

## **Influence of Counselling Services on Alcohol and Drug use among Female Undergraduates in Kenyan Universities in Relation to Academic Performance**

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**Abstract:** The use of alcohol and drugs has continued to pose a big challenge in the society. The menace has also penetrated the young generation, especially the youth in institutions of higher learning. The use of alcohol and drugs among university female undergraduates on campuses has become an issue of concern owing to the health and other risks associated with alcohol use among women. Despite the existence of counselling services that are offered in institutions of learning, the number of female undergraduate students using alcohol and drugs continues to increase. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of counselling services on management of alcohol and drug use among female undergraduates in selected public and private universities in Kenya. This research employed ex-post-facto research design. The researcher sampled 380 students from both public and private universities through proportionate and stratified sampling methods. The data collected was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. This comprised of frequencies, percentages and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The analysis was aided by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The results of this study show the need for establishment of specialized programmes in universities in order to equip students with the necessary skills that will enhance their ability to cope with university challenges, especially in relation to use of drugs and alcohol.

**Keywords:** Alcohol, Drug abuse, Female undergraduate, Counselling.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

There are 22 public universities in the country, which include; University of Nairobi, Moi University, Kenyatta University, Egerton University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Laikipia University, Maseno University and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology among others. These universities have also constituency colleges and some of these have been upgraded to university status and some are in the process. These universities were established due to national and regional needs. Their foundation is not religious, and student admission is through Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service (KUCCPS) which is done purely on academic merit. The student population in public universities is higher than in private universities.

These institutions are congested in accommodation and lecture halls because of large numbers being admitted without expansion of facilities [1]. Although university rules and regulations are given to students when they register, their implementation is not keenly monitored thus some students break them now and then. Social activities in public university campuses are inadequate due to the large student body. Due to idleness, alcohol and drug use are on the

increase in public universities. In some campuses some students peddle alcohol and drugs to earn some money.

There are also more than 25 private universities in the country. Some of these are accredited by their parent universities and have been recognised by the Kenya government to offer degrees having satisfied the requirements by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE). Some of these include; University of Eastern Africa Baraton, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Daystar University, Kenya Methodist University, Kabarak University, United States International University and St. Paul's Theological University among others [2]. Most of these private universities are founded on Christian values and principles. Their philosophies and missions provide for a holistic Christian education, and they usually have a small population. They are well staffed with full time and part time lecturers, and religious activities are emphasized. Alcohol and Drug use is forbidden in campus and this is strictly enforced. However, in the recent past, reports have indicated that the alcohol and drug culture has penetrated the private universities, though the rules and regulations are clearly spelt out to the students.

Guidance and counselling services in public universities are inadequate and the office of the Dean of Students in most campuses is usually understaffed [3]. This is unfortunate considering that young adults of college age are faced with developmental transitional challenges related to adjusting to academic life, developing academic skills and planning careers. They also struggle with personal identity, developing social relationships, learning to live with roommates and forming intimate, romantic partnerships. Counselling services come in handy to help the students adjust to college life expectation. College counselling centres are typically under the jurisdiction of a dean of students. As part of student services, counselling centres work together with the student affairs office to facilitate students' general welfare and academic progress. College counselling services are provided by well trained counsellors. Most Counselling centres serve as resource centre for the placement of counsellor interns from the departments of psychology, educational psychology, and counsellor education.

Individual and group counselling are the most common treatment modality (). However college counselling centres continue to address academic problems by offering outreach activities, such as consultation with faculty. Because of the escalating need for counselling services among students and the lack of resources to employ needed counsellors, many centres refer clients to off campus counselling centres.

In the United States of America in a 2001 survey, Gallagher [4] found a ratio of 1 counsellor to 1600 students in college counselling centres. The ratio generally recommended by counselling centre directors is 1 counsellor to 750 to 1000 students. This latter ratio is minimally sufficient only if other necessary psychological personnel services are available to students. College counselling staffs spend about 61 % of their time in individual and group counselling, with brief counselling the most commonly used approach. Gallagher goes on to aver that crises counselling services have expanded to deal with the increasing number of students afflicted by traumatic crises, student addicted to alcohol and students suffering from violence, abuse and sexual assault.

The need for counselling services to counter substance use is relevant especially because alcohol and drug use and misuse has begun to be viewed as a disease [5].

Many reasons have been given as to why students use alcohol and drugs. Wanyoike [6] states that there is a multifaceted explanation as to why people use substances, since not all people use substances for the

same reasons. Payne and Hahn [7] reported that factors that influence alcohol and drug use among students are numerous and vary from individual to individual. These factors include those that are related to traits of the users, their immediate environment and the society at large. Loaw[8] explains that these factors are traced to the traits of an individual such as genetic predisposition, personality traits, personal attitudes, interpersonal skills and developmental needs. Female subjects who use alcohol and drugs are reported to do so as a result of the stresses and crises associated with the onset of adolescence.

CASA surveyed a nationally representative sample of 2,000 students, who said they take alcohol and drugs to relieve stress, relax, have fun, forget their problems and be one of the gang. College women in focus groups said they wanted to keep up with the guys so they went for a drink with them (though on average 1 drink has the impact on a woman that 2 have on a man). These women also said they were under enormous pressure to have sex and they used alcohol as a disinhibitor.

The Vice chancellors' committee report on causes of disturbances and riots in public universities of 2000, notes that certain susceptible students are more likely to develop substance dependency because of biological, psychological or social predisposing factors such as genetic disposition, depression and peer influence. Heavy use of alcohol and drugs is intensified by precipitating factors such as stressful life events or psychological instigators such as anxiety or insomnia. Primary psychological dependence is developed as a consequence of heavy substance use.

This intolerance in behaviour and increased substance use is the manifestation of physical dependence as a reaction to alcohol and drug use [9]. Substance use can result in mental and physical states that cause disorientation and other behavioural problems in the life of students.

Students' academic performance can be affected. Relationships with families, friends and colleagues can also be disrupted due to dependence on alcohol and drugs. Such students normally become alienated and are most likely to become irresponsible in their behaviour and soon lose a sense of purpose and direction. Perkinson [10] argue that alcohol is basically a central nervous system depressant and dulls the brain making learning a difficult task. When students get to the behaviour of using alcohol their reasoning get impaired and education becomes of less priority in the student's life.

Many students, especially those who come from very challenging environments need to be empowered through counselling because it is very important in colleges, since it informs, creates awareness and spells out the dangers of alcohol and drug use [11]. The empowerment of the students on positive decision making is important during this stage of their college life. Specialized training is important for counsellors who are working with alcohol and drug users. The traditional counselling approaches frequently have limited effectiveness. Counsellors who work extensively with alcohol and drug users usually acquire specialised training. Clients who are substance users are very resistant to change, and the conditions of facilitating their use are often beyond the counsellors' control [12]. Counsellors working with clients need dramatically different techniques proven to have some chance of success with alcohol and drug use clients. Also counsellors must be aware of client's conditions that merit referral to more highly trained specialists for long-term treatment and monitoring [13].

Students who are using alcohol and drugs should be assisted to quit the behaviour, and those who do not have the behaviour of using substances should be empowered to never get involved in such kind of behaviour, [14].

Counsellors working with students who use alcohol and drugs generally should have a specialised knowledge of the pharmacological, physiological, psychological and social cultural aspects of the use of alcohol and drugs. They should be able to endeavour to assist students to improve their self esteem and have a positive self image [15].

Long neglected and underestimated alcohol and drug use problems among women are finally receiving the attention they deserve [16]. According to NIDA [17], there is definite evidence that the rate of alcohol and drug use by women has increased considerably. Schliebner-Tait and Peregoy [18], state that alcohol and drug use among Asian female college students residing in the United States has continued to increase. They add that there is an increase in alcohol and other drug use among those residing in Taiwan. In a study examining substance use among adolescents in Taiwan the results indicated a decrease in smoking and drinking between 1991 and 1994, and then increased between 1994 and 1996, [19].

Schliebner-Tait, and Peregoy, [20] also note that the rate of illicit substance use among females in Taiwan was lowest among high school students, followed by middle school students and higher among students in vocational schools and colleges. The

prevalence of smoking and drinking habits among females increased consistently. Although Asian women are expected to drink little or no alcohol or engage in drug use because of their cultural values, the cigarettes, alcohol and tranquilizers use appeared to be increasing. Two major factors accounting for this increase are stress and level of acculturation. As individuals compete with one another for academic and professional success, the stress associated with this competition may result in the use of alcohol and other drugs.

Also, as individuals immigrate to the Western countries and become acculturated to the Western culture thus altering their own cultural beliefs and values, they may become more vulnerable to drinking alcohol and using drugs. According to Kariuki [21], more male students use substances than female students, that the relatively high male prevalence in substances use is attributed to the characteristics of male susceptibility to curiosity. However, the majority of female substance users tend to be in the age bracket of 14-16 years. He concluded that female subjects in age range use substances as a result of the stresses and crises associated with adolescence. Johnson [22] discussed results of a survey on substance use among adolescents in Kenya and noted that males are more likely to experiment with inhalants, commercial beer, spirits and narcotics than young females. The survey also revealed that the age of experimentation with substances is during adolescence.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted *ex-post-facto* research design. According to Kerlinger [23], an *ex-post facto* research design explores and clarifies relationship between one or two variables. It is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the researcher has no control on the independent variable because its manifestations have already occurred. In this study, the design helped the researcher to determine the influence of independent variable on dependent variables. The independent variable was not directly controlled by the researcher since this influence had already occurred and therefore could not be manipulated. This design ensured that no control was exercised on any of the variables. The design was considered suitable for this study because it allows the researcher to select the relevant variables for an analysis of their influence since the conditions or types of behaviour has already occurred.

The accessible population comprised of six purposively selected universities, three public and three private with an estimated population of 15,003 female undergraduate students in their first, second, third and fourth years of study. Fifth year students were not

considered for this study because some of the selected universities do not offer five year degree programmes. Data collected was cleaned, coded, and keyed in a computer. The processed data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The results of the analysis was interpreted and presented in tables and figures. Frequency tables were used to present data. Inferential analysis tool was used to make inferences about the findings. The tool used was Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

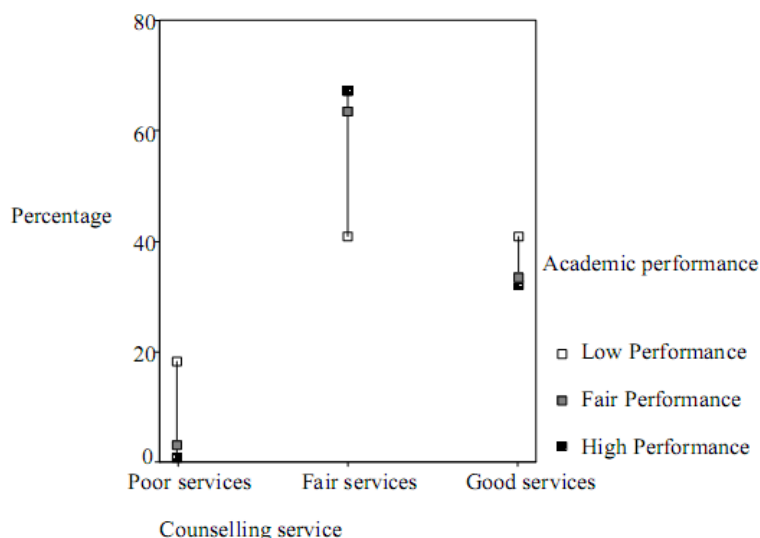
This study sought to determine the influence of counselling services on alcohol and drug use among female undergraduates in selected Kenyan universities in relation to academic performance. It involved a five point Likert scale instrument with choices ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The preliminary investigation into the study gave the findings in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Cross tabulation of Counselling Service and Academic Performance, N= 380**

Counselling service	Academic performance			Total
	Low	moderate	High	
Poor services	4	3	2	9
Fair services	9	61	176	246
Good services	9	32	84	125
Total	22	96	262	380

Table 1 above shows that a total of 262 respondents performed highly in academics. Only a small number (22) of the respondent were low performers. Investigation on counselling services offered showed that 246 respondents rated the counselling services they received in the university as

fair. Almost a half of this figure (125) of the respondents termed the counselling service offered as good. A negligible number rated the service as poor. A further investigation using drop lines of percentages revealed the findings in Figure 1 below



**Fig-1: Influence of Counselling Services on Alcohol and Drug Use among female undergraduates on Academic performance**

Figure 1 indicates that 20% of the respondents who showed low performance also reported having had poor counselling services. On the other hand, above 70% respondents showed both high and fair performance and reported having had fair counselling services. There was very little difference when it came to those claiming to have had good counselling service in comparison to their performance. These findings

indicate that there is some relationship between counselling services offered and academic performance. The results therefore imply that counselling on alcohol and drug use is very important in colleges since it informs, creates awareness and spells out the dangers of alcohol and drug use.

The empowerment of the students on positive decision making is important during this stage of their college life [24]. When a correlation analysis was

carried out the information in Table 2 below was obtained.

**Table 2: Correlations between Counselling Services, Alcohol and Drug Use and the Academic performance, N= 380**

		Academic performance
Counselling service	Pearson Correlation	.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.525
	N	380

Table 2 shows that there was a correlation of .033 between counselling service and academic performance at a probability value  $p = .525$ . This value shows that  $p > .05$ . The finding means that there is no statistical significant influence of counselling services on the consequences of alcohol and drug use on academic performance. There is therefore no statistical significant influence of counselling services on the consequences of alcohol and drug use on academic performance among female undergraduates in public and private universities in Kenya.

This information disagrees with Perkinson’s [25] argument that alcohol and drugs depresses central nervous system and make the brain dull hence making learning a difficult task. Perkinson further argues that when people get used to using alcohol, their reasoning get impaired and education becomes of less priority in their life. Similarly the findings disagree with those of Steenbarger [26] who observed that alcohol and drugs use affect the brain and results in a decline in the functions carried out by the brain. Steenbarger [27] further argues that alcohol and drugs do affect the people’s degree of concentration, drastically reducing academic performance. The results of this study also contradict those of Payne and Hahn [28] who stated that alcohol and drugs use has devastating influence on students who are developing their careers through education, and can make them perform poorly in their academics.

The most probable reason why there was a disagreement with other studies was that the respondents were not sampled from the normal population. Specifically, universities are academic institutions of higher learning where the purposively selected few with high academic credentials are placed. Similarly the other cause of disagreement might have resulted from the fact that this population of study were not addicts’ parse but mere users of alcohol and drugs. Since they had not reached the addiction stage, it is assumed that they still had a control over their abilities.

**CONCLUSION**

This study has established that there is a significant number of female students in Kenyan universities who use alcohol and drugs for various reasons. It has also indicated that counselling services are accessible for most of the students. Majority of the students respond positively, and frequently seek counselling services. There is, however, no substantial evidence that the use of alcohol and drugs causes decline in academic performance among the female students in the universities sampled. This, however, may not be generalised to the whole student population at all levels of education since the sample in the current study entailed those who are already academically strong. Further research may therefore be conducted to ascertain the impact of alcohol and drugs use using more inclusive learning groups.

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