

# Identification of Main Verbal Indicators of Mental Status of University Students' at Onset of Unrest.

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## ABSTRACT

Many factors which includes biological or environmental, influence variation in the mental status of an individual if he/she is exposed to them. Negative factors are the root cause of mental status at the onset of unrest and this can have specific manifestations. During social unrest, people's entire way of life is torn apart. These problems may exhibit themselves verbally since the body's verbal dispensation is a reliable sign of internal state of affairs. Several research findings show that University students' unrest is a common phenomenon all over the world and that most Universities are focused on the aftermath of students' unrest. However, studies have not been done on identifying verbal indicators of mental status of University students' at the onset of students' unrest and then implementing appropriate preventive measures to forestall University students' unrest. The objective of the study was to identify the main verbal indicators of mental status of University students' at onset of unrest. It was a survey research design which used mixed research method approaches. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. The research population included Security officers, secretaries, of selected public Universities in Kenya. Simple random sampling was used which gave a total sample size of 145 which was obtained from a target population of 177. The quantitative data collected was analyzed using SPSS programme into frequency counts, percentages, means and independent t-test analysis. From the findings, the main verbal indicators of mental status of University students' at the onset of unrest were identified as: the use of the word 'comrade' in speech being the most common, followed by a 'threatful speech', the use of the word 'power' in speech, increased talkativeness in speech, loud speech tone, very fast speech rate and hurtful speech, in that order.

**Key words:** Indicator, Mental state, Stressor, Unrest, Verbal.

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## INTRODUCTION

During social unrest, people's entire way of life is torn apart and these problems may exhibit themselves verbally. Goolam (2010) confirms Peter and Mvungi (1986) findings that the phenol men on of students' unrest has persisted since the inauguration of Universities in East and Central Africa in the early 1960s and has defied ideological boundaries and University site, such that each year resources are wasted due to recurrent cessation of teaching and learning, which sometimes results in the closure of Universities. Peter and Mvungi established that students have been conceived and portrayed mostly as negative and disruptive agents and yet they are the key agents in any learning institution. Goolam agrees that Kenya is but one of the many African countries that have had to deal with University students' unrest. South Africa and Nigeria, among others, have also had their fair share in recent years. Although the campus environment today is very different from that a few decades ago, students' unrest still persists, and in fact is on the increase. This is because there still exist conditions that brings tensions that will often lead to University students' unrests. There is therefore need to identify the main verbal indicators of mental status of University students' at the onset of unrest so as to forestall the unrest.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mixed research method approaches and Survey research design was used to collect quantitative data using structured questionnaires. This was adopted from Creswell (2014) who noted that survey research provides numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. The questionnaires were used to collect data from security officers and secretaries. Table 1 gives research population size and sample size that was involved in data collection to answer the research question.

**Table 1: Research Population involved in answering research question**

Serial No.	Stratum / Section	Population Size	Sample Size
1	Security officers	55	48
2	Secretaries	122	97
	Total	177	145

Security officers and Secretaries working at selected Universities in Kenya were the main participants involved in data collection because they were assumed to possess the information required for this study. This is because they are expected to be first persons that interact with University students when they are about to go on strike.

Wadsworth Cengage Learning (2013) noted that the data processing phase of survey typically involves the classification (coding) of written-in answers and the transfers of all information to a computer. In view of this, quantitative data was scored in comparative analysis format. This involved collecting data from different respondents who also belonged to different strata of security officers and secretaries, in time and/or the same settings and to identify similarities and differences. The variable scored in this section was verbal indicators of mental status of University students' at onset of unrest. The respondent questionnaires were subjected to data inspection, after which questionnaires with missing selected options were separated from those that were with complete selected options for each question. Further inspection was done by choosing five questionnaires at random and then confirming from the prepared data if they were correctly keyed in the SPSS programme. This was then used to produce the primary data matrix analysis, categorization and hence helped in arranging collected data in tables. Using independent sample t-test analysis, comparative means of the respondents' perceptions on each variable item were established and ranked appropriately.

#### Data Presentation and Interpretation

The research question which was derived from the objective of this study stated that: What are the main verbal indicators of mental status of University students' at onset of unrest? The responses were keyed into a Computer data file and mean scores calculated using SPSS programme. The mean scores are presented in Table 2

**Table 2: Verbal Indicators of Onset of Unrest**

Item Number	Verbal Indicator of Unrest	Mean	Std. Deviation
11	Word 'Comrade' in Speech	4.39	.828
8	Threatful Speech	4.38	.884
12	Word 'Power' in Speech	4.35	.749
5	Increased Talkativeness in Speech	4.24	.853
2	Loud Speech Tone	4.19	.866
10	Euphoric Speech	4.16	.739
1	Very fast Speech Rate	4.14	.796
9	Hurtful Speech	4.12	1.072
4	Spontaneous Arguments	3.90	.817
7	Tangential Speech	3.88	.923
13	Strike theme Songs	3.86	.990
6	Inflectioned Speech	3.60	.840
3	Rehearsed Speech	3.48	.964
	Grand Mean	4.05	

From the results of the data analysis, it was found that the use of the word 'comrade' in speech is the most common verbal indicator among University students during the onset of unrest. This was followed by a 'threatful speech', the use of the word 'power' in speech, increased talkativeness in speech, loud speech tone, very fast speech rate and hurtful speech, in that order.

The first most frequently used verbal indicator of mental status of university students at onset of unrest is the word 'comrade' ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = .828$ ). This finding fills the gap left by Hooymann and Kiyagat (2008) who noted that unusual speech will be sometimes associated with mental status in response to negative factors in the internal or external environment of the concerned person. The findings also uphold Capital Campus (2014) observation that Kenyan university students normally refer to one another as 'comrades' when they are annoyed by appending administrative issue or when getting ready for rioting of whatever nature. Therefore, for appropriate detection of onset of unrest, the first main verbal indicator will be in the speech content of the University students' with the word 'comrade' being very frequent or pronounced in their speech. The students can as well use similar words in their speech content that signifies their unity and sense of belonging at the onset of unrest. At any time when any university student needs the cooperation of fellow students or their support like when vying for elective leadership position, he/she will also be very particular in using the word 'comrade'. The administrators should therefore be very careful on the context in which the word is used.

The second most frequently used verbal indicator of mental status of university students at onset of unrest is normally a speech full of threats ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = .884$ ). The findings agree with Hinduja and Patchin (2010) findings that threats through telephone text messages or online cyber postings are common at onset of unrest. The threats in speech can be detected in the conversations of the students themselves or even as they interact with other people. This should therefore be used as the second main verbal indicator of mental status of University students' at onset of unrest.

The third most frequently used verbal indicator of mental status of university students at onset of unrest is normally shouts of the word 'power' ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = .749$ ). This further affirms Capital Campus (2014) observation that Kenyan university students' normally shout the word 'power' and calling one another as 'comrade' when there is a pending administrative case or when getting ready to go on rampage after being aggrieved in some way. Rothman (2015) also quoted that it may be the shouts of 'Black power' and riots in Watts and Harlems and other areas but those are the consequences of the 'White backlash' rather than the cause of them. Such shouts should not be ignored and in fact they should be used by the administration as useful language of the unheard. They should cease the opportunity to explore the use of the word as a sign of backlash of their effects on the students. At the onset of unrest, the speech content of university students' will be mingled with shouts of the word 'power' in chorus. In a way, they will be using the word to seek attention of the administrators and therefore if you are a sensible administrator listen to them. The students' will be using such similar words to warn of the imminent force that they have and can use to help achieve their goals. This should therefore be used as the third main verbal indicator of mental status of university students' at onset of unrest.

The fourth most frequently used verbal indicator of mental status of university students at onset of unrest is increased talkativeness ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = .853$ ). This finding gets some bearing in the gap left by Hooymann and Kiyagat (2008) who noted that further investigations be done on quantity of speech which tends to be minimal or voluble depending on the mental status of an individual. The findings show that majority of university students' will normally become unusually more talkative at onset of unrest, though this will depend on where they are and who they are talking to. If they are amongst fellow students of the same interest and concern, then they are likely to talk more. This should therefore be used as a main verbal indicator of mental status of university students at onset of unrest, though some students may not necessarily display this.

The least commonly used verbal indicator of mental status of university students at onset of unrest is rehearsed speech ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = .964$ ). DPRVI (2009) noted that many persons in a negative environment will have their expressive language with ease probably due to some rehearsal. Jan (2015) also emphasized that one should take note of frequent changes of topic (tangential thinking) especially when one is talking to a suspect. It is likely that some university students will rehearse their memories in order to express them in words at onset of unrest and hence this can therefore be used as a follow up verbal indicator of mental status of unrest after having observed the main verbal indicators.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research question was: What are the main verbal indicators of mental status of University students' at onset of unrest? These are the main verbal indicators noted: The word 'comrade' being common in their speech, speech full of threats, word 'power' common especially in group speech and increased talkativeness of students, in that order.



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