# Status of Mental Health Amongst Undergraduate Students in Kenyan Universities (Qualitative Analysis of Sampled Studies)

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## ABSTRACT

**Studies investigating mental health issues amongst university students have shown that mental distress in students is a driver of negative consequences, including suicidal thoughts, substance use, depression, anxiety disorders, poor cognitive functioning, and poor academic performance. The findings imply a similar mental health index in Kenyan universities, with respect to findings that mental health issues are more profound therein owing to associated stressors in these environments. This paper provides an anchor point for an assessment of the situation thereof, in the form of a meta-analysis of seven studies evaluating mental health among university students in Kenya. It was guided by five objectives: to determine the common mental health issues cited in the studies, to document summarised mental health challenges faced by university students, to profile the mental health services sited, to determine the coping mechanism used by students to manage their mental health issues if any, and to establish research gaps identified from the studies reviewed on mental health in the period between 2021-2022. The review revealed that depression, anxiety, and stress are the most prevalent mental health issues, due to diverse challenges. Further, it emerged that student counselling is the instrument put in place to handle mental health issues although students often resort to their own mechanisms when dealing with mental health issues. The findings revealed various gaps for further research in mental health management in Kenyan universities, in the form of relative unawareness or misinformation about mental health issues among university students.**

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**Keywords:** Mental Health Among University Students

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Mental health has over the last decade persisted as a critical issue for research, practice, and medicine as one of the key indicators of general health. Notably, as is postulated byhuman health exceeds the absence of illness or infirmity, to include overall wellbeing in the social, and psychological spheres(Huber et al., 2011). Nonetheless, focus on pathological drivers of ill health has had a toll on mental health, culminating in societies of individuals who are overly conscious about their physical health at the expense of psychological or mental health.

The university has often been cited as one of the social institutions characterized by mental health issues, with the average university student experiencing challenges in so far as their mental health is concerned(Aswani, 2021). The world is changing fast with prospects for life courses taking new trajectories by the day, causing significant uncertainty across the life of the average person. University students have borne a significant percentage of this uncertainty, being at a phase in life where society looks up to them, irrespective of the increasingly challenging life in school, and uncertainties of life upon completion of studies.

University students worldwide are at a constant risk of mental health problems because of the problems they are constantly exposed to (Aldiabat et al., 2014). On average, these students have to grapple with depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, psychosis, addiction, and at times, use psychiatric medications. Despite these findings, the missing link between mental health issues amidst the milestone of youth growth and developmental facets and the realities of life challenges, limited awareness about mental health issues among university students (Aldiabat et al., 2014) to wrongful perceptions of mental health, stigmatization and limiting capacity of students to seek help presents gaps for further research undertakings. In reiteration of the stigmatization of mental health in institutions of higher learning, Kamarunzaman et al (2020) noted that students with mental issues often prefer to stay silent because of stigmatization, and, often, it takes third parties to identify and intervene into suspected cases of mental problems. Studies investigating mental health issues amongst university students have also shown that mental distress in students is a driver of negative consequences, including suicidal thoughts, substance use, depression, anxiety disorders, poor cognitive functioning, and poor academic performance (Mutinta, 2022). The mental health challenge is global and cross-cutting, and students from African universities are no exception. In a study by Aswani (2021), it emerged that about one third of students in African universities have mental health problems, with only two thirds of this faction seeking help. The most notable stressors that have been associated with mental health problems amongst students in African universities include separation from family and friends, financial pressure, academic challenges, and relationship problems. Interestingly, higher prevalence of mental health problems is noted in female students than in their male counterparts (Kamarunzaman et al., 2020), with female students showing susceptibility to more stressors.

Kenya holds a worrying ranking for mental issues at the regional and global level, with depression being the most common form of mental health amongst her population. The number of people showing mental health problems increases daily thereby compounding an already concerning situation. To put this into perspective, a study by Wambui, (2019) had ranked East

Africanas coming to fourth position in the African continent on issues of mental health. The numbers imply a similar mental health index in Kenyan universities, in respect to findings that mental health issues are more profound therein owing to associated stressors. Indeed, Wambui (2019) points out that the socio-economic organization of Kenyan universities provides a suitable environment for mental health problems, with an array of factors converging to increase the risk of problems such as depression, anxiety and drug abuse for students (Wambui, 2019). This background therefore suites the need to undertake a qualitative analysis review of seven recent studies on mental health among university students in Kenya to investigate the status of mental health amongst undergraduate students in Kenyan Universities

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite manageable mental health intervention in various universities institutions, the students are often faced with multifaceted mental health challenges due to their age factor which propels them to peer pressure and general misinformation about the same, hence the need for further mental health studies analysis among university students.

Problems with mental health have often been associated with poor performance in social, economic, and intellectual life. For University students, susceptibility to mental health problems is heightened by the nature of university life and the circumstances surrounding entry into and exit out of university (Aswani, 2021). Research has shown that on a global scale, one out of 10 students joining university is likely to encounter at least one psychological challenge, which often poses threats to academic performance (Gakii, 2021). The problem is more pronounced amongst first year students as they adjust to university life, and as the stressors increase, their mental health outcomes deteriorate further. However, due to little knowledge of mental health, related stigmatization when instances are suspected, and the associated fear of seclusion for victims occurs, it become increasingly difficult to identify cases of mental health among the University students. While it has been noted that the Mental Health issues among the youth warrants resilience by the African gate keepers of mental health, in the African cultural set up especially among the boys, the modern platform today, especially the 21stC youth is riddled with a lot of challenges in their upbringing that life at the University overwhelms them and many silently slip away into mental health issues unnoticed.

For this reason, mental health problems have prevailed amongst university students in the country and slowly eating into the student population with critical consequences. It is therefore fundamental that the mental health situation amongst university students in Kenya be evaluated, as a starting point for intervention with positive mental health outcomes in mind (Mutinta, 2022). This paper provides an anchor point for an assessment of the situation thereof, in the form of a meta-analysis of studies evaluating mental health among university students in Kenya.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To establish Mental Health status among university students in Kenya using meta-analysis approach from seven mental health studies already undertaken in the universities in Kenya.

**Specific Objectives**
1. To determine the common mental health issues sited in the studies

2. To document summarised mental health challenges faced by university students
3. To profile the mental health services offered to university students as sited in the studies
4. To determine the coping mechanism used by students to manage their mental health issues if any
5. To establish research gaps identified from the studies reviewed on mental health in the period between 2021-2022

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology provides an overview of the methods selected and used at every stage during the actual study. It triangulates the study's empirical approach, the data collection methods, and analysis techniques.

### Target Population

The target population in this me-analysis review study are University students. This is because it has been discovered through a study findings that Kenya universities students goes through a lot as far as mental issues are concerned, with some of factors converging to increase the risk of problems such as depression, anxiety and drug abuse for students (Wambui, 2019).

### Study Location

The study focused on studies which have been done in Kenya. This is because Kenya has a high incidence of mental health issues, and by 2018, close to 2 million people in the country showed depressive symptoms (Wambui, 2019). The numbers imply a similar mental health index in Kenyan universities, in respect to findings that mental health issues are more profound therein owing to associated stressors in these environments.

### Study Design

The study adopted a retrospective survey design in triangulating existing research for an in-depth view of the status of mental health and mental health research in Kenyan universities. The study included studies that focused on the mental health situation between 2021 and 2022, limiting its scope to studies that targeted undergraduate students and conducted in the Kenya Universities.

### Data Collection Procedure

Was carried out to identify all studies on mental health among university students undertaken in Kenya. From these studies, a sample size accounting for 10% of all the identified studies was targeted as recommended byKrejcie and Morgan in Bukhari (2021). These studies used as a representative of all studies investigating mental health issues in Kenyan universities in the specified period. However, in the initial evaluation, only 7 studies matched the selection criteria; a) studies targeting Kenyan university students, and b) studies carried out between 2021 and 2022. For this reason, the seven studies were all considered using qualitative analysis of mental health issues amongst university students in Kenya.

### Data Analysis Technique

Qualitative data analysis techniques were applied to analyse the reviewed studies. These included tables, pie charts, graphs and thematic analysis where appropriate.

## STUDY FINDINGS

This section presents the study-related findings from the seven research studies that was sampled for analysis. It presents findings on mental health issues and challenges that emerged among individual student populations, coping mechanisms students attested to using and measures put in place by university administrations to combat the mental health issues.

### Common Mental Health Issues Cited in the Reviewed Studies

A triangulation of the selected studies led to an identification of the mental health issues underscored during inquiry and the results of the studies in so far as mental health issues are concerned. Table presents a summary of the findings

**Table 3.1: Common mental Health Issue among university students in Kenya**

| Study Topic | University | Mental Health Issues Identified | Results of the study's findings |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mental health a growing challenge in Kenyan Universities: The case of Kabarak University | Kabarak University | depression, anxiety different kinds of disorders | Just cited the areas of mental issues identified |
| Influence of Selected psychosocial challenges on Academic performance among first year students in Kenyatta university, Nairobi county | Kenya Methodist University | Anxiety Panic Adjustment Depression | Emotional factors that affect the academic performance of first year students are a result of the lack of a sense of peace, acceptability, sense of security freedom to choose their course of interest, level of anxiety which may be caused by exams as well as fears emanating from various factors such as new environment, lecturers, loneliness and feelings of helplessness. |
| Effects of Contextual Concerns on University Students' Mental Health in the Wake of COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review of Kenyan Cases | Bomet University College, | Depression Anxiety Stress Sleep and eating disorder loneliness | Covid-19 contributed to general poor health and vulnerable university students may have been worse hit. This culminated into mental health issues as depression, anxiety, stress, sleep and eating disorder and loneliness |
| Problematic Internet Use, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among University of Nairobi Students | University of Nairobi | Depressive Disorders Anxiety disorder Generalized disorders | There is a significant relationship between problematic internet use, depression, anxiety and stress among the university students. |
| Correlation Between Self-esteem and Depression Among Poorly Performing Students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya | Africa Nazarene University | 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 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Influence of Selected Psychosocial Challenges On Academic Performance Among First Year Students In Kenyatta University, Nairobi County | Kenya Methodist University | Anxiety Panic adjustment Depression | First-year students face multiple difficulties concerning relational and emotional issues. Some of the most common problems are time, workload and expectations for the two cohorts, balancing relationships with peers, meeting academic performance expectations, freedom of choice in course selection and personal inhibitions such as feelings of loneliness and depression among others |
| Exploring College Students' Biopsychosocial Spiritual Wellbeing and Problems during COVID-19 through a Contextual and Comprehensive Framework | University of Nairobi | Sadness anxiety frustration stress loneliness withdrawal | Change in sleeping patterns, sadness, anxiety, and frustration were reported with one in three reporting "poor" or "fair" mental health. |

From the Common Mental Health Issues Cited in the StudiesTable 3.1 shows that the reviewed studies underlined an array of mental issues amongst students in the six universities represented on the basis of the dependent-independent variable relationships they evaluated. Nonetheless, the recurrent mental issues across the board included depression, anxiety and stress; these mental issues not only informed the investigative pathways of these studies, but also constituted a significant part of their findings. In a triangulation of depression, anxiety, and stress indices across the seven studies, incidences and extent of manifestation of the mental health issues was extracted for analysis on the basis of Normal, Mild, Moderate, Severe and N/A. Qualitative analysis was used to analyse the data further as shown on Table 3.2 as presented below.

**Table 3.2: The corroborative findings are as elaborated in table below.**

| Mental Health Issue | Normal | Mild | Moderate | Severe | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Depression | 43.25% | 12.1% | 24.65% | 10.13% | 9.87% |
| Anxiety | 22.35% | 37.45% | 22.15% | 12.03% | 6.02% |
| Stress | 62.2% | 13% | 17% | 8% | 4% |

As table 3.2 illustrates, most of the students who formed the sample population for the seven selected studies demonstrated relatively high rates of stress at 62.2%, depression 43.25% and, anxiety at 22.35% respectively. However severe mental health conditions seem to have shown anxiety at 12.03% and at the same time with mild occurrence on the same at 37.45%. Moderated outcomes reveal depression at 24.65% as the highest levels. The numbers reiterate findings by Gakii (2021) and Wambui (2019), that the average university student in Kenya is likely to experience at least one mental issue in their study duration, and that at any one time, one out of 10 students is likely to have one of the three mental health issues. As shown on Table

3.1 and Table 3.2 on the common mental Health issues cited in the studies qualitatively analysed,

**Mental Health Challenges Faced by University Students**
The review also sought the mental health challenges faced by the students for insights into the drivers of mental issues as identified in the selected studies. Table 3. 3 presents a summary of the findings

**Table 3.3: Mental Health challenges faced by university students**

| Title | Author | Mental Health Challenges faced by University Students |
|---|---|---|
| Mental health a growing challenge in Kenyan Universities: The case of Kabarak University | Dr. Eunice Njenga | depression, anxiety different kinds of disorders |
| Influence of Selected psychosocial challenges on Academic performance among first year students in Kenyatta university, Nairobi county | Julia Gakii Muthuri | Anxiety Panic Adjustment Depression |
| Effects of Contextual Concerns on University Students' Mental Health in the Wake of COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review of Kenyan Cases | Dr. Hellen Jepchirchir Mettoh | Depression Anxiety Stress Sleep and eating disorder Loneliness |
| Problematic Internet Use, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among University of Nairobi Students | Sylvia Adoyo Mita | Depressive Disorders Anxiety disorder Generalized disorders |
| Correlation Between Self-esteem and Depression Among Poorly Performing Students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya | Innocent Elum Afen Pinto Hubert Aloys Otieno Ojore | Depression |
| Influence of Selected Psychosocial Challenges on Academic Performance Among First Year Students in Kenyatta University, Nairobi County | Julia Gakii Muthuuri Dr. Zipporah Kaaria Dr. Leunita Makutsa Makila | Anxiety, Panic adjustment Depression |
| Exploring College Students' Biopsychosocial Spiritual Wellbeing and Problems during COVID-19 through a Contextual and Comprehensive Framework | Habil Otanga Ahmet Tanhan Phelista Marura Musili Gokmen Aslan Metin Bulus | Sadness, anxiety frustration, stress, Loneliness, withdrawal |

Table 3.3 shows the mental health challenges that university students goes through according to the cited qualitatively analysed. The challenges were further analysed as shown in Table

**Mental Health Challenges Faced by University Students**
The mental challenges faced by students as explored in the selected studies were also sought to identify the underlying circumstances behind the mental health issues identified among the students from the six universities. These had been examined and analysed on the basis of a five-point Likert scale; the final figures were extracted from the six studies and the means and standard deviations computed and presented as in table. 3.4

## Table 3.4: Mental Health Challenges Faced by University Students

| Mental Health Challenge | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Undesired Course | 3.904 | 0.705 |
| Exam anxiety | 3.826 | 0.653 |
| New environment | 3.711 | 0.769 |
| Helplessness | 3.579 | 0.707 |
| Meeting new people | 3.371 | 0.751 |
| Virtual learning | 3.840 | 1.350 |

As table 3.4 elaborates, the overall mental health challenge was students undertaking undesired course at with a standard deviation of 0.705. the was followed by exams anxiety with a mean of 3.826 and sd of 0.653, Virtual learning was majorly cited in the studies reviewed as posing a challenge bordering mental health with a mean at 3.840 with sd of 1.350 respectively. Other mental health issues which posed challenges to students included new environment, helplessness and meeting new people. The figures, on average, demonstrated that most of the students were either neutral, or in agreement that the mentioned challenges had high consequence to their mental health outcomes. Across the board, the standard deviation for the challenges cited had a lower limit of 0.653 and an upper limit of 1.350, implying that the degree of deviation of the responses from the mean was minimal and outliers would be unlikely. These findings agree with the assertion by Kamarunzaman et al (2020), that the university environment's design pre-disposes students to mental health issues owing to its novelty, volatility, affiliation for variety, freedom, and demanding nature at the academic, social, and economic levels.

**Mental Health Services Offered to University Students**
Consequently, the review inquired into the mental health services offered to students as identified in the selected studies. These were considered instrumental for an overview of the role played by Kenyan universities in addressing mental health issues amongststudents. The findings are summarized in table

## Table 3.5: Mental Health Services offered to university students

| Study Topic | University | Mental Health Services Said to be Offered to Students |
|---|---|---|
| Mental health a growing challenge in Kenyan Universities: The case of Kabarak University | Kabarak University | Student Counselling |
| Influence of Selected psychosocial challenges on Academic performance among first year students in Kenyatta university, Nairobi county | Kenya Methodist University | Psychological evaluations, Time bound treatment, Emotional support, Personal development groups External psychological services Social integration for addressing relationship difficulties Orientation programs for first time students |
| Effects of Contextual Concerns on University Students' Mental Health in the Wake of COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review of Kenyan Cases | Bomet University College, | None |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Problematic Internet Use, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among University of Nairobi Students | University of Nairobi | None |
| Correlation Between Self-esteem and Depression Among Poorly Performing Students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya | Africa Nazarene University | Student Counselling |
| Exploring College Students' Biopsychosocial Spiritual Wellbeing and Problems during COVID-19 through a Contextual and Comprehensive Framework | University of Nairobi | None |

From Table 3.5, the findings shows that Mental health services as the reviewed in the studies in the Kenyan context, are not only essential, but could also be determinant of the overall mental health profile of the average university students. As Kamarunzaman et al (2020) puts it, the general unawareness of mental health issues amongst university students is the leading cause of stigmatization against mental health, and the reason behind preference for silence instead of consultation, diagnosis and treatment. For this reason, it has been the role of key stakeholders within the university environment to identify cases that require diagnosis and intervention. An approach that has proved mostly ineffective. Nonetheless, it was mentioned in the selected studies that the most common form of mental health service for students was counselling from respective counselling departments. For example, a respondent in the study by Gakii (2021) mentioned the following about Kenyatta University;

> "implemented some programs to help students cope with the challenges they face in their first year. They said thatprograms include: Psychological assessment and evaluations, time limitation treatments, emotional support, personal development groups or referrals to external psychological services which typically include student counseling services that are given. It is of utmost significance that any information provided by the student is secret and ethical. It is important to share the information with trusted third parties only in exceptional instances (i.e. if there is a serious threat of a student damaging himself or others). This is explained at the initial counseling session to the student. Counselling offers a chance to look at broad developments such as job choices, study behaviors, routine changes, connections, identity, and self-conception."

Ideally, such programs could provide an alternative to handling the mental health issues in Kenyan universities, countering the largely ineffective passive approach that depends on students reporting to designated counsellors for assistance.

**Coping Mechanisms Used by University Students to Manage their Mental Health Issues**
Further, the reviewed studies sought the action taken by students to cope with mental health issues whenever they encountered them at the university. These are elaborated in table 3.6.

**Table 3.6: Coping mechanism used by university students**

| Study Topic | University | Coping Mechanisms |
|---|---|---|
| Mental health a growing challenge in Kenyan Universities: The case of Kabarak University | Kabarak University | Was stated to be drugs and substance abuse |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Influence of Selected psychosocial challenges on Academic performance among first year students in Kenyatta university, Nairobi county | Kenya Methodist University | Was stated as Being part of support groups |
| Effects of Contextual Concerns on University Students' Mental Health in the Wake of COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review of Kenyan Cases | Bomet University College, | Was not stated in the paper |
| Problematic Internet Use, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among University of Nairobi Students | University of Nairobi | Internet use for mood elevation predominated |
| Correlation Between Self-esteem and Depression Among Poorly Performing Students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya | Africa Nazarene University | Was not stated in the papers |
| Exploring College Students' Biopsychosocial Spiritual Wellbeing and Problems during COVID-19 through a Contextual and Comprehensive Framework | University of Nairobi | talking to family/friends physical exercise, social media, reading books, hobbies, spiritual activities, alcohol/drugs |

Table 3.6 shows the approaches that students take to cope when faced with mental issues in the Kenyan university setting. Often, it has been established that students have unique ways of dealing with mental issues, ranging from social systems to destructive behaviour that often alleviates the issues. Further analysis on 3.7 from what was drawn from Table 3.6 qualitatively was further qualitatively analysed. This was achieved by an in-depth evaluation of the findings from the seven selected studies for prevalence of such action and it's examination. The presence of these characteristics qualified the selected studies for data extraction, and the data was presented in table 3.7.

**Table 3.7: Coping Mechanism Used by students to handle their mental health issues**

| Coping mechanisms used | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Talking to family and friends | 4.18 | 0.88 |
| Exercise | 2.77 | 1.42 |
| Social media | 4.17 | 0.96 |
| Reading books | 3.04 | 1.31 |
| Hobbies | 3.85 | 1.08 |
| Spiritual activities | 3.54 | 1.39 |
| Alcohol/drugs | 1.39 | 0.95 |

As table elaborates, the corroborated findings revealed variability in the coping mechanisms students in Kenyan universities utilize to cope with mental health issues. On the one hand, most of the students were found to prefer talking to family members and their friends, followed by the use of social media to divert their attentions from stressors and switching to their hobbies such as sports, dances relaxing and so on. These are the situations which were found to invite alcohol and drug abuse consumptions as a coping mechanism, with a standard deviation of 0.95. Most students were neutral or in agreement that exercise, reading books, hobbies and spiritual mechanisms could be used to cope with mental issues while they are at the university as coping mechanisms. Notably, the high affiliation for social media as a coping mechanism has raised concern in some studies due to it's tendency to distance users from social life, enhancing loneliness and enhancing mental health issues (Otanga et al., 2022). In the same vein, Mita

(2021), associates problematic internet use with higher risks of depression, anxiety and stress amongst students.

**Research Gaps Identified from the Studies Reviewed on Mental Health**

**Table 3.8: Research Gaps identified from the studies reviewed**

| Study Topic | Research Gap |
|---|---|
| Mental health a growing challenge in Kenyan Universities: The case of Kabarak University | No gap on further research was identified |
| Influence of Selected psychosocial challenges on Academic performance among first year students in Kenyatta university, Nairobi county | There is need to focus on other universities both locally and abroad and see whether the results will be replicated on mental health issues. There is a need for a study focusing on other factors not captured in the current study. |
| Effects of Contextual Concerns on University Students' Mental Health in the Wake of COVID-19 Pandemic: A Review of Kenyan Cases | Universities have not invested on psychological first aid and still there is lack of systematic collection of data on the mental health impact of COVID-19 |
| Problematic Internet Use, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Among University of Nairobi Students | There's need for a study on the effect of problematic internet use on other psychiatric problems not covered in the study |
| Correlation Between Self-esteem and Depression Among Poorly Performing Students of Africa Nazarene University, Kenya | A comparative study may be carried out in other private and public universities on the components of depression among the students |
| Exploring College Students' Biopsychosocial Spiritual Wellbeing and Problems during COVID-19 through a Contextual and Comprehensive Framework | long-term consequences of the pandemic are not fully known, and should be adequately addressed using a bio psychological–spiritual approach, which is multidimensional |

## CONCLUSION

The mental health situation amongst students in Kenyan universities is relatively understudied in the past two years, with the implication of limited knowledge of the same and its implications amidst recent changes. Nonetheless, the studies carried out between 2021 and 2022 (Adoyo Mita, 2021; Gakii, 2021; Mettoh, 2022; Njenga, 2021; Otanga et al., 2022; Wambui, 2019) provide some insights about the prevalence of mental health issues in the universities, the measures put in place to address the issues, and the coping mechanisms used by students when they fall victim to mental issues notably are important. In sum, it emerged that depression, anxiety, and stress are the most prevalent mental health issues, and, on the basis of the studies included, the challenges that could be associated with these mental health issues include undesired course, exam anxiety, new environment, helplessness, meeting new people, and virtual learning. Further, the review revealed, albeit shallowly, that student counselling is the instrument put in place to handle mental health issues amongst students in Kenyan universities, and that students often resort to their own mechanisms when dealing with mental health issues. The cited coping mechanisms included talking to family and friends, exercise social media, reading books, hobbies, spiritual activities, and alcohol/drugs. Nonetheless, these were prevalent amongst the minority that acknowledged mental health issues, unlike the majority, who stigmatize individuals with symptoms due to limited knowledge on mental health issues. The findings reveal gaps in mental health management in Kenyan universities, in the form of relative unawareness or misinformation about mental health issues, focus on

mental health management by student centred approaches, and inquiry into changes in the mental health situation amidst a highly volatile society.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the empirical review, the following recommendations follow for mental health policy, general mental health practice, and further studies in the context of Kenyan universities;

1. There is a need to mainstream mental health policy at national and university level to account for, and alleviate mental health outcomes for university students owing to the unique context, and challenges students experience therein
2. There is need for accelerated and diversified mental health service delivery in Kenyan universities to enhance early identification of, and intervention into mental health issues, and sensitize students against stigmatization against victims of mental health issues.
3. There is need for further research into mental health matters amidst recent changes in the globe, and the coping mechanisms used by Kenyan universities in addressing mental health issues.

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