

Correlation Between Self-esteem and Depression Among Poorly Performing Students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya

Innocent Elum Afen, Pinto Hubert, Ph.D., Aloys Otieno Ojore, Ph.D.

Institute of Youth Studies, Tangaza University College, A Constituents College of The Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

Abstract: Education enhances edification of human knowledge and societal development. Good academic performance becomes very crucial for university students to attain knowledge that can be used for oneself and for the good of the human society. This research investigated the correlation between self-esteem and depression among poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya. It addressed the following questions: What are the levels of self-esteem among poorly performing students of African Nazarene University, Kenya? What are the levels of depression among poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya? Is there correlation between self-esteem and depression among poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya? The participants of the study were 335 undergraduate male and female students. The study employed Systematic Random sampling, using Rosenberg self-esteem scale and BDI-II for data collection. Data was analyzed using SPSS and presented in summary tables. Pearson's (r) coefficient was used to examine the relationship between self-esteem and depression. Findings show that 49.5% of the participants were average in their self-esteem, 43.2% came under high self-esteem, and 7.8% were in low self-esteem. Gender revealed that females had high self-esteem, and the males had average self-esteem. On depression, 52.8% were in mild mood disturbance (no depression), 10.5% had borderline clinical depression, 15.6% had moderate depression, 8.1% had severe depression, and 13.5% showed extreme depression. Gender revealed females had borderline clinical depression, the males had mild mood disturbance (no depression). The study established that there was a significant positive relationship ($r = .420^{**}$; $p = .000$, at 0.01 level of significance) between self-esteem and depression among poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya.

Keywords: Education, Academic performance, Depression.

I. INTRODUCTION

An educational institution is a vital human learning institution through which knowledge and skills are taught in a formal gathering of students and teachers. The knowledge and skills gained by students through years of studies have contributed immensely in the development of a nation and the edification of human knowledge. Self-edification and societal development may be attainable when there is helpful atmosphere, and good support systems (Hammond, Flook, Havey, Barron & Osher, 2020). Etymologically, the term education comes from the two Latin words "educare" meaning, to train, to draw out, to mold, and "educere", meaning, to teach, to lead out (Randall, 2004). Thus,

education can be defined as the socially organized as well as planned way of consistence transmission of socially significant training and teaching of an individual and group in attaining knowledge and skills for self-improvement as well as building a nation (Hammond, Flook, Havey, Barron & Osher, 2020). Good academic performance is very crucial for university students as it indicates students' grasp of knowledge during the periods of studies. Academic performance is a concern to many people today such as students, academic institutions, parents, sponsors, teachers, and the government of different nations (Bell, 2017). School performance stands to be measured through examinations and continuous assessments. Bhagat (2013) defined academic performance as the outcome of learning made possible by teaching activity carried out by the teacher and produced by the student. This performance is typically shown through the various level of knowledge display in subjects which is assessed using grade point average.

In the United States of America, Dill and Van Vught (2010) stated that university education was an important institution that works towards the good of an individual and the society as a whole. Academic performance has been a great concern for the government, stakeholders, parents and sponsors. Despite the remarkable academic achievement by the University students, it was noted that academic performance in the U.S. was constantly being compromised by substance abuse, depression, absenteeism, poor negative attitude towards school, poor nutrition, suicidality, violence and sedentary behavior. These factors contributed immensely to poor school performance among students (Ansar and stock, 2010). In the University of Gujrat, Pakistan, a study was carried out by Shahzadi and Ahmad (2014) to assess students' school performance. It was reported that numerous factors contributed to low academic performance among the student in Gujrat University. Such factors included: gender, race, family income, depression, home environment, and poor learning skills affect students' academic performance.

In Nigeria, Al-Zoub and Younes (2015) identified different factors to be responsible for poor academic performance. This included: lack of clear plans by students, medical and psychological reasons, lack of interest by students, students' involvement in secret cult, pressure on students from the family for higher marks, exams anxiety and lack of

educational motivations, poor state of the university and adverse economic hardship. In Ethiopia, there has been a good concentration by the government on poor academic performance among university students. Yigermal (2017) made it known that there were many factors militating against good school performance of students at Arba Minch University in Ethiopia. Such factors were: addiction to drinking, gender carrier discrimination, teaching faculty, students' previous academic background, social media, low self-esteem, drug use and abuse, depression and lack of financial support from poor families. Mutula (2002) opined that the quest for higher education in Kenya continues to surge as a result of the enlightenment that comes from education. Many factors were to be responsible for poor academic performance among university students in Kenya. These included: high rate of economic poverty in families, weak transition from high school to the University, anxiety, stress, health issues, depression, poor study habits, lack of proper time management, fear of lecturers, distraction from peers, alcohol and substance use, divorce and separation in families, and poor teaching methods. Academic performance in Africa Nazarene University has not been so good because students have not been performing satisfactorily. The rise in poor performance gave credence to this study. The researcher needed to know what was responsible for poor academic performances among some students. Poor academic performance in this study would mean students who failed. This study assessed the levels of depression among the poorly performing students to understand whether the students were depressed.

The interest of psychologists with regards to depression have grown rapidly over the years. Kan'ori and Nyutu (2016) claimed that University students at times were faced with numerous psychological issues, for example, depression and suicidal ideation. Depression has been identified as having inimical effect on students' academic performance. Depression propels students to several illnesses like diabetes, HIV infection as well as suicide. The Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) established by the American Psychiatric Association (2013) categorized major depressive disorder to make a diagnosis. A depressed person experiences five or more symptoms for a period of 2 weeks. Depression is a mood (affective) disorders which could be mild, moderate or severe, and recurrent in a person. Depressive symptoms include sadness, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep, lack of appetite or too much appetite, feelings of tiredness, significant weight loss or too much weight gain, restlessness, suicide or suicidal ideation or suicidal attempt and lack of concentration (APA, 2013). Could depression be responsible for poor academic performance among the poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University?

Depression has negative impact on students' academic performance and as such plays negative role in students' life. In Malaysia, Khalid et al. (2016) carried out a study among 200 undergraduates in Selangor University. The study examined the relationship between depression and academic

performance among the accounting students. The research showed that depression had great influence on students' academic performance. Students were depressed hardly concentrate in studies, and as such performed poorly in academic. Findings also revealed that students who had mental health issues performed low in academic. In previous study by Talawar (2011), it was revealed that female students are more depressed. This is because in moments of economic hardship, the female students find it difficult to cope, and as a result fall into depression, and this has negative implication on academic performance.

The American college health association (2013) affirmed that mental health issue like depression affected students' academic performance. The research indicated that 14% of college students experienced depression, and it affected their academic functioning. In a subsequent research, Bisson (2017) conducted a study among the college students of Abilene Christian University in the US, to investigate the effect of anxiety and depression on college students. It established that depression was the most common issue that interferes with students' academic success. In order to combat this disorder, universities established counseling department in the campus to address the mental health issues of the students.

In Nigeria, a study was conducted by Muhammad, et al (2018) among 150 students from Benue state University, on the relationship between depression and academic performance. Findings indicated significant relationship between depression and students' academic performance, that the female students are more likely to get depressed due to socio-economic factor. No study has been carried out in African Nazarene University to assess whether the students who were performing poorly were depressed or not, since academic failures were quite high.

In Kenya, the frequency of depression among university students has been acknowledged. This is because students have been diagnosed with depression. Othieno et al. (2014) in a study carried out among 923 University of Nairobi students; focusing on the impact of depression. Depressive symptoms were noted to be 33.5% in male students, while the female students were 39.0%. The findings also revealed that depression was more prevalent among the first-year students, those living off campus, and students patronizing tobacco were more likely to be depressed. The severity of depression as further increased suicidal ideation among university students in Kenya. Suicide as an intentional death, a self-inflicted death which one makes an intentional direct and conscious effort to end one's life (Schneidman, 2005). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2017) established that Kenya is the sixth with the highest number of depression cases among African countries. The number of suicides reported in Kenya rose by 58% in 2017 to reach 421. Based on statistics, findings show that depressive signs are common, thus affect over 40% of students in Kenyan Universities, and this has drastically affected students' academic performance in some Universities in Kenya (Ndeti, 2012). It was made

known that severe depression was noted to be 5.6% in 2012 (5.3% in males and 5.1% in females). Additionally, there was a discovery that depressive illness was very significant among the first year students, especially those living off campus. There are some variables that are significantly linked to greater depression levels beginning from the year of study and academic performance. This hereby shows that University students in Kenya appeared vulnerable to suicide.

In Africa Nazarene University, depression can affect students at any time. There could be many reasons as to why university students experience depression. One of the reasons could be academic failure. Dawood et al. (2017) affirmed this by stating that students, who are always failing, resort to negative judgment about themselves. This negative self-evaluation and judgment about oneself do interfere with the self-esteem thereby bringing about depression. Depression is capable of causing a major effect in the academic success of a university student, and this could lead to alcohol and substance abuse (Dawood, Rufa, Ghadeer, & Alrabodh, 2017).

II. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of descriptive research design. The research was carried out at Africa Nazarene University in Kajiado County, Kenya. The target population was 2,637. This study made use of systematic random sampling technique. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Therefore, the sample size for this study was 335 students. Beck’s depression inventory (BDI-II) was used in this research. Beck depression inventory is a 21-item scale, further divided into six sub-sections depicting levels of depression. The highest possible score is 63, while the lowest possible score will be 0. Add up the score for each of the twenty-one questions by counting the number to the right of each question you marked. In this study, a score between 17 and above is considered as depression.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to find out the levels of depression among the poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya. Data on the levels of depression was analyzed and the findings are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Levels of depression among the poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University

Levels of depression	Frequency	Percent
No depression	176	52.8%
Borderline clinical depression	35	10.5
Moderate depression	52	15.6%
Severe depression	27	8.1%
Extreme depression	45	13.5%
Total	335	100%

The findings in table 1 shows that 52.8% of research participants were in mild mood disturbance (no depression),

10.5% had borderline clinical depression, 15.6% moderate depression, 8.1% had severe depression, and 13.5% showed extreme depression.

Depression is a mood (affective) disorder which could be mild, moderate or severe, and recurrent in a person (APA, 2013). Notably, the current study established the presence of depression among the students, ranging from borderline clinical depression to severe depression. Borderline clinical depression is a mental illness which is characterized by dysregulation of emotions, unstable sense of self, challenge in interpersonal relationship often leading to suicidal ideation as well as self-harming tendency. Moderate depression is a mood disorder that is characterized by feelings of sadness, dissatisfaction with life, anger, decreased interest in appetites, and severe depression is an intense mood disorder characterized by symptoms such as suicidal ideation, extreme sadness, pessimism about life and the world (Beatson et al., 2012). The findings suggest the possible interference of depression on students’ life, thereby hampering good academic performance.

The outcome of this study is consistent with the findings of Rousseau and Thomson (2019) in South Africa, who made it known that poor academic performance was surging among the students. The findings further showed that 12.82% of students were in moderate depression, while 24.89% had high depression. Ahmed et al. (2020) in Ethiopia, noted that depression was one of the obstacles that obstructed students’ academic excellence. It was discovered that 31.1% of the students had borderline clinical depression, 40.6% were on normal ups and downs of life (no depression), 14.4% had mild depression, 9.9% had moderate depression, and 4% had severe depression (Schrieber, 2018).

Academic goals and intellectual pursuits are sometimes hindered by depression. Beck (1967) explained that when people succumbed to depression, there was a high possibility that they fitted into three basic realities; negativity of self, negative view of the world and negative view of the future. The various findings of this study vividly demonstrated the danger of depression not only on students’ academic activities, but also on their lives. Therefore, the University may consistently engage the students on awareness outreach about mental health coping skills and various psychological intervention techniques on depression.

Components of depression; guilty feeling and suicidal ideation were investigated. The findings are presented in tables 2, and 3 respectively.

Table 2. Guilt as a component of depression

Levels of guilt	Frequency	Percent
Low feeling of guilt	144	43.0
Average feeling of guilt	148	44.1
High feeling of guilt	43	12.8

The results in table 2 illustrates that 43.0% of students fell under the level of low feeling of guilt, 44.1% were in average feeling of guilt, and 12.8% had high feeling of guilt. Guilt is an emotional response to distressful situation emanating from an awareness of violation of social and religious norms and values, and guilt focuses so much on negativities (Burns, 2021). Guilt among students may come from several situations like breaking a promise and trust, going contrary to one's religious injunctions, betraying a friend, testifying against the innocent person, being a perpetrator of rape and criminality, selling expired products to other students, and other ills. Possibly, self-realization and remorse could make students focus on specific negative evaluation that may manifest in behavior that suggest guilt. It is likely that guilt increases remorse, regrets, and if not well attended to, could cause a deeper emotional pain which could penetrate in one's intellectual grasping ability. Eventually, this may lead to academic underperformance.

A study in Turkey by Kaya et al. (2011) established high level of guilt among the students, which had adverse impact on students' academic performance. It was further revealed that high level of guilt led to psychopathology, and this was observed in some students' behaviour. Burns (2021) also postulated that high levels of guilt interfered with students' life. The same study also revealed that high level of guilt was noted among the females at 6.0% as compared to their male counterparts at 5.88%. Therefore, one may safely suggest that students need both counseling and guidance program to help them handle guilt so as to enable psychological healing in their lives.

Table 3. Suicidal ideation as a component of depression

Levels of suicidal ideation	Frequency	Percent
Low suicidal ideation	182	54.3
Average suicidal ideation	97	28.9
High suicidal ideation	56	16.7

As seen in table 3, 54.3% of students were within the level of low suicidal ideation, 28.9% under average level of suicidal ideation, and 16.7% in the level of high suicidal ideation. Thus, from average suicidal ideation to high suicidal ideation, there is a worrying concern about suicidal tendencies among the poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya. Suicidal ideation is a global phenomenon that involves the contemplation and planning of killing oneself or self-injurious behaviors (Nyagwencha, 2021; Ram et al., 2018). This could be seen as an outcome of severe manifestation of depression. Students at this state of mind hardly concentrate in their educational goals.

The finding in this research is also similar to the findings of Ram et al. (2018) In India, they reported that 9.5% of students were at moderate suicidal ideation, 5.7% had severe suicidal ideation and that the prevalence of suicidal ideation was more in females at 5.3% than in males' students at 1.4%. In

England, Mortier et al. (2017) did a similar study and noted that 65% of students were in high suicidal ideation. A similar finding was established by Nyagwencha (2021) in Kenya. She pointed out that suicidal behavior (ideation, plan and attempt) among university students in Kenya was at 60.9%. It was also found that students between the ages 20-22 were at 34.1% suicidal ideation. This study found that average suicidal ideation was at 28.9%, and high suicidal ideation was at 16.7%. the total of the two gives 45.6% of participants manifesting suicidal tendencies. This finding trigger major concern about suicidal tendencies among the students of Africa Nazarene University. A student may hardly perform well due to the interference of this intense feeling in one's academic engagements. A deeper exploration may be carried out by the University counselors so as to unravel the possible factors that could be generating suicidal ideation among the students.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mental health is an important aspect of human life; good mental health enhances great productivity in students. Depression has inimical effects not only on students' lives but also on students' academic endeavors. The findings of this research confirmed the presence of depression among the poorly performing students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya. The university should try to, consistently, engage the students on awareness/outreach about mental health coping skills and various psychological intervention techniques on depression. Additionally, the University counselors may explore the various underlining issues generating feeling of guilt and suicidal ideation among the students. A comparative study may be carried out in other private and public universities on the components of depression among the students. This may open new frontiers for other future researchers interested in addressing issues affecting university students in Kenya.

REFERENCE

- [1] Al-Zoubi, S.M., & Younes, M.A. (2015). Low Academic Achievement: Causes and Results. *Journal of Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 5 (11), pp. 2262-2268.
- [2] Ansari, W.E. & Stock, C. (2010). Is the health and wellbeing of university students associated with their academic performance? Cross sectional findings from the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 7, pp.509-527.
- [3] Ahmed, G.Negash, A. Kerebi, H. Alemu,D. & Tesfaya,E.(2020). The prevalence and associating factors of depression among Jimma University students: A cross sectional study. *International Journal of mental health*. Pp.14-52.
- [4] American Psychiatrist Association, (2013). *Statistical manual of mental disorders(DSM-5)*.
- [5] Burns, S.T.(2021). Raising awareness on the impact of guilt and shame on counselor education students. Michigan: Michigan University.
- [6] Bell, M.J.(2017). Define academic performance. *Classrooms*. Accessed from: <https://classroom.synonym.com/define-academic-performance-4740750.html>
- [7] Baghat, V. (2013). Extroversion and academic performance of medical students. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Invention*,2(3), pp. 2319-7722.

- [8] Beck, A. T. (1967). *Depression: Causes and treatment*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- [9] Beatson, J.A & Rao, S.(2012). Depression and borderline personality disorder. *Medical journal of Australia*, 197(11), pp.620-621.
- [10] Dill, D. & F. Van Vught (eds.) (2010), *National Innovation and the Academic Research Enterprise; Public Policy in Global Perspective*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- [11] Dawood, E., Rufa, Rufa, M., Ghadeer, Ghadeer, H., & Alrabodh, F. (2017). Assessment of depression and its contributing factors among undergraduate nursing students. *International Journal of Nursing*, 4 (2), pp. 69-79.
- [12] Hammond, L.D., Flook, L., Havey, C.C., Barron, B., & Osher, D.(2020). Implication for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Journal of applied developmental science*, 24(2), pp. 97-140.
- [13] Kan'ori and Nyutu (2016). *An integrated approach to peer counselling*. Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House.
- [14] Khalid, F.M., Suman, N.A., Rasid, N.A., Mohamad, A. & Ghazali, N.N. (2016). Depression and academic performance. A case study. *Tenaga: Universiti Tenaga Nasional*.
- [15] Kaya, N., Aşt, T., Turan, N., Karabay, B., & Emir E.(2011). The feelings of guilt and shame experienced by Nursing and Midwifery students. *Journal of Nurse Education Today*, 32, pp.630–635.
- [16] Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 607-610.
- [17] Mortier, P., Cujipers, P., Kiekens, G., Auerbach, R.P., Demyttenaere, K., Green, J.G., Kessler, R.C., Nock, M.K., & Bruffaerts, R.(2017). The prevalence of suicidal thoughts and behaviors among college students: a meta-analysis. England: Cambridge University press.
- [18] Ndeti, D.M. (2012). The association and implications of anxiety and depression in university medical and paramedical students in Kenya. *Journal of Affective Disorders East Disorders East Afr.Med*, 64(3), pp.214–226.
- [19] Nyagwencha, S.K. & Ojuade, S.O.(2021). Prevalence of Suicide Behavior among Undergraduate University Students in Kenya: A Web-Based Cross-Sectional Survey. *African Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 4(2), pp.1-10.
- [20] Othieno, C., Okoth, R., Peltzer, K., Pengpid, M., & Malla, L. (2014) Depression among university students in Kenya: Prevalence and sociodemographic correlates. *Journal of Affective Disorders* 65, pp.120–125.
- [21] Randall, B. (2004). Educare and educere: Is a balance possible in the educational system? *The educational forum*, 6(2), p.161.
- [22] Ram, R.K., Chaudhury, S., & Jagtap, B.L.(2018). Prevalence of suicidal ideation among University students. *Pravara Med Rev*, 10(3), pp.7-11.
- [23] Rousseau, K. & Thomson, S. (2019). *Trends in Depression Among Undergraduate Students at a South African University, 2016–2019*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- [24] Shahzadi, E. & Ahmad, Z.(2011). A study on academic performance on University students. *Gujrat: University of Gujrat*.
- [25] Schieman, S., Bierman, A., Upenieks, L., & Ellison, C. (2017). *Love thyself? How belief in a supportive God shape self-esteem*. University of Toronto: Springer.
- [26] Schreiber, D. Agomate, J.C. & Odi, B. (2017). The impact of demographic influence on academic performance and student satisfaction with learning as related to self-esteem, self-efficacy. *International Journal of learning, teaching, and educational research*, 16 (4), pp.67-90.
- [27] Talawar, S.L.(2011). *College students mental health: Effective services and strategies across campuses*. NASSP: Baltimore MD.
- [28] Yigermal, M.E.(2017). Determinant of academic performance of undergraduate students: In the cause of Arba Minch University Chamo Campus. *Journal of Education and Practice*.