

KUPCA COUNSELORS MEETING PROCEEDINGS ON 28TH NOVEMBER 2023 HELD AT UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI TOWERS

The meeting started with a prayer from the university chaplain Fr. Peter Kaigua

Then members introduced themselves and recapped their journey to the workshop

Climate setting

The chairperson of KUPCA Dr. Catherine Amulundu welcomed all members present. She challenged the members to think big about the direction of the KUPCA. Members expressed the following expectations for the future of KUPCA:

1. Establishing a KUPCA academic journal
2. Having an annual conference
3. Having mental health awareness on the mass media
4. Enhanced visibility of KUPCA in the society
5. Having yearly themes that guide us
6. Reaching out to students before they reach the university at high and primary school-early interventions
7. Review of the peer counsellors' curriculum
8. Introduction of the life skills curriculum
9. Inclusion of suicide in the curriculum
10. Having offices across the country to serve
11. Offering counselling in the digital era- following the students
12. Using university-owned TV and Radio stations to create awareness about mental health
13. Data aggregation of cases handled in the universities
14. Standardization of practice
15. Webinars – Have online supervision sessions
16. Integration of KUPCA with the Counselors and Psychologist Board
17. Increased partnerships with other organisations
18. Becoming more innovative in reaching out to students beyond talking

Photo 1: The KUPCA chair Dr. Catherine Amulundu gives her opening remarks.



OPENING REMARKS BY THE UON VICE CHANCELLOR PROF. STEPHEN KIAMA

Before the remarks, the chair of KUPCA introduced the members present from the following universities

1. Chuka University
2. Daystar University
3. Technical University of Mombasa
4. University of Kabianga
5. LAIKIPIA University
6. University of Eldoret
7. Pwani University
8. Daystar University
9. Tangaza University
10. Taita Taveta University
11. Kisii University

12. Machakos University
13. BARATON
14. Uzima University
15. USIU
16. Egerton University
17. UON
18. University of Embu
19. Meru University
20. DeKUT
21. Kibabii University
22. Masai mara University
23. Turkana university
24. Karatina University

The chair gave a short history of the Association from 2013.

- KUPCA meets once a year

Key activities include

- Generation of peer counsellors' curriculum
- Life skills curriculum

VC REMARKS

- He acknowledged the role of the association
- He noted that the association is important in sharing experiences and emerging issues
- He highlighted that the UON had lost two students to suicide hence the immense role played by counselors
- Upon receipt of the suicide report, he ordered an investigation into the circumstances of the student
- He urged counsellors to be proactive in reaching out to students especially the ones who have missed units, lost a loved one, repeated a course, taken drugs, financial challenges among others
- He noted that no university can produce a holistic graduate without the help of counsellors and urged the counsellors to make sure that what they do finds its way into the university management agendas so that counselling gains prominence
- He noted that mental health challenges are not visible hence people don't always offer to help like with physical injuries it is upon counselors to create awareness about mental health
- He welcomed the participants to the UoN, wished them well and declared the workshop open



Photo 2: The KUPCA Executive giving the University of Nairobi VC a KUPCA-branded T-shirt

Interactive session on suicide

Signs

- Isolation
- Lack of interest in what is happening around them
- Self-neglect
- Preoccupation with suicidal ideas
- Lack of concentration
- Verbalized disappearance
- Feeling of helplessness and hopelessness
- Giving away things
- Bye-bye messages from social media
- Suicidal notes
- Internet searches history
- Drastic changes in behaviour
- Emotional outburst
- History of trauma

Risk factors

- History of trauma
- Self-harm
- Exposure to suicide tools
- Abusive environment
- Gender – being male
- Media publicity
- Age – young adults and teenagers
- Academic and financial distress
- Relationship distress
- Alcohol and drug use
- Missing marks-
- Overuse of social media
- Family Separation

Protective factors

- Social factors-
- Life-skills training
- Advocating for seamless systems
- Tracking student whereabouts through small groups assigned to a mature student

Role of faith in suicide prevention

- The presence of cultism in our universities
- Faith helps give purpose to life
- Working together with spiritual leaders
- Resident chaplain and deans help in early referral and resolution of issues

How counsellors help in case of Needy Students

- Work study program for the needy cases
- Fundraising for students from students and staff
- University bursaries
- Meal cards for students
- Working with peer counsellors and student leaders to identify needy students
- Endowment fund- was created through the staff contributions and fund drives
- Financial aid
- Meal assistance
- Okolea students- fund drives from their constituencies
- Training of students in financial management

Depression in our universities (prevalence, signs and symptoms) by Dr. Teresia Waithira

Tools used in the assessment of clients

- PHQ 9- has 9 questions- depression assessment
- ASK 5- suicide assessment

Questions asked

1. Do we have social workers in Kenya?
2. What do we do to men to open up?
3. What do we do in cases where the parents are uncooperative?

Case study on Suicide cases from various universities

Music therapy, skit and interaction by Suleiman Maningi

- It's a group of students who usually use music and art therapy
- They work in 21 universities
- They use art and dance as an ice breaker

Questions asked

- Is there music that depresses?
- Does the music have to rhyme with the choreography?
- How do you take care of the dancers?

Day 2 Proceedings (29/11/2023)

Before the daily proceedings, members were led into a devotion conducted by Rev. Mitei Hosea a chaplain from the University of Nairobi.

The day started with a recap of the first-day proceedings led by Counselor Mary Otieno from the University of Nairobi.

Spirituality and Mental Health by Fr. Peter Kaigua

Religion related to God, the ultimate truth

He noted the marks of religion as Scripture and ritual

- He urged counsellors to be non-judgmental
- He noted that it's hard to define abnormality since cultures differ from culture to culture

Good Mental health is defined by the following:

- Involves self-awareness
- Freedom from unreasonable fear
- Ability to derive satisfaction from one's deeds
- Living in harmony with others (family,
- Being kind and helpful to others
- Being reliable
- Being dependable
- Being honest with God and others-Spiritual aspect
- Being faithful to one's conscience and religious duties- Spiritual aspect
- Having the capacity to play and have fun
- Taking reasonable care of one's health
- Taking responsibility
- Being able to receive and give love
- Make decisions and face the consequences

He noted that being healthy is a gift from God

Mental health is a job that we have to take care of all the time for all individuals

We have to learn to adjust to all environments and to adapt

If people don't enrich themselves then they will not be able to survive

Mental health manifestation

1. Biological
2. Psychological
3. Spiritual
4. Sociological

Spiritual mental health manifestation

Stress- emanates from

- Confusion about God
- Purpose of life- He recommended a book by Peter Franklin called Man's Search for Meaning
- Temper –anger
- Failure to forgive self and others
- Yield to evil inclinations against our conscience

Coping with mental stress

- Having faith, hope and love
- Constantly turning to God in prayer
- Constant examination of conscience
- Coping with trials and difficulties
- Serving others

Note:

- The practice of religion can be emotive
- Religion is a source of meaning it can be a source of neurotic and psychoticism
- 90% of the population is believers in something because religion helps people cope with trials, pain and suffering
- Religion facilitates mutual living and cooperation
- In early life mental health was done by priests
- Religion influences the psychological balance of people

Questions asked

1. What is the difference between spiritual and psychological counselling?- let there be a collaboration between specialists
2. What is your opinion on psychological matters being responded to in spiritual ways?- **you cannot cure a physical wound with a spiritual bandage!**
3. Can one be unable to forgive God?

SELF-CARE STRATEGIES FOR THERAPISTS BY PAMELA LUNJALU (PHD)

Outline of the Presentation

- Overview
- Therapist burnout
- Statically
- Only 1/5 of people in Kenya receive mental health help

Counsellors deal with

- Client work overload, depression, suicide, trauma, Substance Use Disorder, Stress and anxiety and disorders
- Organizational structure: job pressure, role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity
- Strain of face-to-face sessions
- Work-life imbalance

Self-care strategies

It is a conscious act people take to promote their own physical, mental and emotional health?

Importance of self-care

- Protect the health of the therapist
- Promotion of ongoing health of clients

Types of self-care

- Physical
- Social
- Mental
- Spiritual
- Emotional

The burden of masculinity – the idea that men must not focus on emotion or are weak if they do can be and is very damaging

Have the counsellors considered

1. Seeking professional help
 2. Professional development
- Educational events
 - Professional associations
 - Staying Informed

- New certifications and advanced degrees
- Networking

Self-care steps

1. Assess your needs
2. Consider your stressors
3. Devise self-care strategies
4. Plan for challenges
5. Take small steps
6. Schedule time to focus on your needs

WHO definition of mental health

Self-reflection exercise

- A state of well-being where a person: -

ANXIETY AND MOOD DISORDERS IN THE UNIVERSITY BY DR. ROSE OTIENO KISII UNIVERSITY

- Academic Work is a significant factor in the mental health and wellbeing outcomes of university students.
- Career development helps find and manage work wellbeing outcomes.
- Mental health challenges can impede academic success, career progression and acquisition and retention of suitable work career development.
- Career progression and Mental Health wellness have an interactive relationship (both “good” and “bad”) and well-being outcomes.
- Poor mental health can make the college experience a challenging time for students and their parents/caregivers.
- Students struggling with mental health problems are twice as likely to drop out.

Young people are constantly battling:

- The effects of human rights violations,
- Wars and violence in the home, schools and businesses.
- Spending most of their day on the internet –
- Cyber-crimes, cyberbullying, and playing violent video games.
- Suicide and substance abuse steadily rising
- Feeling alone and persecuted for being true to themselves

- Toxic political environment, relationships
- Covid -19 pandemic

Recent studies in Kenya

- Among medical students, 61%, had moderate stress, non-medical, 36 % (UON) (2022)
- Depression among students from different schools at 48.8% (Kisii University) (2023)
- Others have focused on the factors contributing to mental health problems among students
- Few focused on the interventions

Symptoms of MH Problems- Check out on;

- Behaviors, unusual/ bizarre
- Cognitive function-higher mental processes e.g problem-solving, concentration, decision making affected
- Personality traits e.g enduring characteristics
- Physical signs- e. g somatization, aggression, failure to attend classes or interact with others-withdrawn
- Syndrome combinations
- The duration that requires clinical expertise to differentiate from normal life
- How long, minimum 2-4 weeks and maximum 6 months-1 year
- Diagnosis and case formulation
- Treatment planning and case management

Anxiety in College Students

- For many students, starting college is an exciting time of increased independence and new opportunities.
- For some young people, new experiences can cause anxiety.
- Several reasons why students can feel overwhelmed when faced with unfamiliar situations.
- Young people are particularly vulnerable to anxiety because their frontal lobe – the part of the brain responsible for decision-making, problem-solving and emotional regulation – does not fully develop until their mid-20s.
- Being away from their usual support system of family and friends,
- Loneliness
- Sleep disruption
- Academic pressures.

Common Signs of Anxiety in Students

- Recurring fears and worries
- Apprehensive and tense feelings
- Difficulty managing daily tasks
- Avoiding feared situations
- Struggling to focus
- Refusing to go to classes
- Drop in academic performance
- Extreme self-consciousness
- Highly sensitivity to criticism
- Withdrawal from social activities
- Seeking repeated reassurance from others
- Disrupted sleep
- Physical symptoms including shaking or trembling, shortness of breath and excessive sweating.

Counseling should aim at providing:

- Dislocated, unhappy, maladjusted students with information, support, encouragement,
- Skills that increase personal competence, facilitate hope, and reduce feelings of being a social isolate of little worth or dignity.
- Skill building or psycho-educational approaches to deal directly with such matters as anger management,
- Assertiveness, plan-fulness, interpersonal competence,
- Openness to constructive supervision.
- Educating people for choice, for purpose
- Help people to create reality and make meaning for themselves within the context of work and career.
- As such they are therapeutic ways of engendering mental health.

KEYNOTE SPEECH: MENTAL HEALTH TODAY AND TO THE FUTURE- PROF. JULIUS OGENG'O (DVC ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, UON)

The chair of KUPCA introduced the members present and gave a short history of the association.

Remarks

- He was excited to join university counsellors
- 970 M around the world struggle with some mental illness or drug abuse
- 1 in 4 people will be affected by a mental illness at some point in their lives
- 14.3% or 8M deaths each year are attributable to mental disorders
- In Kenya 25% of outpatients and 40% of in-patients
- Suicide is the 4th leading cause of death among people aged 15-29 years

- 75% of people in low and middle-income countries receive no treatment for depression

Causes

1. Childhood abuse, trauma or neglect
2. Social isolation or loneliness
3. Discrimination and stigma
4. Social disadvantage, poverty or debt
5. Bereavement
6. Severe or long-term stress
7. Having a long term physical health condition
8. Unemployment or losing your job
9. Homelessness or poor housing
10. Being a long term care for someone

Concerns

- Low priority/lack of clear mental health policy
- Poor health infrastructure and lack of funding
- Insufficient numbers of trained specialists
- Poor legal framework

He urged counsellors to take action in anticipation of issues affecting students

Role of counselling

1. Improved communication and interpersonal skills
2. Improved self-acceptance and self-esteem
3. Capability to change self-defeating behaviour and habits
4. More suitable expression and management of emotions
5. Relief from depression, anxiety, or other mental health conditions
6. Greater confidence and decision-making skills
7. Ability to manage stress more effectively
8. Improved abilities for problem-solving and conflict resolution

Questions

1. How can you help a student who has overstayed at the university simply because they cannot make a presentation?
2. How can you help convince other university managers to back counselling services?
3. University managers should ensure role clarity for counsellors since many counsellors are overworked, and do other many roles?

4. He was asked to speak on behalf of counselors to university managers?
5. Staff counseling needs to be emphasized?

SUICIDE PREVENTION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BY DR. AUSTIN OMANYA OF KCA UNIVERSITY

GLOBAL STRATEGIC PILLARS CONSULTANCY

Suicide is from Latin word Suicidium which is the act of act of taking one's life

Behavioral definition of suicide

1. Suicide threat
2. Suicide ideation

Shark tank 14 cartoons- teaches children how to commit suicide

Suicide behavior

- Self-destructive acts
- Attempts to die by suicide
- Completed suicide
- Serious suicidal thoughts or threat
- Attempts to harm, but not kill oneself

Triggers to suicidal behavior

- Recent interpersonal losses
- Loss of self-esteem/status
- Humiliation/ridicule
- Rejection-job, promotion, boy/girlfriend
- Disciplinary/legal difficulty
- Exposure to suicide of friend or family member
- Discharge from treatment or from service
- Retirement

Common signs of suicide ideation

- Appearing sad, tired and disconnected
- Increased irritability or sensitivity
- Social withdrawal/isolation
- Talking about feeling trapped
- Saying goodbye to loved ones
- Online searches for suicide methods

- Substantial weight loss or gain and decrease or increase in appetite
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt

Causes of suicide in universities

- Depression
- Academic pressure
- Trauma
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Financial hardships
- Relationships-irresponsible sexual behaviours
- Toxic environment

Way forward

- Programs
- Practices
- Policies

University mandate

- Develop suicide based prevention programmes
- Student counseling and health caser services

Suicide does not end the pain; it just passes it to someone else.

Day 3 Proceedings – 30/11/2023

The day started with devotion and prayer from Rev. Mitei Hosea a Chaplain from the University of Nairobi

Bernadette Nashelo from Ministry of Health- The Counselors and Psychologist ACT (No. 14 of 2014- Revised in 2019)

- She is a member of the Counselors and Psychologist Board
- The board exists to regulate and standardize the practice of counselling
- The board exists to safeguard the unsuspecting masses from harm

She took members through the:

- The role of the board
- Qualifications for registration of counsellors and psychologists
- The registration process
- Licensing process- Counselors to register each year

Questions asked

1. What do members get after registration? - vetting is currently ongoing for those who have already registered
2. What happens after licensing?
3. What steps are you taking to ensure accreditation of quality training?
4. What opportunities are you taking to associations like KUPCA?
5. What informs the fees set to be paid by individuals per qualification?
6. How much has the board publicized its roles?
7. Is licensing to higher levels contingent on ongoing education in terms of number of hours?

Gender based violence (GBV) in the university by John Chege from Gender Recovery Centre at Nairobi Women Hospital

- He gave a history of the hospital and the recovery centre
- Offers care for free to victims of GBV

KEY MANDATE

1. Response to gender based violence
2. Primary prevention
3. Advocacy – using their data

He highlighted the following issues:

- Value clarification
- Gender vs sex

GBV violates

- Life, liberty and security of a person

Forms of violence

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Social
- Economic
- Denial of resource or opportunities

Common types of GBV faced by university students

- Sexual violence
- Stalking
- Cyber bullying
- Harassment and discrimination

Role of University in Preventing GBV

- Education and awareness
- Policy
- Support services
- Prevention programs
- Safe environment
- Research and data collection

Questions

1. How come some GBV victims fall victims several times?
2. How about the victims who consent to pain during sex?

Remarks by Dean of Students University of Nairobi

- Appreciated the role played by the counselors
- He wished the counselors all the best and was glad to host the KUPCA meeting

REGIONAL GROUPS RESOLUTIONS

Rift valley Region

1. Peer counseling training
2. Case conferencing on 6/2/2024- Online
3. Hold a mens conference
4. Hold a capacity building 21st March 2024

Central Region

1. Peer counsellors' supervision
2. Focus on peer counselors
3. Team building activity at DeKUT

Western and Nyanza Region

1. Hold a meeting on 15/12/2023
2. Peer counsellors' supervision
3. Hold online and physical case conferencing

Eastern Region

1. Meru and Muranga had a webinar on depression
2. Daystar and Machakos universities collaborated on mental health supervision
3. Embu peer counselors were trained
4. To conduct peer supervision
5. To have a team building event
6. To have a meeting to put things in motion
7. Have a leadership training on mental health?

Coast Region

1. Conduct mental health awareness
2. Conduct case supervision

Nairobi region

1. Proposed counseling supervision by end of Jan-March quarter of 2024
2. Peer counselors meeting and team building by February 2024

WAY FORWARD

Feedback and Recommendations

1. KUPCA has improved in terms of learning
2. Food has been usual during meetings for KUPCA
3. Instead of selling the cups is it possible to give the souvenirs them to the university
4. Certificates should be improved by having a seal
5. Supported the idea of having conferences, let conference committee be formed early to start planning?
6. Universities are becoming financially strained hence KUPCA can have a workshop and conference at start of the year and end of year
7. KUPCA executive has done a great job
8. Conference was well organized, and educative
9. Time seems short during workshops hence topics not exhausted
10. Color of T-Shirts to be relooked, the brown one not a favorite to many and sizes to be more XL
11. Let's expand the areas covered during the sessions?
12. The executive seem so occupied hence they need to be working with other members so as the
13. We need to focus on interventions more and more?
14. Proceedings need to be compiled and presented to members
15. KUPCA needs to come up with a welfare structure to assist those who have issues
16. Curriculums need to be reviewed for Peer counselors and Life skills

Observation

- Jane Ombura the KUPCA secretary reported that she was due to retire on 28/12/2023 and the KUPCA constitution requires only one serve as a university counselor?
- It was reported that publications have challenges due to member commitment and finances
- Finances for KUPCA are raised from workshops, and membership fees?
- 90% of the finances are used in financing the workshops venues, food and speakers
- Executive to be keen on time management for each speakers
- Executive urged members to volunteer to be speakers

Next meeting

Proposed topics

- Gender identity issues
- Love relationships

- Social media and emerging issues

Proposed Hosts- Muranga to Consult and Pwani University

Proposed hosts for KUPCA conference 2024: Kabarak University

Subcommittee for KUPCA Conference

1. Dr. Rose Otieno
2. All Kabarak University members

Subcommittee for curriculum Review

1. Runoh Goretti from Muranga University
2. Caroline from Machakos university
3. Mkono Mkono from TUM
4. Esther Kapsir from Kabarak University

The proceedings came to an end with a word of prayer from Dr. Rodah Akinyi.