The Influence of Social Support on the Psychological Well Being of Students in University of Nairobi

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The Influence of Social Support on the Psychological Well Being of Students in University of Nairobi

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Abstract

Purpose: To determine the factors influencing mismanagement of devolved public funds and its effects on service delivery in Nairobi County.

Methodology: The research design was an explanatory research design.

Findings: Results revealed that parental support was significantly associated psychological well being of the students. Results also indicate that guidance and counseling and psychological well being were positively and significantly related. The findings of this study further indicated that peer support and psychological well being are positively and significant related. Finally, the study findings indicate that religious support and psychological well being were positively and significantly related.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The findings of this proposed study is significant in many respects to the undergraduates, psychologists, the university management, policy makers and the general public. The support received by the students could help to decrease their psychological problems since they feel that someone is there to help them, thus helping them to perform well in academic life. By having knowledge on how social support could help students to excel in study and cope with any psychological disturbances, much information could be derived to enhance the amount of support provided. Third, this study also hopes to contribute to the research on how to help and manage students' academic achievement. By having better understanding and knowledge about social support in relation to psychological condition of the students, it could help to design and organize proper development program to help them. Since social support is very much important to students, this study will also help family, especially parents, understand their roles in helping their children so that they can help the students to decrease their psychological problems. To policy makers, the study will provide recommendation on the innovation of new ideas of social support. The study identifies policy

gaps that can be fed to policy development for the betterment of strategy implementation approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Social support refers to the experience being valued, respected, cared about, and loved by others who are present in one's life (Gurung, 2006). It may come from different sources such as family, friends, teachers, community, or any social groups to which one is affiliated. Social support can come in the form of tangible assistance provided by others when needed which includes appraisal of different situations, effective coping strategies, and emotional support. Social support is an element that can help individuals to reduce the amount of stress experienced as well as to help individual cope better in dealing with stressful situations. Several studies indicated that supportive contacts correlate negatively with symptoms and psychological disorder such as stress, depression and other psychiatric disorder, and positively correlate with physical and mental health. A study by Nahid and Sarkis (1994) for example found that social support protects people in life crisis such as bereavement, illness, and other major stress, and moderates the effect of stressors on psychological well being.

It has long been recognized that the characteristics and quality of social support are central to the individual's adjustment. The quality of social support perceived and received has been reported by several studies to correlate more positively with mental health than the quantity of support received (Holahan *et al.,* 1995). Perceived social support refers to the belief that help is available if needed while received social support is the actual help obtained.

There are three dimensions of support provided by family and friend that is warmth, behavioral control, and psychological autonomy-granting. These three dimensions facilitate the development of positive self-conceptions and social skills, responsibility and competence, and impulse control and deterrence of deviance which in turn lead to low level of psychological problems the students. This support has also been found necessary for healthy level of development (Oswald & Suss, 1994). For example, these two sources of social support, i.e. family and friends are the predictor of individual's psychological well-being. The combination of family and friend support with acceptance and emotional warmth has been associated with higher grades in school and college, less misconduct, less psychological distress, and less delinquency among students of all social classes which would produce significant effects on adolescence academic achievement (Silbereisen & Todt, 1994).

Support from family and friends have been found to reduce the impact of psychological problems among students (Calvete & Connor-Smith, 2006). In addition, social support could help students to cope with everyday life stressor and lighten the burden of academic workload. Without enough support from family and friends, they would be in trouble and are vulnerable to

depression, stress and anxiety. This finding was supported by Dollete et al. (2004) who found that social support could act as a protective factor that could decrease psychological problems among students such as stress. A negative correlation between anxiety, stress, and depression, and social support has been reported by Nahid and Sarkis, (1994) in that low level of support have been associated with high level of anxiety, stress, and depression in college students. Social support was found to be one of the most important protective factors for students (Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000).

This is because social support includes social resources that individuals perceive to be available or that are actually offered to them which could help protect against psychological problems. According to Teoh and Rose (2001), lower level of social support is one of the predictors of psychological problems. It is associated with higher level of depression, anxiety, attention problems, thought problems, social problems, somatic complaints, and lower self esteem. These notions are supported by the study of Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, and Cribbie (2007) on 128 first year undergraduate students. It was found that students who perceived that their social resources increased had lower level of psychological problems. This shows that the impact of a stressful situation for example can be decreased when students have good social support. Advice and encouragement from sources of support may also increase the likelihood that an individual will rely on active problem solving and information seeking. These may assist students in dealing with various stressors in the environment and facilitate a positive adjustment process. The supportive actions provided by the social support are thought to buffer the impact of stress by increasing the effectiveness of coping efforts, which in turn decrease distress among students (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). For example, receiving emotional support and companionship may encourage effective adaptation among students in facing and coping with uncontrollable events.

Problem Statement

Social support is an aspect that should be reviewed since it is described as both a buffer against life stressors as well as an agent promoting health and wellness (Dollete, Steese, Phillips, & Matthews, 2004). Research has shown that social support plays an important role in managing psychological problems. Lack of social support has been found to be one of the factors that lead to many psychological problems among students. For instance, the rate of suicidal tendencies in Kenyan Universities has been on the rise. This has been an indicated of deep seated psychological problems being faced by students.

This psychological problem tends to have a negative effect on the progress of learners in universities since it may inhibit their academic progress, it may increase the mortality rate of youth and may defeat the objective of improving the human capital of the youth through higher education. The occurrence of suicidal tendencies is a concern for the individual students, the parents, the university and the nation at large.

Social support is very much important for individuals in their life. Deficits in social support have been shown to be related to many psychological problems such as depression, loneliness, and anxiety (Eskin, 2003). Elliot and Gramling (1990) found that social support helps the college students to lessen depression, anxiety, and stress. They also found that social support could help the students manage and lessen their psychological problems. Tumuti and Wang'eri (2014)

explored trauma types, symptoms manifestations and social support systems among Under-graduate students in Kenya. The findings further revealed that majority of students preferred seeking help from their close friends and only insignificant percentages sought help from established University programmes such as psychological counseling and other social support systems. The study recommended that the university set up a system of screening students for symptoms of psychological trauma. Kyalo (2011) investigated the influence of selected factors on students' social and academic adjustment at the University. Results also revealed that first year students had a higher level of academic adjustment compared to other students in the university. In addition, guidance and counseling programme has a critical role to play in assisting students to adjust in the university.

Despite the fact that a growing number of literature and empirical research have indicated the relationship between social support and psychological problems among students, the occurrence of suicidal tendencies as a result of lack of social support has been noted in the past where students have ended their lives prematurely. The problem seems to persist in the recent present as indicated earlier in the study and may persist in the future if not addressed properly. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate further on the effect of social support on the psychological well being on students in Nairobi University with an aim of finding a solution.

General Objective

- To establish the effect of parental support on the psychological well being of students of Nairobi University.
- To establish the effect of counseling support on the psychological well being of students of Nairobi University.
- To establish the effect of peer support on the psychological well being of students of Nairobi University.
- To establish the effect of religious faith based support on the psychological well being of students of Nairobi University.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Psychological Well Being Theory

This theory focuses on life in two different domains, namely peculiarly and non-peculiarly domains. The peculiarly reflecting the economic part of life while the non-peculiarly captures the social part of one's life. Life events in the non-peculiarly domain, such as marriage, divorce and physical disability, have a lasting effect on the well being and do not simply deflect a person temporarily above or below a set point given by genetics and personality.

This theory critics economists who argue that the peculiarly domain is better. In their argument, they claim that an increase in income results to an increase in goods at one's disposal and thus increasing the wellbeing. This is not true since the since the anticipated ex ante utility from an increase in consumption turns ex post turns out ex post to the expected. This is as result of a parallel increase in the living levels as one adapts to the new living level.

Theory of psychological well being builds on the evidence that adaptation and social comparison affect utility more in peculiarly than non-peculiarly domains. The failure of individuals to anticipate that these influences disproportionately undermines utility in the non-peculiarly goals, such as family life and health, and reduces well being.

Abrahams Maslow's theory

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in Psychological Review. Maslow subsequently extended the idea to include his observations of humans' innate curiosity. His theories parallel many other theories of human developmental psychology, some of which focus on describing the stages of growth in humans. Maslow used the terms Physiological, Safety, Belongingness and Love, Esteem, Self-Actualization and Self-Transcendence needs to describe the pattern that human motivations generally move through.

Maslow studied what he called exemplary people such as Albert Einstein, Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Frederick Douglass rather than mentally ill or neurotic people, writing that "the study of crippled, stunted, immature, and unhealthy specimens can yield only a cripple psychology and a cripple philosophy."Maslow studied the healthiest 1% of the college student population.

Maslow's theory was fully expressed in his 1954 book Motivation and Personality. While the hierarchy remains a very popular framework in sociology research, management training and secondary and higher psychology instruction, it has largely been supplanted by attachment theory in graduate and clinical psychology and psychiatry.
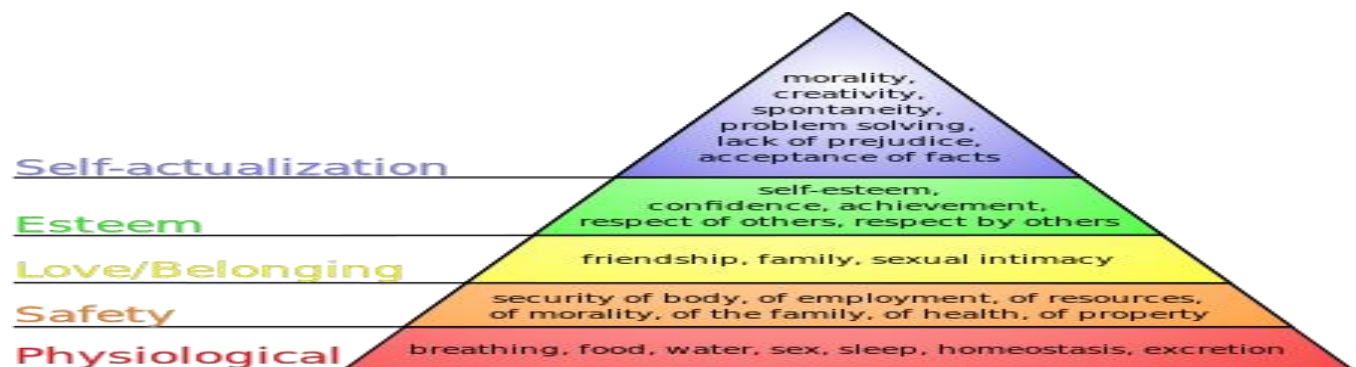

Fig 1:   Maslows Hierarchy of Needs

Source (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs)

This theory is very relevant to our current study since it clearly outlines that social support is a key factor to maintaining an individual's psychological well being.

Social Support Theory

Social relationships are a ubiquitous part of life, serving important social, psychological, and behavioral functions across the lifespan. More important, both the quantity and quality of social

relationships have been reliably related to morbidity and mortality (Blazer, 1982). Social support comes chiefly in the forms of instrumental assistance, information assistance and emotional assistance from other people. This theory suggests that social support can be experienced in the event that one is a member of a closely-knit group which has direct mental health benefits, one has confidants to whom he/she can confide in thus avoiding being weighed down by issues which could have been solved or lightened.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research design was an explanatory research design which attempted to establish the influence of a set of social support indicators on the psychological well being. The population of the study was the students registered in the peer counseling club of University of Nairobi. They were 600 members of the peer counseling club of University of Nairobi. A sample of 10% was used. This implies that the sample size was 60 students. The study used a questionnaire for data collection and the data was analyzed using a Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis was by descriptive and inferential statistics. In particular, mean scores and standard deviations were used.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Response Rate

The number of questionnaires that were administered was 60. A total of 57 questionnaires were properly filled and returned. This represented an overall successful response rate of 95% as shown on Table1.

Table 1:   Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percent
Returned	57	95%
Unreturned	3	5%
Total	**60**	**100%**

Demographic Characteristics

The respondents were asked to describe their basic characteristics such as their gender, age bracket, undergraduate programme they are pursuing, the year of study and religion. Results revealed that majority of the respondents were between 18-25 years represented by 75.44% and those between 26-35 years were represented by 24.56%. This implies that majority of the student at the University of Nairobi are between 18-25 years of age. Results also revealed that majority of the respondents were civil engineering students represented by 28.07%, 24.56% were from mechanical engineering, 17.54% were structural engineering students, electrical & Electronics had 15.79% and Environmental and Bio Systems had a representation of 14.04%. Further, results revealed that majority of the respondents were 5th year students with a representation of 24.56%, 4th year students had a representation of 21.05% followed by 2nd year at 19.30%. Those

in 1st, 6th and 3nd had a representation of 14.04%, 12.28% and 8.77% respectively. All the respondents also indicated that they belonged to a religion.

Descriptive Statistics

This section provides results from descriptive analysis of the determinants of psychological well being. The results are presented in the form of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Parental Support and Psychological Well Being

The objective of the study was to establish the effects of parental support on psychological well being of the students in at the University of Nairobi. A result in Table 2 shows the response on parental support. Majority (84.90%) of the respondents had parents/guardian. Majority of the respondents (68.40%) received social support from their parents while growing up while 49.10% of the respondents are currently being supported socially by their parents a further 50.90% represents those that don't receive social support from parent/guardian currently. When asked if their parents/guardians spend time with them during holidays, 64.90% had a yes respond while 35.10% of the respondents did not spend time with their parents/ guardian during holidays. Respondents who benefited from social support from their parents/guardians were 63.20% while 36.80% of the respondents were not benefiting in terms of social support from their parents/ guardians.

Table 2: Parental Support

Statement	No	Yes
Do you have a parent or a guardian?	15.10%	84.90%
Did your parent/ guardian provide you with social support as you were growing up?	31.60%	68.40%
Does your parent/guardian provide you with social support currently?	50.90%	49.10%
Does your parent/guardian have time with you during holidays?	35.10%	64.90%
Do you share disturbing issues with your parent/ guardian?	50.90%	49.10%
Do you benefit in terms of social support from your parent/guardian?	36.80%	63.20%
Average	**40.07%**	**59.93**

Counseling Support and Psychological Well Being

The objective of the study was to determine the effects of counseling on psychological well being of the students at University of Nairobi. Results in Table 3 reveals how students responded when asked different questions pertaining guidance and counseling in the university. Majority (68.40%) agreed the University had a well-established guidance and counseling department while 31.60% felt the University's guidance and counseling department was not well established. The respondents also had different views on whether the university counselors had the right education on matters guidance and counseling with 70.20% agreeing that the counselors had the right knowledge while 29.80% were of contrary opinion. On whether the respondents were free

to share disturbing issues with the counselors, 57.90% were in agreement and admitted they had freedom to discuss issues with the counselors while 42.10% of the respondents felt they were not free to approach the counselors on disturbing issues. The respondents who admitted that they benefit from social support from the counselors were (64.10%) while 35.90% felt they don't get any social support from the counselors.

Table 3: Counseling Support

Statement	No	Yes
Is there an established guidance and counseling programme in the university?	31.60%	68.40%
Do the counselors' have the right education pertaining to guidance and counseling?	29.80%	70.20%
Are you free to share disturbing issues with the counselors?	42.10%	57.90%
Do you benefit in terms of social support from the counselors?	35.90%	64.10%
Average	**45.62%**	**54.38%**

Peer support and Psychological Well Being

The objective of the study was to establish the effects of peer support on psychological well being of the students in at the University of Nairobi. A result in Table 4 shows the response on different aspect to determine the of peer support on psychological well being of the students. 40.40% of the respondents were members of a peer group while 59.60% did not belong to any peer group. On whether the peers gave positive guidance 52.60% of the respondents were in agreement while 47.40% felt their peers did not give them positive guidance. The respondents who received social support from their peers when having psychological problems were 57.90% while 42.10% did not receive social support from their peers when having psychological problems. Majority of the respondents represented by 59.60% benefited in terms of social support from their peers while 40.40% did not benefit in terms of social support from their peers

Table 4: Peer Support

Statement	No	Yes
Are you a member of a peer group?	59.60%	40.40%
Do your peers give you positive guidance?	47.40%	52.60%
Do your peers give you social support when you have psychological problems?	42.10%	57.90%
Are you free to share disturbing issues with your peers?	36.80%	63.20%
Is there an established peer counseling unit in your university?	47.40%	52.60%
Do you benefit in terms of social support from your peers?	40.40%	59.60%
Average	**37.90%**	**62.10%**

Religious Faith Based Support and Psychological Well Being

The objective of the study was to determine the effects of religious faith based support on psychological well being of the students at University of Nairobi. Results in Table 5 indicate students' response to different questions with relevance to their religion and psychological well being in the university. At least 94.70% were members of a certain religion. Those that active members of their denomination 80.70% of the respondents while 19.30% were not very active members of their denominations. Majority of the respondents represented by 86.00% agreed that their denominations offered social support to its members, while 14.00% were of contrary opinion. The study also indicate that majority of members of different denomination were free to share disturbing issues with their spiritual leaders as supported by 93.0%. On the other hand 7% of the respondents felt that members of their denomination were not free to share disturbing issues with their spiritual leaders. Majority (86%) of the respondents admitted that they get social support from their denomination and they benefit from it while 14% of the respondents did not benefit in terms of social support from their denomination.

Table 5: Religious Faith Based Support

Statement	No	Yes
Do you belong to any religion?	5.30%	94.70%
Are you an active member in your denomination?	19.30%	80.70%
Does your denomination offer social support to its members?	14.00%	86.00%
Are the members free to share disturbing issues with their spiritual leaders?	7.00%	93.00%
Do you benefit in terms of social support from your denomination?	14.00%	86.00%
Average	**11.92%**	**78.05%**

Psychological Well Being

The study sought to find out the effects of social support on psychological well being of the students. The study accessed social support from different organs of the society within which students operate. The study accessed social support from parent, peers, religious groupings and guidance and counseling departments. The response on whether social support from the organs above was boasted their psychological well being was as follows; 89.50% of the respondents agreed that social support from parents/guardian was of assistance to their psychological well being and 10.50% were of the opposite opinion. Majority of the respondents (71.90%) agreed social support from their peers played a major role in their psychological well being while 28.10% of the respondents felt social support from their peers did not play a role in their psychological well being. Majority of the respondents also agreed that social support from guidance and counseling department boasted their psychological well being.

Table 6: Psychological Well Being

Statement	No	Yes
Social support from my parents/guardian has been of assistance to my psychological well being?	10.50%	89.50%
Social support from my peers has been of assistance to my psychological well being?	28.10%	71.90%
Social support from the guidance and counseling department has been of assistance to my psychological well being?	24.60%	75.40%
Social support from my religious leaders has been of assistance to my psychological well being?	24.60%	75.40%
Average	**21.95%**	**78.05%**

Inferential Statistics

This section provides results from regression between the dependent and the independent variables.

Regression

Table 7 shows the fitness of the model identified above to determine the effect of social support on psychological well being. The coefficient of determination also called the R^2 was 0.528. This means that the combined effect of the predictor variables (parental support, guidance and counseling, peer support and religious faith based support) explains 52.8% employee performance.

Table 7: Model of Fitness

Indicator	Variable
R	0.407
R Square	0.166
Adjusted R Square	0.155

The results on analysis of variance in Table 8 indicate that the overall model was significant. This shows that the effect of social support was statistically significant in explaining psychological well being. This was demonstrated by a p value of 0.000 which is less than the acceptance critical value of 0.05.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Indicator	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	0.675	4	0.169	7.264	0.000
Residual	1.208	52	0.023		
Total	1.884	56			

Table 9 below presents the results of the regression coefficient of the study. The results shows that parental support and psychological well being are positively and significant related (B=0.206, p=0.036). The table further indicates that peer support and psychological well being are positively and significant related (B=0.373, p=0.004). It was further established that counseling and psychological well being were positively and significantly related (B=0.655 p=0.000). Similarly, results showed that religious faith based support and psychological well being were positively and significantly related (r=0.513, p=0.001).

This means an increase in either of the variables will positively increase the level of psychological well being. The analysis also yields results that show all variables used in the study are statistically significant as the probability (p) values were below 0.05 which is the conventional value of 0.05.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients

Variables	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant		5.007	0.000
Parental Support	0.206	-1.809	0.036
Peer support	0.373	-3.005	0.004
Guidance and counseling	0.655	5.217	0.000
Religious faith based support	0.513	0.113	0.001

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study it can be concluded that peer support influences the psychological well being of the students in the University of Nairobi. Precisely it can be concluded that parental support, counseling support, peer support and religious faith based support influences the psychological well being of the students in the University of Nairobi.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that parents/guardians should offer social support to their children especially those in learning institutions in order to enhance their psychological well being. The students benefit greatly from social support from their parents/guardians this would result to reduced psychological problem and increased psychological well being.

The study also recommends that students should be allowed to mingle with their peers up to a certain level. From the study findings, peer groups play a significant role in psychological well being of the students. The peer groups engagements should closely be managed by parents and counselors because a considerable percentage from the findings indicate peers can also affect psychological well being negatively.

The study also recommends that University should strengthen the guidance and counseling sector since this department also plays a significant role in psychological well being of the students. Majority of the students still trust the guidance and counseling with their disturbing issues.

Further, the study recommends that the religious leaders through their different denominations should enhance social support mechanisms to reach most of their members. The youth should be given special attention in order to enhance their psychological well being.

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