

Counselling Strategies Influencing Students' Academic Intrapersonal Conflicts in Public Universities, Kenya



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Abstract

One of the conference sub-themes is education, science and technology for sustainable Development. To achieve great milestone in line of development goals, university counseling service supports the mental well-being of students, nurtures student success, and multicultural aware campus community. However, university students have a similar characterized life trend full of intrapersonal problems which influence their academic performance to a large extent. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the influence of selected counseling strategies in resolving students' academic intrapersonal conflicts in public universities in Western Kenya. The specific objective was to establish the effectiveness of counseling strategies in resolving student's selected academic intrapersonal conflicts in public universities in Western Kenya. A mixed method research design was adapted. All five hundred and fifty six (556) respondents served as participants in the study. Questionnaires, in-depth Interview schedules and Focused Group Discussions were used to collect data. Collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The findings indicated that when Kenyan public universities apply counselling strategies, academic stress and anxiety levels are reduced on one hand, while the self-esteem to some extent is improved in Kenyan public universities. This study recommended that University Management Boards of Public Kenyan Universities should liaise with Commission of University Education, Deans of schools, Chairpersons of Academic Departments, Students welfare services to address academic intrapersonal conflicts experienced by students.

Keywords: Counseling strategies; Academic intrapersonal conflicts; University students, Academic stress; Academic anxiety; Levels of self-esteem

Introduction

An individual can struggle with a personal conflict, for instance, students can potentially experience high levels of stress and anxiety. This can affect their health and academic performance due to the continually changing nature of the university environment [1-9]. Conflict in one's head between opposing motives or ideas is shown by an individual's internal dialogue. This is said to be at the intrapersonal level [10]. Intrapersonal conflict becomes when the individual chooses and tries to reach the mutually exclusive purposes. Increased academic stress, and anxiety, high self-esteem, and, low self-esteem have an effect on general health, academic and co-curricular performance of university students [11-14]. Upon entering the university one has to realize that social life can also be destructive, therefore, as a student joins the university students' body there is need to exercise a deep sense of responsibility and good will to create the

favourable condition for the development of a healthy intellectual life [8]. The bad influences that the students' body may have on a university student relate mainly to moral and ethical issues and such implications affect one's self-esteem.

Intrapersonal conflict potentials in the universities are varied, hence there is need for all groups within the system to recognize these potentials and deliberately make concerted efforts to curtail the negative consequences of these forms of conflicts. Therefore, it becomes necessary to examine the resultant effects of academic intrapersonal conflicts on the attainment of the goal of university education [11]. Regardless of the level of intrapersonal conflicts, there are differing approaches to deal with the incompatibilities that exist [4]. Conflict resolution hence should involve the reduction, elimination of all forms and types of conflicts.

A study carried at Iowa city, Westlawn by [11] highlighted that university counseling service uses five techniques for resolving intrapersonal conflicts. First, withdrawal whereby a person tries to solve a problem by denying its existence and this intervention strategy results in win-lose. This method is only appropriate when the issue is relatively unimportant, timing is wrong, cooling off period is needed and it is short-term. The disadvantage of using this method is that the conflict is not resolved but builds.

Secondly, university counseling service apply smoothing where by differences are played down and surface harmony continues to exist therefore, results in win-lose in form of resentment, defensiveness and possible sabotage if the issue remains suppressed. It is recommended when preservation of relationship is more important at the moment. However, inappropriate to use when there is reluctance to deal with the intrapersonal conflict leading to evasion of an important issue and when others are ready and willing to deal with conflict [5].

Thirdly, forcing as an approach to conflict resolution when used, one's authority, position, majority rule or a persuasive minority settles the conflict, it results in win-lose if the dominated party sees no hope for self [11]. This approach can be practiced when power comes with position of authority and this method has been agreed upon. Forcing can be destructive when losers have no way to express needs resulting in future disruptions.

Forth, compromise which when used each party gives up something in order to meet midway results in win-lose if middle of the road ignores the real diversity of the issue [11]. It can be used when both parties have enough leeway to give. Resources are limited when win-lose stance is undesirable. Inappropriate to use when original inflated position is unrealistic, the solution is watered down to be effective and commitment is doubted by parties involved.

Lastly, collaboration as an approach is where by abilities, values, and expertise of all are recognized, each person's position emphasis is on group result and it results in win-win for all. It can be conducted when time is available to complete the process parties are committed and trained in use of process. It's not recommended when the conditions of time, abilities, and commitment are not present [5].

From this review, the researchers' report deviated from the current study due to the fact that on one hand, he has concentrated on what happens when used, when they should not be applied, yet effective assessment of intrapersonal conflict resolution initiatives is complicated since interventions involve multiple goals and cross-level connections where indirect effects are often not seen in the short run [15]. In addition, there is no single best instrument

for assessing the extent to which intrapersonal conflict resolution practice had been successful. It is clear that any university need to adapt relevant intrapersonal counseling strategies depending on its form. Thus, the five enlisted types are important though it depends with the form of intrapersonal conflict. However, most researches conducted on counseling strategies are global, very few have been done in the African continent and Kenya is no exception. Additionally, a few researches have been conducted in Kenyan public universities. Therefore, these are glaring gaps hence the need to assess the influence of counseling strategies on students' academic intrapersonal conflicts in public universities in Western Kenya [16,17].

Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed research design [6]. The intention of using this design was to bring together the differing strengths and overlapping weakness of quantitative methods with those of qualitative methods [6]. In this study, selected counselling strategies were students' Independent Variable while academic intrapersonal conflicts were the Dependent Variables. Therefore, it was most suitable to investigate the influence of selected counselling strategies on students' intrapersonal conflicts.

The Target Population for this research was university students in Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOUST) and Kisii University. The researcher's choice would enable him concentrate on instances which would display a wide variety possibly even focus on extreme cases to allow the study come up with appropriate information that is informative. The target population comprised of four thousand, four hundred and eight (4,408) third year university students, four (4) Deans of Students, one hundred and twenty (120) Student Leaders, four (4) Student counselors, sixty (60) Chairpersons of Academic Departments. All four thousand, five hundred and ninety five (4,595) respondents served as participants in the study. They were chosen for the study because of the fact that they have the required information with respect to the objective.

Simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) counties namely; Kakamega, Siaya, and Kisii in Western Region of Kenya. Statistics sample size is important in determining the accuracy and reliability of research findings hence, according to [2] James. C. Bartlett, et al, Cochran's sample size formula for continuous data was used to calculate the sample size of the students' research population. The sample population of students for this study was obtained using [7] formula.

$$n = \frac{2^2 p q}{d^2}$$

Sample size = $(2 \cdot \text{Score})^2 \times \text{Standard Deviation} \times (1 - \text{Standard Deviation})$

$(\text{Margin of Error})^2$

This formula was used to select four hundred and ninety six (496) third years from a total of four thousand, four hundred and eight (4,408) university third year students. Students in their third year of study were considered for the study because they have matured through the system, therefore, could provide objective assessment of the purpose of this study which was to evaluate the influence of selected counseling strategies applied by Kenyan public universities in resolving academic stress, academic anxiety, and levels of self-esteem as forms of academic intrapersonal conflicts in order to enhance academic performance. The researcher then applied stratified random sampling technique to divide the population in strata on the basis of gender and from each of these strata she drew a random sample size. This step increased the probability that the final sample would be representative and comprehensive in terms of the stratified groups. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three (3) Deans of Students, three (3) Student Counselors. Purposive sampling technique was used to select thirty six (36) student leaders, eighteen (18) Chairpersons of academic Departments in the respective universities. Last but not least simple random sampling was applied to select three public universities.

Data for the study was collected using questionnaire, this approach was used because questionnaires give the opportunity to collect large amount of information in reasonably quick space of time. The use of questionnaires promises a wider coverage since they can approach respondents easily than other approaches [16]. They were administered to university third year students from sampled uniform measures without variations. The questionnaire captured the influence of selected counseling strategies applied by Kenyan public universities in resolving academic intrapersonal conflicts. It contained closed ended questions. In their own opinion, third year university students were to indicate how frequently the respective universities applied the interventions indicated in the questionnaire. In-depth Interview Schedule was used to enable the researcher extract very sensitive information related to counseling strategies and academic intrapersonal conflicts of students who were in the universities to clarify and elaborate the purpose of the research. It was used to supplement on what could be left out on using the university students' questionnaire [13]. It was administered to Deans of Students, Students Counselors, student leadership and Chairpersons of academic Department.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was used to gather thirty six university student leaders to discuss academic stress, academic anxiety, and levels of self-esteem as forms of academic

intrapersonal conflicts experienced that result from university environment. It was used to explore the range of options or views on the topic of this research so that it provides an insight into how the group thinks about related issues about the range of opinion and ideas, and the inconsistencies and variation that exists among university students in terms of their experiences and practices [17].

Data collected was processed, coded, and analyzed to facilitate addressing the research objective. Data was analyzed to help the researcher interpret data for the purpose of providing meaningful insights about the problem being examined [12]. Descriptive statistics, that is frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and variance of respondents' scores to all the statements in each of the sections of the questionnaire, interview schedule, and Focus Group Discussions were computed to allow the researcher describe the data and examine relationships between variables. Inferential statistics were used to enable the researcher examine causal relationships and even go beyond the parameters of present study sample and draw conclusions about the population from which the sample was drawn. Spearman's rho Correlation was used to evaluate whether there is an influence between the populations means of Independent (unrelated) Variables are significant in relating to the Dependent Variable. The statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for windows was used to aid in the data analysis [15]. All data was analyzed at a level of significance of 95% or $\alpha = 0.05$ and the degrees of freedom depending on the particular case determined.

Result

Descriptive Analysis of the Variables in the Study

The researcher examined the influence of various counseling strategies applied by Kenyan public universities in resolving the selected academic intrapersonal conflicts. The responses were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Indicates that an average application of the counseling services strategies in resolving the selected intrapersonal conflicts by public universities was rated at 52%, a mean of 2.0937, Standard Error mean .03599, Standard Deviation. 69782, Skewness. 683, and Standard Error. 126. The average rating of application of counseling strategies is an indication that the universities only but sometimes apply the counseling services strategies.

Inferential Analysis of the Variables in the Study

To examine the effectiveness of counseling strategies for influencing the academic intrapersonal conflicts in Kenyan public universities of Western Region a correlation analysis was conducted. The results of the Spearman's rho correlation were summarized in Table 2.

Table 1: Strategies Applied by University Counseling Service.

Strategy		Rarely	Sometimes	Occasionally	Mostly	
Withdrawal	Count	190	76	37	37	
	%	55.90%	22.40%	10.90%	10.90%	
Forcing	Count	179	74	34	59	
	%	51.70%	21.40%	9.80%	17.10%	
Avoidance	Count	139	105	45	52	
	%	40.80%	30.80%	13.20%	15.20%	
Compromise	Count	117	115	62	43	
	%	34.70%	34.10%	18.40%	12.80%	
Collaboration	Count	85	92	68	110	
	%	23.90%	25.90%	19.20%	31.00%	
Average Application of Counseling Techniques	Mean	%Mean	SE	SD	Skewness	SE
	2.0937	52%	0.03599	0.69782	0.683	0.126

Source: Field Data, 2019

Table 2: Correlation Matrix (Spearman's rho Correlation) for Counseling Strategies.

		Academic Intrapersonal Conflicts				
		Counseling Strategies	Low Self-esteem	High Self-esteem	Academic Anxiety	Academic Stress
Counseling Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1	0.022	-0.067	-.186**	-.136**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.701	0.24	0	0.008
	N	376	310	310	368	376
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, (2-tailed).						
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level, (2-tailed).						

Source: Field Data, 2019

Table 2 indicated that application of University Counseling Service strategies to resolving academic intrapersonal conflicts had a strong significant negative influence on academic stress, $R = -.186$, $p\text{-value} = .000$, and anxiety $R = .136$, $p\text{-value} = .008$. Therefore, effective use of these strategies in intervening academic intrapersonal conflicts is likely to keep these intrapersonal conflicts within the required levels. University counseling Service strategies to resolving academic intrapersonal conflicts had an insignificant correlation coefficient with self-esteem, low self-esteem $R = 0.022$, $p\text{-value} = 0.701$, high self-esteem $R = -0.067$, $p\text{-value} = 0.240$, thus the relationship between the two variables was weak. Students experiencing challenges with regard to self-esteem are expected to present themselves to the student counselors for counseling, seemingly very few do so considering the service relies on the willingness of the students to seek this service.

Discussion

Basing on the presentation and interpretation of results the influence of counseling strategies applied by Kenyan public

universities in resolving academic intrapersonal conflicts; the findings were discussed as follows:

Techniques Applied by University Counseling Service

With regard to descriptive statistics according to [11], university counseling service use withdrawal as a strategy where by a person tries to solve a problem by denying its existence thus results in win-lose. Information given above is in line with the objective of the study where 55.9% of Kenyan university third year students claimed that the strategy is rarely applied to resolve selected form of intrapersonal conflicts. 22.4% claimed that their respective universities only but sometimes apply it, while 10.9% of the students claimed their respective universities occasionally use it and 10.9% indicated that their universities mostly apply this approach to resolving academic intrapersonal conflicts. Referral services as a counseling instruction is applied when using this technique as an intrapersonal conflict management strategy. This is because sometimes, the cases that are brought to the attention of students counselors are beyond their capacity to handle e.g. psychiatric problem, financial challenges etc. Student counselors

refer certain cases to fellow counselors when they feel convicted that the counselor would be in position to handle the case better. Referrals are done depending on the nature of the problem to Meet identified classified appropriate problems.

According to [11] forcing as an approach to conflict resolution when used, one's authority, position, majority rule or a persuasion minority settles the conflict. It results in win-lose if the dominated party sees no hope for self. To some extent this study is in agreement with the current research where 51.9% stated that their respective universities rarely apply forcing strategy in solving academic intrapersonal conflicts, 21.4% indicated that sometimes it is used, while 9.8% of the respondents claimed that their respective universities occasionally apply this strategy, and 17.1% in most cases do apply forcing strategy in solving the selected forms of conflicts respectively. In Kenyan universities the student counselors and Dean of Students occasionally apply this strategy for university students who have been put on probation. Students who have committed crimes and have to appear before a students' examination irregularity disciplinary committee to defend themselves. Failure to satisfy the committee, the verdict is to be on probation thus forced to seek counseling.

Avoiding is a common response to the negative perception of conflicts. Generally all that happens is that feelings get pent up, views go unexpressed and the conflict manifests itself until it becomes too big to ignore [3]. His observations concur with those of this findings where majority of the university students, 40.8% claimed that their respective universities rarely apply avoidance as an approach to resolving academic intrapersonal conflicts. 30.8% of the respondents indicated that it is sometimes used, 13.2% occasionally and 15.2% mostly apply avoidance techniques in resolving the selected forms of conflicts. According to interviews and FGDs conducted, some third year university students stated that most of them tend to avoid dealing with academic intrapersonal conflicts. For engaging in dialogue and negotiation around academic intrapersonal conflicts is something students tend to approach with fear and hesitation, afraid that the conversation will go worse than the conflict has gone, thus fear.

It was reported that compromise which when used each party gives up something in order to meet midway results in win-lose if middle of the road ignores the real diversity of the issue [11]. It can be used when both parties have enough leeway to give [1]. It should be noted that this agrees with the research. 34.7% of the respondents stated that Kenyan universities rarely apply compromise to resolving the selected forms of conflicts, 34.1% claimed that their respective universities only but sometimes apply it, while 18.4% of the students stated that the technique is applied occasionally and 12.8% had noted that the strategy is used most of the time. To some extent this research shows that compromising is a satisfactory strategy when applied since students are able to gain and give in a series of tradeoffs. However,

compromise is generally not satisfying for both parties realm shaped by individual perceptions of their needs and does not necessarily enable the victims to understand the other side very well. University students often retain lack of trust and avoid risk-taking involved in more compromising issues.

Collaboration as a strategy is where by abilities, values and expertise of all are recognized, each person's position emphasis is on group result and it results in win-win for all [11]. Just as theorized in the above study, it has been revealed that 23.9% of the respondents agreed their respective universities rarely apply collaboration as a strategy in solving academic intrapersonal conflicts. 25.9% of university students hinted to it that sometimes it is used, 19.2% claimed that it is applied occasionally while 31% mostly use it. Collaborating is the pooling of individual needs and goals towards a common goal therefore, university students encourage the university personal to apply it since it offers the chance for consensus, the integration of needs, and the potential to exceed the possibilities available that previously limited their views of the intrapersonal conflict. In addition, it brings new time, energy and ideas to resolve the dispute meaningfully. However, time consuming to plan and coordinate. Sometimes staff - student meetings to discuss various issues, if not well structured and coordinated cause commotions.

Inferential statistics generally show that counseling strategies had a strong significant negative relationship with academic stress as a form of intrapersonal conflict; counseling strategies ($R = -.136$, $p\text{-value} = .008$). An indication that use of this strategies in intervening conflicts is likely to lead to reduced academic stress among students hence, improving academic performance in public universities in Western Region, Kenya. From the results, [10] stated that universities apply the counseling strategies effectively such that students are assisted to control academic stress levels. This in turn enables university students to perform on the academic mode. Counseling strategies had a strong significant negative relationship with academic anxiety as a form of intrapersonal conflict; counseling strategies ($R = -.186$, $p\text{-value} = .000$). The findings revealed that use of this strategies in intervening conflicts is likely to lead to a reduction in the levels of academic anxiety among students hence, improving academic performance in public universities in Western Region, Kenya. Thus, there is evidence that Kenyan public universities apply these counseling strategies effectively such that students are helped to cope with academic anxiety to the extent that university students are likely to realize their academic goals.

Low self-esteem was found to have insignificant correlation coefficient with counseling strategies; ($R = 0.022$, $p\text{-value} = 0.701$) as shown in table 2 above. This is a clear indication that use of this strategies in intervening conflicts is not likely to lead to improved self-esteem among students in public universities of Western Region, Kenya. These counseling strategies are only but

sometimes applied by Kenyan public universities, Western Region. Nevertheless, it is possible they might not have a significant influence on students suffering from low self-esteem for such individuals require special continuous attention if they have to be helped using these resolutions. Counseling strategies were found to have insignificant correlation coefficient with high self-esteem ($R = -0.067$, $p\text{-value} = 0.240$) as shown in table 2 above. According to [10] use of these counseling strategies in intervening conflicts is not likely to lead to improved high self-esteem among students hence not likely to influence the academic performance in universities. From the results of the research, it was reported that the use of these strategies can be fruitful if applied in an established healthy relationship where the consent of those in need of assistance is sought and both parties feel safe in such a relationship.

Conclusion

Counseling strategies, namely withdrawal, forcing, avoidance, compromising, and collaboration applied in public universities, Western Region, Kenya led to the right kind of academic stress and anxiety. Counseling strategies for resolving academic intrapersonal conflicts in universities were to some extent insignificant in raising and maintaining the students' self-esteem.

Recommendations

The Commission for University Education should organize routine technical inspections to establish the extent to which Public Kenyan Universities uphold academic standards. The University Management Board should diversify the operations of the counseling office to University Counseling Services in order to address varied intrapersonal conflicts exhaustively. Student welfare services, through its programs should offer a model for promoting universities capacities and responsibilities for making decisions about students' lives.

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