



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

## Counselling Needs of Students in Private and Public Chartered Universities in Kenya: Is There a Difference?

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### **Abstract:**

*The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is a difference in counselling needs of students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya. The counselling needs of students were put into three categories; career/educational needs, personal needs and life skills needs. Descriptive survey design was used. The respondents were university students, student counsellors and peer counsellors who made a total sample of 487 from six randomly selected universities. Simple random sampling stratified random sampling and purposive sampling methods were used to arrive to the sample size. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data. The data was analysed using inferential statistics and specifically the chi-square to test the hypotheses. Chi-square analysis showed; no statistically significant difference in personal/educational needs, statistically significant difference in personal needs and a statistically significant difference in the life skills needs of students in private and public chartered universities of Kenya. The study will advise the university management on the type of counselling programmes to implement or to improve that are congruent to the counselling needs of the learners.*

**Keywords:** Counselling, career/education needs, personal needs, life skills need, students, Kenyan universities.

### **1. Introduction**

Various and enormous changes are taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, communities are growing large and complex causing problems on social, economic and occupational structures (Gysbers & Henderson 2006). This complexity has led to job scarcity and making transitions from school to work and from work to further education and back to work again more complex and difficult. Gysbers and Henderson (2006) further add that social structures and personal values continue to change: people are on the move from rural to urban and back again and from one region of the country to another in search of economic, social and psychological security. As human beings interact with the physical, social, cultural and economic environment, they are faced with a variety of challenges. These challenges vary from one individual to the other as influenced by such factors as age, gender, interests, social economic status, culture and educational level (Aluende, McEachern & Kenny, 2005). For instance, the adolescents will experience problems with deciding who they are, what they are all about, and where they are going in life as they confront many roles from vocational to romantic in trying to get their real selves (Santrock, 2005). Santrock (2005) adds that the young adults will struggle with issues of intimacy and choosing life partners while those at middle life will have midlife crises. Students joining universities for the first time will experience adjustment difficulties and loneliness as they try to learn each other and thus form friendships, career and academic issues (Wangeri, Kimani & Mutweleli, 2012). Pre-school and primary school children are faced by moral, social, emotional and personal growth problems while at secondary level, students have issues in areas such as problem solving, decision making, developing positive attitude towards self and others, establishing personal goals and selecting courses based on interests and talents (Charturvedi, 2004).

At the university level, students counselling needs are more diverse due to the complexity and heterogeneity of its set-up. Odeck (2007) states that learners in higher education system come from a diversity of learning backgrounds which means that there is diversity in their socio-economic and academic profiles which leads to differences in the way they behave. Some students mostly the undergraduates and those in the pre-university training are still in their adolescent stage, others are post graduates, some are married, and some are from noble families while others are from humble ones, are of different cultural backgrounds, and also have different religious beliefs (Egbochuku, 2006; Nayak, 2007; Sindabi, 1989). This heterogeneity leads to varied needs and challenges among the students. It is important therefore to investigate whether these needs differ according to the type of university so that the right structures can be put in place to meet the clients need.

### *1.1. Statement of the Problem*

University students' counselling needs are diverse due to socio-economic, cultural, religious and academic backgrounds. University students are faced by numerous counselling needs some of which include; relationship needs, academic issues, drug and substance abuse, financial difficulties, family issues, murder, kidnappings, theft, career issues, adjustment problems, psychological and behavioural difficulties, sickness to include HIV/Aids. This study sought to investigate whether counselling needs of students differ according to the type of university so that the right structures and programs can be put in place to meet the students' needs.

### *1.2. Objective of the Study*

To establish the differences in counselling needs of students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya.

### *1.3. Research Hypothesis*

There is no statistically significant difference between counselling needs of students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya.

## **2. Reviewed Literature**

University is a complex set-up with students from all cultures, studying at different levels, all ages from adolescent to late adulthood and this explains why the counselling needs are numerous and complex and a clear understanding of these needs is crucial in order to plan and implement the right counselling structures that are congruent to the needs of students in those specific universities. Aluende et al., (2005) states that the needs of university students vary from academic, social, personal, developmental to psychological. Nayak (2007), Egbochuku and Akpan (2008), Charturvedi (2004) and Sindabi (1989) identifies the areas that students seek counselling to include; public speaking anxiety, improvement in their study skills, career uncertainty, self-confidence problems, lack of motivation, fear of failure, depression, lack of purpose in life, anxiety and nervousness, love and relationships, physical health problems, alcohol and drug abuse, weight, eating problems, time management, overcoming fear about taking exams, meeting career and educational needs; psychological issues such as suicidal and homicidal thoughts, mood changes, phobias, problem solving, marital issues, traumatic life events and life transitions. Are these counselling needs different in private and public chartered universities in Kenya?

In their study to assess and compare the counselling needs of several sub groups of students at middle East Technical University in Turkey and to investigate the perspectives of the counselling staff about counselling needs of the students and the counselling services, Guneri, Aydin and Skovholt (2003) found in their study that managing ones time, was rated highest in the list of student needs, identifying and planning goals for one's life and concentrating on studies followed next, followed by ending a relationship which took a share of 51% while, getting a job after college took a 50% portion. Knowing self better came lowest in the listing with 35%. The problem of time management among students may be a contributing factor to the increasing incidents of student unrest in the universities. Aluende (2001) states that academic stress among students which is largely brought about by mounting examination fears and academic pressures is a significant factor in most incidents of student unrest not only in Turkey universities but also in other universities in other countries. In a study of the profile of students attending university of Granada in Spain, Arco, Fernandez, Heilbon and Lopez (2005) revealed that students rated academic needs; getting easily distracted, need to improve their study skills, problem of time management and problem of test taking anxiety as the areas desiring significant attention. These studies ventured on the counselling needs of subgroups and student profiles in Middle East Technical University in Turkey and university of Granada in Spain respectively, thus the current study sought to establish whether the counselling needs are different in private and public chartered universities in Kenya. In the current study, the counselling needs were categorized into three which include;

### *2.1. Career/ Educational Needs*

Students are faced by a variety of career/ educational needs as they strive to achieve their academic goals. Some of these career needs are; problems in the choice of careers, fear of failing examinations which leads to anxiety, worries about getting a job related to one's career choice, financing one's education, content overload, poor study habits and skills, poor concentration and understanding of subject content and concerns about some inconsiderate and insensitive lecturers (Egbochuku&Akpan, 2008; Agatha, 2006; Berk, 2005).

Due to scarcity of jobs in the job markets, students, especially the adult students, may tend to pursue different careers from their original careers, they need to be aware of the world of jobs and their rewards. Selecting and planning job/occupational choices is a great need among students, they face the challenge of making realistic job/occupational choices, identifying the requirements of appropriate and available jobs and identifying main occupational interests and needs. Furthermore, the transition from one career line to another, calls for clear guidance in order to place the academic mind in the right academic environment (Polson, 1998). Muola and Migosi, (2012) add that students who need to further their education need information on opportunities for advancement. In study by Muola and Migosi, (2012) on Academic Advising Needs among University Students in Kenya, maintaining high grades, handling heavy academic workload, setting career goals and setting academic goals were the greatest academic needs among the students. This study therefore sought to investigate whether there is a difference in career needs of students in public chartered universities and private chartered universities in Kenya. This study sought to determine whether students in Kenyan universities had academic needs and the differences in the needs according to the university category.

## 2.2. Personal Needs

These needs are critical in keeping relationships and maintaining friendships with other people. Nyutu (2006) states that personal needs involves students learning about themselves and others: it includes learning to understand, accept and respect self, developing positive attitudes through identifying, prioritizing and evaluating values, understanding and making appropriate decisions regarding drug and alcohol abuse, tobacco and abuse of other harmful substances, developing respect for cultural diversity, learning how to behave responsibly in the family, school and community at large, develop relationship skills to resolve conflicts in a safe and responsible manner and develop effective ways to cope with violence in order to ensure personal safety (Gysbers& Henderson, 2006) Personal needs are diverse and therefore, impact on the student as an individual, the student and the immediate community in which he/she lives (the family, peers, college and the place of work).

Santrock (2005) state that students who have achieved self-awareness are able to understand and appreciate their own complexities and those of others. These complexities may include physical and psychological needs, interests, abilities, aptitudes and emotions. Accepting oneself means that one can be aware of his needs and motives and thus work on his/her weaknesses. Conversely, the inability to understand your own complexities makes it difficult to understand and appreciate other people (Berk, 2005). Students between the age of forty and sixty are in their middle adulthood. At this stage, many women experience menopausal boredom and a decline in mental capacities (Egbochuku&Akpan, 2008). Egbochuku and Akpan (2008) add that other students may be married and with children who may also be in school and thus in need of finances. This may lead to financial constraints. Egbochuku and Akpan (2008) further notes that two thirds of students are worried about paying their college fees and most expect to work while in college to help pay those costs. Santrock (2005) states that as young women pursue careers they are faced by questions involving careers and family. The young women are not able to make clear decisions of whether to combine career, family and child bearing or to venture in career first, or family and child rearing. Santrock (2005) adds that today's women are more likely to try to 'have it all'. To avoid such a dilemma among career woman, career counselling programmes in the universities is a necessity. This can be achieved only if the needs of students in private and public universities in Kenya are clearly understood.

Individual independence involves doing things without help, for instance; managing your time, deciding on what to do and when to do it, what to wear, and accepting responsibilities for actions done (Berk, 2005; Santrock, 2005). Lack of independence leads to poor personal development, this is due to the fact that one cannot make concrete decisions, cannot have plans for his/her life and thus, one is controlled by a significant other. Lowery (2001) states that the millennium generation is over-protected by their parents, they are warmly sheltered from any conceivable harm, they enjoy very close relationships with their parents and excessive parental involvements in simple matters like admission process in college and slight misunderstandings between boy/girl relationships among others. This study sought to establish whether there is a difference in personal needs of students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya.

## 2.3. Life Skills Needs

Life skills include a wide range of knowledge and skill interactions believed to be essential for adult independent living (Santrock, 2005). Some of the life skills needs according to Santrock (2005) include; managing personal finances; -this may include simple things such as; managing one's savings, managing personal budget and keeping records, demonstrating personal finance decision making skills, making responsible expenditures and paying bills among others.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

Descriptive survey design was used to assess whether any differences in counselling needs among students in private and public chartered universities. Descriptive survey involves using questionnaires and interview schedules to collect data and this method does not allow manipulation of the variables, instead the variables are studied in the natural setting (Orodho, 2003).

### 3.2. Population of the Study

The target population for this study was 132,373 students from the seven public and the twelve private chartered universities in Kenya (Ministry of Education, 2009). The accessible population (54,974) comprised of students from six universities (three private chartered and three public chartered universities) that were selected through simple random sampling. Twelve student counsellors and ninety peer counsellors were also included in the study.

### 3.3. Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Stratified random sampling was used to draw the sample. The sample was drawn from the accessible population. Stratified random sampling is used in situations where the researcher knows some of the variables in the population that are critical to achieving representativeness (Burns & Groove, 1995). Type of university and gender were used as variables for stratification.

The 19 universities formed two strata comprising of seven public chartered universities and twelve private chartered universities respectively. The accessible population comprised of six universities; three public and three private chartered universities which were randomly selected from the target of 19 universities as shown on Table 3. Using Kathuri and Pals (1993) table (appendix III), a population of over 100,000 subjects has a minimum sample size of 384 subjects. In this study, the target population is 132,373 and therefore a sample of 384 is appropriate. For representativeness, proportionate sampling was used to distribute the 384 respondents by

gender to the six randomly selected universities as shown on Table 3. For confidentiality, the researcher used letter A B and C to name the universities under study.

	Category of University						Total
	Public	Private chartered					
	A	B	C	A	B	C	6
Total number of students	138	832	962	832	460	706	974
Males	73	61	42	19	12	13	221
Females	61	43	21	15	12	12	164
Sample	134	104	63	34	24	25	385

Table 1: Students Population, gender and their Sample Sizes

The information on Table 3 shows the six universities, (three public and three private chartered universities) that were randomly selected for the study. For the purposes of confidentiality, the universities are denoted by letters A, B and C. The information on Table 3 further shows the proportional distribution of students by gender and the sample size for every university under study. Other respondents in the study included twelve student counsellors (two from each university under study) and ninety purposively selected peer counsellors (fifteen from each of the six selected universities. Since the peer counsellors were to answer the peer counsellors' questionnaire, they were exempted from answering the students' questionnaire. Thus, the total number of respondents was four hundred and eighty-nine.

### 3.4. Instruments

Student needs' assessment questionnaire, peer counsellor's questionnaire and an interview schedule for the student counsellors were used for data collection. The student counsellors' interview schedule was used for the purposes of validating the data. Mugenda (2008) states that data should be validated through the use of triangulation or the use of multiple data collection techniques.

### 3.5. Reliability

A pilot study was conducted in one public and one private chartered university; ten percent of the entire sample size was used for a good representation of the entire sample (Basavanthappa, 1998). For piloting purposes, 38 students, 2 student counsellors and 9 peer counsellors were used. Test retest technique was used. A Pearson's product moment formula for the test-retest was employed to compute the correlation coefficient. Reliability coefficients obtained were 0.986 for the students' questionnaire and 0.912 for the peer counsellors.

### 3.6. Validity

The researcher developed the instruments by examining them on the objective and made consultations with other experts in the field of psychology and research to ascertain content and face validity.

### 3.7. Data Analysis Procedure

The researcher ensured that data collected was cleaned before carrying out the analysis, after which, the researcher formulated a coding scheme whereby codes were assigned to each likely answer. Data was then entered into the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. Inferential statistics, specifically the chi-square was used to test the significance of the relationship between the variables in the hypotheses of the study. The hypothesis was tested at significance level set at 0.05.

## 4. Results

The study sought to investigate whether any difference existed in counselling needs of students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya.

### 4.1. Career/Educational Needs

The researcher sought to find out whether there is any difference that existed in career/educational needs between students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya and this information is presented on Table 2.

University category	Type of need	Not a need	A need	Total
Private	Career/Educational needs	26.3%	76.7%	100%
Public		44.6%	55.4%	100%

Table 2: Summary of Career/Educational Needs in Private and Public Chartered Universities in Kenya

The findings on Table 2 show that career /education needs were identified as a need in both the private and the public chartered universities in Kenya. In a study by Tumuti (1985) on needs assessment in primary schools, academic needs were rated high by both the teachers and the pupils. The author further found out that 76% of the pupils indicated that they were confused in choosing future career or ended up choosing the wrong career. This concurs with a study by Egbochuku and Akpan (2008) on “An Assessment of Counselling Needs of Nigerian University Graduate Students” who states that a university student is faced with problems concerning his or her personality, vocation, educational matters which include learning, study habits, concentration, and passing examination. Egbochuku and Akpan (2008) further states that graduates in State Government Universities need more educational counselling than the students in the federal universities. In this study students in Private chartered universities are expressing a more need for career counselling than the students in public chartered universities. This may be due to the fact that the courses offered in the private universities are fewer compared to those offered in public universities and therefore, once the student gets an admission to a private university he/she does not have a variety of courses to choose from and may end up taking a course that is not the best for him/her. Furthermore, some affluent parents opt to take their children to private universities where few or no strikes are reported, the child may be forced by the parents to take any course that he/she qualifies in and this leads to discontentment and a need for career counselling. Many of the courses in the private universities are also art based, a student who is science oriented may feel out of place once he/she realizes that his or her area of interest is not offered in the university of his/her parents’ choice.

To test whether there was any difference in career/educational needs among students in Kenyan universities, the researcher used chi-square and this information is presented on Table 3.

	<b>Chi-square</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>	<b>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</b>	<b>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</b>
Pearson Chi-Square		8.317 <sup>a</sup>	1	.004		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>		7.575	1	.006		
Likelihood Ratio		8.669	1	.003		
Fisher's Exact Test					.004	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association		8.293	1	.004		
N of Valid Cases		356				

*Table 3: Tests of Independence for Career/Educational Needs*

Addressing hypothesis on career/educational needs category, an inspection of the results of chi-square on Table 3 show that the calculated p-value of Career/Educational needs (0.003) is less than the set alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant difference in career/educational needs among students in private and public chartered universities of Kenya. In this case, the null hypothesis (there is no statistically significant difference in career/educational needs among students in private and public chartered universities) was accepted. Career/education need is identified as a need in both Private and public chartered universities.

#### 4.2. Personal Needs

Personal needs are the emotional distress or behavioural difficulties that arise when an individual struggle to cope with developmental stages or tasks that is either relating to self or to other people. The researcher sought to find out whether any difference existed in personal needs among students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya and this information is presented on Table 4.

<b>University category</b>	<b>Type of Need</b>	<b>Not a Need</b>	<b>A Need</b>	<b>Total</b>
Private		22.4%	77.6%	100%
	Personal Needs			
Public		32.2%	67.8%	100%

*Table 4: Summary of Personal Needs in Private and Public Chartered Universities in Kenya*

The information on Table4 shows a cross tabulation of personal needs in both private chartered and public chartered universities in of Kenya. In the two categories of the universities personal needs have been identified being in existence among the students. In the Private chartered universities, 77.6% of the students indicated a need for counselling in personal needs and 67.8% of the students in public chartered universities also needed help in solving personal issues. Some of the personal needs among the students were; learning how to be self-confident, self-reliant, learning how to use time more appropriately, learning how to make more friends, learning how to live and work with others and learning how to stop drug abuse. This concurs with Guneri, Aydin and Skovholt (2003) in their study to assess and compare the counselling needs of several subgroups of student’s at large urban university in Turkey who found out that the personal needs of the students were; time management, ending a relationship, anxiety about speaking in front of people, behaving more assertively and coping with stress. Students in the universities are from different background and therefore are faced by numerous personal issues that may affect their studies. The researcher sought to find out whether any statistical difference existed in personal needs of students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya and this information is presented on Table 5.



Chi - square	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.728 <sup>a</sup>	1	.099		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	2.283	1	.131		
Likelihood Ratio	2.847	1	.092		
Fisher's Exact Test				.121	.063
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.721	1	.099		
N of Valid Cases	359				

Table 5: Tests of Independence for Personal Needs

The information on Table 5 is addressing hypothesis on personal needs category and the results of chi-square reveal that the calculated p-value of personal needs (0.063) is greater than the set alpha value of 0.05. Therefore, there is a significant difference in Personal needs of students in private and public chartered universities of Kenya. The null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, students in private chartered universities illustrated a more need for help in personal needs than those in public universities of Kenya.

#### 4.3. Life Skills Needs

Life skills needs is the last category of students' needs that was studied in this study. Information on life skills needs is presented on Table 6.

University category	Type of need	Not a need	A need	Total
Private	Life Skills needs	35.5%	64.5%	100%
public		41.3%	58.7%	100%

Table 6: Summary of Life Skills Needs in Private and Public Chartered Universities in Kenya

Students in both private and public chartered universities indicated life skills needs as needs calling for counselling. The Hypothesis sought to find out whether statistical difference existed in life skills needs among students in private and public chartered universities, chi-square was used and the information presented on Table 7.

Chi-square	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.844 <sup>a</sup>	1	.358		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.619	1	.431		
Likelihood Ratio	.853	1	.356		
Fisher's Exact Test				.429	.216
Linear-by-Linear Ass	.841	1	.359		

Table 7: Tests of Independence for Life Skills Needs

The information on Table 21 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in life skill needs among students in private and public chartered universities of Kenya. The calculated P value (0.216) is greater than the set value (0.05) and therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that life skills need vary according to the university category. Students in private chartered universities indicated a more need for life skills counselling than the students in the public chartered universities of Kenya.

## 5. Conclusion

Students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya have counselling needs that fall into three categories as Career/Educational Needs, Personal needs and life skills needs. From the hypothesis; there is no statistically significant difference in career/educational needs of students in private and public chartered universities in Kenya. A significant difference existed in personal and life skills needs among students in private and public chartered universities with the private universities having more of these needs than the public universities.

## 6. Recommendations

- i. Since counselling needs of students are not the same in the universities, counselling programmes set should be in congruent to the needs of the students.
- ii. Before any counselling programmes are set in any institution, counselling needs of the consumers should be assessed.

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