that demands we think beyond our individual disciplines and address the global challenges articulated by the United Nations in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As we move forward in our discussions today, I urge each of you to reflect on your unique role in this global movement. Whether you are a researcher discovering new ways to heal the mind, a clinician providing direct care, or an advocate fighting for policy change, your work contributes to a larger, collective mission. Together, we can make the fundamental right to mental health a reality for all. Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to open this conference as we come together to explore, learn, and contribute to the wealth of knowledge that drives progress in our society.





DEAN – SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

Prof. Frederick B.J.A. Ngala, PhD, MBS, OGW.

Prof. Frederick B.J.A. Ngala is the Dean School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences and an Associate Professor of Education Management and Leadership, specializing in **instructional leadership** with a mission to teach courses in diverse areas of academic interest in Education Management and administration, **Instructional Leadership**, Legal issues in education, management of Finance in Education Institutions, Policy Formulation, and Human Resource Management in Education. As an expert in **instructional leadership**, his mission is to assist in development of instructional resources including **competency Based curriculum** and promote high standards in assessment. As an eminent researcher, my mission is to carry out research in diverse areas of Education Management and administration, curricular, Instructional Leadership, Legal issues in education, management of Finance in Education Institutions, Policy Formulation, and Human Resource Management in Education. As a trained and practicing musician, carry out research and practice Management of Choral Organizations, Choral Conducting, Arrange and perform African Music, teach Theory of music and Compose different genres of Music. As national Chairman, Kenya Music Festival, ensure quality, access and participation in music festivals, enhance productivity of music artists in primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutions and universities and promote creative economy in Kenya. As director of Music in the University, direct, compose, arrange, teach and conduct Music.

CHAIR – KENYA UNIVERSITIES PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLORS ASSOCIATION (KUPCA)

Dr. Catherine Amulundu, PhD.

Dr Catherine Amulundu is a clinical psychologist and a lecturer at the Department of Psychiatry, faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Nairobi. Dr Amulundu is a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) and FORGATY Scholar. Dr. Amulundu's research interest lies in interventions for mental health challenges of children, adolescents and young adults. She has particular interest in implementation science research using mHealth technologies. She has focused on prevention and management of alcohol and drug abuse, mental health literacy and HIV/AIDS prevention among adolescents and young adults. Dr Amulundu is the chairperson of the Kenya Universities Professional Counsellors Association (KUPCA). She is served at the KUPCA executive committee for the last 7 years. She is a member of the Prevention Science Society, the International Society of Substance Use Professionals, and the World Federation Against Drugs among others.





KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Prof. G. Tongi Mugoya, Ph.D., MPH, CRC.

Prof. Mugoya is an Associate Professor of Rehabilitation in the Department of Educational Studies in Psychology, Research Methodology and Counseling at The University of Alabama with training in Rehabilitation and Public Health. He serves as the Director of the Office of Interdisciplinary Research and Development in Mental Health and the Assistant Director for Center for Substance Use Research and Related Conditions. Prof. Mugoya's areas of academic, research, and clinical interest focus on how psychosocial and cross-cultural factors shape the life circumstances of individuals affected or at risk of mental health and substance use issues, with the overall aim of empowering and improving the quality of lives of my study populations. He has extensive experience developing, implementing, and evaluating programs. He has served as a principal investigator (PI), Co-PI and Investigator in both qualitative and quantitative research studies, as well as developing training programs. He has over 40 publications and has received over \$30 Million in funding to support his research activities. In addition to research, he is actively involved in teaching, curriculum development and mentoring. He is actively involved in mentoring students in various capacities such as including serving as academic advisor, chairing dissertations, working with students in his research projects and publishing with them.



GUEST SPEAKER

Prof. Muthoni Mathai, PhD.

An associate Professor at the - Department of Psychiatry, University of Nairobi and a clinician and researcher having graduated as a doctor from the University of Nairobi in 1983, awarded a Masters' degree in Psychiatry (M. Med Psychiatry) 1990 at the same university. She was awarded a PhD in Social Work in 2005 at the University of Kassel in Germany as a recipient of a scholarship by the Heinrich Boell Foundation. In 2007 she returned to Kenya to take up a teaching position at the University of Nairobi, Faculty of Health Sciences. Prof Muthoni is interested in Depressive disorders, Trauma, Adolescence and Maternal mental health. She is a therapist and trainer for TF-CBT and Interpersonal Therapy. Prof Mathai has been a researcher for several years with predominantly funding from the National Institute of Health. She is a Member of Kenya Psychiatric Association, Kenya Medical Association and the World Association of Cultural Psychiatry.

GUEST SPEAKER**Prof. Margaret Mwenje, PhD.**

Prof. Margaret Mwenje, holds a PhD in Clinical and Christian Counseling from Cornerstone University, USA, Master of Education, specializing in Guidance and Counseling from University of Montevallo, USA, BA in Biblical Studies from Southeastern Bible College, USA. Mastery Certificate in Trauma & Recovery offered by Harvard University Refugees program in Orvieto Italy, Certificate in Mental Health Assessment & Psychology First Aid by US Department of Health. Have worked in several universities like Kenyatta University department of Psychology, Pan Africa Christian University and Karatina University. I have worked for NACADA. Have worked as a Rehabilitation and Addictions Counselor in a Community Based program in Birmingham, Alabama. I have worked with Autistic Adult Clients as a Rehabilitation Instructor in Birmingham, Alabama. Seasoned Researcher in Mental Health and Addictions. Has published widely in reputable journals. I have supervised ten PhD students to completion in different universities like KU, Kabarak University, Karatina University & PAC University. I am an External Examiner in St. Paul's University, Daystar University (PhD Clinical Psychology Dissertations), Pwani University (Educational Psychology Thesis). I have held university administrative positions like: Counseling Psychology Practicum & Internship Coordinator, Examination Coordinator (KU), HoD Department of Social Sciences & Community Outreach Coordinator (Karatina University) and HoD Department of Psychology, Dean School of Humanities & Social Sciences and Director of PAC Institute of Technology and Social Studies (PAC University).

**GUEST SPEAKER****Prof. Sung Seek Moon, PhD.**

Prof. Sung Seek Moon is a Full Professor and Lindner Endowed Chair at the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work, Baylor University. He holds a Ph.D. in Social Work from the University of Georgia and an MSW from the University of South Carolina. Prof. Moon's research focuses on adolescent mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention. He has published over 60 articles and book chapters, contributing to understanding youth health risk behaviors and prevention strategies. Prof. Moon has led numerous funded projects supported by institutions such as the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the Amon G. Carter Foundation. He has served as President of the Korean American Social Work Educators Association and Vice Chair of Korea's National Unification Advisory Council. His cross-cultural research explores acculturation and its effects on immigrant health outcomes. As a 2024-2025 Fulbright U.S. Scholar to Kenya, Prof. Moon is expanding his research on global public health and social work. His work, which continues to shape policy and practice on both national and international levels, is a testament to the practical implications of his research.



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
KABARAK UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE
IN PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

THEME: *Mental Health: A Fundamental Right for All*

DATES: 16TH-17TH OCTOBER, 2024

VENUE: KATIBA AUDITORIUM

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Mode: Face-to-face / Online

Link: <https://kabarak-ac-ke.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUfuqtrDlrGtO8cT8Osq3oAUsrOSlg-q2p>

DAY 1 - 16 TH OCTOBER 2024		
8.00 am – 8.30 am	ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION	Pst. Esther Kapsir and Peer Counsellors
8.30 am – 8.40 am	Devotional Meditation and opening prayers	Rev. Laban Kittony, Ag. University Chaplain
8.40 am – 9.00 am	Settling up in the Breakout Rooms	Session Chairs
	Breakout Room 1 Chair: Dr. James Kay Rapporteur: Francis M. Gacheru	Breakout Room 2 Chair: Dr. Alice Anika Rapporteur: Pst. Esther Kapsir
Track	Environmental, Emerging and Re-Emerging Issues in Mental Health	Education, Technology, Artificial Intelligence and Innovations in Mental Health
9.00 am – 9.20 am	<i>From Stigma to Support: Creating Supportive Environment for Mental Health in Higher Institutions</i> - Billiah Gisore	<i>Mental Health with Technology within the University Settings</i> - Omondi Francline Owuor & Godwin Kipkalya Kiprop
9.20 am – 9.40 am	<i>Influence of Home Environment on Mental Health among Undergraduate Students: A Case of Kabarak University in Nakuru County, Kenya</i> - Julius Kiprono Langat, Pr Esther Kapsir, Veronicah Kombich	<i>Online Gambling among University Students: Nexus for Financial Distress and Mental Health in a Public University, Kenya</i> - Rose Otieno
9.40 am – 10.00 am	<i>A Deep Learning Model for Early Detection of Mental Health Disorders</i> - Samson O. Ooko & Laura Cheptegei	<i>The Prevalence of Nomophobia and Associated factors among Medical and Nursing students with smartphone addiction at Moi University</i> - Borter, B.
10.00 am – 11.00 am	Plenary/Workshop Guest Speaker: Prof. Sung Seek Moon Chair: Dr. Rose Otieno Rapporteur: Dr. Francis Gacheru	
11.00 am – 11.30 am	Health Break & Professional Networking	
11.30 am – 1.00 pm	CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS JOIN THE CHAPEL SERVICE AT THE UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION HALL	
1.00pm – 2.00 pm	Health Break & Professional Networking	
2.00 pm – 2.20 pm	<i>Institutional Support on Mental Health Issues: A Case of Rift Valley National Polytechnic</i> - Paul Komen & Jackline Ong'injo	<i>Emerging Technology Applications in Exposure Therapy: Challenges and Opportunities in Africa</i> - Micah A. Ochola & Laura Cheptegei
2.20 pm – 2.40 pm	<i>Influence of Occupational Stress on Work Performance among Kenya Police Officers In Njoro Sub-County, Kenya</i> - Biwott Suter Noah	<i>Digital Therapy in the Age of Telehealth: The Evolving Role of Technology in Counseling Psychology</i> – James Kay

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2.40 pm – 3.00 pm	<i>Influence of Occupational Stress on Work Performance Among Kenya Police Officers in Njoro Sub-County, Kenya</i> - Biwott S. Noah, Caroline Mutua, Elizabeth Mbithi, Wamalwa Benard & Kivanguli Gregory	<i>Short Paper: Elevateminds Network System</i> - Omondi Francline Owuor & Godwin Kiprop
3.00 pm – 3.20 pm	<i>Dreams and Grief Process in Selected Communities in Africa</i> - Stephen Asatsa, Uchenna Kalu Agwu, Cyprien Nkoma, Boaventura Sapalo Cordeiro, Lawrence R. Machogu, Tanoh Firmin Koffi, & Daniel Nyangoya	<i>Community-Based mHealth-Delivered Intervention to Provide On-Demand Alcohol and Other Drug Use Prevention and Improve Mental Health Literacy among Youths in Kenya</i> – Catherine Musyoka
3.20 pm – 3.40 pm	<i>Are there Co-Benefits of Workplace Green Infrastructure and Employee Quality of Work-Life, Mental Well-Being, and Job Satisfaction?</i> - Lydia Mbula Kitonga	<i>The Extent to Which Ethical Standards Influence Utilization of Digital Technology in Counselling Practice: A Case of Kenya Universities Professional Counsellors Association (KUPCA) in Kenya</i> - Goretti W. Runnho
3.40 pm – 5.00 pm	Health Break & Professional Networking	

DAY 2 - 17TH OCTOBER 2024

8.00 am – 8.30 am	Arrival and Registration	Veronica Kambich and Peer Counsellors
8.30 – 8.35 am	National Anthem, East Africa Anthem and Kabarak University Anthem	School of Music and Media
8.35 am – 8.40 am	Settling and Devotional Meditation	Rev. Justus Mutuku, AG. Provost
8.40 am – 8.50 am	Opening Remarks	Dr. James Kay, Convener, Psychology & Mental Health Conference
8.50 am – 9.00 am	Welcoming Remarks	Prof. Fredrick B.J.A. Ngala, PhD, OGW. Dean SEHSS
9.00 am – 9.05 am	DVC (A&R)	Prof. John Ochola, PhD
9.05 am – 9.20 am	Welcome remarks by the Vice Chancellor & welcoming Keynote Speaker	Prof. Henry Kiplangat, PhD, MBS, OGW.
9.20 am – 10.00 am	Keynote Speaker	Prof. G. Tongi Mugoya, Ph.D., MPH, CRC
10.00 am – 10.40 am	Guest Speaker	Prof. Muthoni Mathai
10.40 am – 11.00 am	Photo Session	Media Team
11.00 am – 11.30 am	Health Break & Professional Networking	

	Breakout Room 1 Chair: Dr. Daniel Otworl Rapporteur: Ms. Caroline Mutua	Breakout Room 2 Chair: Dr. Jane Lang'at Rapporteur: Ms. Janet Soi
Track	Substance Abuse and Addictions Interventions & Child, Adolescent, Youth and Aging Mental Health Issues	Policy, Social, Political and Economic Issues in Mental Health
11.30 am – 11.50 am	<i>Substance Use and Sexual Behavior among Secondary School Students</i> - GraceAnne Wanjiru Kimaru & Walter Odera Owino	<i>Psychological Well-Being: Panacea for Social-Cohesion and Peace Building</i> - Francis M. Gacheru
11.50 am – 12.10 am	<i>Association Between Substance Use and Suicidal Behavior among Secondary School Students in Nairobi County</i> - Walter Odera Owino & GraceAnne Wanjiru Kimaru	<i>Influence of Orientation Program on Emotional Adjustment of First-Year Students in Public Universities in Kenya</i> – Rose Otieno
12.10 am – 12.30 am	<i>The Influence of Family Environment on University Students Substance Use in Public Universities in Kenya</i> - Pamela Lunjalu	<i>Ensuring Universal Access to Mental Health Services: Challenges and Solutions</i> - Jacob Luttah
12.30 am – 12.50 pm	<i>Self-concealment Influence on Addictive Behaviour, Suicidal Ideation, and Mental Health among Drug Addicts from Sampled Rehabilitation Centres in the Coastal Region of Kenya</i> - Alice A. Anika	<i>On Developing a Culturally-Adapted CBT Model: A Qualitative Investigation on the Experiences of Kenyan Counsellors using the CBT 5 Aspects Model with their Clients</i> – Georgina Green
12.50pm – 1.50 pm	Health Break & Professional Networking	

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Track	Substance Abuse and Addictions Interventions & Child, Adolescent, Youth and Aging Mental Health Issues	Policy, Social, Political and Economic Issues in Mental Health
1.50 pm – 2.10 pm	<i>Enhancing Efficient Psychological Support Mechanisms for Healthy Sexual Relationships among university students: A literature Review - Rose Otieno & Rhoda Auni</i>	<i>Psychological Well-Being: Panacea For Social-Cohesion and Peace Building - Michael Mbiriri</i>
2.10 pm – 2.30 pm	<i>The Emerging Adolescent Emotion Regulation – Ruth Mwangi</i>	<i>Prevalence of Stress among Undergraduate Students: A Case Study of Kabarak University, Kenya - Patience Nyakoa Ingati</i>
2.30 pm – 2.50 pm	<i>The Psychological Impact on Parents Caring for Adolescents with Alcohol and Substance Abuse Disorders in Kalimoni Ward, Juja Sub-County, Kiambu County - Dr. Lydia Muthili Kimanzi</i>	<i>Enhancing Efficient Psychological Support Mechanisms for Healthy Sexual Relationships among university students: A Literature Review - Rhoda .T. Auni</i>
2.50 pm – 3.10 pm	<i>Cohabitation among Chuka University Students: Push and Pull Factors and the Consequencies - Gacheru Francis Muchiri</i>	<i>The Anxiety Relief Companion – Felix Masigwa</i>
3.10 pm – 3.30 pm	<i>Navigating University Transitions by Undergraduate Students through Challenges, and Coping Strategies: A Systematic Literature Review - Lucy Ngutiku</i>	The participants join Room 1 in preparation for the special session
3.30 pm – 4.30 pm	Special Session to Discussion Emerging and Re-Emerging Issues in Mental Health and Society Moderator: Dr. Catherine Amulundu	
4.30 pm – 5.00 pm	Health Break & Professional Networking	

DAY 3 - 18TH OCTOBER 2024

8.00 am – 8.30 am	ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION	Pst. Esther Kapsir and Peer Counsellors
8.30 am – 8.40 am	Settling and Devotional Meditation	Rev. Laban Kittony, Ag. University Chaplain
8.40 am – 9.00 am	Settling up in the Breakout Rooms	Session Chairs
	Breakout Room 1 Chair: Dr. James Kay Rapporteur: Dr. Alice Anika	Breakout Room 2 Chair: Dr. Francis Gacheru Rapporteur: Rev. Dr. Julius Lang'at
Track	Trauma-Informed Care, Treatment and Healing in Mental Health	Community-Based Approaches, Cultural Diversity and Inclusion in Mental Health
9.00 am – 9.20 am	<i>The Relationship Between Academic Stress and Mental Health in Undergraduate Nursing Students at Kabarak University, Nakuru County, Kenya - Okado Fanuel, Faith Nasike, Beryl Chepngeno, Belinda Okello & Kamau Delilah Wangui</i>	<i>A Bio-Ecological Approach to Addressing the Global Mental Health Crisis - Janet Surum & Esther Njeri Kiaritha</i>
9.20 am – 9.40 am	<i>Mental Health as Predictor of Effective Service Delivery among Professional Counselors in Public and Private Universities in Central Region, Kenya - Dr. Teresia, Mary Calmen Mugane, Margaret Wainaina & Joseph Wanjau</i>	<i>Using an Integrated Approach to Unravel Mental Health Challenges - Gloria Kemuma Gichaba</i>
9.40 am – 10.00 am	<i>Trauma-Informed Care, Treatment and Healing in Mental Health - Mary Karanja</i>	<i>The Role of Taboo in Behavior Regulation in Selected African Communities – Afen Innocent</i>
10.00 am – 11.00 am	Plenary/Workshop Guest Speaker: Prof. Margaret Mwenje Chair: Dr. Catherine Amulundu Rapporteur: Pst. Esther Kapsir	
11.00 am – 11.30 am	Health Break & Professional Networking	
11.30 am – 1.00 pm	High-Level Professional Engagement	
1.00pm – 2.00 pm	Health Break & Departure	

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ONLINE GAMBLING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: NEXUS FOR FINANCIAL DISTRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY, KENYA

Dr. Rose Otieno
Department of Psychology
Kisii University

Abstract

Gambling disorder is a public health concern, and more so online gambling among university students. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual defines (DSMV) defines gambling disorder as persistent and recurrent gambling, leading to clinically significant impairment or distress. University administrators are increasingly getting concerned with online gambling among university students who spend most of their time on online gaming and gambling, leading to problematic gambling, hence the need to address poor student outcomes (e.g., debt, mental health concerns, failure of courses, withdrawal from programs) due to excessive and high prevalence of gambling behavior, that has led to psychological and financial distress. Lack of assessment of the impact of gambling on Kenyan university students impinges efforts around policy, prevention, and treatment. This has been compounded by little evidence-based assessment and treatment available for university students with gambling disorders. The study aimed to assess and determine problematic online gambling, psychological disorders and financial distress associated with online gambling among Kenyan university students as well as socio-demographic characteristics and gambling disorders. Gambling disorder was assessed using South Oaks Gambling Screen and Problem Gambling Index, and Beck Depression Inventory and Beck Anxiety Inventory for depression and anxiety respectively. Preliminary results have shown high prevalence of online gambling among university students and the co-occurring disorders of anxiety and depression.

Key words: *Gambling disorder, Online gambling, Mental Health, Financial distress, University students*

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS IN EXPOSURE THERAPY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN AFRICA

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Laura Cheptegei, Kabarak University,
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Abstract

Exposure therapy is a well-established treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders, and phobias. Traditionally, Exposure Therapy involves gradually exposing patients to anxiety-provoking stimuli in a controlled environment, helping them to reduce fear and anxiety responses. However, access to traditional exposure therapy can be limited in some regions, including parts of Africa, due to a shortage of trained therapists, cultural differences in the perception of mental health, and logistical challenges. In recent years, the integration of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mobile-based applications, has shown promise in enhancing the delivery and effectiveness of exposure therapy, providing solutions to the challenges, particularly in the African context. This paper explores the current state of research on the use of these

technologies in exposure therapy for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and phobias in Africa, highlighting the challenges and opportunities. The review covers studies published between 2020 and 2024, drawing from academic sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of this evolving field. The findings suggest that while these technologies have the potential to improve access, engagement, and cultural relevance of exposure therapy, significant barriers related to infrastructure, affordability, and capacity building must be addressed to ensure their successful implementation in Africa. The paper concludes with recommendations for future research and practical implications for mental health practitioners and policymakers in the region.

Key words: *Exposure Therapy, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety, Phobias, Virtual reality, Augmented Reality, Telehealth*

SUBSTANCE USE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Risky sexual behaviors such as early sexual debut, casual sex and unprotected sex increase the risk of pregnancy and infection with sexually transmitted diseases including the HIV virus. Recent studies have shown a high prevalence of such behavior in Kenyan youth. Studies have also revealed that substance use is a likely predictor of involvement in risky sexual behaviors. The association between substance use and risky sexual behaviors in Kenyan adolescents has not received much attention especially among secondary school students. Therefore this study investigated whether substance use was associated with risky sexual behaviors in secondary school students in Nairobi County. A random selection process was used to select 367 participants from nine public secondary schools in Nairobi County who completed questionnaires with items to assess risky sexual behaviors and the use of various substances. Associations between risky sexual behaviors and the use of alcohol, cigarettes, bhang and any other psychoactive substances was tested using Chi square test of independence and risk ratios were calculated to show whether students using substances were at greater risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviors. Analysis of data was done using SPSS. The likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviors was higher in students who used substances compared to students who did not use substances. The association between substance use and risky sexual behavior was statistically significant. It is recommended that preventing substance use should be part of the efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies and other effects of risky sexual behaviors.

Key words: *Risky sexual behavior, HIV/AIDS, substance use, adolescents*

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SUBSTANCE USE AND SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NAIROBI COUNTY

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Abstract

Research across different populations of adolescents has associated substance use with various mental health problems. One of the mental health challenges associated with substance use is suicidal behavior. Suicidal thoughts, making suicide plans and making suicide attempts are aspects of suicidal behavior. Recent studies have found a high prevalence of suicidal behavior among Kenyan youth but the association between suicidal behavior and substance use has not been investigated among Kenyan adolescents. The aim of this study was to fill this gap by investigating whether there were significant associations between suicidal behaviors and substance use among secondary school students in Nairobi County. The study utilized a correlational design. Participants in the study were 367 students randomly selected from nine public secondary schools in three sub-counties of Nairobi County. Self-report questionnaires were used to collect data on suicidal behaviors and substance use and the data was analyzed using the SPSS software. Chi Square test for independence was performed to ascertain whether suicidal behaviors were associated with substance use at $P < .05$ and risk ratios were computed to compare the likelihood of suicidal behavior between substance users and non-users. The study found a greater likelihood of suicidal behaviors in students who reported using alcohol, smoked cigarettes, smoked bhang or used other psychoactive substances and this was statistically significant. Based on these findings, it is recommended that students' substance use be taken into account in suicide prevention efforts. Mental health providers should also increase efforts to curb substance use among secondary school students.

Key words: *Suicide, suicidal behavior, substance use, adolescents*

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE, TREATMENT AND HEALING IN MENTAL HEALTH

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

Abstract

Trauma events in life are one of the leading factors that are responsible for one's behavior to self and the surrounding hence, how and when the traumatized person is attended to really determines how an individual will be. Most researches have shown that a good percentage of people experience traumas which when not attended to lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] and later to chronic PTSD in which during the process, one gets dehumanized. For a trauma case, people are affected in three stages that is: the primary trauma which affects the main victim, the secondary trauma affects

those who witnessed the incident or the immediate people to the main victim and the tertiary which affects the care givers and counsellors during and after the incident. Understanding these groups play a crucial role on how to provide counselling services. Therefore, the education on trauma management is essential to provide care that will help facilitate recovery of the traumatized victim. Mental health retards one's general performances and interactions with not only self but also with the entire surrounding. To deal with mental illnesses caused by the trauma, the victims need to come to realization about the trauma they experienced then seek attention from the care givers, so that the care givers can address their conditions accordingly.

Key words: *Trauma, Victims, Informed Care, Treatment, Healing, Mental illness, Mental health*

A DEEP LEARNING MODEL FOR EARLY DETECTION OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

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Abstract

The rising prevalence of mental health disorders globally, and specifically in Africa, calls for innovative approaches to early detection and diagnosis. This study explores the application of deep learning techniques for the early detection of mental health issues, emphasizing the role of timely intervention in enhancing patient outcomes. The study applied the Design Science Research Methodology to develop the Model. Data for this study was collected using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS), a widely recognized psychological assessment tool. A Deep Learning model was developed using this data to predict mental health conditions. The study compared the model's results with traditional DASS scale assessments to determine if the model can achieve similar or better accuracy in identifying mental health disorders. Our findings indicate that deep learning can effectively predict mental health conditions, offering a promising alternative to traditional assessment methods. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on the intersection of artificial intelligence and mental health, proposing a viable solution for early diagnosis and intervention. Future work will focus on refining the model and exploring its application across diverse populations and mental health conditions.

Key words: *Deep Learning, Early Mental Health Detection, Mental Health Diagnosis, Artificial Intelligence, DASS Scale*

THE EXTENT TO WHICH ETHICAL STANDARDS INFLUENCE UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN COUNSELLING PRACTICE: A CASE OF KENYA UNIVERSITIES PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLORS ASSOCIATION (KUPCA) IN KENYA

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Abstract

The world is changing the way it is operating, professionals are now acknowledging the importance of digital technology in counselling. Unfortunately, many mental health professionals especially counsellors have not yet fully embraced its utilization. The aim of the study was to investigate the extent to which ethical standards influence the utilization of digital technology in counselling practice among Kenya Universities Professionals Counsellors Association (KUPCA). The study applied descriptive research design and used total population sampling a type of **purposive sampling technique**. The data collected was processed and analyzed using both inferential and descriptive statistics, which were correlation and regression models and descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that ethical standards had a moderate extent of influence on the utilization of digital technology. The standard multiple regression model revealed that ethical standards had a high influence on the utilization of digital technology. The study showed that there was a need to review ethical standards if at all they exist so that they can accommodate the issues of digital technology in counselling. This is because many counsellors felt the existing Kenyan codes are more of a code of conduct rather than ethical standards with little or no information on digital technology in counselling.

Key words: *Counselling, Ethical Standards, Digital Technology, Code of Conduct*

ON DEVELOPING A CULTURALLY-ADAPTED CBT MODEL: A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION ON THE EXPERIENCES OF KENYAN COUNSELLORS USING THE CBT 5 ASPECTS MODEL WITH THEIR CLIENTS

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

Abstract

This research project focuses in on the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) elements that are prevalent within Kenyan eclectic counselling models, confronting prevailing post-colonial systems, that result in persisting acculturation and oppression around Afrocentricity. The aim of this research project is to find out via the lens of Kenyan counsellors, in urban and rural communities, their experiences of using the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) 5 Aspects model, (Padesky & Mooney, 2012) within their own eclectic practice. This research intends to provide findings and outcomes of interest for Kenyan counselling professionals but also for practitioners in the West, as we embrace intersectionality and positioning as therapists, embracing cultural humility whilst addressing culturally-adapted models, (Forum of African Psychology, (FAP), 2021; Masambia, 2014). The methodological design takes the ontic view of critical realism and uses a qualitative enquiry using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013) to analyze the data. A focus group method was chosen, comprising of two separate

groups – one in Nairobi (urban) and one in Eldoret (rural), within Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors (KAPC) branches. All 16 participants attended -12 in Nairobi and 5 in Eldoret. The participants reported positive use of the CBT 5 Aspects model but reported complexity when eliciting thoughts and feelings from their clients, via English, Ki-swahili and mother tongue dialects. Although this project is at the data-analysis stage, both groups advocated for Ki-swahili words and pictures to be included into the CBT 5 Aspects model as an example of an emerging product. (Word count- 246)

A BIO-ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

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Abstract

Despite the increasing global crisis of mental illnesses and the significance of mental health in achieving sustainable development goals and overall well-being, it is apparent that existing interventions are insufficient and inadequate, suggesting a need for new innovative approaches to reduce the occurrence, effects, and severity of mental health issues. This intervention strategy is anchored on Urie Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological Systems Theory. This approach places the individual at the center of their world, the individual influences and is influenced by their ecosystem and the relationship is bidirectional in nature. This theory views the child as growing up in a microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. These systems represent the environment that influence the child directly, shapes their value and belief system as well as the events in a child's environment that affects their wellbeing. According to the WHO, an interplay of individual, family, community and structural factors serve as risk or protective factors for mental health. This paper focuses on the institutions that must collaborate to redesign the environments that affect mental health. It also suggests addressing the mental health crisis through a multi-institutional approach. It will then be used as a strategy to promote mental health and prevent mental health illnesses.

USING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO UNRAVEL MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

Abstract

The intertwined interaction between policy, social, political, and economic factors significantly influences psychology and mental health. This study aims to provide a lucid overview of the various factors that impact mental health policies and practices, as well as their implication to an individual and to the society as a whole. Motivated by the awareness and the recognition of mental health as a public health priority and critical component of the overall well-being of an individual and society, the objective of this study is to analyze how policies, societal norms, political decisions, and economic conditions sculpture mental health outcomes and accessibility of the much-needed psychological services. Utilizing a mixed methods approach, the study will have recourse to quantitative data analysis

to identify trends and disparities from national health databases, combined with qualitative interviews of patients, healthcare providers and stake holders including policy makers. This study is expected to reveal, significant correlations and mental health indicators by policies found to either facilitate improved community well-being or hinder access to mental health services, incorporating strategic policy reforms that cover psychological services adequately, social determinants such as stigma and cultural attitudes towards mental health, proposing public health community education initiatives, political configuration towards healthcare funding, suggesting increased funding for mental health services, and economic constraints by reducing economic barriers to promote equitable and attainable mental health care. By addressing these challenges, this integral approach will promote mental health equity for all.

THE EMERGING ADOLESCENT EMOTION REGULATION

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

Abstract

Emotion regulation is undoubtedly being considered central to sustainable mental wellness interventions in Africa. Understanding its workings and emerging aspects amongst African adolescent populations can offer current practical insights for their targeted mental health interventions. This study aims at unearthing emerging emotion regulation factors unique to adolescents, in African family and school contexts. The overall objective is to present research-based, insightful and contextual recommendations that relevantly inform targeted mental health interventions for the young African population. A literature review approach is proposed to provide a well-grounded answer to the research question. This will include peer-reviewed publications within the last five years from reputable literature sources. The review will seek to clearly show contextualized family and school related factors in adolescent emotion regulation. It will focus on emotion regulation dynamics from a largely socio-cultural interaction within African contexts of family and school. The review is expected to adequately identify family and school social interactions affecting adolescents that have deep and lasting impact on their emotion regulation experiences. It will possibly bring to the fore what adolescents in Africa identify as emotion and its regulation. This is anticipated to inform, challenge and refine existing interventions and formulate new ones, contextually. It is also expected that the thorough literature review will form a reliable basis for further research for targeted interventions and their effectiveness.

FROM STIGMA TO SUPPORT: CREATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

A person's mental health impacts their thoughts, feelings and behaviours, affecting how they respond to stress, interact with people and make decisions. Mental health has profound impact on overall well-being, human dignity, and the ability to participate fully in society. Recognizing mental health as a fundamental right ensures that individuals can live healthy, productive lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Addressing mental health promotes human dignity, equity, and social justice, enabling individuals to lead healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives. Academic institutions are grappling with mental health issues as evidenced by the alarming rise in suicidal behavior and self-harm among students, increased use of alcohol or drugs, challenges in expressing thoughts or emotions clearly among others. Identifying mental health issues in university students has been challenging, as symptoms vary widely and are often mistaken for typical stress or the pressures of academic life. Students come from homes dealing with issues such as grief from loss of loved ones, displacement due to flood or conflict, depression and anxiety from the recent COVID 19 pandemic among others. All these can lead to long-lasting psychological trauma. At the university, despite being places of learning and growth, they come face to face with issues such as increased academic demands and competition, large volumes of coursework, homework and studying, strict institutional policies such as rigid deadlines, and inflexible grading systems, high living expenses, high cost of tuition, online classes that require smart gadgets, cultural adjustment which leads to feelings of isolation and anxiety among others, which can lead to emotional distress and mental health issues. As much as universities offer counselling services, they are not sufficient, therefore there is need for innovative support approaches. This paper emerges from a systematic review done on ways in which the university community can be a support system in addressing mental health. Universities should offer resources and support for students, faculty and support staff to empower them to identify students with mental health issues and know the steps to take. There should be regular mental health workshops and seminars for students, faculty and support staff to raise awareness, training on how to recognize signs of mental health issues and have access to mental health resources and support. This therefore means that the university community must be empowered. Integrating mental health education into the curriculum across various disciplines should be considered. Specialized courses focused on mental health, stress management, and resilience building should be offered across different disciplines.

Key words: *Mental Health, Academic Institutions, Counselling Services, Innovative Support Approaches*

INFLUENCE OF ORIENTATION PROGRAMME ON EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

Abstract

Orientation programme facilitates the integration of new students into university environment. Student adjustment increases their likelihood of success and retention. However, various studies reveal that a huge number of first years leave university due to adjustment related challenges. Specifically, the study endeavoured to ascertain the degree to which orientation programme influences emotional adjustment of first-year students in public universities in Kenya; the study used descriptive survey design and mixed methods research approach. The study was conducted in nine public universities in Kenya. Slovin's formula and purposeful sampling technique were employed to obtain 479 respondents from the target population of 71,285. Data was collected using a questionnaire, focused group discussions, and in-depth interview schedule. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques that include Content Analysis, Means and Standard Deviation, Factor Analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Post-hoc t-tests were utilized. Detailed analyses revealed that new-urban universities obtained the highest levels of adjustment followed by new-rural universities, then old-urban universities, and old-rural universities as the least on; how to manage homesickness, loneliness, emotions, the dangers of experimenting with alcohol and other substances of abuse, and on how to handle personal and intrapersonal conflicts. The study recommends the establishment of proper counselling and wellness centres in all institutions of higher learning equipped with proper psychological assessment tools and manned by fully qualified and experienced service providers.

Key words: *Orientation, emotion, adjustment, counselling, institution, wellness,*

THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY ENVIRONMENT ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SUBSTANCE USE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Problem: Psychoactive substance use continues to be a global problem with the prevalence of alcohol use being higher among university students than in the general population, despite several prevention strategies to address the problem. Family environments are considered substantial elements for the adolescents' healthy development and the general outcome of a person's life but not much has been documented on the influence of family on drug use among the youth in institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

Objective: The overall objective of the study was to explore the influence of family environment on university students substance use in public universities in Kenya, specifically the link between family cohesion, communication and conflict to substance use.

Methods: The study adopted a mixed methods embedded design. Probability sampling technique and random sampling procedure was used to select a sample size of student population and purpose sampling used to sample Deans of students. Data collected was stratified by study locations and analyzed using SPSS version 24 software.

Results & Conclusions: Majority students continue to abuse psychoactive substances adversely affecting their mental, social and academic well being. More importantly, family environment plays a

significant role in youth involvement in substance use and that improved family relations can improve substance use outcomes as well as other forms of delinquency.

Recommendation: The study recommends development of policy guidelines that promote healthy family environment through effective strategies for prevention of substance use among students in universities in Kenya.

INFLUENCE OF HOME ENVIRONMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: A CASE OF KABARAK UNIVERSITY IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Not all undergraduate students can go home, or even have homes to return to, when campuses close for breaks which may affect their mental wellbeing. Therefore this study purposed to assess the influence of home environment on mental health among undergraduate students: a case of Kabarak University in Nakuru County, Kenya. Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura and Family Systems Theory by Murray Bowen guided the study. The study was carried out among 3rd year undergraduate students from Kabarak University in Nakuru County. The study adopted a correlation research design. The target population was 8570 undergraduate students. The accessible population was 2400 3rd year undergraduate students whose sample was 367. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The study included a sample of 10 peer counsellors who were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected and obtained using questionnaire for undergraduate students and focus group discussions guide for peer counsellors. Validation of research instruments was done through peer and expert review. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse quantitative data using SPSS Version 25 whereas the qualitative data was analysed thematically. The analysed data was presented in tables, graphs, and narratives. The researcher considered ethics of confidentiality and informed consent. The findings indicated that majority of students perceive that home environment indeed influence their mental health. There is also sufficient evidence to conclude that majority of students perceive that parental upbringing influence their mental health hence safety concerns: some students may not feel safe at home due to abuse or other reasons and financial constraints i.e. students who can't afford travel expenses may find it difficult to go home.

Key Terms: *Home Environment, Influence, Mental health, Undergraduate students*

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH IN UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS AT KABARAK UNIVERSITY, NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

Okado Fanuel, Faith Nasike, Beryl Chepngeno, Belinda Okello, Kamau Delilah Wangui

Abstract

Globally, about a third of the students' report signs and symptoms related to poor mental health like depression, anxiety, personality disorder and sleep disorder among others. Academic stress is an issue of concern among students in most learning institutions with nursing students being more prone to developing academic stress due to the nature of their studies. Mental health is key to the successful completion of their studies. There is limited data on the extent of academic stress experienced by nursing students in private universities. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between academic stresses on mental wellbeing of undergraduate nursing students at Kabarak University. The study adapted a cross-sectional descriptive study design with quantitative approaches in data collection, analysis and presentation. Most of the students reported experiencing high level of stress (47%) due to academic stress which leads to mental disorders. This therefore necessitates the need for the policy makers in the department and the university to come together and make strategies that may ensure a friendly environment for learning. These strategies include; social support from lecturers, peers and counsellors, teaching on effective time management skills, raising awareness and training faculty staff on symptoms of academic stress to help identify and reduce causes and effects of stress and lastly developing of student support program to address the needs of the nursing students. Further research is recommended to investigate the coping strategies that are adapted by nursing student to combat academic stress and also a longitudinal research to assess how mental disorders evolve from academic stress throughout nursing education program.

ENSURING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

Abstract

Mental health is increasingly recognized as a fundamental human right essential to the overall well-being of individuals and communities. Despite this recognition, significant barriers persist that prevent many from accessing necessary mental health services. This presentation explores the multifaceted challenges impeding universal mental health access and proposes actionable solutions to address these issues. We begin by examining mental health's status as a fundamental right, supported by international human rights frameworks, and the ethical imperative to provide equitable mental health services. Current global statistics reveal stark disparities in access, with marginalized populations disproportionately affected. Through specific case studies, we highlight how socio-economic factors, cultural stigma, and structural inadequacies create substantial barriers. To overcome these challenges, we propose comprehensive strategies that include policy reforms, community-based interventions, and the integration of innovative technologies. Effective policy recommendations emphasize the need for increased funding, the development of inclusive mental health policies, and the promotion of mental health literacy. Community-based approaches demonstrate the efficacy of grassroots

initiatives in bridging access gaps, while advancements in telemedicine and digital health platforms offer scalable solutions to reach underserved populations. The presentation underscores the critical roles of governments, healthcare providers, NGOs, and individuals in advocating for and implementing these strategies. By fostering collaboration among these stakeholders, we can work towards a future where mental health services are universally accessible, ensuring that mental health is upheld as a fundamental right for all. This abstract sets the stage for a comprehensive discussion on making mental health services universally accessible, aligning with the conference theme of "Mental Health: A Fundamental Right for All."

COHABITATION AMONG CHUKA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: PUSH AND PULL FACTORS AND THE CONSEQUENCIES

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Abstract

Cohabitation is the state of a male living together with a female and having sexual relationship without being married. Cohabitation is very rampant in all developed countries, urban areas and among the educated people across the world. The purpose of this study was to establish the push and pull factors that compels the Chuka University Students to cohabite and the consequences of cohabiting. The study adopted a descriptive study design with a sample size of one hundred and sixty respondents from year one to year four of study. The study found that in every five students two were cohabiting. The push and pull factors behind Chuka University Students cohabiting include: Pressure from peers, Economic challenges, Curiosity, rehearsal for marriage, sexual fulfilment, disregard for religious values, culture, freedom from parents and to proof that the cohabitees are adults. Consequences of cohabiting were: pregnancy, sexual transmitted infections ,becoming a parent student, abortion, underperformance ,delayed graduation, drop out, breaks up ,violence, suicide, taking up part time jobs or constantly demanding money from parents or guardian and becoming a sexual addict. The study recommended that: Parents be sensitized on campus life, University to establish mentorship program, self-disclosure testimonies to all newly admitted students by x cohabitee victims, offering family planning services, establishment of psychosocial support group and cliché services.

Key words: *cohabitation, cohabitee, push and pull factors, consequences.*

DREAMS AND GRIEF PROCESS IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Death is as old as life itself. The death or loss of a loved one is always a tragedy, disastrous and difficult when and wherever it occurs. The unpredictable psychological feeling called grief is usually accompanied with emotional setbacks like; anxiety, depression, insomnia, anger, feeling

of guilt, sadness, despair and yearning among others. Within these emotions also lie the reality of dreaming about the deceased. Thus, this study has as its main objective to assess the role of dreams in grief process among selected communities in Africa and was guided by Nyerere's philosophy of Ujamaa. The study used a phenomenological design with a sample size of 31 respondents from the Igbo (Nigeria), Tabwa (Democratic Republic of Congo), Muganda (Angola), Agni Morofoue (Cote D'ivoire), Luo (Kenya) and Gusii (Kenya) cultures, using an in-depth interview style with a convenient sampling procedure. The results of the study were interpreted using content analysis according to themes. The findings showed that dreams served the roles of comfort, encouragement, warning, revelation, and spiritual presence during grief process. The results also showed that dream images can be interpreted in three ways; positively, negatively or altered image interpretation, each having its emotional effects. Prayers, purification, libations, and ritualistic sacrifices are some of the communal healing techniques for dreams having a negative image interpretation. The study therefore recommends that detailed analysis be combined with empathetic intuition and creative imagination in dream interpretation as many African communities place great importance on dreams about the deceased.

Key Words: *Dreams, Death, Grief, Africa, Communities*

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES: A CASE OF RIFT VALLEY NATIONAL POLYTECHNIC

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Abstract

The growing severity of mental health difficulties across students is a critical issue for learning Institutions. Nevertheless, little is known about the steps these learning institutions could take to support student mental well-being better. This article focuses on management's support for students' mental health and trainers' support of the students' mental health in TVET Institutions Kenya.. Data was collected from 50 students using a simple random sampling method. A descriptive survey design was applied to collect data. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS. The study findings were presented in tables and percentages. The study established that management support and trainers' support are essential to the institution. Students identified that timetabling, fee challenges, inadequate guidance, and counseling personnel are significant challenges in school. The study identified that there had been cases of school dropout and suicides, which are identified as financial challenges. Government capitation and relationship issues are also significant issues that affect students. The findings from this study offer essential awareness to administrators, policymakers, and trainers on how they can better support student well-being and prevent high rates of psychological distress. The study emphasizes that prioritizing health programs is crucial for enhancing mental well-being among students in learning Institutions.

Key words: *Institutional support, Mental health, Psychological distress, Student well-being, and TVET institutions*

SELF-CONCEALMENT INFLUENCE ON ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR, SUICIDAL IDEATION, AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG DRUG ADDICTS FROM SAMPLED REHABILITATION CENTRES IN THE COASTAL REGION OF KENYA

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of self-concealment on addictive behaviors, suicidal ideation, and mental health among drug addicts in rehabilitation centres located in the coastal regions of Kenya. Self-concealment, defined as the tendency to hide personal information and emotions, is hypothesized to exacerbate psychological distress and hinder recovery processes. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research sampled 200 individuals undergoing rehabilitation, employing standardized questionnaires to assess levels of self-concealment, addiction severity, suicidal thoughts, and overall mental health status. Qualitative interviews provided deeper insights into the lived experiences of participants, highlighting the interplay between self-concealment and their struggles with addiction and mental health. Findings reveal a significant correlation between high levels of self-concealment and increased addictive behaviors, as well as elevated suicidal ideation. Participants who reported greater difficulty in expressing their emotions were more likely to engage in substance use as a coping mechanism, leading to a cycle of addiction and mental health deterioration. The qualitative data further illustrated how societal stigma and fear of judgment contributed to self-concealment, perpetuating feelings of isolation and hopelessness. This research underscores the need for targeted interventions that address self-concealment in therapeutic settings, promoting open communication and emotional expression among individuals in recovery. By fostering an environment of trust and support, rehabilitation programs can enhance mental health outcomes and reduce the risk of suicide among drug addicts in Kenya's coastal regions.

Key words: *Self-concealment, Addictive Behaviour, Suicidal Ideation, Mental Health, Rehabilitation Centres.*

MENTAL HEALTH AS PREDICTOR OF EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN CENTRAL REGION – KENYA

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Abstract

The mental health of professional counselors in public and private universities in Kenya's Central Region is increasingly recognized as critical to effective service delivery. This paper reviews literature on the mental health challenges faced by university staff globally and within Kenya. The primary research question investigates the prevalence and contributing factors of mental health issues among university counselors in Kenya, hypothesizing differences between those in public and private institutions due to varying work environments and support systems. A mixed-methods approach was used,

combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews from 50 counselors across JKUAT, Karatina University, Kirinyaga, MKU, Murang'a University, and Dedan Kimathi University (DeKUT). Quantitative data analysis identified prevalence rates and associated factors, while qualitative insights highlighted personal experiences and coping mechanisms. Findings reveal significant mental health challenges in both sectors, with public university counselors reporting higher stress and burnout due to resource constraints, large class sizes, and administrative inefficiencies. Conversely, private university counselors, though experiencing lower stress, faced issues related to job security, performance pressures, and work-life balance. The study indicates that while mental health burdens are substantial in both sectors, the causes and manifestations differ. These findings have critical implications for policy and practice in Kenyan universities. Public institutions may require structural reforms to alleviate workload, while private universities could benefit from enhanced job security and support systems to improve work-life balance.

Key words: *Mental health, professional counselors, public universities, private universities, Central Region Kenya, mixed-methods research, educational policy*

ENSURING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Jacob Luttah

Abstract

Mental health is increasingly recognized as a fundamental human right essential to the overall well-being of individuals and communities. Despite this recognition, significant barriers persist that prevent many from accessing necessary mental health services. This presentation explores the multifaceted challenges impeding universal mental health access and proposes actionable solutions to address these issues. We begin by examining mental health's status as a fundamental right, supported by international human rights frameworks, and the ethical imperative to provide equitable mental health services. Current global statistics reveal stark disparities in access, with marginalized populations disproportionately affected. Through specific case studies, we highlight how socio-economic factors, cultural stigma, and structural inadequacies create substantial barriers. To overcome these challenges, we propose comprehensive strategies that include policy reforms, community-based interventions, and the integration of innovative technologies. Effective policy recommendations emphasize the need for increased funding, the development of inclusive mental health policies, and the promotion of mental health literacy. Community-based approaches demonstrate the efficacy of grassroots initiatives in bridging access gaps, while advancements in telemedicine and digital health platforms offer scalable solutions to reach underserved populations. The presentation underscores the critical roles of governments, healthcare providers, NGOs, and individuals in advocating for and implementing these strategies. By fostering collaboration among these stakeholders, we can work towards a future where mental health services are universally accessible, ensuring that mental health is upheld as a fundamental right for all. This abstract sets the stage for a comprehensive discussion on making mental health services universally accessible, aligning with the conference theme of "Mental Health: A Fundamental Right for All."

THE ROLE OF TABOO IN BEHAVIOR REGULATION IN SELECTED AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

Abstract

Taboo is one of the crucial cultural practices that is deeply rooted across the different cultures in Africa, and this rootedness demonstrates high concern of moral regard for humans and nonhumans. It is an avoidance rule that forbids members of a community from exhibiting some kinds of behavior. Thus, this study intends to explore the role of taboo in behavior regulation in selected African communities. The study will address the following questions: What are the different types of taboos in selected African communities? How does taboo regulate behavior among selected African communities? What are the possible challenges in adhering to taboos in selected African communities? The study will adopt the exploratory sequential research design. The target population of this study will be adults between the ages of 25-50 years old, from selected African communities of both male and female participants. Purposeful sampling technique will be utilized. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. An audio recording of participants' content will be carried out, and the audio recordings will be transcribed to verbatim thereby followed by the systematic thematic analysis. Permission will be obtained from the Research Committee of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA). Research permit will be sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Ethical considerations will be paramount throughout the study. It is hoped that the study will offer significant understanding of the role of taboos in behavior regulation in selected African communities.

NAVIGATING UNIVERSITY TRANSITIONS BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS THROUGH CHALLENGES, AND COPING STRATEGIES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Transitioning to university can be a challenging experience to many students joining campus. Even after settling in the university, most students still have to deal with a number of challenges that include financial, career choice, peer pressure and relationships, managing the newly acquired independence and freedom, accommodation, adjusting to new lifestyle and new environment. Depending on the strategies employed to cope with these new challenges, a student may successfully navigate through to graduation, or fail to transition to graduation if negative coping strategies are employed. Studies have shown that students joining university

do not need to continue going through the same hurdles that their parents or cohorts before them went through due to lack of timely information and guidance. The aim of this study was to identify and review some of the specific major challenges faced by students that included career choices, financial challenges and accommodation, that greatly affect their overall well-being and academic success. This in turn affects their transition to graduation. The study also identified the various coping strategies used by students to cope with these challenges. The study employed a systematic review of literature to collect data on the major variables under discussion. The study recommends useful coping strategies that can help students to successfully transition to graduation, as well as the importance of support to the students by various stakeholders.

Key words: *University students, Challenges, Campus life, Transition and Strategies*

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON PARENTS CARING FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS IN KALIMONI WARD, JUJA SUB COUNTY, KIAMBU COUNTY

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored the psychological impact on parents caring for adolescents with alcohol and substance abuse disorders. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 parents to gain insights into their lived experiences, subjective perspectives, and the emotional challenges they faced. It examines the psychological stressors, emotional toll, and coping mechanisms utilized by these parents. The study used Family Systems Theory and Attachment Theory. The findings revealed that parents endured immense emotional turmoil, including feelings of guilt, shame, anxiety, and depression, as they navigated the complexities of supporting their adolescents' recovery. Many participants described significant disruptions to family dynamics, with reversed caregiving roles and struggles to maintain healthy boundaries and attachment. The study also highlighted the strain on marital and familial relationships, as well as the financial hardships associated with funding treatment and managing the consequences of their adolescent's substance abuse. Participants emphasized the critical need for comprehensive support services, including family therapy, counseling, and access to community resources, to address the multifaceted needs of parents in these situations. Implications for social work practice include the importance of adopting a systems-based, trauma-informed approach to support families affected by substance abuse disorders and the provision of interventions tailored to the unique developmental stage of the family. The study underscores the necessity for a holistic understanding of the psychological impact on parents to inform the development of effective support programs and policies.

Key words: *psychological impact, parents, adolescents, alcohol, substance abuse, disorder*

COMMUNITY-BASED MHEALTH-DELIVERED INTERVENTION TO PROVIDE ON-DEMAND ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE PREVENTION AND IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY AMONG YOUTHS IN KENYA

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Abstract

Introduction: Both the burden of alcohol and other drug (AOD) related deaths and use rates are increasing in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), including Kenya, the focus of this application and a low-resource country where an estimated 46% (15+ years) are considered heavy drinkers. Such use is associated with poor health outcomes, including high mortality rates, violence, alcohol poisoning, and engagement in risky sexual behaviours. Furthermore, the social costs of youth AOD use and mental health disorders are substantial. Interventions that address AOD and enhance youth mental health literacy are crucial in preventing severe and complex mental health problems. Enhancing mental health literacy can lead to early community screening, diagnosis, and more proactive health-seeking behaviour among youth. Additionally, it equips them with essential life skills to avoid AOD use, often linked to a lack of knowledge about mental health.

Study Objective: This study assesses the feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness of a community-based mHealth app leveraging mobile phones to prevent alcohol and other drug misuse and improve mental health outcomes among youth ages 15-24 years in Kenya.

Methods: This will be a randomized controlled mixed-methods sequential study implemented in two phases. In phase one Preparation, Intervention Adaptation (months 1-4): Based on our expertise in global AOD and mental health research, we will use mixed-methods approaches and the Assessment, Decision, Adaptation, Production, Topical Experts, Integration, Training, Testing (ADAPT-ITT) framework for adapting evidence-based interventions to develop the intervention. In phase two, we will randomize participants to receive either the Youth Empowerment Digital Intervention (YEDI), which is a group cognitive behaviour therapy (GCBT), based intervention delivered via a mobile app or the standard of care (SOC) intervention. Data will be collected at baseline, three- and six-month post-intervention initiation using standardized behavioural and mental health disorders screening tools.

Utility: The project aim is to assess the feasibility, acceptability and preliminary impact of YEDI intervention to prevent alcohol and other drug abuse and enhance mental health literacy among youths in Kenya. The study will attempt to demonstrate that adolescents and young people can be meaningfully involved in the design and development of health interventions targeting them. It will also add to the body of knowledge on the feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness of using the mHealth technology to provide mental health literacy. This study will also provide epidemiological information on the alcohol and drug use as well as mental health literacy of adolescents and young adults. The long-term goal is to advance the development of mHealth-based preventive strategies targeting alcohol and other drug use and mental health disorders among youth in Kenya and low-resource settings in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key Words: *Mental Health Literacy and Education, Youth Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Mental Health Prevention and Promotion, Community Engagement*

PREVALENCE OF STRESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS : A CASE STUDY OF KABARAK UNIVERSITY, KENYA

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Abstract

This study investigates the prevalence of stress among undergraduate students in Kabarak, motivated by concerns about its impact on mental health. The primary goal is to identify and assess significant stressors, including their frequency and intensity. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from a sample of 384 students using structured questionnaires. The results show that academic constraints and interpersonal stressors are the most significant sources of stress. Financial issues and worry about future employment all surfaced as significant stressors. Furthermore, concerns such as anxiety, poor diet and lack of self motivation contribute to increased stress. Stressors are divided into interpersonal, educational, and environmental stressors. Interpersonal stressors include family expectations, peer interactions, and cultural conventions. Educational stressors include course load pressure, exams pressure and lack of time management. Environmental stressors include financial difficulties, living circumstances, and adaptations to new environment. The conclusion underlines the critical necessity to provide comprehensive support systems such as academic counseling, mental health services and financial aid programs. By addressing the complex nature of stress it can improve student well-being and academic achievement. This study emphasizes the necessity of having a supportive educational atmosphere that promotes students' holistic development. Implementing these measures can dramatically reduce stress and promote better student academic and personal outcomes.

Key words: *Impact, Prevalence, Stress, Stressors, Undergraduate students*

MENTAL HEALTH WITH TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY SETTINGS

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Abstract

The proposed Counselling Booking System aims to revolutionize the counseling process by automating the tasks of booking, scheduling, rescheduling, and managing sessions. Designed for users such as students, the system simplifies the process of booking sessions with counselors, rescheduling appointments, and setting meeting dates without the need for physical presence or phone calls. This approach addresses the inefficiencies inherent in traditional, manual systems, which often involve in-person visits or phone calls that lead to long wait times and overcrowded offices. Key features of the system include automatic rescheduling, venue setting, and daily or weekly booking management, which enhance user convenience. The system operates through a two-part process: users input their personal information and secure their appointments. Both users and administrators can access

appointment information, allowing the system admin to approve or modify bookings based on availability. Additionally, the system integrates questionnaire results for counselors to review prior to sessions, ensuring more informed and prepared interactions. A rule-based algorithm supports the system by leveraging user preferences to optimize appointment scheduling. This Counselling Booking System represents a major advancement in the global context of counseling services, providing a more efficient, accessible, and user-friendly platform for booking and managing counseling sessions.

Key words: *Counselling Booking System, Automation, Rule-based algorithm, User convenience*

ENHANCING EFFICIENT PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR HEALTHY SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Students join university for undergraduate studies are at a developmental stage that incites self-knowledge as well as establishment of meaningful intimate relationships. There is a drastic change in institutional environment; from a high school guarded by daily supervisory instructors to university life of self-watch and guidance, coupled with peer-pressure for intimate relationships, that create a need for a sense of belonging. Despite the mechanism in place in learning institutions to orient freshmen into university life and system, handling intimate sexual relationship has remained a challenge for most learners. While institutions have Counselling and medical centers as support system to students' healthy sexuality offering free voluntary services, they remain underutilized. Increased cases of pregnancies, abortions and student mothers is a clear indicator of existence of unprotected sexual interactions among students. There are also cases of broken relationships that adversely affect students' mental wellness with worst cases of suicide and crimes of passion and unplanned pregnancies cause distress to students who have to assume parental roles resulting deferment of studies and academic results. The study aimed to review literature on existing mechanisms in the universities to support students deal with sexual intimate relationship and create, create awareness of the among the university stakeholders on the importance of promoting psychosocial support to students as well as create awareness on healthy sexual relationship among university students. The study recommends the need for intensive orientation program for new students joining universities.

Key words: *Healthy, sexual relationships, students, Orientation and mentorship programs.*

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: PANACEA FOR SOCIAL-COHESION AND PEACE BUILDING

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Abstract

Psychologically health individuals form the bedrock and foundation for any society. Psychological well-being is conceptualized as amalgamation of positive affective state such as happiness and functioning with optimal strength and effectiveness in individual and social life. It is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. Psychological distress is an obvious risk and predictive factor for conflict and violation of societal values. Individuals who experience psychological ill-health expose others to crime, violence and individualism. In addition, persons experiencing psychological disorder may be grossly selfish, callous, irresponsible, and impulsive and sometimes they are unable to feel guilty or learn from events and encounters. The modern society is experiencing decline of psychologically health individuals despite the public campaign efforts by World Health Organization (W.H.O) and various governments. The stigma, social exclusion and discrimination that occurs around people with psychological distress compound the situation. Mental health illness is highly prevalent through the world and are major contribution to wars, conflicts and poor socio-economic growth. The objective of this paper is evaluate various forms of psychological well-being that can enable an individual to improve social cohesion and peace in their respective communities. The main trajectory of this article is that by neglecting various forms of mental health, advocates of peaceful co-existence will fail to understand one of the primary root causes of poor social cohesion and conflict. The paper is informed by methodology of close reading, exploratory survey as well as content analysis. This review showed that improving and enhancing individual's psychological well-being can play a significant role in achieving social cohesion and establishing sustainable peace.

Key words: *Psychological well-being, peace, social cohesion.*

INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS ON WORK PERFORMANCE AMONG KENYA POLICE OFFICERS IN NJORO SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Wamalwa Benard & Kivanguli Gregory: Kenya Methodist University

Abstract

Police Officers are exposed to high level of stress due to heavy workload, long working hours and exposure to traumatic experience emanating from daily duties. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of occupational stress on work performance among Kenya police officers in Njoro Sub-County. The study was based on the role stress theory that explains how individual roles and expectations influence the outcome of individual responsibilities and how these functions cause occupational stress and affects work performance among police officers. The study adopts a

descriptive survey design. The study targeted a population of 367 police officers. Stratified sampling was used to select a sample size of 104 respondents. The data collected through self-administered structured questionnaires were used as the research instrument to collect the data. Descriptive statistics was used in analyzing the data where the results was presented in form of tables, graphs, charts, frequency and percentages to give the meaning to the study. The results shows that out of 104 questionnaires administered 81 were returned indicating a response rate of 77.88 percent. The study established that majority of the respondents perform poorly due to stress they experience from work and that there is strong influence on performance attributed to poor communication network, lack of serviceable equipment's, lack of support, lack of motivation, role conflict, heavy workload and long working hours . The study recommends that the National Police Service should focus on the causes of poor performance among the police officers and develop a strategy of addressing the gap to better service delivery. Develop counseling programs in police syllabus and sensitizing officers on the need of sharing problems that affects their work performance. Finally the government should increase budgetary allocation and mobilize more resources and training to help them acquire skills in order to improve police public relationship and to improve work performance. The study therefore recommended for a similar study to be conducted in the national police service in other Sub-Counties in Kenya to compare the findings.

SHORT PAPER: ELEVATE MINDS NETWORK SYSTEM OMONDI FRANCLINE

Owuor Godwin Kiprop

Abstract

The proposed Counselling Booking System aims to revolutionize the counseling process by automating the tasks of booking, scheduling, rescheduling, and managing sessions. Designed for users such as students, the system simplifies the process of booking sessions with counselors, rescheduling appointments, and setting meeting dates without the need for physical presence or phone calls. This approach addresses the inefficiencies inherent in traditional, manual systems, which often involve in-person visits or phone calls that lead to long wait times and overcrowded offices. Key features of the system include automatic rescheduling, venue setting, and daily or weekly booking management, which enhance user convenience. The system operates through a two-part process: users input their personal information and secure their appointments. Both users and administrators can access appointment information, allowing the system admin to approve or modify bookings based on availability. Additionally, the system integrates questionnaire results for counselors to review prior to sessions, ensuring more informed and prepared interactions. A rule-based algorithm supports the system by leveraging user preferences to optimize appointment scheduling. This Counselling Booking System represents a major advancement in the global context of counseling services, providing a more efficient, accessible, and user-friendly platform for booking and managing counseling sessions.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SUBSTANCE USE AND SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NAIROBI COUNTY

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Abstract

Research across different populations of adolescents has associated substance use with various mental health problems. One of the mental health challenges associated with substance use is suicidal behavior. Suicidal thoughts, making suicide plans and making suicide attempts are aspects of suicidal behavior. Recent studies have found a high prevalence of suicidal behavior among Kenyan youth but the association between suicidal behavior and substance use has not been investigated among Kenyan adolescents. The aim of this study was to fill this gap by investigating whether there were significant associations between suicidal behaviors and substance use among secondary school students in Nairobi County. The study utilized a correlational design. Participants in the study were 367 students randomly selected from nine public secondary schools in three sub-counties of Nairobi County. Self-report questionnaires were used to collect data on suicidal behaviors and substance use and the data was analyzed using the SPSS software. Chi Square test for independence was performed to ascertain whether suicidal behaviors were associated with substance use at $P < .05$ and risk ratios were computed to compare the likelihood of suicidal behavior between substance users and non-users. The study found a greater likelihood of suicidal behaviors in students who reported using alcohol, smoking cigarettes, smoking bhang or using other psychoactive substances and this was statistically significant. Based on these findings, it is recommended that students' substance use be taken into account in suicide prevention efforts. Mental health providers should also increase efforts to curb substance use among secondary school students.

Key words: *suicide, suicidal behavior, substance use, adolescents*

SUBSTANCE USE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Risky sexual behaviors such as early sexual debut, casual sex and unprotected sex increase the risk of pregnancy and infection with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including the HIV virus. Recent studies have shown a high prevalence of such behavior in Kenyan youth. Studies have also revealed that substance use is a likely predictor of involvement in risky sexual behaviors. The association between

substance use and risky sexual behaviors in Kenyan adolescents has not received much attention especially among secondary school students. Therefore this study investigated whether substance use was associated with risky sexual behaviors in secondary school students in Nairobi County. A sample of 367 participants from nine public secondary schools in Nairobi County completed questionnaires with items to assess risky sexual behaviors and the use of various substances. Associations between risky sexual behaviors and the use of alcohol, cigarettes, bhang and any other psychoactive substances was tested using Chi square test of independence and odds ratios were calculated to show whether students using substances had greater odds of engaging in risky sexual behaviors. Analysis of data was done using SPSS (version 23). The likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviors was higher in students who used substances compared to students who did not use substances. The association between substance use and risky sexual behavior was statistically significant. It is recommended that preventing substance use should be part of the efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDs, teenage pregnancies and other effects of risky sexual behaviors.

Key words: *risky sexual behavior, HIV/AIDS, substance use, alcohol, smoking, bhang adolescents*

THE PREVALENCE OF PROBLEMATIC SMARTPHONE USE AMONG STUDENTS AT MOI UNIVERSITY, KENYA

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

Abstract

Background: The ubiquity of smartphones has led to problematic smartphone use, which if uncontrolled leads to nomophobia; the anxiety that accompanies the inability to use one's smartphone.

Objectives: To determine: 1) the prevalence of problematic smartphone use, 2) the prevalence of nomophobia among problematic smartphone users, and 3) the factors associated with nomophobia among problematic smartphone users, at Moi University Schools of Nursing and Medicine.

Methods: This cross-sectional study at the College of Health Sciences, Moi University, involved 502 participants. Data was collected using validated self-administered questionnaires about smartphone addiction and nomophobia. The data was analysed for measures of central tendency and associations between variables. A P-value of ≤ 0.05 was considered significant.

Results: The participants' mean age was 22.6 (± 2.9) with males constituting 53.6%. Medical students were about 74.9%, about 60.6% of the participants had owned a smartphone for more than 5 years and 93.6% spent more than 30 minutes on their smartphones daily. The prevalence of problematic smartphone use was 86.4% amongst whom 99.8% had nomophobia. Moderate form of nomophobia was 67.2%, and mild was 29.7%. The fear of missing out was significantly associated with nomophobia ($P < 0.001$). Fear of missing out ($P < 0.001$) and openness to experience personality traits ($P = 0.015$) were associated with nomophobia at the multivariate level.

Conclusion: Problematic smartphone use prevalence was 86.4%, nomophobia was 99.8%, and fear of missing out and openness to experience were associated with nomophobia.

Key words: *nomophobia, smartphone, problematic smartphone use, FOMO.*

THE ANXIETY RELIEF COMPANION

Kenya Universities Professional Counselors Association (KUPCA)

The Anxiety Relief Companion (ARC) is an innovative solution designed to address the rising prevalence of anxiety, especially in underserved communities where mental health resources are scarce. The ARC system comprises four key integrations: a hand worn device, STK interaction for non-smartphone users, WhatsApp integration, and a web dashboard for healthcare professionals. The hand worn device assesses anxiety using the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), classifies the severity of anxiety, and recommends personalized interventions such as the 4-7-8 breathing technique or the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding method, offering real-time relief. STK interaction ensures that the device is accessible even to those without smartphones, broadening its reach in low-resource settings. Through WhatsApp integration, users can receive ongoing support and follow-up appointments, while the web dashboard provides professionals with comprehensive user analytics, allowing for remote monitoring and tailored interventions. ARC's primary target market includes adolescents and young adults in Kenya, where anxiety often goes undiagnosed due to the lack of affordable mental health services. Currently in the initial prototyping phase, this innovation aims to democratize mental health care by providing cost-effective, accessible, and scalable tools that empower users to manage their anxiety autonomously. The project holds significant potential for improving mental health outcomes in Kenya and similar regions by reducing barriers to care and offering timely, personalized interventions.



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