

INFLUENCE OF SELECTED PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, NAIROBI COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

University students face numerous psychosocial challenges that contribute to poor academic performance. The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of selected psychosocial challenges on academic performance of first year students in Kenyatta University. The study was guided by three objectives: to examine the influence of relational factors on academic performance of first year students in Kenyatta University, to determine the influence of emotional stability on academic performance and to identify strategies that can be used to help the first year students to overcome psychosocial challenges affecting their academic performance. The study was guided by Social Learning Theory and Cognitive Behavioral Theory. The study adopted descriptive survey design, stratified sampling techniques were used to select 560 students' respondents from target population which were first year students at Kenyatta University. Data were gathered utilizing an interview and questionnaire routine. The study used descriptive to analyze the questionnaire and the interview guide while the multiple linear regression model was used to analyze quantitative data with the aid of SPSS. The findings of the study were presented in tables and pie charts. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis and presented verbatim as per the objectives of the study. Validity was ensured by using standard data collection tool and method hence ensuring that data obtained represent variable of the study. A pilot study was performed to identify and identify any issues not readily understood or poorly built. The study used the test-retest-method to ensure reliability.

The study found that first-year students face multiple difficulties concerning relational and emotional issues. Some of the most common problems in the study were time, workload and expectations for the two cohorts, balancing relationships with peers, meeting academic performance expectations, freedom of choice in course selection and personal inhibitions such as feelings of loneliness and depression among others. The study further found that based on the selected psychosocial challenges affecting the academic performance of first-year students in Kenyatta University, interventions addressing these issues had already been put in place and they include: Often psychological and evaluations, time-bound treatment, emotional support, personal development groups or references to external psychological services, are the student counseling services given. Social integration has been utilized to help solitude and relationship difficulties. This is done by encouraging students to engage in any academic, cultural and sporting activities. The university also offers orientation programs for students joining the university. The institution provides a culture of university and also gives the students advice concerning the university. To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs in place, the University has taken measures to widen the scope of their focus in future by providing programs during the orientation week for first year's students to get to know each other.

Key Words: psychosocial challenges, academic performance, relational factors, emotional stability, workload and expectations, freedom of choice,

psychological services, counseling services, Social integration

INTRODUCTION

Globally, 1 out of 10 (20%) of the young people joining University are likely to encounter at least one psychosocial challenge. These psychosocial challenges are likely to pose a significant threat to academic performance. Half lifetime people experience psychosocial disorders such as stress related disorders for example anxiety, panic, adjustment and depression among others this may start before the age of 14 years, and 75% at the age of 24 years (WHO, 2015). Studies done in Canada and USA have shown that psychosocial challenges among the students joining universities are increasing (Jellinek, Murphy, Pagano, 2015). In African countries, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania, the scenario of psychosocial challenges and its care system is worse compared to developed countries. Similarly, there are few related studies done on psychosocial challenges amongst first year students in universities in Kenya and may not represent the current situation. In Kenya, 14–30% of adolescent students joining University are assumed to have psychosocial health problems which affect their academic performance (Gurung, 2015). And also exposure to war conflicts may pose considerable threat to the optimal development of a child thus likely to affect school adaptation as these challenges pose considerable threat to academic performance.

First-year University students might face numerous psychosocial challenges, for instance, academic demands, high expectations, the pressure to do well, homesickness, peer pressure, increased freedom among other challenges. This may lead to risky behaviors that are likely to affect their academic performance (Kadison & Digeronimo, 2014). Research shows that majority of first year students seem not ready for the social and emotional demands of the University (Calvete, & Connor-Smith, 2016). It is crucial to highlight that the social factors that may interrupt or enrich the quality and efficiency of learning impact the psychological environment of learners (Ferre, 2019). The challenge is how to handle and study in an atmosphere that is not safe, secure in emotional terms and that enables academic achievement. Motivation, social control, auto-regulation are essential factors in the learning of the classroom (Zins et al., 2014). Students must thus be encouraged, directed and learn how to control their feelings.

Many students may find it very hard to form relationships due to lack of social interaction before college life. It is very important to get along well with other students so as to live in harmony. Due to the differences in attitude, personality, culture, and ethnicity, it is likely for them to have various challenges. They may feel confused, nervous, pressed, lonely and unsafe or even have the various crises (Cohen, 2016).

Most of the first year students who were outstanding in their high school Might suddenly start to perform poorly during their first year of study. Some may drop out of school others change

courses for example from sciences to art based. On the other hand, Government sponsored students who are the majority in public universities are not given a chance to pursue a specialty based on their interest, they find themselves taking courses that are far from their dreams and deviates too much from their future completion, there may be loss of interest and motivation in their specialties (Calvete, & Connor-Smith, 2016).

University students go through many challenges and academic demands, for example being away from family may contribute to loneliness, depression, and stress. Developmental challenges, increased freedom, inability to make decisions, challenging family beliefs, engaging in risky behaviors and pressure to do well (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2014).

University students have interpersonal relationships, including the teacher-student connection, student-student relationships, roommate relationships and love relationships. Other students with diverse lifestyles, attitudes, financial situations, hobbies and traits surround themselves in the first year. Solitude and sadness can happen among students if they have poor interpersonal communication skills or a communication barrier (Gurung, 2015). Freund relationships with others can be difficult since external stress factors that harm them (Rob & Callahan, 2011). Low academic performance is a key contributor to the student stress level and leads to the fear of failure and expulsion. Depression can cause absenteeism and desperate sentiments, which interfere with healthy study habits, and subsequently further decrease academic performance (Lakey et al, 2015).

Most of the university's high school pupils may lose dominance over the various university competitors. This contest might lead to a sense of defeat, severe psychological problems, inadequacy and deception in a research (Calvete, & Connor-Smith, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

First-year students comprise a large proportion of students who struggle because of specific psychological problems to cope with their academic burden. Most students are underprepared for University life and do not know how to cope with it (Jellinek, Murphy, Pagano, 2015). The students become disturbed psychologically and socially, leading to poor performance. Some of the psychosocial challenges that affect students are emotional and relational factors. In this field a few research were carried out. These are studies by Kyalo on select factors influencing social and universities adjustment of university graduate students of the University of Egerton (2011) and by Wangeri (2013) on transitional challenges facing university students at the first year. University of Kenya (2013). However these studies do not seem to bring out clearly the issue of the influence of psychosocial challenges on academic performance and specifically, they do not touch on emotional and relational factor. Therefore, few related studies have been done in this area in Kenya. Hence, this study intended to investigate the influence of emotional stability and relational factors on academic performance in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County and also come up with interventions that may help students to overcome the psychosocial challenges they face.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of relational factors on the academic performance of first-year students in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County.
2. To determine the influence of emotional stability on the academic performance of first-year students in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County.
3. To identify strategies that can be used to help first-year students to overcome psychosocial challenges affecting their academic performance in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County.

Theoretical Review

Two ideas drove this study: social theory of education and cognitive behavior.

The main reason why I employed two theories in my study was to aid in organizing important empirical evidence in order to establish a context for interpreting occurrences. Thus, diverse theoretical views might often propose distinct methods or practical ideas, although based on a set of actual evidence.

Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura (1977) developed the theory of social learning, which is a cognitive process which takes place in a social context (Bandura, 2002). The psychologist argument was that, people learn behavior cycles from observation followed by imitation before they finally adopt the new ways in a process referred to as observational learning. The behavior of human beings is a consequence of sustained interactions taking place in the cognitive, social and physical environment. Change of social behaviors is first processed in the mind when an individual observes the behavioral patterns of others. In the observation, the individual also takes mental notes on the consequences of the said actions before making a decision to imitate them (Bandura, 2002). They may then develop a model of applying them in the process which may lead to being assimilated into new social behaviors.

In the campus setting, most first-year students may not have social stands and can easily copy the various behavior patterns of other students in other years. They then try to fit into the new system by directly imitating what the seniors are doing. They may frequent the social places that were previously unknown to them. Use of new language patterns especially the adoption of slangs, fashion change follows. The first year may not be easily distinguished from the rest. The danger comes when these new lifestyles which have just been fixed in their lives affect their studies. They might also experience challenges in trying to normalize it. And this can lead to distraction from their academic work.

Psychosocial difficulties and other related constructions play a key part in adapting to university life through the social environment in this study. Therefore, the dynamic character of SCT can reflect the flexibility necessary to respond to stresses and accommodate changing requirements and give a framework for understanding resilient behavior. The specified elements, namely connection and emotional stability, affect academic achievement in schools. This hypothesis, thus, was proven beneficial to comprehend how psychosocial difficulties might affect academic achievement.

Cognitive Behavioral Theory

Cognitive Behavioral Theory is a type of psychotherapy that helps people to change unhelpful or unhealthy thinking habits, feelings, and behaviors. It covers the integration of cognitive and emotional states to ultimately influence behavior. An individual's thoughts have an impact on what they feel and how they behave. Thus, a mindset that creates negative thoughts, in the end, has negative feelings with an equal effect on the behavior. The concept was developed by Albert Ellis (1960) who indicated that cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can be used to treat people with a wide range of mental health problems. University students have an above average cognitive ability which implies that they can manage to control their own thought processes. Normally, the end behavior patterns can be traced to the mental perceptions absorbed within their minds. A first-year student who perceives alcohol drinking as a good behavioral idea may end up trying to emulate the patterns from friends. The student may become used, hence in the process taking this up as a trait. Another student may form a cognitive perception of a bad living habit which they avoid thus adopting a lifestyle from his/her peers.

The process, therefore, breaks down to how they first form the thoughts, the influence of such on their behavior and finally the impact on their academic performance. Albert Ellis (1960) developed a sub-field of cognitive behavior theory named Rational Emotive Concept. In this, he argued that every individual had their own set of assumptions that guided their own perception on given behavioral traits. Albert Ellis (1960) recognized that most people bear irrational thoughts that may lead them into adopting behavior that is not against accepting. This may describe the life of a first-year University student, he/she joins University knowing well the difference between good and bad behavior. In the end, due to influence and irrational thinking, they might end up imitating those traits that affect their academic life negatively. This happens despite them having exceptional cognitive abilities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Design

A descriptive research design was employed in this study. The descriptive design according to Kothari (2014) allows the investigator to explain the existing or existing circumstances of record, evaluate and report. Descriptive research is aimed at obtaining information about a

phenomena and drawing a valid conclusion from the data. The descriptive survey frequently seeks to characterize or define an issue, using the stated factors to create a profile of the collection of issues, individuals or events. Orodho (2015) states that descriptive design is used when collecting information about people, attitude, opinion, habits, education and social issues. Specifically, the study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods in the collection, measurement and analysis of its data.

Study Area

The study took place at Kenyatta University. The main campus of Kenyatta University is in Kahawa County, Nairobi County, on the road, about 18 kilometers north-east of Kenya Capital District Nairobi, Nairobi-Thika Road.

There were almost 75,000 students at the Kenyatta University. About 35,000 students and institutional institutions, including as Kitui, Mombasa and Ruiru, were open learners and attended other campuses. The students were around 10,000 on the main campus, with 10% of the population in 2017 being the first year students.

Target Population

The target population is defined as all members of a hypothetic or actual set of topics, objects or persons to whom a researchers wish to generalize the findings of this study, as stated by Creswell (2016). The study target demographic was first-year students at Kenyatta University in 2017.

Sampling Techniques

Kenyatta University had approximately 5600 first-year students as per (Kenyatta University strategic document, 2017). The study utilized random and stratified samples. This approach includes stratifying population segmentation into homogeneous (groups with the same features) (Creswell, 2016). Then, a random selection of participants from each strata was completed. The strata were based on the department and then the male and female students were sampled proportionally.

A sample of 560 respondents was taken using basic laminating and a random sampling methods in their respective departments based on strata in graduate courses. This is according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2018) who state that for a population of less than or equal to 10000 an appropriate sample percentage of 10-30% is a good population.

Table 1: Sample Size

Department	Target population	Sample size
Education	1030	103
Pure and Applied Sciences	720	72
Humanities	990	99

Environmental	900	90
Business Studies	1110	111
Economics	850	85
Total	5600	560

Data Collection Procedures

Separately gathered and analysed quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative information was obtained using surveys and qualitative information was acquired via an interview guide. In order to collect data on how relational and emotional stability factor influence academic performance amongst student, the study used open and closed questionnaires. Similarly, to gather qualitative data on the variables and identify strategies that can be used to help first year students overcome psychosocial challenges affecting their academic performance in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County and the study employed the use of in-depth interviews with the Dean of Schools at Kenyatta University.

Qualitative methods of research are of great use when it comes to providing rich descriptions of complex phenomena. They are the follow-up of unique or unforeseen events; the illumination of experience and interpretations of events by actor who have very different stakeholder roles and roles. Quantitative techniques are often meant to summarize facts supporting generalization about the studied phenomena.

In order to increase participation, the study questionnaire was delivered by the researcher, using the research staff, throughout the day of school and in the classroom. The researcher described the methods and replied to the respondents with any concerns concerning evaluation measures. To complete the surveys, students were allotted 30-40 minutes. As a result, with the aid of properly trained research assistants, the researcher conducted the questionnaire for the selected respondents. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews. Questionnaires for safe storage have been gathered promptly.

In order to reply to the study questions, a questionnaire was utilized to collect information from respondents. Questionnaires refer to printed lists of questions that are used in gathering people`s thoughts or feelings about an issue, product or service. Questionnaires can be interviewer administered or answered by the respondents themselves (self-administered). According to Kombo & Tromp (2016), a questionnaire is regarded as a highly convenient way of collecting information within a shorter period of time from a large number of people.

As a list of topics, themes or fields to be addressed in a six-structured interview, Michael S. et al (2014) provides an interview guide. The key informants (Dean of students) were provided with the interview guide by the researcher. The main purpose for the interview guide was to make meaningful inferences to the study.

Piloting

Prior to the main data collection, pre-testing of questionnaire and interview guide was conducted at Kenyatta University City campus, Nairobi. 20 respondents were used. The pre-testing enables the researcher to assess clarity and ease of use of a questionnaire. The researcher also identified the sensitive, confusing or biased item and modified it. Data obtained from the pre-testing was used to amend the questionnaire before administration during the actual day of data collection.

The validity of the face validity pre-testing instruments is a useful approach to improve the probability of face validity. There are two sorts of validity addressed and stated. Secondly, the study used content validity exhaustively in the tools for data collection.

Validity was ensured by using standard data collection tool and method hence ensuring that data obtained represent variable of the study. The validity of the instruments was assured through discussions with experts in the subject matter, particularly with researcher's supervisor.

In particular the data collecting point included completeness of the questionnaires, readability of the reports and validity of the replies over the whole study procedure. Data quality was included. The quality control comprises data purification, validation and secrecy at the data processing point.

Instrument reliability is the extent to which devices produce same findings in repeated tests. Reliability is the propensity to coherence seen in repeated measurements (Carmines & Zeller, 2016). In order to find and discover any queries that were not understood or constructed readily, a pilot research was carried out. The study employed the test-retest-method to guarantee reliability. In order to assess dependability, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was employed. A composite dependability value of 0.6 was judged to be sufficient for all buildings and above all. The coefficient of dependability was 0.6 and higher.3.7

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection was carried out at Kenyatta University on the first year students. This was done through questionnaires and interview schedule for the dean of schools, which was issued by the researcher. The assistant was trained by the researcher before the data collection days. A written consent was obtained from the participants and only those students who consented to the study participated. The researcher also sought approvals from the national council for science and technology (NACOSTI) in order to conduct the study.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The analytical procedure included the editing, the coding and the entering of data. To examine descriptive statistics such as average, default differences, frequency and percentages. Tables, figures and charts were used for the display of data. Quantitative data was displayed using Pie-charts and bar charts while qualitative data results was presented using content analysis and histograms.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Academic Performance

The study intended to find out the extent to which students' respondents agreed with statements regarding their academic performance.

Table 2: Academic Performance

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
In all my lectures, I get ready	3.929	1.908
During every talk, I pay attention and listen	4.014	0.675
In every unit, I aim to obtain good scores.	3.693	1.456
I participate actively in every debate	3.822	0.432
When I notice technological issues, I get focused.	3.773	1.902
I like home studies and activities, since in every unit they help me develop my skills.	3.954	1.541
When I perform hard jobs, I make extra effort.	3.612	1.234
Problem resolution is a helpful pastime for me	3.886	0.932

The study found that the students paid attention and listened during every discussion to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 4.01, the students enjoyed home studies and activities because they helped them improve their skills in every unit to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 3.95, the students made themselves ready in all their lectures to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 3.92, solving problems was a useful hobby for the students to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 3.88, the students actively participated in every discussion to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 3.82, the students gained focus when they saw technical problems to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 3.77, the students wanted to get good grades in every unit to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 3.69 and the students exerted more efforts when they did difficult assignments to a great extent as shown by a mean score of 3.61 as shown in table 2.

The findings were in line with Andrade (2016) who stated that a number of research were conducted to identify and analysis the many elements which impact the academic performance of students in different learning facilities. The findings of these students identify the effort, the past education, parent education, family income and self-motivation, student age, learning preferences, attending classes and entry qualifications as factors that have a significant effect on the academic performance of students in different environments.

Catherine (2015) also discovered a substantial influence on the academia performance of the parents, particularly those with high incomes. A positive atmosphere for the académic performance was also identified as a determining factor (MolokoMphale & Mhlauli, 2014). The academic performance of pupils was affected by the available learning resources, competence of instructors and the environment in which a school is located, therefore, Maganga (2016), Nghambi (2014) and Osei-Mensah (2012). In addition, the personalities of students, personal objectives and motivation, as well as instructor support and teaching experience, impact the academic performance of students substantially (Ulate & Carballo, 2011).

The Influence of Relational Factors on the Academic Performance

The first objective of the study was to establish the influence of relational factors on the academic performance of first-year students in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with several statements concerning the influence of relational factors on their academic performance. A scale of 1-5 was provided as follows: (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=moderate, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree). The findings were as illustrated in the table 3.

Table 3: Extent to which Relational Factors affect Academic Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
My friends give me a sense of belonging and this makes me feel loved, hence improves my academic performance	3.224	1.242
Belonging to a group builds my sense of identity which in turn improves my confidence to excel in academics	3.620	0.630
Peer groups influence my short and long-term education plans	3.650	0.714
The influence of my peers on my decision making affects my academic work	3.728	0.954
The security I get from relation groups in the University contributes to the improvement of my academic performance	3.735	0.653
Difficulty accepting support from teachers and others affect my academic work	3.749	0.514
Uncontrolled freedom affects my time management skills and this affects my studies.	3.812	0.678

As per the findings, the mean values for the responses varied from 3.2-3.8 which showed that the respondents to a great extent, agreed with the statement on the extent to which relational

factors influence the academic performance of first-year students in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County. Uncontrolled freedom affects their time management skills and this affects their studies had the highest mean of 3.812 and a standard deviation 0.678. This was followed by difficulty, accepting support from teachers and others affect their academic work which had a mean of 3.749 and a standard deviation 0.514. The security they get from relation groups in the University contributes to the improvement of their academic performance had a mean of 3.735 and a standard deviation 0.653. The influence of their peers on their decision making affects their academic work had a mean of 3.728 and a standard deviation 0.954. Peer groups influences their short and long-term education plans had a mean of 3.650 and a standard deviation 0.714. Belonging to a group builds my sense of identity which in turn improves my confidence to excel in academics had a mean of 3.620 and a standard deviation 0.630. Their friends give them a sense of belonging and this makes them feel loved, hence improves their academic performance had a mean of 3.224 and a standard deviation 1.242. The findings imply that the academic performance of first year students is significantly affected by relational factors.

The study also found out from the key informants that first year students experienced various relational challenges. In the beginning, the social environment at university can often cause anxiety, particularly during first year students. While some students automatically leave, most of them have to fight to build social relationships. Some kids may find themselves isolated or removed from events for fear of humiliation, judgment or fear of refusal. In their research, Oseguera and Rhee (2019), Ramsay et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of interactions amongst university students. In the first year of their university experience, they discovered that students require help during transition periods. University students must be able to perceive that their university environment supports them to minimize stress in the transition to a demanding setting. Some people identify themselves as shy and don't feel that they can join others.

One student said; "I always feel shy to mingle with old students and I prefer staying in my hostel room all weekend than going to clubs."

New students who have left their familiar culture and live in a new setting are likewise affected by culture. Moreover, while new students may have had a great popularity in their high schools, their successes for the university community could be difficult to join the social groups of university students. For example, failure to adapt to culture can lead to social isolation and contribute to stress, sadness and loss of interest in learning and communicating with peers. Some students choose to stay or go to the library rather than to walk up and introduce themselves to other pupils. The student feels lonely and isolated, overwhelmed by the lack of companionship and peer support. Depression occurs in many cultures, with industrialized countries having greater rates than emerging countries (Kessler and Bromet, 2013).

Peer pressure is a challenge faced by these students whereby they are pressured into indulging in activities that may negatively affect their academic performance in the long-run. For instance, uncontrolled partying; It's not an issue to party in itself. Parties have been

organized to give students a nice time. Some parties may, however, present difficulties. There may be too much alcohol and life-threatening conditions. Sex can spread the illness without the appropriate safeguards. University students are described as driving forces for the expression of sexuality, because young people are exposed to new experiences such as alcohol and other medicines, are under pressure from their peers and face new circumstances that have previously been banned or impeded (Borges et al, 2015).

Students who have no connection to a topic in academic education and acquire special knowledge or experience in the promotion of circumstances in education and preventing academics look the first time to be the most prone to select safer sex practice. It is important that we realize that sexual habits endure in the lifetime, since it may contribute to particular activities of higher education facilities, to safe conduct and formal knowledge regarding sexuality, for example prevention of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted illnesses. The psychological problems facing students need to be recognized in order to give subsidies to minimize vulnerability and environmental exposure (Sílvia et al. 2016).

Peer pressure may also affect students' academic performance because they more often tend to pull away the students from class to leisure activities so as to fit in. This finding is supported by (Frank et al., 2015, Burns, 2003) who found that peer approval leads to pro-social behavior. For instance, it may result in a student mucking around with friends in town and not doing assignment and private study. Priority is therefore given to having fun instead of concentrating on one's academic work and that moral reasoning and perspective taking often regarded as the cognitive dimension of empathy is linked to the development of pro-social behavior.

The problems related to relationships also affect students in their first year. There are excellent relationships, but they may be incredible. There are instances when a pair have a discrepancy or problem in every relationship. Disagreements between spouses can distract kids from work at school and increase stress. Break-ups may lead some students to despair even further. These results are consistent with (Nasrin, 2010), which advised university students to confront numerous issues such as family separation, entry to a new environment and adjustment to educational standards lead to high levels of depression.

One of the respondent stated; 'I had suicidal thoughts not once when I realized my then third year boyfriend had broken up with me'

The results agree likewise with those of different academics, such Allensworth & Easto (2017), who found that the likelihood of pupils who are closely related to instructors and classmates is higher. Quillian and Campbell (2013) also claim that peer approbation in various fields of a child's life leading to pro-social conduct, including academics. This in turn affects the child's self-esteem, which has numerous social effects. Students in the first year expressed less knowledge about the social environment that might lead to retirement from the university. Pike and Kuh (2015) observed that students in the first year are less likely than other years to have a social and academic commitment. Gardner (2016) said the effective academic and social adaptation of first-year students may foster learning, growth and

conservation Kuh (2013) found that intellectually and socially engaging university environments increase achievement.

The Influence of Emotional Stability on the Academic Performance

The second objective sought to determine the influence of emotional stability on the academic performance of first-year students in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County. Again, several statements on emotional stability and academic performance were identified and the respondents were required to rate the extent to which they applied to them using 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=moderate, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree.

Table 4: Extent to which Emotional Stability affects Respondents Academic Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Meeting new people affects my ability to concentrate in class	3.371	0.751
Anticipating Exams frustrates and makes me feel depressed	3.579	0.751
Feeling overwhelmed or helpless interferes with my academic work	3.579	0.707
My academic performance is affected by frustration brought about by my fear of some lecturers.	3.613	0.671
Feeling lonely or isolated makes me lose focus on my school work	3.655	0.687
Worries of being in a new environment affects my academic performance	3.711	0.769
Trimester exams make me anxious and this affects my school work	3.826	0.653
Being denied a chance to choose a course of my choice frustrates me and this affects my grades	3.904	0.705

As indicated in Table 4, the mean values for the responses varied from 3.37-3.90 which showed that the respondents agreed to a great extent with the statements on the extent to which emotional stability influences their academic performance.

Specifically, the respondents agreed that being denied a chance to choose a course of their choice frustrates them and this affects their grades had a mean of 3.904 and a standard deviation 0.705. Trimester exams make them anxious and this affects their school work had a mean of 3.826 and a standard deviation 0.653. Worries of being in a new environment affects their academic performance had a mean of 3.711 and a standard deviation 0.769. Feeling lonely or isolated makes them loose focus on their school work had a mean of 3.655 and a standard deviation 0.687. Their academic performance is affected by frustration brought about by their fear of some lecturers had a mean of 3.613 and a standard deviation 0.671. Feeling overwhelmed or helpless interferes with their academic work had a mean of 3.579 and a standard deviation 0.707. Anticipating Exams frustrates and makes them feel depressed had a mean of 3.579 and a standard deviation 0.751. Meeting new people affects their ability to concentrate in class had a mean of 3.371 and a standard deviation 0.751. The findings portray that emotional factors that affect the academic performance of first year students are as a result of the lack of freedom to choose their course of interest, exams as well as fears emanating from various factors such as new environment, lecturers, loneliness and feelings of helplessness.

The dean of students said, “Students in their first year face various challenges that include homesickness as a common struggle for many students. What often hurts about being homesick is not simply that the student is away from home, but rather that he or she hasn’t made Kenyatta University another place to call home. Returning home often (or focusing on wanting to be back home) can keep the homesick student from creating familiarity. The dean of students interviewed confirmed that this is often the case.”

Another emotional challenge student face is academic workload. Most of respondents reported that 76 percent were not prepared for university work and do not follow up on all tasks and homework. You must read and write a lot and should comprehend the materials of the course. Students are no longer regarded like children who are reckless; they are treated as people with duties. Furthermore, the academic challenge must be autonomous in time management.

There is a growing worry that the expectations and hence insecurity about the possibilities for jobs will not be met. The difficulties are typically depressing and/or anxious and these reactions can occasionally be serious and/or long term and need active treatment. Depression and anxiety can influence both interpersonal and social and academic processes (Alawia, 2012). Some students may have serious anxiety during examinations. They may be anxious and find that they have difficulties concentrating, hyperventilating and sweating. Since worry is a learning answer, however, it can be unlearned as well. This is a far broader approach than anxiety, according to Dave (2018), thus it is feasible to conceive difficult tests due to their own qualities or functions without having to deal with perceived concern and excitement.

Other common experiences are that you feel disconnected from others, you struggle to develop habits like time management, prioritize, and stay healthy, meet academic demands that are more difficult than expected.

The emotional challenges affect students’ academic performance in majority of the cases negatively. This is because the students try to find coping mechanisms that pull them further away from concentrating on their academic work. For example, by initially testing alcohol and/or drugs, recreation or binge consumption, students develop dependence problems, something with which some students want to explore. If excessive usage can result in change in personality, degraded focus (university decline) and social difficulties. Furthermore, some students could cheat with the belief that they won't get discovered (copying assignments from online sites). The consequences of such a choice are poor academic performance due to quality issues or punishment for being caught considering the side effects of punishment and its harmful consequences on students’ behaviors and future life (Alawia, 2012). These findings are similar to what Pike and Kuh (2015) reported that first-year students were less likely to be socially and academically engaged which may not be common in other years.

Strategies to Overcome Psychosocial Challenges affecting Academic Performance

The key informants further explained that various skills are important for a student to have a successful educational experience including, time management since students getting to

college may not be accustomed to taking responsibility for their own schedule. In addition, students in the first year must establish adequate schedules and provide enough time to study. Confidence and communication are another essential ability. Students in the first year should not be afraid to talk to others, be introduced and work on a variety of campus community projects. This means that pupils in the first year should be visible to others. In relation to academic work, confidence and communication help in students seeking clarification whereby they should ask professors and tutors for help and clarification. According to the majority 76% of the student respondents, most college professors are rather friendly and willing to help a student (Barefoot, 2015).

In addition to trust in one's understanding, critical thinking is a crucial skill for first-year students. The critical thinking characteristics described by Warren (2015) include examining factual claims, assumptions, remarks, comparisons and contrast of works, finding clarification or challenges, as well as keeping the claims open, sensitive, determined and open-minded. Warren characterizes critical thinking as an element of reflection, with the three parts critical and creative thought and understanding of information. The knowledge is more deeply integrated into cognitive awareness, and encourages a good decision by assessing and evaluating friendships, relationships, and social activities.

The Key Informants (Dean of Schools) further revealed that the University has implemented some programs to help students cope with the challenges they face in their first year. They said that programs include: Psychological evaluations and evaluations, time limitation treatments, emotional support, personal development groups or referrals to external psychic services typically include student counseling services that are given. It is of utmost significance that any information provided by the student is absolutely secret and ethical. It is important to share the information with trusted third parties only in exceptional instances (i.e. if there is a serious threat of a student damaging himself or others). This is explained at the initial counseling session to the student. Counselling offers a chance to look at broad developments such as job choices, study behaviours, routine changes, connections, identity and self-conception.

In addition, social interaction is usually suggested to assist solitude and relationship issues. This means that students are encouraged to engage in intellectual, cultural and sports activities. Extracurricular activities are available to supplement the academic program and increase the educational experience of the student. Additional academic engagement can improve training, i.e. coping, problem solving and time management abilities. University peer networks also have a major impact on personal growth, whereas students, who are solely concerned with home buddies, tend to experience greater issues with adjustment (Barefoot, 2015). The findings are comparable to those of Barefoot in 2015, where institutions have established transition programs ranging from information guidance sessions during the initial university days to organized, clinical treatments of at-risk students to ease transfer to the university.

Barefoot et al. 2015 supported the findings, arguing that there was a lot of attention given to first-year experiential programmes: teaching and staff consultations, first-year student training opportunities and even first-year professorial courses. These programmes, shown to

improve student performance in their first year, give students with the opportunity to engage in an informal style and provide much-needed social support. While promising, they stress strongly the role that First and High-Class peers may play in aiding the transfer of pupils to university, while not analyzing carefully the faculties or staff-led programs. Research has previously shown that peer contacts increase university performance of the students in the first year and develop leadership qualities.

Conclusions

This study concluded that the first-year students face multiple difficulties concerning relational and emotional issues. This is done by encouraging students to engage in any academic, cultural and sporting activities. The university also offers orientation programs for students before joining the university. The institution provides its culture on students' advice concerning entering the university. To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs in place, the University has taken measures to widen the scope of their focus in future by providing programs during the orientation week for first year's students to get to know each other and familiarize themselves with the environment.

It was observed that tactics were employed in the institution, which was to provide first-year students with guidance programs before entering university. They were so encouraged to participate in scholarship, culture and sports. These workshops complement the academic curriculum and improve the educational experience of the learner.

This research aimed to evaluate the effect on academic performance of students from relationship and emotional variables. The study revealed that the variables impact the academic performance of pupils significantly. It may be concluded that displaying positive attitudes and the interaction between students and teachers can successfully improve education and learning for good academic achievement in universities.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the investigation, the following suggestions were made:

- i. These findings will help the management of the universities and university counselors in the assessment of the specific barriers of learning among the first-year students. This will in turn help to remove barriers that influence many first-year students from achieving their full potential.
- ii. Lecturers need to exhibit more leadership, friendly and understanding behavior in their interaction with students' so as to enhance their academic performance positively.

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