INFLUENCE OF PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON UTILIZATION OF PEER COUNSELLING SERVICES IN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN PSYCHOLOGY (COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY) IN THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER, 2018
DECLARATION

This research is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University for any award.

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I dedicate this thesis to my daughter Jean Wairimu and son Quincy Kamina, my husband Floyd Kamina Mwangi and my siblings for their continued support and encouragement throughout the research process.
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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

AA Program: Alcoholic Anonymous group which comprise of people recovering from Alcohol and other drugs addiction.

Barriers: Reasons for not being able to attend to a certain activity

Behaviour Modification: Change of behaviour from one that is socially unacceptable behaviour to a more socially acceptable one.

Coping skills: Ability to find ways of adjusting and be able to handle difficult issues in life.

Counselling: The help offered by a counsellor to a client/ counselee/ a person in need so that she/ he is able to acquire coping skills to handle their issues.

Challenges: Issues and struggles that the university students experience in life

Lifestyle: The behaviour of individuals as influenced by the particular environment

Peer Counselling: The help that a person of a similar age and experience offer to one another.

Perception: The notion university students have on Peer Counselling Services

Positive Perception: When a university student has the notion that utilization of PCS is useful to them

Negative Perception: When a university student has the notion that utilization of PCS is not useful to them

Social Support: Help offered by our peers or professional ‘in solving day to day issues
**University Administrator**

University staff who are in charge of the well-being of the students

**Utilization:**

The participation of the university students in peer counselling activities.

**Willingness:**

The ready acceptance to attend peer counselling services without being coerced.
ABBREVIATIONS

CCG – Centre for Counselling and Guidance

FDG – Focus Group Discussion

FGDG – Focus Group Discussion Groups

HBM – Health Belief Model

LIA – Letter of Interim Authority

MoE – Ministry of Education

NACOSTI – National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

PCS – Peer Counselling Services

SMU – Singapore Management University

TIVET – Technical Industrial Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

USIU – United States International University
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ABSTRACT

Peer counselling refers to the help among and by people of the same age group or people operating at the same level who take charge of assisting each other on various issues that affect them. Based on this understanding many universities have established peer counselling as one of the ways of helping university students to cope with their day to day issues. The purpose of this study was to establish how the university students perceive peer counselling services and its influence on utilization of these services. The study utilized a descriptive correlational design, in which the researcher was primarily interested in describing relationships among variables. The site of the study was selected universities in Kenya and the target population was third and fourth year undergraduate students in universities in Kenya. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the universities. The third years and fourth year students were purposefully selected to take part in the study. The study used simple random sampling to select 400 students from the third and fourth years in the selected universities. Questionnaires and focus group discussion guides were used to collect data. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics in form of means, percentages and frequencies. Logistic Regression Model was used to establish the significant demographic variables that consequently had an influence on the relationship between perception and utilization of the peer counselling services at the universities. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.1 for Windows software was used to aid in quantitative data analysis while the qualitative data was grouped and analysed thematically. The findings of the study revealed that a large percentage of the university students (75%) had negative perception on Peer Counselling Services which subsequently influenced negatively on the utilization of the services. It also revealed that while 15% of the students utilized Peer Counselling Services at different levels, a larger percentage, 85% never utilized Peer Counselling Services at any time. The findings also revealed that more females (69%) than males (31%) had positive perception of the services. While the findings also revealed that more fourth years (51%) than third years (49%) had a positive perception, the type of university (public or private) did not have a significant influence on the perception of the students and the utilization of Peer Counselling. Some of the major recommendations the study made were: to consider the type of perception the university students have on peer counselling services, the university management need to provide relevant training to its peer counsellors and provide close supervision by the trained counsellors, peer counsellors are recommended to undertake all trainings offered by the university management which involves peer counselling activities, as well as sensitization of activities conducted in the university to all students. This information could help the students to have a more positive perception of PCS, and hence utilize the services more.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

People’s ability to make decisions is highly influenced by perception amongst other factors (Pickens, 2005). The process of perception involves both the information we take in through our senses and previous knowledge about the phenomenon at hand to understand our context. The implication is that, perception can be affected by different factors within the environment. This refers to the entirety of human reactions to a decision taken in specific context, and implies both cognitive reactions and behavioural reactions (Zigon, Corradetti, Snidero, Gregori, & Passali, 2005). This is one of the factors that make perception an important factor in the decision making process as whether to utilize the service or not. From the cognitive perspective, psychological aspects that are shaped partly by the environment and personal aspects are equally important in shaping behaviour. Accordingly, studies have shown that perception and behaviour can interact synergistically via the environment (Verschure, Voegtlin, & Douglas, 2003). Thus, perception forms associations with an action, organized by reinforcement. It can be argued that university students who receive positive reinforcement on peer counselling services, may utilize the services more often unlike those who receive negative reinforcement who are likely to be less motivated towards the service. When the university students are less motivated, they may develop negative perception towards the service, resulting into low utilization of peer counselling services.

In addition, our perception can be learned or influenced through experience thus aids in forming a basis of our perception towards a situation or other people (Pickens, 2005). He further informs
that perceptions are formed as a result of learning, modelling on our direct experiences with situations and people. Similarly, university students may form either a positive or negative perception, based on the attitude that they may have. A study by Vogel & Wester (2005) indicated that 62% of the 304 sampled college students consented that in the decision making process, attitudes and psychological factors contributed to seeking for professional help. It can therefore be implied that when the university students have a positive attitude, they will have a positive perception towards PCS, which in turn would positively influence utilization of the services.

University administrators have developed peer counselling programs as one of the ways of giving opportunities for university students to help their peers in various difficulties. These peer counselling programs not only target university students with behavioural and developmental challenges, but also offer a forum through which university students can discuss various issues about life including academic and relational issues. Some of the peer counselling programs activities include: group counselling, individual counselling, consultations, motivational talks, outings and visitation to other universities. While this is the initiative of the university administrators, the university administrators have not put emphasis on the perception of the students on these services as a major factor for the offering of the PCS among the university students.

According to Kamanja (2012), Kenyatta University runs a program for university freshmen on reproductive health in collaboration with Pathfinder International. This program has helped many new students at the university in adjusting to university life. This information only benefits the
students joining the university for the first time. This reveals a degree of miscommunication since after sensitization of the services there is no follow up of the same information to the students as they go to higher classes in their university life. More sensitization of the services in the upper classes may influence the perception of the university students on PCS, and probably their utilization of the services. Similarly, United States International University-Africa (USIU-A) has a well-organized in-house peer counselling training program with a manual that provides basic counselling skills to guide the peer counsellor. While these programs are said by the university administrators to be useful to the university students, it is not clear how the university students perceive these services and how this may influences their utilization of these services.

According to the university administrators, peer counselling services among the university students is mainly to help the students improve on decision making skills, which probably could be the reason for the university administrators availing the services to the university students (Rowntree, 2016). Guided by their own perception on the service, the university administrators have set high expectations on the utilization of peer counselling. Although the university administrators have established peer counselling programs that have been beneficial to the university students, and expect a high utilization of these services by the university students, it is not understood how the university students perceive these services. University students may not necessarily utilize the services offered to them unless they perceive the services positively, hence the importance to understand the perception of the university students on PCS. This makes the current study crucial as it aims at establishing the influence of the students’ perception on the utilization of peer counselling services. This can only be achieved by firstly, establishing the type of perception the university students have on peer counselling services. Secondly, the perception
of students on the peer counselling services was important because it helped establish the influence perception has on utilization of peer counselling services.

However, there are several challenges that would influence the type of perception the university students have on PCS from those assumed by the university administrators. For instance, a case study conducted in Australia on international students and their use of counselling services, realized that most students were not aware of such services in the university and attributed their inactive use of the counselling services to lack of knowledge of the PCS (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2007). Lack of awareness on the existence of PCS can be termed as ignorance, which may imply negative perception by the students on peer counselling services and hence low utilization of the PCS.

Perception could also be influenced by Lack of confidence or trust / confidentiality as perceived by the university students. University students may fear that in sharing their issues the peer counsellors may disclose their information to other students. On the other hand, some students would probably argue on time constraints because third and fourth year students are engaged in serious assignments in their curriculum. The above issues may influence the type of perception the university students have on PCS and this perception may subsequently influence their utilization of the services.

The current study found it necessary to include demographic factors because they seemed to influence perception in different ways. This was crucial because perception is also influenced by experiences which are moderated by demographic factors such as age, gender, and culture and level of education, programs of study, and year of study (Glosoff & Pate 2002). It was therefore
important to study the perception of the university students on PCS, by these demographic parameters. University students being different in gender, whether male or female, as well as being at different levels education (year of study), and type of university (private or public), might be factors contributing towards the difference in perception on of PCS. These variations may impact on the individual university student’s experiences of psychological discomfort, which in return may influence utilization of peer counselling services. Probably, if the university students perceived the benefits of the utilization of PCS, they may overlook the challenges and utilize the services.

Deane, Stogstad & Williams (2001) in their study, revealed that their participant’s attitudes towards seeking counselling were significantly associated with past counselling experiences. This also resonates with Komiya et al. (2000), who informed that the desire to avoid painful feelings while undergoing therapy may result in formation of a negative attitude towards counselling. One’s attitude highly influences their perception. For instance, counselling is a service that may be useful to individuals experiencing distress at various stages of their lives, when the individuals perceive the service as beneficial to them in exploring ways of coping with their distress. Thus, the level of the students’ distress may influence their perception on PCS and hence the need to utilize PCS. This implies that the university student’s experiences of distress may influence their perception towards counselling and consequently their level of utilization of the services.

As the study sought to find out the influence of perception of the university students on utilization of Peer Counselling Services, it was crucial to understand the term Peer Counselling
as one of the many forms of counselling. The term counselling is used to describe professional helping relationship between a counsellor and a counselee where empathetic understanding, respect and acceptance are exercised. Nelson (2011) describes counselling as a type of intervention that reflects on theoretical approaches. There are many forms of counselling including; Marriage and Family counselling, which mainly focuses on family issues, Addiction Counselling which addresses different addictions, Child Counselling which focuses on childhood issues, and Adolescence Counselling whose focus is on the people at adolescent developmental stage, Group Counselling and Peer Counselling among others (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Peer counselling has been defined as the psychological help offered by people of the same age group, workmates or people operating at the same level who take charge of assisting each other on various issues that affect them (Rowntree, 2016). This is because, as may be observed, people of the same age bracket share similar challenges, interest and concerns. The concept of peer counselling had its beginning in 1939 with the establishment of Alcoholics Anonymous (Carter & Ed., 2000). It was found that people who had experienced the problem of alcoholism and overcame it through AA program would be more effective in assisting others who were trying to do the same. AbuRasain & Williams (2006) explains that the concept of peer counselling is mainly underpinned by the commonalities of peer members because they have the capacity to influence each other through empathy. In addition, empathy which is a powerful principle in counselling where the client feels understood is the guiding principle for the peer counsellor (AbuRasain & Williams, 2006). Peer counselling among the university students is the help that is offered by their peers formally or informally. Peer counsellors at the universities offer help to
their fellow students to deal with their day to day issues including psychosocial and developmental challenges for instance in academic achievement or in self-awareness. Hence it is assumed that students empathy towards each other may influence their perception of PCS positively, it is however not certain the type of perception they have on PCS, thus the importance of the current study.

Despite several university administrators having invested much on peer counselling among the students, some of the students continue to manifest psychosocial challenges. From a research review on several researches conducted in British, American, South African and Indonesian Universities, Raunic & Xenos (2008), noted that despite counselling services being made freely available to those university students, only a minority of the students experiencing psychological distress viewed these services as beneficial to them and used the services. In a similar British university study, (Cooke et al., 2006) indicated that only 3% of the 4,699 first year students had used the university counselling service by the end of their second semester. Most of the other students would prefer seeking help from their family members or elsewhere which raised concern as to why they would not take advantage of the free counselling services (Raunic & Xenos, 2008). This further informs on the fact that some students may perceive PCS negatively and prefer seeking for help elsewhere despite the university administration’s facilitation on the PCS. Thus, the current study in seeks to establish the type of perception that the university students have on PCS, and how their perception may influence the utilization of PCS.

Peer counselling is also thought to constitute a potential valuable helping resource in the area of academic achievement, enhancing self-concept, encouraging more efficient adjustment to the
environment and actualizing their own potential in certain ambience thus making peer counselling an alternative method of intervention. A case study at Pakistani Medical School conducted at the Aga Khan University in Karachi sought to identify their student’s perception on stress and their coping mechanisms as they undertook their medical college studies. This study revealed that a majority of the students, more than 88%, perceived that they were stressed during their course of study, with a higher percentage of them 98% female and 95% male being the fourth and fifth year students. The prevalence of such perceived stress eventually affects the students taking a negative toll on their academic performance and inevitably on their health. The study recommended that amongst other requirements, an introduction of peer counselling and better counselling facilities would aid greatly in the reduction of such perceived stress factors by the students. Similarly, Tindall (2011) concurs, that enhanced utilization of PCS is necessary because peer counselling adopts similar approaches to professional counselling, which is said to be a concerted attempt to harness the capacity to console, appease and also befriend one another. Perception of the students on their need for help in the above study is dependent on their perception of their stress rather than what the people in authority will guide them. Whatever type perception the students have, whether positive or negative will highly influence their utilization of PCS.

The perception that people with various needs for instance terminal illness have may influence their need to seek utilization of PCS. For instance, people with issues of stigma and low esteem, arising from terminal illnesses do benefit from peer counselling. Harris & Larsen (2007) sought to find out how peer counselling worked with people suffering from HIV/AIDS. Harris (2007) researched with 12 people with HIV/AIDS and found out that the participants cited several
thematic benefits of peer counselling which they reported, enhanced their hope. In this study, peer counselling was facilitated by those living with HIV/AIDS and had some training in counselling. People living with HIV/AIDS do experience stigma, and this causes social isolation which shows that peer counselling and support is an important resource for HIV-positive individuals. Sharing similar experiences encourages understanding and empathy which is helpful in supporting each other. In addition, university students share similar experiences, and thus would not fear sharing with their peers as much as they would with professional counsellors. The resulting perceived benefits of PCS, would influence perception positively, and hence enhance utilization of the service.

In another study, Chapman (2004), found that peer counselling services when offered to low-income breast feeding mothers encouraged them to breast feed longer which diet therapists highly advocate for good growth and development of a baby (Chapman et al, 2004). Similarly, Chola (2011) emphasized that peer counselling in the exclusive breast feeding program in Uganda, was effective through the involvement of peer counsellors, whereby women who were breastfeeding became mentors in guiding their fellow peers in exercising exclusive breast feeding (Chola, et al., 2011). The perceived benefits of services offered thus, influences their seeking of the services. Similarly, the university students who perceive PCS to be beneficial to them may tend to seek the services.

The perceived success of the PCS in dealing with different personal issues of the students may influence their seeking of the services. For instance, Larimer et al. (2005), advocated for peer counselling among the university students as a method of reducing alcohol and drug use among
the university students (Larimer, Kilmer, & Lee, 2005). Since peer counselling has been successful in addressing the issues of alcohol use, it can be implied that peer counselling can be used in handling other issues among the university students which include: sexuality, relational issues, family issues, career and finances, among others. Frijns (2009) established that, attitudes such as keeping secrets, sharing, caring, being real and not judgmental, are important aspects of peer counselling. Peer counsellors do have high friendship expectations from their peers and this special relationship makes it possible for peers to establish unique trust among themselves (Frijns & Finkenauer, 2009). Hoffman (2001) emphasizes on the same argument and adds that empathy contribute to principles of caring and justice that can be incorporated in peer counselling. This makes peer counselling a convincingly effective intervention among university students. Drawing from Hoffman (2001) views, it can be argued that it is natural for the university students to empathize with each other and seek support from each other, as they interact in other activities of the day; this kind of a counselling relationship is thus unique since it takes place freely and naturally among peers without much struggling.

Wells & Ritter (2016) stipulated that, there is a controversy surrounding the relationship between students and peer counsellors and similar behaviours are likely to be observed among the university students in Kenya today. Wells & Ritter (2016) found out that, more than four-fifths of the 550 students sampled would only go to a school counsellor if they wanted to change class or determine graduation requirements, and only 4 percent of that number would seek peer counselling when faced with a personal problem. The study further suggested that American high school students do not view peer counselling as an effective source of important help except in the area of education-vocational decision making. This is similar to the study undertaken by
(Calhoun& Selby 2009), whose findings were that in Hong Kong University, only 17% of the student population seek peer counselling. Though the above studies are rather old, their findings are quite relevant to the current study. The study did not include the perception of the students on the utilization of counselling.

Historically, people used to be advised by their parents, lovers, clergy, and social leaders by providing such counsel whether sought or not (Glosoff & Pate, 2002). The need for counselling today may be as a result of the ever changing developmental, social and technological challenges which place a demand on coping with these challenges (Biswalo, 1996). Parental guidance is not always available because of the limited time parents have for sharing with the students due to their busy schedules in the competitive world of career and business. University counsellors are expected to counsel students but in reality, they are overwhelmed by the ever rising student population which do not commensurate with the number of counsellors. For instance, in Kenyatta University, according to the Wellness Center, which is the department tasked with counselling the entire student population of approximately 60,000 students, has only 3 qualified staff counsellors. Such discrepancy continues to worsen each year. Mulford & Giordano (2008) and (Arudo, 2008), noted that the current socio-technological changes (people finding solution to their issues from the internet), and educational demands, (limited time to attend formal counselling due to school assignments) would cause distress among the students thereby compelling them to seek for counselling services at the universities. The scarcity in the number of professional counsellors against the large number of students in the universities may bring about a negative perception amongst the students as they develop a notion that they would not have an opportunity to access the said limited counselling services.
1.2 Statement of the Problem

Perception influences our attitudes and willingness to utilize a service. Since it is observed that, peer counselling is the help by others who are of the same developmental stage or people with similar experiences, it is expected that university students would utilize the peer counselling more than they would university counselling services. This is due to the convenience offered by peer counsellors as they may interact together with their peers in the days’ activities. In addition, while peer counselling has been availed in several universities, university students continue to experience challenges in coping with their daily issues. This is manifested by the several maladjusted behaviours of university students for instance, taking of alcohol and drugs, fights and other related behaviours. In addition, Salovey & D’Andrea (1996), indicated that 78% of the universities and colleges surveyed, had peer counselling programs in their institutions. The study though noted that, despite the presence of the peer counselling programs there is a scarcity of research in evaluation of utilization of the services (D’Andrea & Salovey, 1996). While several studies have revealed the importance and levels of utilization of the PCS, few studies have been carried out on the influence of perception of PCS on utilization, thus, the current study seeks to establish utilization of peer counselling services as influenced by perception among the university students in both private and public universities. Similarly, university administrators have invested in facilitating peer counselling program and yet the utilization of PCS, by the university students does not seem to measure up with the utilization of these services. When people perceive a service as important to them they may utilize it more, unlike when they perceive it negatively, hence, the study on the perception of the university students on PCS, and how this influences utilization becomes a timely study.
1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to establish the influence of perception of the university students on utilization of Peer Counselling Services.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. To find out the perception of university students on peer counselling.
2. To determine the extent to which social demographics of the university students influence perception.
3. To find out the frequency of utilization of peer counselling services by the university students.
4. To examine the influence that perception has on utilization of peer counselling services.
5. To establish the challenges of utilization of peer counselling services among the university students.
6. To establish what needs to be done to enhance on the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research question?

1. What is the perception of university students on peer counselling?
2. How do social demographics of the university students influence perception of peer counselling?
3. What is the frequency of utilization of peer counselling services by the university students?
4. What is the relationship between perception of the university students and utilization of peer counselling services?

5. What are the challenges of utilization of peer counselling services among the university students?

6. What measures should be taken to enhance utilization of peer counselling services among the university students?

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

University administrators have invested on peer counselling programs since they assume that these programs would be beneficial to the university students. In some cases, PCS has been beneficial to the university students. The success of PCS among the university students may be contributed by the fact that university students interact with each other all the time and they feel free to express their experiences with their peers since they share similar experiences. Peer counselling has been useful in many ways for instance in academic performance, discipline and health as well as being a suitable intervention among the university students as compared to the professional counsellors. However, despite the usefulness of PCS, university students continue to manifest psychosocial and developmental issues as well as an increase in complexity and severity in students presenting problems. In addition, university administrators have employed counsellors to mitigate the counselling needs of the university students, but the number of these counsellors is limited and hence the need for peer counsellors in a bid to help ameliorate the short fall of university counsellors. Similarly, the university administrators assume that, university students may utilize the services. However, it is not clear the perception of the
university students on these services and how this influences their utilization of the services and hence the current study becomes timely and crucial.

The current study provides useful information for the university administrators which may be included in the PCS programs with the aim of enhancing utilization of PCS and in adjusting PCS programs to make them more responsive to the needs of the students. The study will also provide useful information to other stakeholders such as parents and guardians of the university students, so that they may motivate the students in utilizing PCS. In addition, the research findings may be useful to the students since the study will generate a better understanding of the importance of utilizing the PCS. Utilizing the PCS, may be an avenue to alleviate the students’ day to day distress as well as enhancing their holistic wellbeing. Other beneficiaries of this study may include tertiary institutions and the Ministry of Education as they may incorporate the suggestions from the findings which would provide effective Peer Counselling Services in the institutions.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study was carried out in Nairobi and Nakuru counties respectively and focused on third and fourth year undergraduate students from both private and public universities. The study did not include the satellite campuses.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

This study assumed that:

1. University students have a specific perception on peer counselling services.
2. University students’ perception of peer counselling services influences their utilization of these services.

3. Third and fourth year students are more likely to understand the need for peer counselling.

4. Students from private and public universities would perceive peer counselling services differently.

5. Participants would cooperate and be truthful in providing information as required in the questionnaires and in the group discussions guide.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction
This chapter focused on theoretical framework, review of related literature which involved a critical look at the existing research that was significant to the study. These included books, journals and dissertations. The chapter also had, related literature and a summary of the related literature given as well as the conceptual framework.

2.2 Theoretical Frame Work
The study adopted the Health Belief Model (HBM).

The originators of HBM were Godfrey Hochbaum, Stephen Kegels and Irwin Rosenstock in the year 1952. They were trained in social psychology with phenomenological orientation. The model was originally developed as a systematic method to explain and predict preventive health behaviour. It focused on the relationship of health behaviours, practices and utilization of health services.

The Health Belief Model uses four constructs which include: firstly, the perceived threats, secondly, perceived benefits, thirdly, perceived susceptibility and fourthly the perceived vulnerability. Each of these perceived experiences are explained as follows: The perceived threat indicates ways through which the person experiences threatening challenges in life, perceived severity which indicates the level at which the person experiences extremes of negative feelings towards a given circumstance or threat, perceived susceptibility is the level at which an individual experiences hopelessness and lack of ways of issues freely (no sufficient trust) and
finally, perceived vulnerability ways in which the person feels vulnerable (feeling more likely to experience a certain harm than other people). People who had positive perception towards healthy living were able to gain good health and happiness than those who perceived the information negatively.

The Model indicates that, a person's motivation to undertake a healthy behaviour can be divided into three main categories: individual perceptions, modifying behaviours, and likelihood of action. Individual perceptions are factors that affect the perception of illness or disease; they deal with the importance of health to the individual, perceived susceptibility, and perceived severity. Modifying factors include demographic variables, perceived threat, and cues to action. In addition, the HBM assumes that, the perception of a personal health behaviour threat is itself influenced by at least three factors: general health values, which include interest and concern about health; specific health beliefs about vulnerability to a particular health threat; and beliefs about the consequences of the health problem. Once an individual perceives a threat to his/her health and is simultaneously cued to action, and his/her perceived benefits outweighs his/her perceived threats, then that individual is most likely to undertake the recommended preventive health action

The assumption of the Health Belief Model was relevant to the study in several ways: first, the perceived threat was indicated by the fact that university students were faced by several challenges in their day to day experiences. Drugs and substance abuse, issues of sexuality and relationships as well as communication with the older people, issues of examinations and career were some of the challenges that the university students experienced. In the Health Belief Model
these are termed as threats. In relation to this study, when one is faced by any of the above threats, they may choose to seek help or not. While some students may develop coping skills on their own others may require help, as they may perceive threatened by their inability to cope with their day to day issues.

According to the HBM, the second assumption was the perceived benefits which indicated that a person took a health-related action if that person felt that a negative health condition could be avoided, had a positive expectation that by taking recommended action, he/she would avoid the negative health condition. Likewise, university students were more enthusiastic in undertaking a task which they perceive was beneficial to them in the long run. This meant that if the university students perceive peer counselling as being of benefit to them, they may be influenced towards a positive perception of PCS consequently increase utilization of the services. Similarly, if the university students perceived the services not to benefiting them, they were likely to form negative perception towards PCS hence not utilize the services.

HBM looks at susceptibility as a third assumption. Susceptibility can be explained by the fact that, a person encountered challenges in choosing whom to share with their challenges. Sometimes people feel vulnerable and intimidated when sharing their challenges with older people as compared to when they are sharing among their peers. When university students are faced with issues of sexuality, they feel embarrassed to talk about these with older people. Thus, the perceived susceptibility is the manner in which a person may feel threatened by the circumstances they are in and can only share their feelings only under very special understanding. Hence, the current study found the HBM to be useful in explaining the university
students’ perceived susceptibility. Conventionally, university students would perceive vulnerability in dealing with some issues which the students found difficult to discuss with older people. They would find it embarrassing to talk about their sexuality with older people and prefer to talk about it among themselves. Peer counselling among the university students may therefore be an avenue for the students to safely share their issues with their peers as they share similar experiences.

In addition to susceptibility, HBM also explains perceived severity. Perceived severity forms a basis of encouraging a person to work on their sickness and pain. The level at which the person seeks help may be determined by their perceived severity of the need. In the current study, perceived severity of the challenges of the university students determined the extent to which they sought peer counselling services. According to the HBM, there is an aspect of the perceived barriers which is explained by the fact that a person may encounter challenges while seeking help. In the current study, some of the barriers that the university students encountered were their perceived issues in life, their perception of how other people viewed them as well as other challenges for example time, availability of counselling services, among others. These barriers may contribute to the young people’s utilization of peer counselling services.

The study was further informed by the Health Belief Model in the way that university students dealt with their perceived challenges of shying off from sharing with the older people, their engagement in academic work, as well as the way they handled their limited time. Ignorance and lack of understanding on the benefits of peer counselling, peer pressure and stigmatization were challenges that influenced young people’s utilization of peer counselling services.
2.3 Review of Related Literature

2.3.1 Peer Counselling Services

Counselling has been in existence for many years. Peer counselling is a form of counselling that is practised by people of the same experiences. Peer counselling is a relatively new concept. From a historical perspective, the concept of peer counselling had its beginnings in 1935 with the establishment of Alcoholics Anonymous, which believed that persons who had experienced the problem of alcoholism and overcame it would be more effective in assisting others who were trying to do the same. People who abused alcohol and wanted to stop were influenced by the fact that others had been able to stop. In the current study, if the university students perceive the peer counselling services benefited them they may utilize the services since they are offered by people of their age who share similar experiences with them.

Peer counselling is a process that makes others feel understood, appreciated and respected. The idea behind peer counselling encompasses an enabling process designed to help people from the same cohort assist one another to achieve better personal adjustment, growth and maturity. In a study conducted to assess the efficacy of peer counselling in promotion of exclusive breastfeeding among low-income city women in Hartford, Anderson et al (2005) established that employment of community based peer counsellors was effective in improving the breastfeeding rates among the women. The study established that the infants whose mothers were in the peer counselling group had a 50% reduction in diarrhoea episodes unlike their counterparts in the control group (Anderson, Damio, Young, Chapman, & Perez-Escamilla, 2005). This reflects the impact peer counselling may have on individuals in a group as they encourage concerted effort to harness the capacity in which group members sharing common interests may consult, console,
appease, befriend, and mediate one another (Ndichu, 2005). Thus the perception of the individuals seeking help influences them either utilize the services or not.

Peer counsellors are also para-professionals selected from the group to be served, trained, and given on-going supervision to perform some key function generally performed by a professional. This means that as the university students continue with their studies, they could be trained to become peer counsellors from among the rest of the students. They are able to engage in counselling by helping their own peers. Peer counselling training encourages students both individually and collectively in a system. The activities of peer counselling can flourish in settings where there is an already established system for working together in cooperation with one another and where people support the values of caring about others. It works where there is concern for a belief in relationships that is based on hierarchies. It can take root or be sustained over time if the pioneering individuals in the organization are committed to its development. Individuals must have characteristics of having interest in innovation or changes in human systems (Arudo T. O.-O., 2006). In school situation, they may be able to assist their colleagues enjoy enhanced self-definition, reduce anxiety, have confidence and improve performance. As much as peer counselling activities have been established by the university administrators as well as training peer counsellors, it is not certain how this influences the type of perception that the university students have on PCS.

According to Weaver et al, (2010), the purpose of peer counselling programme in a learning institution is to promote the health, well-being and safety of young people through peer education and referral. Weaver et al, (2010) adds that peer counselling programs train a selected
cross-section of students to act as helpers and active listeners for their fellow students (Weaver, Fitzpatrick, & Kovalak, 2010). The core of the programme is improve on academic performance and address skills building capacity as well as communication, problem solving and decision making aspects. It also addresses a multitude of social, individual, school and family concerns. This makes the university students benefit from the peer counselling services offered to them, yet it is important to establish the perception of PCS by the university students.

According to Arudo (2006) students contact fellow students for help when they are experiencing problems and concerns such as rape and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Culturally, university students might not find it comfortable to share such issues with their parents or teachers. It is easy for the students to share with their peers because of their closeness to them. Cases of substance abuse and also psychosocial distress issues would be apprehended long before they get out of control when shared among peers who would also bring them to the attention of teachers and parents when necessary. Positive perception towards peer counselling becomes important for students who have issues of concern, which may be easily identifiable by peer counsellors as they mingle with each other during co-curricular activities.

In addition, through careful selection and training, peer counsellors increase the likelihood that appropriate help can be received by the requesting persons. The results can be a positive and safer climate for both the students and staff, with lower stress levels, as well as better utilization of school and community resources (Onis, Onyango, & Borgi, 2007). This indicates that positive perception of peer counselling and the utilization of peer counselling services may be of benefit to the students. Carty et al, (2000) carried out a 4 year longitudinal study of peer counselling and
the effects on students’ development. Their findings indicated that students who received peer counselling services scored significantly higher on coping and social skills scale (Carty, Rosenbaum, Lafreniere, & Sutton, 2000). This is an indication that the students may have had positive perception on peer counselling could be of benefit to the university students in solving their problems.

Peer counselling activities need to be encouraged and guided by acceptable codes of conduct (Bishop, Spence, & MacDonald, 2003). These activities should be left to students to run with minimum adult intrusion. Peer counselling programmes have been proved to be an essential aspect in helping university students in their challenges. This study established some steps that could be put in place to enhance the utilization of peer counselling services at the universities.

The fact that, peer counselling among university students of different levels of training is gradually gaining root in today’s universities as an extra curriculum activity, both formally and informally, would mean that the students’ perception also changes and this would influence the utilization of PCS. Peer counselling programmes are underpinned by both theoretical and practical foundations that espouse peer counselling as an effective way that works for people with similar needs and hence the need to establish the influence of perception of the university students on utilization of PCS.

From a practical perspective, peer counselling is seen as a facility that could be readily available, enabling the university students to access it whenever they needed it since they spend much time together and also because they engage with similar activities. From a theoretical perspective, peer counselling is credited with offering support through the sharing of experiences, facilitation of empathic understanding which provides insights in challenges faced as well as the provision
of opportunities to express feelings through the peer counselling modelling. Students offering peer counselling to other students is a concept widely used in colleges and universities across the United States and Canada. One study observed that up to 78% of these educational institutions employed University and College students as peer helpers, educators and para-professionals in support of various programs (Klein, Sondag, & Drolet, 1994). Similarly, since 2003, the Singapore Management University’s (SMU) Centre for Counselling and Guidance (CCG) have actively promoted, trained and developed undergraduates to serve alongside the professional university counsellors as peer counsellors.

Surprisingly, a student satisfaction survey on peer counselling conducted at Singapore Management University’s Centre for Counselling and Guidance (SMU) in 2006, revealed that just eight percent of respondents highlighted that they would readily approach a peer counsellor should they be in a position of need. Majority of the respondents indicated that they would prefer to rely on friends, religious groups and parents for assistance and comfort when they face emotional difficulties. This finding necessitates the need for the current study which sought to establish the perception of peer counselling services and its influence on utilization among students in universities in Kenya.

2.3.2 Demographics Factors Influencing Perception

The current study found it necessary to include demographic factors because they seemed to influence perception in different ways. This was crucial because perception is also influenced by experience which are moderated by demographic factors such as age, gender, and culture and level of education, programs of study, and year of study (Glosoff & Pate 2002). It was therefore
important to study the perception of the university students on PCS, by these demographic parameters.

More women are likely to utilize PCS than men for several reasons (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Their research indicated that women had more role constraints than men and also had diminishing societal stereotyping which has necessitated women to seek help more readily than men. In addition, they stated that, female undergo more psychological distress than male which is based on the fact that female have the biological responsibility of child bearing and also family wellbeing. In addition, women have equal responsibility with men on search for career path (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). This adds to the strains that a female experiences. Similarly Wischmann (2008), carried out a study on stresses arising from infertility of couples and found out that more women than men sought counselling to cope with the infertility stresses than men (Wischmann, 2008). This study shows that the difference in the way male and female are socialized may influence the university students’ perception on peer counselling services.

In a study conducted by Boulton (2005), it was noted that 75% of those that utilized PCS on the issue of bullying were girls. Twice as many women than men sought counselling, adding that traditionally, more women than men sought counselling in general because men and women are socialized differently globally, with women finding it easier to talk about their issues than men (Boulton, 2005). This resonates with a survey commissioned by the British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP, 2013) which found that, female do talk about their issues more than men. They are more likely to share with their counsellor than men. The female university student may be more likely to perceive PCS positively than male as they search for coping skills for their personal and societal demands. According to Vogel, Wester and Larson
(2007), women were more likely to seek counselling than men who experienced greater role conflict and were more likely to self-stigmatize and less likely to self-disclose than women. High self-stigma and less disclosure lead to less positive attitudes and subsequently to less willingness to seek counselling (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007).

Perception is also influenced by experience which could be moderated by demographic factors such as age, gender, culture and level of education, programs of study, and year of study of the students (Glossoff & Kporowicz, 1990). University students being different in gender, whether male or female, as well as being at different levels education (year of study), might be factors contributing towards the difference in perception on of PCS.

A combination of academic challenges and family issues were reason for positive perception on PCS by fourth year students in the university. According to Deane & Chamberlain (2004), family cohesion and communication are powerful influences in our lives. Addressing the issues surrounding family members can be a difficult task and hence those directly involved do feel stressed when families are faced with the above said issues. In addition the scarcity of job market for the graduating youths from different universities has remained one of the stresses for the university students who are preparing to finish their university education and enter into job market. Kenya has experienced youth unemployment in the recent past, which makes the students to prepare well for the much competitive job market. According to a report on youth unemployment status in Kenya by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), in a report by (Nyerere, 2009), the youth unemployment continue to rise. Education is acknowledged as a means for transforming and empowering communities. The youth especially
gain skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable them become productive members of the society. Education contributes to sustainable development, and is recognized in Kenya as a priority area of development. This means that, fourth year students need to deal with these issues, the information of which is sometimes provided among the peer counselling activities. These among other reasons may contribute to factors that influence fourth years towards positive perception on PCS.

Other factors that may influence perception are the various challenges, for instance; severity of the problem one is handling, and benefits towards their utilization of peer counselling services among others. Probably, if the university students perceived the benefits of the utilization of PCS, they may overlook the challenges and utilize the services.

2.3.3 Perception of the University Students towards Peer Counselling Services

The term perception refers to psychological process involved in the immediate organization of sensations that underlie information intake. The process of perception involves both the information we take in through our sense and previous knowledge about the phenomenon at hand to understand our context. Pickens (2005) define perception as the process by which an individual interprets a given situation or stimuli into something meaningful, based on prior experiences. The implication is that perception can be affected by different factors within the environment (Frijns & Finkenauer, 2009). Positive perception on PCS may influence positive perception on PCS.
Notably however, and of particularly relevance is that at the basis of a person’s behaviour, is the objective perception of the benefits. This refers to the entirety of human reaction to a decision taken in specific context, and it implies cognitive and behavioural reactions (Zigon, Corradetti, Snidero, Gregori, & Passali, 2005). From the cognitive perspective, the psychological aspects that are shaped partly by the environment and personal aspects are equally important in shaping behaviour. Accordingly, studies have shown that perception and behaviour can interact synergistically via the environment (Verschure, Voegtlin, & Douglas, 2003). Thus, perception forms associations with an action, organized by reinforcement. This is to argue that if individuals receive positive reinforcement the behaviour will be strengthened. On the contrary a negative reinforcement would weaken the behaviour.

Pickens (2005) further informs that attitudes are formed as a result of learning, modelling and our direct experiences with situations and people. Our attitudes can be learned or influenced through experience thus aids in forming a basis of our perception towards a situation or other people (Pickens, 2005). An attitude has been defined as a mind-set or tendency to act or react in a particular way due to both experience and temperament. A university student may form a negative perception, based on a negative attitude that may be as a result of a previous painful experience while seeking professional help. In a study by Vogel & Wester (2005), the results indicated 62% of the 304 sampled college students, consented that in the decision making process, attitudes and psychological factors contributed to seeking for professional help.

Deane, Stogstad & Williams (1999) in their study revealed that their participant’s attitudes towards seeking counselling were significantly associated with past counselling experiences.
This also resonates with Komiya et al. (2000), who informed that the desire to avoid painful feelings while undergoing therapy may result in formation of a negative attitude towards counselling. The students therefore, may form a negative attitude based on a previous encounter while seeking for help that may not have granted a positive outcome.

Several studies across the helping profession (including psychiatrists, psychologists, and counsellors) have explored the issue of client reticence in seeking help when in distress (Eisenburg, Downs, Golberstein, & Zivin, 2009) (Corrigan, 2009). These studies highlight the possible reasons for social stigma and negative attitudinal perceptions faced by individuals seeking help. Similarly, when students are faced with such issues, some may cope, while others may not. As discussed previously the benefits of peer counselling becomes one the motivators for the university student to utilize PCS. However, the level at which the university students utilize peer counselling service has not been established.

In addition, in terms of benefits, there have been numerous studies (Naylor, Cowie, & Del Re, 2001); focusing on participants of peer counselling, argued that if a person perceives something to be of benefit to them, they are likely to be influenced to perform that behaviour, while if they do not perceive it benefit them, they are likely to undertake less of it. Similarly, (Chapman, Damio, Young, & Perèz-Escamilla, 2004) studying on Breastfeeding habits in Uganda, suggested that, breast feeding program was successful, significantly increasing both the initiation and also the continuance of breastfeeding. Chapman et al. noted that, culturally competent peer counsellors can significantly improve breastfeeding initiation rates and positively impact on the health of the child. In the same way university students may influence each other to adopt a
behaviour that may be perceived to be of more benefit to them. Perception is an important aspect in behaviour in that when an activity is reinforced, it will be repeated several times, while, if it is not reinforced it will not be repeated. Likewise, if university students perceived peer counselling to be beneficial to them they may have utilized the services, and overlook the possible challenges for example stigma and negative influence from their peers and sought peer counselling services.

2.3.4 Utilization of Peer Counselling Services by University Students

According to the Ministry of Education in Kenya (M.o.E, 2009), peer counselling takes a universalistic approach hence the ease of applicability among the university students in Kenya. Similarly, Wango (2006) supports this argument by stating that, people will only listen and absorb each other’s ideas and opinions and decide to either utilize a particular service or not (Wango, 2006). This is equally true of peer counselling among the university students who often are more sympathetic with each other than the professional counsellors.

Utilization of peer counselling services by the students may be affected by individual experiences or psychological factors. Fischer et al. (1983) describes some of the factors that may be involved in the decision making process to seek for counselling, as personal factors, socio-cultural and agency or counselling service related factors. These factors may have a major influence on the student’s perception towards peer counselling and consequently utilization of the service. University students are the first in noticing when their fellow students are worried or depressed, since they confide in one another’s immediate concerns, fears and issues that disturb them. Their reaction is usually, immediate acceptance, in understanding and consoling, as well as provision of a warm and physical support for each other (Wango, 2006).
This fact strongly supports the peer counselling approach. This has seen university administrations establishing and encouraging their students to use peer counselling services hoping to address the concerns and psychological challenges their students may be facing. Despite the university administration’s initiative, the students have continued to manifest various psychological problems often manifesting in stress, alcohol and drug abuse and strikes. Yoo & Skovholt (2001), in a study that sought to determine cross-cultural differences in depression expression and help seeking behaviour among college students in the United States and Korea, noted that utilization rates of the counselling services by the students was very low ranging between 2% to 4%. Similarly, Setiawan (2006) noted that amongst the 1,279 undergraduate students, who participated in the study that sought to find out the factors that inhibit and facilitate willingness to seek for counselling in Indonesian universities, their willingness to seek out or utilize the university counselling services was very low.

While advocating for utilization of peer counselling, Keller et al (2006) stipulated that peer counselling among the university students is the best alternative in identifying the needs among the university students. When seeking a sense of identification and support, university students join cliques and groups for various reasons such as provision of personal needs of affiliation and companionship as well as material or psychological reward. This is important in raising their self-esteem and gaining identity. This is an example of an informal peer counselling setting which is common among the university students.

Peer counselling programmers integrate into the range of preventive strategies that can promote harmony between the students and the school administration. It reinforces the value of discussing
problems and difficulties experienced by the students amicably without resulting into violence; that is, talk it out rather than act it out. This creates ownership of the peer counselling programs (MOE, 2009). In addition, Mamarchev (1981) stipulated that peer counselling among the university students do expand counselling services and reduce counselling costs since professional counsellors are fewer in numbers and have other duties. Administrators expect peer counselling to support traditional counselling services by use of enhanced unique abilities and skills, offered when training them. This enhances their opportunity to gain special insight into the needs and problems of the students they serve as well as bridge the gap between professionals and the students.

2.3.5 Challenges of utilization of PCS

Studies have shown that perception and behavior can interact synergistically via the environment (Verschure, Voegtlin & Douglas, 2003). Accordingly, perception forms associations with an action, organized by reinforcement. That is to argue that if individuals receive positive reinforcement the behavior will be strengthened. On the contrary a negative reinforcement would weaken the behavior. Hence if the university students perceive the type of reinforcement associated with an activity positively, they may be keen to adopt the particular activity. It can therefore be said that if the university students perceive peer counseling services to be of benefit to them, they may have positive influence on their utilization of the services. If the university students perceive challenges, barriers and less severity and benefits towards their utilization of peer counseling services, they may seek less of the services. While, on the other hand, if they perceive peer counseling to benefit them, they are likely to seek more of the services. Such
benefits may include, coping and resolving personal and interpersonal challenges, resolving academic difficulties among others.

According to Mutie & Ndambuki (1999), some of the problems experienced by peers include drug abuse, anger, violence, sexual pressures, STIs, communication, rebellion, pornography (through videos, TV influence), masturbation, incest, rape and unwanted pregnancies. Tindi & Silsil (2008) postulate that in a learning setting, students express their difficulties through various ways namely withdrawal, unhappiness, annoyance, anger, inability to meet needs, lack of knowledge, partial or total failure, anxiety, inability to turn aspirations into fruition and hyperactivity. The above study showed that some of the issues experienced by the university students could be understood better by their peers who experienced the same issues than how the adults would understand them. Other barriers could fear and stigma of exposing their issues to other people. Fear of being viewed as well as weak would hamper utilization of PCS.

Inadequate training and lack of confidentiality amongst the peer counsellors can also pose a challenge (Tanaka & Reid, 1997). This study also indicated that peer counsellors require some level of training in some specific skills in order to become effective. They should also demonstrate helping abilities such as listening, asking questions and expressing support and empathy. In addition, they must be able to maintain confidentiality and neutrality. According to UNESCO, (2012), and also (Karanja & Bowen, 2012) most of Peer Counsellors have inadequate knowledge and skills in counselling and as such are not well equipped in handling issues like drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, hatred, isolation and open criticism from other students. Wango (2006) seems to concur with this and asserts that, Peer Counsellors who receive peer counselling
training are more confident and tend to be more skillful and persuasive as they relate with other students. Unfortunately, there seems to be no uniform structure for evaluating peer counselling programs in the education systems in Kenya (UNESCO, 2012).

2.4 Summary of the Literature Review

The concept of counselling is not a very old phenomenon in Kenya but is gradually taking roots. Formal counselling in Kenya started as guidance and counselling services in the 70’s. Since then, the Ministry of Education has gradually enhanced the services. Counselling was taught in the universities in the year 2000 which was an effort to separate it from guidance and counselling and is still developing. Atieno, Okech and Kimemia (2015) and Wambui and Fischer (2014) explain that development of counselling in Kenya is still in its early stages but gradually gaining popularity. This means that the government has contributed and continue to contribute towards PCS and hence the need to establish the perception of PCS on these services. The fact that Peer Counselling is a service offered at the universities may not mean that the services are embraced by all students. Some students may have positive perception of PCS while some may not. Peer counselling originated from alcoholic anonymous in the 1930s, where people who had abused alcohol and had successfully stopped were able to influence others who wished to do the same. The current study sought to find out the influence perception has on utilization of Peer Counselling Services (PCS).

The term perception refers to psychological process involved in the immediate organization of sensations that underlie information intake (Frijns & Finkenauer, 2009). The process of perception involves both the information we take in through our sense and previous knowledge
about the phenomenon at hand to understand our context. The implication is that perception can be affected by different factors within the environment and it will also depend on the basis of a person’s behaviour, as well as the objective of the type of perception. Perception also refers to entirety of human reactions to a decision taken in specific context, and it implies cognitive reactions and behavioural reactions (Zigon, Corradetti, Snidero, Gregori, & Passali, 2005). From the cognitive perspective, the psychological aspect that are shaped partly by the environment and personal aspects are equally important in shaping behaviour. Accordingly, studies have shown that perception and behaviour can interact synergistically via the environment (Verschure, Voegtlin, & Douglas, 2003). Accordingly, perception forms associations with an action, organized by reinforcement. That is to argue that if individuals receive positive reinforcement the behaviour will be strengthened. This means that, when and individual perceives the service positively, they may utilize the services, on the contrary a negative reinforcement would weaken the behaviour. There are several reasons why the university students may have positive or negative perception on peer counselling. Some of these reasons include: willingness to utilize the service, availability of the services as well as severity of their issues. While some students would utilize the peer counselling services, some may not. The current study therefore sought to find out the perception of the university students on peer counselling and how that impacted on their utilization of the services.

This study adopted the Health Belief Model which uses four constructs namely: the perceived threats, perceived benefits, perceived susceptibility and the perceived vulnerability. The HBM assumptions were suitable in the study since university students may at times perceive their problem to overwhelm them as they navigate their developmental challenges as well as seek ways of coping with ups and downs of daily life.
2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2:1: The Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variables

Source: Researcher’s design

The conceptual framework indicates that the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students may be influenced by perception of the services. Perception can be influenced by the attitude the student has towards the services, their willingness and past experiences which would be the decision making standards as to whether or not to use the peer counselling services. Socio-demographic factors have also been viewed as factors that can influence perception hence reviewed in this study. The independent variable was perception of the students on peer
counselling services which would be either positive or negative while the dependent variable was utilization of the peer counselling services which was high or low. Perception was based on the respondent’s age, gender, year of study and the type of university. The intervening variables were training of the peer counsellors, provision of open forum discussion platforms to increase awareness, sensitization on PCS and provision of infrastructure or facilities for peer counsellors. Low utilization of PCS is characterized by manifesting low level of distress and inability to seek PCS, decrease in academic performance, overindulgence in Alcohol and drug abuse, among others, while high utilization of PCS, may be characterized by: an increase in utilizing PCS activities and improved academic performance as well as ability to deal with social relationships better among others.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter examined the methodology that was used for the study on research design, study variables, site of study, target population and sampling. It also included the data collection methods, approaches and instruments, validity and reliability tests together with the data analysis tools used and the ethical considerations. The current study aimed to establish the perception of the university students towards Peer Counselling, and how this impacted on their utilization of the peer counselling services.

3.2 Research Design
The study employed a correlational design. A correlational design was relevant in the current study because one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type (Creswell, 2006). In this research qualitative data was used to support correlational data. This was informed by the understanding that a single data set may not sufficiently address all research questions that contribute to answering the major research question on perception and utilization. Utilization of peer counselling is subjective and it is only through expressing personal views as experienced in the interaction of the service that one may be able to understand why or why not one uses the service. At the same time there was need to quantify the relationship between perception and utilization of the service. For this reason, descriptive correlational survey design was used. The researcher collected and analysed data using quantitative as well as qualitative methods. The independent variable was the perception of the university students on peer counselling services while the dependent variable was the level of
utilization of peer counselling services. In addition, descriptive correlational survey was suitable because it described the perception of the university students on peer counselling services and how this influenced their utilization of the services.

3.3 Study Variables
The key variable for this study were categorised as independent variables and dependent variable. In the current study, the independent variable was the perception of peer counselling services while the dependent variable was the utilization of the peer counselling services.

3.4 Site of the Study
The study was conducted in Kenyan universities – Kenyatta University, United States International University (U.S.I.U) in Nairobi County; Egerton University in Nakuru county. These universities are cosmopolitan and hence accommodate students from all parts of the world. They also have well-established Peer Counselling Units and they represent both private and public university representation as well as rural and urban population.

3.5 Target Population
The target population for the current study was all undergraduates, in both private and public universities. Use of private and public universities increased reliability of the study, since students from public universities had different lifestyles and behaviour. According to the Commission of University Education (CUE), by June 2013, there were 22 public universities in Kenya with a total enrolment of about 170,417 students that year. While there were nine Public University Constituent Colleges established by a Legal Order upon satisfying set minimum
standards by the Commission for Act, at the same time, there are 17 private Chartered Universities, and 12 Private Universities with letter of Interim Authority (LIA).

3.6 Sampling Techniques and Sample size

Stratified random sampling was used in selecting the four institutions that were used for this study. This is a deliberate selection of particular units of the universe for constituting a sample which represent the universe as supported by (Kothari, 2004). The selected universities were best suited for the study due to their cultural diversities and also as a result of the variety of programs they offered. The study adopted a proportionate sampling procedure from all the universities’ total population. It was assumed that the administration of the PCS among the students at the public universities was different from that of private universities which necessitated the need to carry out the research in both private and public universities.

The third years and fourth year students were purposefully selected to take part in the study as a sample population because they had more insight to campus life than first and second years, and had already gone through the turmoil of the previous years’ experiences. Third and fourth year university students may have already established both the existence of the Peer Counselling Services provided by the university as well as how they could benefit from these services.

The study used simple random sampling to select 400 students from the third and fourth year students from selected universities. This was based on Kathuri & Pals (1993) table on the size for population of between 100,000 to 150,000 which requires a sample of 384. Based on the accuracy of data, the margins of error associated with sampling and other random effects at 95%
confidence level was kept at a maximum of + 4% for a sample size of 384. The formula used was:

$$n = \frac{\chi^2 NP (1-P)}{\sigma^2 (N-1) + \chi^2 P (1-P)}$$

Where, 

- \(n\) = required sample size 
- \(N\) = the given population size of university students 
- \(P\) = population proportion assumed to be 0.50 
- \(\sigma^2\) = degree of accuracy whose value is 0.05 
- \(\chi^2\) = table value of chi-square for one degree of freedom

Hence a sampled size of students of 400 was selected. Simple random sampling was appropriate as it ensured representativeness, since it gave the respondents an equal and independent opportunity of being selected.

### 3.7 Research Instruments

Questionnaires, focus group discussion guides and individual interviews were the data collection instruments as discussed below.

#### 3.7.1 Questionnaires

The study used both open ended and closed ended questions to collect the data from the students from the selected university. The questionnaire was the most appropriate research tool as it allowed the researcher to collect information from a large sample with diverse background; the findings remained confidential and saved time. Mugenda & Mugenda (2008) and Kothari (2004) agree that questionnaires have various merits: It’s free from the bias of the interviewer; answers are in respondents own words and respondents have adequate time to give well thought out answers. The questionnaire was divided into six sections. Sections A and B was on bio-data and perception of university students on peer counselling services respectively. Sections C and D
focused on levels of utilization of peer counselling services and relationship between perception and utilization respectively.

The sections D and E focused on challenges that hinder and measures that will improve utilization of peer counselling services.

The first objective in the current study was to establish the type of perception that the university students had on PCS, whether positive or negative. Participants were presented with a 15-Item questionnaire, which were measured on a 5-point Likert scale as follows: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

The second objective was to establish the frequency of utilization of peer counselling services by the university students. The frequency of utilization of PCS was measured in two sections; first section was measured by asking participants to indicate how often they utilized the PCS in their university which was rated as: every day 5, once in two weeks – 4; once a month – 3; once a year – 2; and never – 1, while the other section focused on 8 PCS activities and the participants indicated how often they participated in each activity. These activities included: Individual counselling, group counselling, discussions on particular topics, and trainings on life skills, consultation sessions on specific issues, motivation, outings and visits to other universities. The participants were required to indicate how they engaged with these activities: 1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often and 5= always (maximum was 8 items by 4 because never =0 that is 32).

Objective 4 sought to establish factors that hinder the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students. Open ended questions were used and the results were summarized into five themes: 1) Lack of Confidence/Trust, 2) lack of time/Priorities/Too busy, 3) PC not effective 4) Lack of sensitization on PC services and 5) Insecurity/Peer pressure/Ego. The other
section required the students to state their opinion on the reasons why their peers did not utilize PCS.

The last objective required the participants to suggest measures to be put in place in enhancing the PCS. The resulting themes included: social stigma, peer counsellors not well trained, insufficient counselling materials for peer counsellors, and negative attitude towards PCS, by the administrators, peer pressure and lack of infrastructure.

3.7.2 Focus Group Discussion Guide

Focus group discussion guide was used to collect data from the students from the respective universities. Focus group discussion was useful for the qualitative element of the study and was helpful in getting in-depth responses relevant for the study (Kothari, 2004). The focus group discussion guide consisted of two sets of six questions each which were administered to two groups of 8 students each in each university. One set of questions was used for the peer counsellors, while the other set was for the students. The FGD for these groups were important in enhancing the reliability of the data. The FGDG assisted the researcher to facilitate the discussion.

3.8 Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

3.8.1 Reliability

The researcher established the reliability coefficient by test retest method. The researcher administered the instruments twice to the same population from two universities not included in sample. In developing questionnaires and interview guides, sufficient number of items were generated to cover adequately the research questions in the study. The test and re-test results
were used to ensure that the instruments were not too long to bore or tire the participants as well as confirm on the clarity of the instruments used. In order to maximize validity, the questions were framed in the least ambiguous way. Reliability and comprehension of the questionnaires were improved by verifying with the peers.

3.8.2 Validity

Validity of results was assumed by using different types of instruments namely; the questionnaires and interview guides to counter the limits of a single instrument. Open and closed ended questions increased the validity of the instruments. Content validity is a qualitative type of validity where the domain of the concept is made clear and the analyst judges opine whether the measures fully represent the domain (Bollen, 1989). Content validity was ensured by use of Focus Group Discussion Guide which was a source of deeper information on the utilization of peer counselling among the university. It was also enhanced by selecting a reasonable sample size as given above and by developing questionnaires that were open ended hence providing more information.

3.9 Pilot Study

The researcher used a sample of 38 students (10% of total sample size) from two universities not included in the final sample. Piloting assisted the researcher in identifying and modifying items in the research instrument that were ambiguous, time taken to respond to items of the instruments and to test whether methods of data analysis were appropriate. Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler (2011) explain that a pilot study is conducted to detect weaknesses in design, instrumentation and to provide proxy data for selection of probability
3.10 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedure is the gathering of information to serve or prove some facts (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). Before undertaking the data collection exercise, a letter of introduction was issued by Kenyatta University and permission was sought from National Commission for Science and Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Appointments for introduction to the various universities were made after which, the researcher collected data from the sample population with the help of research assistants, who were trained in advance. The researcher together with the research assistants administered the questionnaires to both the students and the peer counsellors at different times.

The research assistants were taken through a thorough training after which they were provided with the questionnaires for administration. Dates for different universities were agreed upon and the different universities were informed of the dates so that they would allow the administration of the questionnaires at the most appropriate time.

The researcher then picked different sessions for students and peer counsellors’ focus group discussion. For each of the universities the researcher organized the peer counsellors in groups of 10 to 12 members. The research assistants facilitated the students FGD guides as well as the peer counsellors at the agreed times.

3.11 Data Analysis and Processing

The researcher edited, classified and tabulated from the raw data in order to draw conclusions from it. Data entry converted the raw information gathered through questionnaires and interviews to a code book that was to be manipulated to provide summaries that would help answer the study questions.
Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics in form of percentages, frequencies, standard deviations and means. Inferential statistics in form of regression model was used to establish the relationship between perception and utilization of the peer counselling services. Qualitative data from focus group discussion and the responses were transcribed and written in narrative form based on the research objectives. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software aided in data analysis of quantitative data. Further, data was then presented in tables, charts and graphs.

### 3.12 Data Management and Ethical Considerations

In line with the requirements of social science research, the researcher obtained ethics clearance for the study from a recognized ethics board. In addition clearance was sought from Kenyatta University graduate school and a research permit obtained from National Commission for Science and Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Permission was sought from the various institutions’ administrators and the different lecturers who were teaching the classes at the time, prior to administering the questionnaires. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to participants so that they could make informed decision on whether to participate in the study or not. To ensure anonymity, the participants were not required to write their names on questionnaires. The researcher treated the data collected with confidentiality and only used it for the intended purpose. Efforts were made to debrief the participants after the instruments’ administration to deal with unwanted psychological effects of the testing. The researcher assigned security codes to computerized records. For further ethical consideration, the data/documents were properly disposed, destroyed, or deleted, after analysis and final presentation.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings and discussions arising from the analysis of the data collected on the students’ perception of Peer Counselling Services and how this influences their utilization of these services in the Kenyan universities. The study specifically aimed at establishing the relationship between students’ perception on peer counselling services and the respective utilization of these services among the university students in Kenya. The reporting of the findings has first been presented and thereafter the discussion of the same as per the study objectives.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To find out the perception of university students towards peer counselling services
2. To establish demographics that affect perception of university students
3. To establish the frequency of utilization of peer counselling services by the university students
4. To find out the relationship between the perception of the university students towards peer counselling services and the frequency of utilization of PC Services
5. To establish factors that hinder the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students
6. To find out what needs to be done to enhance on the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students

The data was collected and analysed in line with the objectives of the research and was presented under the following sub headings: social demographic data, which includes: gender, age, year of
study, type of university (whether private or public), perception of peer counselling, factors that influence perception of the university students on Peer Counselling Services, the frequency of the utilization of the Peer Counselling Services by the university students, relationship between perception and utilization of the Peer Counselling Services by the university students, challenges in utilization of Peer Counselling Services by the university students and the intervention that may be adopted to enhance utilization of peer counselling services.

4.2 Demographic data

In this section, the respondents’ demographic data was presented which includes: Gender, age, year of study, and type of university (whether private or public).

4.2.1 Gender of Respondents

The study involved both male and female students from both public and private universities in their third and fourth year of study. The study considered the gender of the respondents because it was assumed that, male and female university students may perceive Peer Counselling Services differently Figure 4.1 presents the findings.

Figure 4.1 Gender of Respondents
Data from Figure 4.1 shows that the female respondents were 58% while, 42% were male. According to Heller & Callender (2013), male students were outnumbered by female in UK universities. Similarly, Bold et al (2013) observed that, the number of female students entering Kenyan universities rose at the fastest rate ever – by more than 30% – the previous year, and for the first time there are more than 100,000 female students in higher education, new government data show. Kenya’s recently released Economic Survey 2013, a document that tracks annual economic data across all sectors, showed that there were some 105,115 female students enrolled in universities in 2012, up from 80,560 the year before. In addition the survey added that, there has been a female enrolment rise faster than that of males, whose number rose by 15% – half the growth rate of women – from 117,700 in 2011 to 135,436 in 2013. The fact that female students are more in number and were readily willing to participate more than the male, may perhaps explain why the study had more women respondents than male. In addition, female do express themselves more that male.

The study also considered the age of the respondents. This is because university students at different ages may perceive Peer Counselling Services differently. Section 4.2.2 presents the age of the respondents.

4.2.2 Age of the Respondents

The ages included in the study were between 18 and 30 years as majority of the third and fourth year university students are in this age bracket. Table 4.1 presents the findings.
Table 4.1: Age of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-20 years</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-23 years</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-26 years</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-30 years</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 shows the age distribution of participants. The data analysis demonstrated that participants between the ages of 18-20 years were 51 (14%). Those between ages 21-23 were 217 (69%), while those between the ages 24 – 26 were 82 (22%). A few of the students were between the ages of 27-30 that is 13 (3%). This means that, respondents of ages 21-23 outnumbered the rest of the ages (60%), which is double the number of the respondents of the other age categories. This could be because, going by the Kenyan Ministry of education (Kenyan 8-4-4 education system) guidelines on school attendance age, learners enter into the university at the age of 18 years, which means that students get into their 3rd and 4th year of study, at the age of 21-23. Few students would be expected to be in third and fourth year at the age of 18-20, by this age students could be in their 1st and 2nd years of their study. Much fewer participants were at the age of 27-30 years, because by this age majority of the students could have finished their undergraduate education.

In addition to age, the study sought to find out the perception of the university students on Peer Counselling Services by their year of study. The respondents sampled were those in the third and fourth years of their study from different departments.
4.2.3 Year of Study of Respondents

In this section, the study sought to find out the year of study of the respondents. It was important to include the year of the respondents in the study because people perceive information differently at different stages of their development. Table 4.2 shows the distribution of the respondents by their year of study.

Table 4:2: Distribution of the respondents by their year of study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from table 4.2 there were more third year than fourth year students. There were a total of 191 (60%) third years and 125 (40%) fourth years. The difference in the number of respondents in third and fourth year could be attributed to many factors. The information from the registrars of some of the sampled universities indicated that there was a student population decline as they got to their fourth year. For example one of the registrars said that:

“There is usually a gradual decrease of student population as they get to fourth year. By the time students are in their fourth year, some of them defer their studies to engage in internship programs, as well as taking gap year off campus to work abroad and resume their studies later. Some get engaged in employment and therefore call off some semesters”.

The above statement may mean that, the students get fewer as they progress from third year class to fourth year. This could be attributed to different reasons, for instance, attending to internships or deferring from the university to take up employment. According to Burnsed (2010), university
officials and employers almost universally maintain that partaking in an internship or several of them, sets students apart from their peers even more before graduation is integral to finding meaningful employment in today’s seemingly impenetrable job market. In addition, sources from most Universities in Kenya suggest internship/attachment/practicum in the 4th year of the learning period. This being part of the requirement of the program coverage, dictates that at some point in the fourth year of the learning program, some students may be engaged in attachment or in employment. More than ever, universities are pushing students of all majors toward internships, and several have even added them to their graduation requirements. These internships give the students an edge that they would not have otherwise had (Burnsed, 2010).

4.2.4 Type of University of Respondents

The study also considered the type of university since there were experiences from private and public universities. The distribution is presented in table 4.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of University</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 indicates that there were 84% participants from public university and 16% from private university. As can be seen from the tabulation, there were more participants in public universities than there were in private universities. This may be attributed to the fact that there are more students in public universities than there are in private universities. The public university
enrolment is dictated by the government and records an increasing number annually. Public universities attract more students due to the cheaper fees requirement compared to that of the private university.

According to Bold et al. (2014), the Kenya Government university enrolment records revealed that, by May 2014 there was an increase of public university enrolment from 195,428 in 2012 to 276,349 by the end of 2015. This was a 41% increase and the trend has since persisted. For the private university the increase was 45,023 (2012) to 48,211 (2015). This shows that there are more students in public universities than in private universities.

4.3 Findings of the Study

In this section findings of the main objectives of the study will be presented. In the first objective, the study sought to find out the perception university students have on Peer Counselling Services.

4.3.1 Perception of the university students towards Peer Counselling Services

This first objective sought to find out the global perception of how university students perceived peer counselling service. The students were presented with a 15-Item questionnaire, which were measured on a 5-point Likert scale as follows: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The analysis of the items were collapsed into Agree, Disagree and Not sure as shown in the Table 4.4
Table 4.4: Frequency perception distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>ITEMS</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When distressed I think of peer counselling services as the first help</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am willing to work with peer counsellors to help me solve my problems</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I experience general unwillingness toward peer counselling services</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I feel embarrassed to attend Peer counselling sessions</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In my opinion peer counselling is not important</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I can manage my problems without attending peer counselling</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>In my opinion peer counselling is for people with mental illnesses</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I have a negative attitude towards peer counselling</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I prefer to keep my problems to myself</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I think peer counselling is a waste of time</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I have a positive attitude towards Peer Counselling</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I would be willing to seek Peer Counselling Services when faced with issues</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I would not care much about what other students think when I attend Peer Counselling Services</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I would advocate for students to attend Peer Counselling Services</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I would not advocate for students to attend peer counselling services</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While it would be assumed that university students would seek for peer counselling services, the study findings revealed otherwise. It was noted that most students, 75% had negative perception towards peer counselling services. For instance, from item 11, when questioned on their attitude
on peer counselling, which directly reflects on their perception towards peer counselling, 75% disagreed with the fact that they have a positive attitude towards peer counselling while only 11% agreed to the same.

This item was analysed as shown in Figure 4.2 below.

![Figure 4.2 Perception of University Students on PCS](image)

Similarly, this finding was mirrored by its counter item eight (8) which sought to find out whether the students had a negative attitude towards peer counselling. 79% agreed that they had a negative attitude on peer counselling services, while 13% disagreed to having a negative attitude. This would mean that a higher percentage of the university students have a negative perception of peer counselling services than those with a positive perception.

Pickens (2005) defines attitude as a mindset or a tendency to act in a certain way due to both; a person’s experience or temperament and comprises a person’s thoughts, actions and behaviours (Pickens, 2005). He further elaborates that attitudes are formed as a result of learning, modelling others and direct experiences with people and situations and this will influence our decisions,
behaviour and what we remember. Pickens (2005) further relates perception to attitude as he defines perception as the interpretation of stimulation or situations based on prior experiences. University students may have a negative attitude based on either previous experiences, or what they may have or not heard which may influence them towards negative perception of peer counselling services.

Keller et al, (2006) analyzed that psychological functions such as: attitudes towards seeking counselling influences perception. Attitude is described as the way one thinks and feels about something. According to Vakola & Nikolaou (2005), negative attitude towards change in an organization is influenced by the occupational stressors that an individual may be experiencing. This means that people will respond to any change according to their attitude whether positive or negative. Accordingly, university students with positive attitude towards PCS will result in positive perception of the service. In addition, Keller et al (2006) and Carty et al (2000) noted that self-awareness and willingness to seek help are significant predictors for perception (Keller, et al., 2006) (Carty, Rosenbaum, Lafreniere, & Sutton, 2000). Likewise, a study carried out by Cepeda-Benito (1998); found a positive interaction between psychological distress, attitudes towards searching psychological counselling, present social support and self-awareness as well as available social support (Cepeda-Benito & Short, 1998). This means that, any of these aspects may influence people’s type of perception whether positive or negative.

The study selected on the four positive statements on PCS from table 4.4, which were item numbers: 2, 11, 12 and 14 to establish the percentages of both positive and negative perception peer counselling services as shown in Figure 4.3. The study selected the specific items because they are inclined towards a positive perception on peer counselling services.
The analysis in figure 4.3 revealed that most of the students tend to disagree with the positively inclined statements. Item 14, “I would advocate for students to attend Peer Counselling Services” 83% had negative perception and 7% only consented that they would advocate for students to attend PCS. Item 12, “I am willing to work with peer counsellors to help me solve my problems” 66% had negative perception and 18% negative. Item 11, “I have a positive attitude towards Peer Counselling” 75% had negative perception and 11% positive perception and in Item 2, “I am willing to work with peer counsellors to help me solve my problems” 59% of the students revealed a negative perception and 21% positive.

From figure 4.3 analysis, it can be noted that a most of the participants had negative perception on peer counselling services.
While it is assumed that both the university students are in the same developmental stage and hence would appreciate peer counselling, the findings of the study revealed that majority of the participants had negative perception on all positive items.

However perception is determined by experience as noted by (Faria, 2009). Faria (2009) states that our experience influence our perception and by extension our behaviour. It is therefore likely that the participants who had negative experiences when utilizing PCS, may view PCS negative and vice versa. Similarly, Naylor, Cowie & DelRe (2001) stipulated that, when people perceive a service or an action positively, they are likely to repeat it unlike when they perceive it negatively (Naylor, Cowie, & Del, 2001).

The study noted though, that despite having a large number of participants having negative perception as shown on most items in figure 4.4, on item 1 - “When distress I think of peer counselling services as the first help”, 48% agreed while 37% disagreed.

![Figure 4.4 Perception of Students in Distress](image)

Figure 4.4 Perception of Students in Distress
Distress is a common psychological state that arises when an individual experiences different psychological challenges. In addition, distress, and the variety of ways it manifests itself, is part of a natural emotional and physical response to life’s ups and downs. However, distress when unaddressed builds up and creates a backup of feelings that make people uncomfortable and to the extreme may incapacitate people. According to Conture, Kelly & Walden (2013) many people do not function in distress due to anxiety and other psychological stresses, which may necessitate their seeking help. Similar views were expressed by Berkeley University of California -Peer Counselling Program Guidelines (2007) that emphasized on fostering hope among students, adding that, students when in distress need psychological relieve that make them function well. Perhaps this explains why the majority of the participants had favorable response to this item.

However, from a more critical perspective it can be noted that, the participants appear to be ambivalent in the way they perceive peer counselling. Peer counselling appears to be seen as an avenue for releasing distress while at the same time participants’ revealed negative perception in the other 14 items. Feelings of distress are common among people including university students. In addition, university students’ distress may mainly be due to the psychological demands of their developmental stage. Other issues causing distress to the university students include: academic, career problems as well as family concerns. Similarly, self-awareness predicts the help seeking willingness (Zahavi, 1998). Accordingly, university students who may seek PCS to alleviate their distress may be influenced to do so by their level of willingness.

The few participants with positive perception on PCS could be attributed to the students’ willingness to utilize PCS which may be influenced by the convenience in connecting with the peer counsellors. Peer counsellors are conveniently available to speak to fellow students on
various issues. Being available makes it easier for the students to reach out to peer counsellors unlike when they seek help from the university counsellors and other external sources of help.

According to Noe (1988) Peer Counselling provides opportunity to relieve old negative perceptions which may be relieved (Noe, 1988). This may be facilitated through the help of peer counsellors. In addition, institutional settings like university, peer counsellors are students themselves who continuously interact with their fellow students. This means that peer counsellors are accessible to the student making it easy for those who need help to have an opportunity to do so, thus share their feelings of distress with them.

This view is reinforced by a participant’s response from the Focus Group Discussion as exemplified by their response below;

“I have several issues ranging from family, academic and finances. I also have relationship issues. Sometimes it is so bad that, I have to see a peer counsellor who is in our company in class and out of class, I think peer counselling helps”

As can be seen from the above statement, students face many issues that may overwhelm them requiring an immediate relieve such that they perceive the immediate help available in this case peer counselling to be very valuable. For example: ‘Sometimes it is so bad that....’ this brings to the urgency through which they may require help. As noted earlier, peer counselling is conveniently available because students are together at the university as they interact in the class rooms and other settings at the universities. They also can make special arrangements on what time, where and how to meet. Availability of peers is an important factor that may influence the university students’ perception on PCS because university life is usually busy with class work and assignments in their programs which occupy them and leave them with limited time for other
engagements. While traditional form of counselling, the student may be required to make an appointment and follow the procedure put in place. Following these procedure inconveniences the students as it may take a long time due to the limited number of counsellors available. According to the Health Believe Model, accessibility of service is an important motivator towards seeking help. Besides availability, severity of the distress may influence their perception. This is similar to the HBM concept that states that, perceived severity and the perceived benefits of utilizing the service that will help in alleviating the distress. Severity of one’s issue may propel them to seek peer counselling services. Accordingly, when university students perceive PCS to benefit them, they may perceive PCS positively. According to Chapman et al (2004), when people perceive a service to benefit them, they will perceive the service positively (Chapman, Damio, Young, & Perèz-Escamilla, 2004).

Berliner & McCandless (1993) observed that peer relations are important because of their enforcing nature (Berliner & McCandless, 1993). Regardless of the different perspectives, it was clear that individuals preferred peers as companions that they can relate with. Such kind of mutual support and guidance contrast to the authoritative ones and could attract the students at the university when distressed more than in traditional counselling. Furthermore some universities train their peer counsellors in basic counselling skills thus making it a more authentic service to the students.

According to Boulton (2005), the use of trained students to help their peers in distress has a history of many decades, and this may attract perception of peer counselling services by the university students. Besides availability of peer counsellors and other factors mentioned above as reasons for positive perception on PCS among the university students, it can be said that, those who had positive perception on PCS when distressed could probably be attributed to the fact that,
students experience similar developmental issues with their peers. When people experience similar developmental issues, they are likely to understand each other better. This feeling of understanding another person’s issues is termed as empathy.

According to Davis (1983), empathy is concerned with an individual’s experience to be understood since it a human condition which imposes common cultural heritage with common goals and sharing. Empathy brings the conscious and unconscious components into one’s world. Thus, it produces affective communication which helps to understand a person, what they are saying and what they mean (Davis, 1980). The individual feels understood by the virtue of being listened to. It can therefore be noted that with empathy that is offered by peer counsellors, university students when in distress may perceive peer counselling positively. In the mainstream counselling empathy makes the counsellor connect with the issues of the client. They listen and reflect which encourages the client to open up. For example in the quote below the FGD participants emphasizes the importance of being listened to when in distress.

“Sometimes I feel so stressed with many issues in my life that I end up going to seek help from the peer Counsellors, I think........sometimes, you need somebody who can listen to you”.

Empathic listening is implied in the quote and peer counsellors are best placed to listen to empathically. According to Davis (1983), empathy is concerned with an individual’s experience to be understood since it a human condition which imposes common cultural heritage with common goals and sharing. Empathy brings the conscious and unconscious components into one’s world. Thus, it produces affective communication which helps understand a person, what they are saying and what they mean. It can therefore be noted that with empathy that is offered
by peer counsellors, university students when in distress may perceive peer counselling positively.

Distress may arise due to several factors. For example one participant was quoted as below:

“I have several issues ranging from family, academic and finances. I also have relationship issues. Sometimes it is so bad that, I have to see a peer counsellor, I think peer counselling helps”

In the above quote, it is likely that some university students have positive perception on PCS as they seek ways of coping with their daily issue, which include: family issues, career and finances among others. The students may feel obliged to attend to their family issues because, a family is a social unit which each member finds a sense of belonging and when the cohesion is disrupted, members get psychologically affected to the extent that their other duties are affected. Besides understanding the need for a good family relationship, university students have to attend to their studies and career life. Career life is determined by several factors among them, academic performance, hence, when the university students’ performance is low, they may distressed.

While just 11% of the university students had positive perception towards PCS, a greater percentage 75% had negative perception. This negative perception might be influenced by several factors for instance; some students may feel more comfortable when their issues are handled by adults who may be more experienced. This resonates with (Fishcer & Farina, 1995) who indicated that some students feel the need to seek help from their parents, teachers or specialists (counsellors). In addition, one of the FGD participants said that:

“I would not wish to seek counselling from my peers. I would not tell them my problems because -what will my age mate tell me?”
In this respect, some university students may feel more comfortable dealing with adults because their own peers may not have as much help to offer. This resonates with Wivell & Webb (1995) who indicated that, help seeking behaviour refers to the extent to which a person utilizes different external sources against a situation that threatens his or her normal life functions, in order to reach or reestablish equilibrium (Wivell & Webb, 1995). Upon realizing problems, people attempt to solve them from social support resources. Primarily, people choose to receive help from their close relatives or family; and if this does not work well they shift to professional help. Similarly Zahavi (1998), believe that, people may have negative perception towards counselling when their social support network is degraded and when they chose not to share information about their negative feelings (Zahavi, 1998). This is reflected by the students, in responding to the item, “I would be willing to seek Peer Counselling Services when faced with issues” the analysis showed that, 18% agreed, 68% disagreed. Lack of willingness to utilize PCS among the university students shows a negative perception on PCS.

Positive and negative perception was revealed by the way the participants responded to each of the 15 items in table 4.4, for instance, in the item 6, on managing issues, 30% agreed while, 53% disagreed which means that, majority did not require PCS to manage their issues. This means that there were 30% of the participants who perceived PCS positively would use these services to manage their problems. Managing one’s problems would be important to a student because when a student has many issues they may not be able to concentrate on their academic work which is their main reason of being at the university.
Negative perception could be attributed to many factors among them social stigma, ignorance, embarrassment and fear. According to Wester & Vogel (2012), citing (Deane & Chamberlain, 1994) social stigma is defined as the fear that others will judge a person negatively if she or he sought help for a problem (Wester & Vogel, 2012). Similarly, social stigma attached to seeking help has been viewed as a barrier to PCS and individuals tend to be negative towards the services in these basis. University students who are in a developmental stage where conformity is a psychological need would wish to portray a strong behaviour and not a weakness, at the same time, they may thus fear to be stigmatised as weak. Traditionally seeking counselling may be viewed as a weakness by peers especially those that are able to cope with their issues. In addition to fear the treatment involved in seeking a service is another possible cause of avoidance towards utilization of PCS. The students would fear to be labelled. According to Kushner & Sher (1989), treatment fears have been defined as a subjective state of apprehension arising from aversive expectations surrounding the seeking of help (Kushner & Sher, 1989). Traditionally, university students seek to conform to their peers and would fear to be labelled as emotionally weak. Being labelled may work against the students’ association with their peers as they may shy off from and withdraw from peer counselling activities. As a result of this kind of fear, some university students preferred to keep their issues to themselves. For example a response from one of the FGD participant who said,  

“I may not feel comfortable telling “strangers” my personal issues”

The above response may mean that the university student had negative perception on PCS based on fear of disclosing his issues to his peers. Another response from the FGD was quoted to have commented that,  

“Sometimes I attend peer counselling services because it relieves me of my many issues”.

66
Another one stated:

“Since I am the one who understand my issues best, I prefer to keep my issues to myself. I always try to deal with them first before sharing them with anyone else and in most cases I succeed without being counselled by my peers or any counsellor.” “Students would hate to be seen being counselled by the peer counsellors, because they fear being labelled by the counsellors who talk about their clients’ issues to their friends.

This means that, the above student speaking of being labelled in the narrative above perceives PCS negatively due to fear of being labelled. Being labelled stigmatises the student as it makes students feel victimized and side-lined by others. This would mean that the individual may view themselves as weak and this may influence the student negatively on PCS.

According Vogel, Wester & Larson (2007), self-disclosure is an act of a person to reveal their feelings, thoughts and attitudes to another person. An individual may not be able to self-disclose if the person does not feel comfortable to share their issues (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007). Self-disclosure is only possible where there is sufficient understanding between individuals and also where there is maximum trust among the parties concerned. However where self-disclosure is possible counselling is more effective. This is similar to Crisp et al (2007) who stipulate that, fear to discuss painful emotions may be a contributing factor towards individuals’ utilization of peer counselling services (Crisp, Gelder, Rix, Meltzer, & Rowlands, 2007).

In the current study on item 4, a majority of the students - 62% suggested that they would be embarrassed to seek help from peer counsellors and only 21% felt that they would not consider embarrassment as a problem that would hinder them from seeking help from peer counsellors. Counselling and Psychotherapy has been described as “potentially difficult, embarrassing, and overall risky service which is avoided by some individuals” (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007) citing (Kushner & Sher, 1989). However, in the current study there were 21% of the participants
who did not consider embarrassment as a hindrance towards utilization of PCS, which would be said to be against the general perception that counselling is for emotionally weak people who are unable to cope with their issues. Similarly, the 62% of those that viewed embarrassment as a hindrance towards utilization of PCS may be demotivated because the university students are in a developmental stage where conforming to others is important to them and they would hate to be viewed as emotionally weak by their peers.

In addition, Lawler (2013) describes being embarrassed as a social rule and context which makes an individual feel ashamed to do an activity that they would otherwise do (Lawler, 2013). It is likely that the students feel embarrassed to utilize PCS for fear of being perceived as weak by their peers. This may mean that the individual is not able to cope with challenges they face and therefore weak. Similarly, students feel shame and guilt when they seek psychological help. They hate to be seen by their colleagues attending counselling services. The student could feel stigmatized. Stigma contributes to the feeling of embarrassment (Lawler, 2013). The 21% of the participants who did not attach the issue of embarrassment to their perception of PCS may be because they value the benefits of undertaking PCS and therefore perceive PCS positively. Similarly, when students understand the severity of their issues, they may overlook the issue of embarrassment and hence perceive PCS positively.

### 4.3.2 Social demographics influencing perception

The study used regression Model analysis to identify the key demographics which have a high significance in the relationship between perception and utilization of the PCS. In a different study on psychological factors that inhibit seeking help Davis (1980), indicated that some
variations like gender, culture, gender roles, age can affect the salience of avoidance factors (Davis, 1980).

Table 4.5 shows the results of the regression analysis and the significant factors as resulting from the analysis.

**Table 4.5: Regression analysis on the significant variables in perception and utilization of PCS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Wald $X^2$</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>-1.709</td>
<td>0.649</td>
<td>6.932</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>0.170</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-1.023</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>16.714</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>0.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>0.260</td>
<td>15.563</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>2.789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi-sq.</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Likelihood Ratio</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.1535</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&lt;.0001***</td>
<td>31.8774</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&lt;.0001***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

From table 4.5 it was observed two out of the three independent factors were statistically significant in the perception of PCS: Gender, and Year of Study both having a p value less than 0.001. This implies that among the various demographic variables used in the study, which included; gender, year of study, type of University (private or public) and age; gender and year of study were likely to significantly influence the perception and utilization of PCS.

The model further illustrates that female students had 3.5 lower odds ratio (chances) of having negative perception of peer counselling when compared to male students, while fourth year students had 2.8 times higher odds of having negative perceptions towards PC. This implies that gender may be a key demographic in perception of PCS and utilization as well. The year of study
also features as a prominent demographic with the third years having a higher odds ratio 27.89 in positive perception as compared to fourth years who have a lower odds ratio 16.75.

According to the statistics shown in tables 4.5, gender, age and year were significant in perception of PCS. The study revealed that more females than males who perceived peer counselling positively. This can be explained by the fact that females are more likely to talk about their issues than men. Traditionally, women tend to talk about their feelings and explore their emotional and psychological difficulties. Talking about ones issues has been seen as ‘female’ rather than ‘male’ trait. This has been embedded in gender socialization and how women and men consider and evaluate themselves. Men are viewed as emotionally stronger than women. This resonates with a survey commissioned by the British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP, 2013), and Andrew (2014) shared similar findings that there were twice as many women than men who sought counselling, adding that traditionally, more women than men sought counselling in general because they are men and women are socialized differently globally. The concept of talking about feelings and exploring emotional and psychological difficulties has, for many years, been associated with a ‘female trait’ rather than ‘male trait’. It can therefore be observed that being male or female may influence perception and this explains the statistical significance in perception by gender in the above data analysis. It is therefore important to utilize peer counselling to help individuals cope with their issues that overburden them.

Similarly, the year of study was significant in this study. This could be attributed by the fact that fourth year students are more likely to engage in PCS, for several reasons. Firstly, fourth year students are in a stage of serious career decision making as well as seeking stability in
relationship. Secondly, they are fourth year students more mature than third years may have had more experiences in seeking PCS, hence have understanding of the benefits of PCS, and thirdly, fourth years also have more experience of the university life and would therefore understand where and when to seek for PCS. Given their critical stage in their academic life they may find a need to seek PCS. In addition, fourth year students are in a stage that necessitates tem to seek ways of settling in career and employment as they graduate from the university and hence may perceive PCS as a way of helping them to settle down.

The study further revealed statistical significance in perception of PCS by gender and year of study as shown in tables 4.6 and 4.7 below.

**4.3.2.1 Perception by Gender**

The study sought to explore perception by gender. This was important because being male or female may influence an individual’s perception. Various studies have indicated women tend to have a more positive attitude in seeking for professional help than men do (Fishcer & Farina, 1995). Table 4.6 presents findings from this study.

**Table 4.6: Perception by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Perception</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Perception</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\chi^2=0.01897; \text{DF}=1; p<.01\]
The findings indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between perception and gender as shown in Table 4.6 with a Chi-square value of 0.01897 at $p$-value of <0.01. This results indicate that there is a strong and a positive correlation between perception and gender. It can be observed that 69% of the females had positive perception while only 31% males had positive perception, which means that there were more females than males who perceived peer counsells positively. There were also 44% of the female with negative perception compared to 56% of the male participants with negative perception on PCS. This means that there were more female than male students who perceived PCS positively. This can be explained by the fact that females are more likely to talk about their issues than men. According to Hayes & Flannery (2000) women had more role constraints than men and also had diminishing societal stereotyping which has necessitated women to seek help more readily than men. In addition, they stated that, female undergo more psychological distress than male which is based on the fact that female have the biological responsibility of child bearing and also family wellbeing. In addition, women have equal responsibility with men on search for career path (Hayes & Flannery, 2000). This adds to the strains that a female experiences. Similarly Wischmann (2008), carried out a study on stresses arising from infertility of couples and found out that more women than men sought counselling to cope with the infertility stresses than men (Wischmann, 2008). This study shows that the difference in the way male and female are socialized may influence the university students’ perception on peer counselling services.

In a study conducted by Boulton (2005), it was noted that 75% of those that utilized PCS on the issue of bullying were girls. Twice as many women than men sought counselling, adding that traditionally, more women than men sought counselling in general because men and women are
socialized differently globally, with women finding it easier to talk about their issues than men (Boulton, 2005). This resonates with a survey commissioned by the British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP, 2013) which found that, female do talk about their issues more than men. They are more likely to share with their counsellor than men. The female university student may be more likely to perceive PCS positively than male as they search for coping skills for their personal and societal demands. According to Vogel, Wester and Larson (2007), women were more likely to seek counselling than men who experienced greater role conflict and were more likely to self-stigmatize and less likely to self-disclose than women. High self-stigma and less disclosure lead to less positive attitudes and subsequently to less willingness to seek counselling (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007).

4.3.2.2 Perception by Year of Study

The findings of the study indicated that there was a statistical significance in perception by year of study. Table 4.7 presents the findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Year of Study</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Perception</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Perception</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2=0.01727; N=305; DF=1; p<.01$

The relationship between perception and year of study is highly statistically significant with a Chi-square value of 0.01727 at $p$-value of <0.01. This results indicate that there is a strong and a positive correlation between perception and year of study. The study noted that 51% of the fourth
year students had a positive perception towards PCS as compared to third years at 49%. This means that, when considering the negative perception, the third year students seemed to have a higher negative perception of the PCS (73%) as compared to the fourth years (27%).

Other contributing reasons towards this may be that the fourth years have gained much more experiences at the university in their previous years, which include; the awareness of the existence of PCS and a need for more seriousness in career search. It is also assumed that the fourth year students are more likely to be anxious of life after university as compared to the third years. Furthermore, fourth year students being more mature developmentally, than third years may have a better understanding of PCS and hence perceive the services more positively.

Similarly, fourth years do struggle in establishing career and employment as they graduate from the university and enter into the job market because there is high job market competition which puts pressure on the university students to perform better. According to Mungai & Osomu (2014) there is an ever increasing unemployment for the youths in Kenya. Success in academic work increases the opportunity for job market. Job competition and preparation for interviews are challenges fourth years have to contend with and this probably would make the students seek more of the PCS.

A fourth year student had reported in this study as saying:

Peer Counselling has helped me a lot as the counsellor understands me well when I talk about poor performance and need to do better and graduate so that I can get a job. I need money for my upkeep and for helping my family members who look up to me.....I come from a not very well to do family. Communication and relational issues with my family members worry me.

The above statement is similar to the participant in the current study. He cited several issues which included academic, finances and family. This contradicts the study by Wesley & Haines (2005) which sought to compare changes in perceptions in years third and fourth year university
students and found out that there was no significant difference (Wesley & Haines, 2005). In addition, the study by Eisenburg (2007) reported that there was no difference in perceived need for professional help for their mental and emotional health among third and fourth year university students (Eisenburg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007). Similarly, Andersen (2017) stipulated that, attitudes and beliefs about PCS may not differ among third and fourth year students.

4.3.3 Frequency of Utilization of the PCS by the university students

This section presented the findings on the frequency of utilization of peer counselling services by the university students. The frequency of utilization was measured in two ways: first by how often they utilized the peer counselling services and secondly by the rate at which they engaged in the peer counselling activities.

4.3.3.1 Frequency of the utilization of PCS by the university students

Frequency of utilization of PCS was measured by asking participants to indicate how often they utilized the PCS in their university. In the analysis, the frequency of the utilization was rated as: - daily – 1, monthly – 2, never - 3. The analysis is presented in the Figure 4.5

![Figure 4.5 Frequency of utilization of PCS among university Students](image)
Figure 4.5, shows that 15% of the university students utilized PCS with varying frequency, while 85% did not. The analysis showed that there were 85% as never having utilized PCS, those having utilized monthly as 12% and another 3% as utilizing on an everyday basis.

There are several reasons that would contribute towards lack of utilization of PCS. For instance, as it will be recalled in the earlier discussion, it was noted that despite university students experiencing several developmental issues they may not seek PCS due to embarrassment and fear of being labelled as weak by their peers, among other reasons. Lawler (2013) describes being embarrassed as a social rule and context which makes an individual feel ashamed to do an activity that they would otherwise do. It is likely that the students feel embarrassed to utilize PCS for fear of being perceived as weak by their peers. In addition, Larimer, Kilmer & Lee (2005) stipulated that, students feel shame and guilt and may require psychological help (Larimer, Kilmer, & Lee, 2005). These reasons among others may limit utilization of PCS.

Utilizing counselling from the university counsellors require scheduled time which the students may not easily find time to utilize as they have to cope with school work and finishing assignments. In addition university counsellors are few hence not proportionate to the number of the students at the universities because the number of the university students is ever rising. Besides, there are other reasons why university students may display help seeking behaviour. Some do it because of their fears, weaknesses, and failure while others voluntarily express their problems to a professional. Unhealthy psychology, high frequency of stressful and unwanted events, intensive health problems, and a lack of social support creates a need for help seeking behaviour (Phillips & Murrell, 1994).
Low utilization of PCS could mean that students rarely or never sought PCS despite the distresses that overwhelm them. Most common issues that face the university students include: emotional needs, relationships, academic and career as well as family issues (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007). Utilization of PCS can also be attributed to the fact that university students are in a developmental stage that need to establish a sense of individual identity and feelings of self-worth which include adaptation to more mature intellectual abilities, adjustment to societal demands for behavioural maturity, and internalizing a personal value system as young adults. Being at the university requires a person to adjust from the previous life of parental care to one of freedom to choose one’s actions or behaviours. University students can identify with each other on matters of developmental challenges and therefore would seek PCS. This means that, when people are in the same developmental stage they are likely to understand each other.

This resonates with Chow (1995), who observed that peers provide opportunity to learn how to interact with others, control social behaviour, develop age-relevant skills and interests, and share problems and feeling. Similarly, Bishop et al (2003) proposed that young people may utilize counselling because they have several psychology needs for instance need to cope every day’s anxiety (Bishop, Spence, & MacDonald, 2003). Coping with anxiety makes someone to perform executive functions, which means that they can continue with their work and live healthy lifestyles.

The study further considered the frequency of the utilization of PCS by the university students by different activities offered by the peer counsellors at the universities. These activities included: Individual counselling; group counselling; discussions on particular topics; trainings on life
skills; consultation sessions on specific issues; motivation; outings and visits to other universities. It was important to establish the utilization of these activities because some activities look into intrapersonal values, while others involve working with other people. Utilization by activities were scored by use a 5-point Likert scale with never being (1) rarely (2) sometimes (3) often (4) and always (5), whose findings are presented in table 4.7.

4.3.3.2 Utilization by Activities of PCS

The second section involved a selection of 8 PCS activities where by the participants were required to indicate how they engaged with these activities: 1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often and 5= always (as shown in Table 4.8 on the activities).

Table 4.8: Activities carried out by the Peer Counsellors among the University Students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Activities carried out by the peer counsellors</th>
<th>Never %</th>
<th>Rarely %</th>
<th>Sometimes %</th>
<th>Often %</th>
<th>Always %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Individual counselling</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Group counselling</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Discussions on particular topics in groups</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Training for students on life skills</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Consultation sessions for the students who have specific issues</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Motivational talks</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Outings</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Visiting other university peer counselling clubs/exercises</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8 revealed that, only 38% preferred individual counselling while, 60% did not. The findings also revealed that, 42% preferred group counselling unlike 56% who did not. More
participants preferred group counselling compared to individual counselling. The process of counselling is facilitated through empathy. As discussed earlier empathy is a skill where the counsellor puts themselves in the place of the client and treats them with a nonjudgmental attitude, in the process the client feels understood and appreciated. This resonates with Hoffman (2001) who stipulates that empathy contributes principles of caring and justice that can be wedded in behaviour modification approaches. It can therefore, be argued that it is natural for the university students to empathize with each other and seek help (Hoffman, 2001).

People may seek individual counselling when they require more personalized services to address their distress. While individual counselling may be appropriate for handling personal issues group counselling is preferred when people have a common problem. According to Tindall (1995), some of the advantages of group counselling include group members handling common issues. This means that, individuals are able to understand each other, learn from each other as well as give and receive feedback (Tindall, 1995). The knowledge that, people have similar issues to theirs makes people feel comfortable. Similarly, Sakar et al (2010) noted, that group counselling provides close knit sharing among individuals in decision making (Sakar, et al., 2010). Another advantage of group counselling was cited (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007) who reckoned that, group counselling, exposes members to different ideas of coping with issues; hence they feel encouraged and have hope to find solutions to their issues. Unlike individual counselling where the counsellor confronts the client to explore their own issues in group counselling, all members in the group share their ideas and therefore there is quicker development of solutions to people’s issues. This resonates with the findings of Thompson
(2014) who advocated that people feel more secure when working among members of the group than in any other form of counselling setting.

In discussions on different topics activities, the findings revealed that 69% of the participants utilized this service, while, 29% did not. This shows that discussions on specific topics was important to university students. Generally, there are some specific issues that are important to university students as they navigate their developmental stage. These issues differ from season to season and also according to social settings.

Glossoff & Kporowicz (1990) proposed there are several reasons why university students may not seek both individual and group counselling when in psychological distress (Glossoff & Kporowicz, 1990). These include: negative attitudes towards seeking help generally as well as issues of cost, transport, inconvenience, and issues of confidentiality. While some students may utilize either individual or group counselling, others are able to handle the problem. In addition Gulliver, Griffiths & Christensen (2010), stated that, emotional competence, knowledge, positive attitudes towards seeking professional help, social encouragement, and the availability of established and trusted relationships with counsellors may help in enhancing the attitude towards counselling.

On the activity of training for students on life skills, 63% utilized this activity, while, 33% did not. Training people on any skill alongside practice of the same, make them better in the activity. Training involves being taught to do things in a better way. In life skills competence in the way students run their everyday life is enhanced through training. Similarly, Kamore (2015) noted that, training people in different areas of life improves on their competence in the areas they are
trained in. When university students are trained in a certain topics they may engage its practice once a challenge occurs. As stated earlier, university students encounter several challenges. According to Larimeer (2005) the challenges that the university students struggle with include use of alcohol and drugs, relationship and career choice. Probably if students are trained in handling these issues they may acquire coping skills that will help them manage them. Similarly, when the university students are well informed through trainings, they may be able to perceive the severity of their issues and be willing to seek help. As demonstrated by the HBM, a person may utilize a service when they perceive the severity of their issues that is being addressed by a particular service. This assumption may mean that university may utilize PCS when they gain knowledge of the severity of the issues they encounter. This may mean that, the severity of the issue may necessitate consultation with the peer counsellors.

In consultation, the findings revealed that, 40% of the students consulted with the peer counsellors while, 56% did not. The 40% who consulted may be as a result of the challenges that they experience as they balance academic work with their social life. The 56% who did not consult with the peer counsellors despite the peer counselling programs being constituted in the university, probably because some students may consider peer counsellors as their age mate and therefor had no new information to offer. This resonates with (Arudo, 2008), who stipulates that university students continue to experience many unresolved personal issues and yet some of them did not seek counselling.

The findings also show that 23% of the university students did utilize motivational talks while 75% of the students did. The reason that makes motivational talks popular could be because currently there is a global scarcity of employment as well as competition in entrepreneur.
University students are encouraged through motivational talks in areas of their interest and they are happy to hear success stories. As noted earlier competition in academic excellence is important in Kenya’s academic world because success in studies is interpreted to mean success in life.

4.3.4 Influence of perception on utilization of the PCS.

The study sought to establish the relationship between perception and the utilization of PCS in order to find out whether the participants with positive perception had high utilization of PCS activities.

The PC Activities were: Individual counselling, group counselling, trainings on life skills, consultations, motivational talks, outings and visitation to other universities. The study found out that the PC activities that were statistically significant relationships were: visitation by gender, individual counselling by year of study, group counselling by year of study, outings by type of university, utilization visitation by type of university.

Table 4.9: Visitation as a Utilization Activity of PCS by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilization</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Utilization of visitation</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Utilization of visitation</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 4.3493; N=203; DF=1; p=0.0370 \]
Table 4.9 above shows that there is a significant relationship between gender and utilization having the p coefficient value less than p<0.05 where p=0.03.

Visitation to other students from other universities in Peer Counselling is an activity where university students visit other universities to exchange ideas and learn from each other. It is a time of fun and bonding among members from the different universities. In some cases team building and other activities of fun are organized. These activities that are held at the different universities depend on what the peer counselling counsellors / leaders plan in consultation with the students. In the current study, it was found out that there is a statistically significant relationship between utilization of visitation to other universities by gender. There are more females from universities with low utilization of visitation. In contrast, there are more males from universities with high utilization of visitation.

### Table 4:10: Individual Counselling as a Utilization Activity by Year of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilization</th>
<th>Year of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Utilization of individual counselling</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Utilization of individual counselling</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ²=9.5962; N=239; DF=1; p=0.0019

There is a significant relationship between individual counselling and year of study where p<0.05; as the significant p coefficient is p=0.0019; which means, more third year students had low utilization and more fourth year students had higher utilization of individual counselling than third years. This contradicts with the study by (Parket, et al., 2004) who found that transition from one level to another in university students did not influence utilization of PCS.
Fourth year students are at a stage where they may be internalizing the responsibilities ahead of them in career life after they leave campus life. Having had a longer stay at the university, fourth year university students are more likely to understand the existence of and PCS. They are also likely to utilize PCS as they seek empathy from their peers on matters of their concern. This contradicts the study by (Parket, et al., 2004) who found that transition from one level to another in university students did not influence utilization of PCS. Fourth-year university students take more effort to prepare themselves for the job market and this may require them to seek interventions of which are often part of the activities offered by the peer counselling programs.

**Table 4:11: Chi-square for group counselling by year of study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilization</th>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Utilization of group counselling</td>
<td>Third</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Utilization of group counselling</td>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 5.4118; N=239; DF=1; p=0.0200 \]

The findings indicate that there is no significant relationship between group counselling utilization activity and year of study as shown in Table 4.11 with a Chi-square value of 5.4118 at \( p \)-value of <0.02 and 1 degree freedom.

People seek to have group counselling when they are seeking solutions for common problems as such the third year students may be more likely to have higher utilization of group counselling activity in PCS than would fourth years, as they seek more conformity with their peers, unlike fourth years who have outgrown this need. This may indicate why more fourth year students had low utilization and more third year students had higher utilization of group counselling. Thus
group counselling becomes a suitable service among other PCS activities as individuals seek to address a common issue.

Table 4:12: Chi-square for outings by type of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilization</th>
<th>Type of University</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>88.39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Utilization of outings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>11.61</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73.75</td>
<td>26.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>196</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 8.1673; \text{ N=235; DF=1; p=0.0043} \]

There was statistically significant relationship between utilization of outings and type of university. There is low utilization by a large number of respondents from public universities than there were more university students utilizing of outings as a PCS activity. As was discussed earlier, there were more students who participated in the current study from public universities than from the private universities.

Through outings as a PCS activity, university students may form networks to help them exchange ideas among each other as well as formation of peer helping programs may be enhanced (Denninson, 2000). Outings to other universities as a PCS activity has been seen as an efficient means of help when dealing with issues being experienced by university students as they prefer to interact closely with their peers since they have similar challenges. Students from private universities may utilize outings more as they are more likely to meet the financial demands of visiting other universities.
4.4 Challenges that hinder the utilization of Peer Counselling Services

The study sought to establish the factors that hinder utilization of the PCS from the respondents and found that although it is expected that university students may utilize Peer Counselling services given the several developmental issues they face, they may not maximize on the utilization of this service because of various reasons /challenges. It is for this reason, this that the current research sought to establish some of the challenges that may hinder maximum utilization of PCS.

The researcher identified some recurrent challenges from the respondents’ views which act as hindrances to utilization of PCS amongst the students, which were: lack of confidence or trust in peer counselling service; lack of time/priorities/too busy to attend the PCS, PC is not effective; lack of sensitization on PC services and insecurity/peer pressure/ego they experience. The findings are presented in table 4.13:

Table 4:13: Challenges as per Type of University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges in Utilization</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Total in both types of Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Confidence/Trust</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time / Priorities / Too busy</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC is not effective</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sensitization on PC services</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insecurity/Peer pressure/Ego</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 4.13, findings indicate that 28% of the students from both public and private universities noted that the greatest challenge was a lack of sensitization or a lack of awareness on
the availability of the peer counselling services. In the public universities, the percentage was higher at 31% as compared to their counterparts in the private universities at 16%. This shows that despite the fact that most universities may have instituted PCS in trying to address their students’ issues and concerns while adjusting to university life, most of these students were not aware of such services being offered in the university. In a case study conducted in Australia on international students and their use of counselling services, (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2007) noted that most students were not aware of such services in the university and attributed their inactive use of the counselling services to lack of knowledge of the PCS.

The students further indicated there was a lack of consistent information on such services offered by the institution throughout the academic year. Most of the students noted they only received such information only during the orientation program (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2007). This may imply a degree of complacency by the university administration in establishing consistent communication channels with their students on the respective counselling services offered within the universities resulting in the lack of knowledge of the PCS.

Lack of confidence or trust in the peer counselling services offered was the least noted concern in both universities at 15%. In the private universities though, the percentage was slightly higher than in public universities at 16% and 15% respectively. According to Russell et al, students expressed feelings of discomfort about asking for help or were concerned about being understood or being able to be helped. This perception consequently, reflected on the students’ hesitation to engage in Peer Counselling Services.
When discussing lack of time/priority/too busy it means the level of which the university students may prioritize and spend time in utilizing PCS. In the analysis carried out in the current study, private university students were at 16%, compared to 15% of those from the public universities. Public universities have higher population of student population and this may mean that there is need for more Peer Counsellors since the qualified full time counsellors may not cope with the ever increasing numbers. In addition, according to the Health Believe Model vulnerability is a factor that is considered to contribute towards utilization of a service. If a person perceives themselves to be vulnerable in a certain way, they are more likely to seek services that would alleviate their pain. Similarly, the students from public universities are more likely to utilize PCS in the account of their vulnerability.

While 20% of the students from both universities indicated that PCS are not effective, a larger proportion of this percentage are from the private universities (28%) while only 19% share the same view from the public universities. Similar argument to the one cited above may be taken into account. Students may find PC more accessible than attending the traditional counselling because traditional counsellors may not be sufficient to cope with the ever rising number for the student population and thus students may turn to Peer counsellors for help.

Insecurity/peer pressure/ego, in this aspect, there were 14% who perceived peer pressure and ego would be a challenge that harbored the utilization of PCS, compared to 27% from private universities. This shows that peer pressure, insecurity and ego (16%) in both universities, was not as much of a challenge to the students in the public university as it was among the students of the private universities. Students from private had expressed more insecurity and lack of trust to
be of more challenge than those from the public universities and this explains more the reason that makes them to perceive peer pressure, insecurity and ego to a more challenge in utilizing PCS than it did with the students from public universities.

The study sought to establish other challenges that hinder utilization of PCS by the use of the items on Social stigma if one uses peer counsellors, peer counsellors not well trained, insufficient materials to peer counsellors, negative attitudes towards peer counselling by administrators, Peer Pressure, Lack of office space and other infrastructure and general perception. These items were measured on a percentage of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SA). The findings are presented in the table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Distribution of Respondents by challenges that hinder the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social stigma if one uses peer counselors</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer counsellors not well trained</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient counselling materials to peer counsellors</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitude towards peer counselling by school administration</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure not to utilize peer counseling</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of infrastructure needed by peer counselors</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social stigma is defined as fear that others will judge a person negatively if she or he sought help for a problem (Deane & Chamberlain, 1994). The social stigma attached to seeking professional help has been conceptualized as one of the most significant barriers to psychological treatment because the public in general tend to provide negative descriptions, and labelling to individuals who experience mental illness (Crisp, Gelder, Rix, Meltzer, & Rowlands, 2007). Insufficient
necessary materials and peer counsellors not well trained”. From the table above, social stigma was among the challenges that influenced underutilization of PCS. The table showed that 30% agreed, while 60% disagreed. Stigmatization may occur when the individual consider those utilizing counselling as emotionally weak or fear of being seen to have many problems. People have who do not understand the meaning of counselling may consider the service as “washing dirty linen in public”. Considering that only 30% of the participants considered social stigma as a hindrance to utilization of PCS, it means that twice as many students did not consider stigmatization as a challenge in utilizing PCS. University students who have as much as the issues that were mentioned earlier and needed PCS, may not stay away from utilizing Peer Counselling Services. Stigma on utilization of PCS arises when an individual perceives counselling as a service for those suffering from mental illness hence will not want to conceal their utilization of PCS. Instead they keep off from utilizing PCS. According to the findings of this study, 60% of the students may keep away from PCS on the basis of stigma. The other challenge considered in the study was the level of training.

The findings on insufficient level of training for the peer counsellors found out that, 50% were in support that insufficient training deterred utilization of PCS. According to (Tanaka & Reid, 1997), peer counsellors require some level of training in some specific skills in order to become effective. They should also demonstrate helping abilities such as listening, asking questions and expressing support and empathy. In addition, they must be able to maintain confidentiality and neutrality. According to UNESCO, (2012), and also (Karanja & Bowen, 2012) most of Peer Counsellors have inadequate knowledge and skills in counselling and as such are not well equipped in handling issues like drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, hatred, isolation and open criticism.
from other students. Wango (2006) seems to concur with this and asserts that, Peer Counsellors who receive peer counselling training are more confident and tend to be more skillful and persuasive as they relate with other students. Unfortunately, there seems to be no uniform structure for evaluating peer counselling programs in the education systems in Kenya (UNESCO, 2012).

The findings also indicated that 40% did not consider the level of training as a challenge to utilization of PCS. Which means they would utilize PCS when they had a need, without considering the level of training of the Peer Counsellors. It is therefore evident that there was a need to offer at least some basic training to the Peer Counsellors to for them to offer effective services to the students. The other challenge which was considered in the study was “insufficient necessary materials for counsellors.”

“Insufficient necessary materials for peer counsellors”. These may include reference materials, writing materials incentives and refreshments while at work. Necessary materials when provided to Peer Counsellors would motivate them to get more involved in attending to their Peers more willingly. The findings showed that 80% agreed that there was limited necessary materials for counsellors and only 20% disagreed. This shows a challenge of unavailability of materials for peer counselling.

“Negative attitude towards PCS by university students was studied”. The statistical data analysis showed an equal percentage of 40% in agreeing and disagreeing that there was a challenge in attitude of PCS among the university students. The challenge was therefore significant to the utilization of PCS. Professionally, counsellors are supposed to safeguard the privacy of the
clients thus build trust in the counselling process. If this does not happen clients may have negative perception towards counselling. In addition, counsellors are ethically expected to respect cultural, individual and role differences including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language and socio economic status working with members of such groups. In addition counsellors should exercise empathetic understanding towards clients hence create a healthy therapeutic stance towards the client which makes the client gain trust and confidence with the counsellor.

“Lack of infrastructure needed by peer counsellors”. The findings revealed that 80% agreed that lack of infrastructure was a challenge experienced in utilizing PCS, while 20% disagreed. Peer counselling infrastructure include: counselling rooms any materials needed including books by peer counsellors among others. The high percentage of participants that agreed on lack infrastructure would mean that the peer counsellors did not have sufficient rooms set aside for counselling and this would probably hinder utilization of PCS by the students. Lack of proper counselling rooms would be deterrent to utilization of the service by the students due to limited confidentiality. On the other hand, the 20% who disagreed on infrastructure as a hindrance to utilization of PCS meant that, students would still utilize PCS regardless of the limitation of these facilities.

Peer pressure is a situation whereby peers influence each other either positively or negatively. In the current study, peer pressure as a challenge for not utilizing PCS had 60% agreeing and 30% disagreeing. Peer influence among the university is common because students interact with each other in several activities day by day and hence influence each other. In addition, being in the same developmental stage would mean that, the students understand each other and would
therefore influence each other. They influence each other in matters of life skills. The high percentage of the influence of students in utilization of PCS, means that peer pressure is a significant determinant of utilization of PCS.

4.5 Measures that can be put in place to Improve on the Utilization of Peer Counselling Services in Universities

This section aimed to establish the measures that can be put in place to improve on the utilization of peer counselling services in Universities. As indicated in table 4.15, participants responded to the challenges that were experienced by students in utilization of PCS. A majority of the students indicated a concern on: employment of motivational efforts to disseminate benefits of peer counselling, provision of physical resources to make peer counselling effective, encouragement of proper training of counsellors, comprehensive peer counselling services to be provided and initiation of school based peer counselling policy were measures that can be put in place to improve on the utilization of peer counselling services in Universities.

| Table 4:15: Activities to be put in place to enhance the utilization of PCS |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|--------------------------|
| Sensitization                                  | Public   | Private  | Total in both types of universities |
| Benefits/Importance/Gain                       | 49%      | 48%      | 49%                      |
| Include other activities/ Clubs                | 12%      | 48%      | 12%                      |
| Train Counsellors/ Invite outsiders            | 25%      | 48%      | 24%                      |
| Train Outsiders                                |          |          |                          |
Figure 4.15 shows discussions from the participants of the current study which were under the following activities: Employment of motivational efforts to disseminate benefits of peer counselling; provision of physical resources to make peer counselling effective; encouragement of training for peer counsellors; inclusion of comprehensive peer counselling services to the peer counsellors; providing initiation of school based peer counselling policy; financial support by university administrations and inclusion of an all-inclusive counselling framework to include all stakeholders.

The findings shown in the table 4.15 revealed that, students from both private and public universities perceived that sensitization on the existence of PCS was important. This was at 49% for the public universities and 24% from the private universities. Sensitization is important especially to freshmen joining universities as they are oriented on where to seek help when faced by issues in life. It was observed that in examining the challenges that university students encounter in utilizing PCS, students in public universities had a higher percentage that their private university counterparts and this is made clearer by the higher percentage in discussing the action that should be taken to enhance the utilization of PCS. When students are informed of the availability of the services, they are in a better position to make a choice to utilize the services or not. In a similar study by (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2007) it was noted that a high percentage of students expressed general hesitation to engage in counselling as they felt unease about approaching the counselling service to seek for information on what is available. Strategies to demystify and familiarize students with the peer counsellors and counselling process should be advocated to increase use of these services (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2007).
Table 4.15 also indicates that 12% of the students from the public universities stated that making the PCS more beneficial to them was important, those from private universities and there were 13% of the students from private universities who supported this perception. Ideally, the level of utilization of PCS would be determined by how important they perceive the services to be. From the observation of the given statistics, it appears those from private universities proved the PCS to be made more beneficial to them, than those in the public universities. This may be so because students of the private universities had shown a higher percentage in handling the challenge of prioritizing on PCS. Probably if they understood the benefits of utilizing PCS, they may prioritize on the utilization of PCS more. One way to make the PCS beneficial to students would be in engaging students in motivational talks or open discussion forums to sensitize students on the peer counselling services offered (Brown, 1999)

The study also focused on the inclusion of more activities into the PCS program and the findings were that, 14% participants from the public universities supported this while, 22% supporting this were from the private universities. This is an indication that there were more students from the private universities that showed that inclusion of more activities in the PCS would enhance the utilization of PCS. Probably the existing activities that were offered at the private universities by the peer counsellors were not varied. As Brown (1999) notes, engagement of students in various individual or group activities that are facilitated by counsellors, and focused on educational, life skills or career goals, can be a beneficial activity for the students (Brown, 1999). Students, especially the fourth year students, would be inclined to take part in career oriented programs as they advance towards leaving the university and venture into their careers. Peer counsellors would thus use such opportunities to organize for activities such as career weeks and
corporate networking events in which they would interact with and sensitize other students on the activities and services offered.

On the training of peer counsellors and inviting outsider speakers, 25% were from public universities, while 16% were from the private universities. With the ever rising numbers of students in the public universities and very few or no increase in the number of employed counsellors, as compared to those in the private universities, there is a need to empower peer counsellors by training them and sometimes engage outsiders to give motivational talks to the students.

In addition to the above findings, in the FGD session, several students expressed the need for employment of motivational efforts to disseminate benefits of peer counselling, provision of physical resources to make peer counselling effective, encouragement of proper training of counsellors, comprehensive peer counselling services to be provided and initiation of school based peer counselling policy were measures that can be put in place to improve on the utilization of peer counselling services in Universities. This can be deduced from the following comment from one of the peer counsellors.

“I think the university administrators should support us by giving to us more trainings, infrastructures, materials and better policies for running the program as well as seek ways to sensitize students’ activities”.

The above statement is an indication that peer counsellors appreciate the university management’s involvement in the PCS but wish for more help, and would wish that they are offered more support. The university administrators may also need to sensitize the students on the benefits of PC.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations arising from the findings of the study. The study specifically aimed to establish the relationship between students’ perception on peer counselling services and utilization of these services among the university students in Kenya.

The objectives of the study were: 1) To find out the perception of university students towards peer counselling services; 2) To establish the extent to which the social demographic influence perception; 3) To establish the key demographics that influence perception; 4) To establish the frequency of utilization of peer counselling services by the university students; 5) To find out the relationship between the perception of the university students towards peer counselling services and the frequency of utilization of PC Services; 5) To establish factors that hinder the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students; and 6) To find out what needs to be done to enhance on the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students.

This chapter discusses the summary of the key findings based on the objectives and conclusions drawn on perception of peer counselling and its utilization.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

5.2.1 Perception of the university students on PCS

The study found out that there were majority of university students who bore a negative perception towards PCS. It established that most university students, 75%, had a negative perception on PCS. However, a few of the participants perceived PCS positively. The percentage
of those with positive perception on PCS were mainly the ones who tended to seek relieve from distress (48%) compared to the (37%) with negative perception on distress, otherwise participants perceived PCS negatively, going by their responses to the questions asked. Feelings of distress are common among people including university students. In addition, university students’ distress may mainly be due to the psychological demands of their developmental stage (Vogel, Wester, & Larson, 2007). Other issues causing distress to the university students include: academic, career problems as well as family concerns. Accordingly, university students who may seek PCS to alleviate their distress may be influenced to do so by their level of willingness.

Negative perception could be attributed to many factors among them: social stigma, embarrassment, fear; ignorance, and general unwillingness all based on either their previous experiences or on attitude formation. Social stigma which was defined as fear that others will judge a person negatively if she or he sought help for a problem was attached to negative perception in seeking PCS. In essence, since university students are in the same developmental stage where conformity is a psychological need, university students would wish to portray a strong behaviour and not a weakness, and at the same token fear to be stigmatised as weak.

According to the perceived norm, seeking counselling may be viewed as a weakness by peers especially those that are able to cope with their issues. In addition fear of treatment involved in the counselling process is another possible cause of avoidance towards utilization of PCS - the students would fear to be labelled. Ignorance, fear of being labeled by peers as well as stigma contributed to the negative perception. University students value being associated with their peers and hence would not wish to be sidelined by these same peers.
The study established that there were more female with positive perception on than male. With 69% of the females and only 31% males with positive perception. This can be explained by the fact that females are more likely to talk about their issues than male. In addition, the study also found out that 51% of the fourth year students had a positive perception towards PCS as compared to third years. There were 73% third years with negative perception compared to 27% of the fourth years with negative perception. This may imply that fourth years perceived PCS positively compared to the third years, probably because of the issues of career life for which the fourth years needed to consult peer counsellors.

5.2.2 Frequency of utilization of peer counselling services by the university students

The study sought to establish the frequency of utilization of PCS by the university students and found that, 85% of the university students did not utilize PCS, while the rest 15% utilized PCS at different frequencies.

The study sought to establish utilization by activities offered by the peer counsellors. It was established that, more fourth year students utilized individual and group counselling than third years. This is because fourth year students are more likely to have spent sufficient time to establish the existence of PCS as compared to the third year students who may not be keen to know about it. Fourth years may utilize individual and group counselling more than third years because they may need to consult with their peers more on issues of managing their preparation of their career life.
5.2.3 Relationship between the perception of the university students towards peer counselling services and the frequency of utilization of PC Services

The study found out that there was a relationship between perception of the university students on PCS by activities depending on the key variables singled out in the regression model analysis. For instance, the study established that there was a significant relationship between perception and utilization of some of the peer counselling activities. Visiting other universities may bring about competition among students as well as learning from each other. It creates fun and hence motivates students to engage more in PCS activities.

The study also established there was also a relationship established on the frequency of utilization and the perception held by the students.

5.2.4 Challenges that hinder the utilization of Peer Counselling Services among the University Students

In order to establish the necessary intervention to enhance utilization of PCS, the study considered the challenges that would hinder utilization among the university students. Although it is expected that university students may utilize Peer Counselling services given the several developmental issues they face, they may not maximize on the utilization of this services because of various reasons /challenges. These challenges include: lack of confidence or trust in peer counselling service; lack of time/priorities/too busy to attend the PCS, PC is not effective; lack of sensitization on PC services and insecurity/peer pressure/ego they experience.

The analysis showed that, the highest of the challenges in the list was lack of sensitization at 28%. The participants seemed to appreciate that, although peer counselling exists in the universities some students were ignorant about it.
The second one was lack of time/too busy (21%). It can be noted that, the students did not have sufficient time to utilize PCS. This could mean that university students may not be managing time well to include utilization of PCS. Universities need to invest on ways that could ensure that peer counselling is well marketed to ensure that all university students are well informed about the availability of this service. According to the Health Believe Model which was adopted by the study, it is assumed that when individuals acknowledge the benefits of a certain service, they are likely to utilize it more. Peer counselling has been used to help in discipline issues of clients among others and therefore is an important service to the university students. This information should be provided regularly so that the students can remember to utilize. This resonates with (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2007) who proposed that, most of the students noted they only received such information only during the orientation program. This may imply the university administration may need to establish consistent communication channels with their students on the respective counselling services offered within the universities which has contributed to the lack of knowledge of the PCS.

Another challenge that was noted was peer counselling not effective as per the students requirements. Effectiveness was rated at 20%. Students may rate effectiveness of PCS by their experience and it is therefore expected that, anyone who may have had any unmet needs by the peer counsellors may believe that peer counselling is not effective. However, since the peer counsellors are not fully trained practitioners as the full time counsellors, it is expected that any issues that they may not be able to handle be referred to peer supervisors.

Peer pressure challenge was rated as 16%. This challenge there for was not as highly rated which means that university students may not be influenced by their peers on not utilizing PCS. This
finding is important because it is assumed that university students are at the developmental stage where peer influence is effective.

5.2.5 Measures to be taken to enhance utilization of peer counselling services among the university students

The study sought to establish what needs to be done to enhance utilization of PCS among the university students. When analysing the challenges that hindered maximizing of utilization of PCS by the peer university students, which were: lack of sensitization, lack of time, peer counselling not effective, peer pressure and lack of trust, it was noticed that in order to enhance utilization of PCS, these challenges needed to be addressed.

For sensitization, it was realized that some universities had well organized schedules for the peer counsellors. The peer counselling clubs had the duty to engage in activities that attracted more members and also brought awareness of the existence of these services. However, this should be done consistently throughout the academic year so that students may become familiar with the activities offered. In addition the universities should establish specific infrastructure which include offices and peer counselling rooms. In some universities the officials of the Peer Counselling have other benefits like special T Shirts to identify them, key holders written Peer Counsellor and also budge. This makes it easy for all the students including the first years identify peer counsellors around the university. These ideas among others may be encouraged in all the universities.

Universities may be
rrow ideas from each other since some had well organized peer counselling programs with collaborations with NGO’s who help in different areas of life skills. For example, in Kenyatta University, the Pathfinders have been working with peer counselling club to offer sexual education to the new students (first years). Other different areas of interest need to be identified by different universities and more help offered to the students.

5.3 Conclusion

Drawing from the findings of the study, it can be concluded that unlike what is expected in perception of university students on PCS, the study found on the contrary. It was established that majority of the students perceived PCS negatively. Some of the reasons that the participants cited for negative perception and consequent low utilization of PCS included, ignorance, fear, social stigma and lack of trust among others.

However, it was also established that university students value certain activities such as group counselling, motivational talks and outings to other universities. Perhaps the universities need to reflect more on the kind of activities that are valued more by the students and seek ways of encouraging the students to undertake the other activities which did not seem to be appealing to them. This would in turn strengthen the PCS and make all peer counselling activities more appealing and beneficial to the students.

University management should schedule regular supervision sessions for peer counsellors. Since different universities have different needs at different seasons of the school semesters university management need to work closely with the peer counsellors in order to get all the information of the needs of the university students and handle each of them promptly.

Sufficient funding for the peer counselling departments in order to ensure necessary infrastructure is put in place.
5.4 Recommendations

The study proposes the following recommendations:

5.4.1 University Administrators

Relevant trainings have been facilitated to the peer counsellors to enhance their competence, as well as continuous supervision by the trained counsellors. Maintaining ethical issues like confidentiality will encourage trust for students to seek PCS more. Peer counselling activities need to be encouraged and guided by acceptable codes of conduct. These activities should be left to students to run with minimum adult intrusion. In addition, the university administrators may enquire from the university students how they perceive PCS, and therefore in cooperate the contributions made by the university students about the PCS.

University administration should also be keen on enhancing awareness of creation on peer counselling services. These services should be equally availed to the university students at all levels of their university years. Feedback from the university students on their perception of these services should be sought and included in the planning of PCS activities. This will help increase the likelihood of positive perception of PCS among the university students and hence an increase in the perception of these services.

5.4.2 Peer Counsellors

Peer counsellors have the responsibility to listen to the issues of their peers who come to them for help. They also are expected to refer the students’ issues that are beyond their competence to the university counsellors. This helps to maintain a balance between emotional wellbeing of the students and the understanding peer counselling issues by the university management. For this reason, peer counsellors should endeavour to remain as professional and ethical as much as
possible to enhance the trust of the students. In addition, university students peer counsellors should encourage the university students to express themselves on the perception they had on PCS.

5.4.3 Other Students

The findings of the study indicated that University students had negative perception on PCS and also the utilization of the same and therefore it is recommended that they should engage often in the PCS activities offered at the university, by initially, having a positive perception of the PCS.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Further Research

The study established that there exists a positive relationship between perception and utilization of peer counselling services based on the year of study, in which the fourth years utilized the services more than the third years. Hence, the research recommends further studies can be carried out to establish ways of incorporating all the university students irrespective of the year of study in utilizing of Peer Counselling Services offered by the Universities. The study also further recommends on the need to identify the perception of different cultures, as well represented by the diverse student cultures in the universities, on peer counselling services. This may aid in having a better understanding on the role that culture plays in making decisions on seeking help and whether this affects the perception the students have and consequently utilization of the service.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix I: Consent Letter

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

P.O BOX 43844

NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam

Introduction

I am a PhD student at Kenyatta University carrying out a research on Perception and utilization of Peer Counselling among Undergraduate University Students in Kenya. This research is meant for academic purposes as well as enhancing peer counselling services among the university students. You have been selected as one of the participants in the study.

Note: DO NOT write your name. Take time to read the instructions for each section carefully and give a response for each question as honestly as possible. Every response is valid. Your responses will be handled with maximum confidentiality. Completing the questionnaire is voluntary.

Please confirm that you have read the above information and accepted to participate in the survey by signing the following consent form.

Having understood the above information and knowledge that the survey is voluntary, with confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed, I do hereby accept to participate in the survey.

Participant’s Signature__________________ Date__________________
Appendix II: KU Introduction Letter

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

Our Ref: C82/26526/2013

DATE: 24th April 2015

The Principal Secretary,
Higher Education, Science & Technology,
P.O. Box 30040,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION MARY WAMBUI KAMINA—REG. NO.
C82/26526/2013

I write to introduce Ms. Mary Wambui Kamina who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. She is registered for Ph.D degree programme in the Department of Psychology.

Ms. Kamina intends to conduct research for a Ph.D Proposal entitled, “Perception of Peer Counselling Services and their Influence among Students in Universities in Kenya”.

Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

MRS. LUCY N. MBAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL
Appendix III: NACOSTI Authorization Letter

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Telephone: +254-20-2213471, 2241340, 310571, 2219420
Fax: +254-20-318245, 318249
Email: secretary@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

Ref: No.

Date:

29th May, 2015

NACOSTI/P/15/4298/6067

Kamina Wambui Mary
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Perception of peer counselling services and their influence among university students in Kenya,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Nairobi and Nakuru Counties for a period ending 31st July, 2016.

You are advised to report to the Vice Chancellors of selected universities, the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education, Nairobi and Nakuru Counties before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

DR. S. K. LANGAT, OGW
FOR: DIRECTOR GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The Vice Chancellors
Selected Universities.

The County Commissioner
Nairobi County.
Appendix IV: Questionnaire

This chapter presents questionnaires to establish the perception of the University students on peer counselling services. The questionnaires are divided into five sections. Section A is the Bio data. Section B Perception of University Students towards Peer Counselling Service. Section C is the utilization of Peer Counselling Services, section D is the challenges of peer counselling, while E is the measures that may be taken to enhance the utilization of peer counselling services among the university students. Give your responses to the questions below. Be as accurate as possible. You need not to indicate your name.

SECTION A - Bio Data

From no 1-4 Tick the one that suits you

Age

18 – 20 ( )
21-23 ( )
24 - 26 ( )
26 – 30 ( )

Others ( ) Specify

Gender

Male ( )
Female ( )

Department / Program

Your academic year of study

3rd year ( )
4th year ( )
SECTION B - Perception of University Students towards Peer Counselling Services

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Indicate by ticking [✓] your view on the value of scale is below

SA-Strongly Agree (1), A-Agree (2), U-Undecided (3), D-Disagree (4), SD-Strongly Disagree (5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When distressed I think of peer counselling services as the first help</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>I am willing to work with peer counsellors to help me solve my problems</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>I experience general unwillingness toward peer counselling services</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I feel embarrassed to attend Peer counselling sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>In my opinion peer counselling is not important</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I can manage my problems without attending peer counselling</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>In my opinion peer counselling is for people with mental illnesses</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I have a negative attitude towards peer counselling</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>I prefer to keep my problems to myself</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>I think peer counselling is a waste of time</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>I have a positive attitude towards Peer Counselling</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>I would be willing to seek Peer Counselling Services when faced with issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I have would not care much about what other students think me when I attend Peer Counselling Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I would advocate for students to attend Peer Counselling Services</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>I would not advocate for students to attend peer counselling services</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>Others (specify)________________________</td>
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</table>

**SECTION C – Frequency of Utilization of Peer Counselling**

There are two sections in this section. The first section focuses on the frequency of utilization of Peer Counselling Services, while the second part is on the choice of activities of Peer Counselling.

Please indicate the frequency by which you attend Peer counselling Services

Every day ( )
Utilization of different Peer Counselling Services

Indicate the frequency with which you attend each of following 8 Peer Counselling Activities using the scale 1-5 provided with never being (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4) and always (5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Activities carried out by the peer counsellors</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Individual counselling</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Group counselling</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Discussions on particular topics in groups</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Training for students on life skills</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Consultation sessions for the students who have specific issues</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Motivational talks</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Outings</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Visiting other university peer counselling clubs/exercises</td>
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</table>

SECTION D: Challenges that hinder Utilization of Peer Counselling Services

List reasons as to why you may not utilize peer counselling services in the university

________________________________________________________________________
In your opinion, what are some of the reasons why students may not utilize Peer Counselling Services in your University?

SECTION E – Measures that may be taken to enhance the utilization of peer counselling among university students:

Suggest measures that can be put in place to enhance utilization of Peer Counselling Services by students in the University.
Appendix V: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Students

a) What do students think about Peer Counselling Services offered in your university?

b) In your opinion, do you think Peer Counselling is useful to you in helping you cope with your daily challenges

c) What are the challenges that you and your peers experience in utilizing Peer Counselling Services

d) Suggest measures that can be put in place for improved utilization of Peer Counselling Services by students in the University.
## Appendix VI: Required Size for Randomly Chosen Sample

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<td>3000</td>
<td>341</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>346</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>351</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kathuri & Pals (1993)

N=Population size

S=Sample size