

Campus This Week – November 27

USIU-Africa Alumni Association Chair produces film featured on Netflix; garners 12 Kalasha Award nominations

By Brenda Odhiambo



40 Sticks is the fourth Kenyan film to debut on Netflix in the past two months. The film is produced by among others, the Chair of the USIU-Africa Alumni Association, Mr. James Cutha Gatherere. Photo: Courtesy.

The Kenyan film industry recently received a big boost as one more Kenyan film was featured on Netflix. The film, *40 Sticks*, is a thriller that premiered on the global streaming platform on Friday November 20, 2020, and lists among its executive producers, James Cutha Gatherere, the current USIU-Africa Alumni Association Chairperson.

The film, directed by Victor Gatonye and based on a fictional story created by Frank G. Maina and written by Voline Ogutu, the story revolves around a group of death row prisoners trapped in a crashed prison bus and their fight for survival, while a mysterious killer is lurking in the shadows. Speaking to CTW, Mr. Gatherere noted that the recognition of Kenyan films by Netflix was a sure sign that the local film industry was rapidly evolving.

“The fact that in the past few months, we have had three Kenyan films feature on Netflix is a true testament that the Kenyan film industry is growing. It is exciting to see what other Kenyan stories will be featured on the global stage,” he said.

“So far the film has received amazing reviews from a cross-section of Kenyans, and it’s currently sitting at the top, number 1 movie in Kenya on Netflix (3 days running) after debuting at number 3,” he added.

“What makes this debut even more exciting is the fact that not only will the film be shown across Africa, US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, but also that it has garnered 12 nominations in the Kalasha Awards, making it one of the second highest nominees this year,” he noted.

“We are excited to be part of the films that will be honored at the 2020 edition of the awards, alongside other Kenyan productions that have made waves in the local and global scene,” he added.

40 sticks stars Robert Agengo, Bilal Mwaura, Andreo Kamau, Xavier Ywaya, Shivisike Shivisi, Arabron Nyyeneque and Cajetan Boy.

To watch the film trailer, click [here](#). For more information about how to vote for the film at the Kalasha awards, click [here](#).

Loneliness during COVID-19: Is there beauty in loneliness?

By Counseling Team

Loneliness is a state of solitude or being alone/invisible in a world full of people, a feeling of isolation or not being able to connect with other people, longing to get love, concern, attention, closeness than you have. It could also be an inability to engage in and enjoy what everyone else is doing; a feeling that you are not having as much love and closeness as you would like, an inability to find meaning in one's life, experience the world from subjective negative and unpleasant feelings related to the deficient social relations, or a feeling of disconnectedness or isolation.

Loneliness is a universal human emotion that is both unique and complex to each person hence its causes vary from one person to another. Loneliness could lead to poor physical or psychological health, it can be paralyzing, painful, distressing with feelings of shame and embarrassment that you are a failure for not having friends or socializing with other people.

It distorts our perceptions of life. It can also make you push people away or have an overwhelming need for attention or affection, need to be heard, understood or cared for which may make one desperate and depended on other people, aggressive, too anxious or fearful of being alone and other people may push away from you too, initiating a devastating chain of reactions.

Loneliness is sometimes referred to as a silent killer, because it can get worse as you continue keeping to yourself and becoming lonelier by the day, and creates both psychological (hesitant to

talk to people, developing fear, becoming withdrawn, suspicious, uneasy having small talks with people, hyper vigilant to social threats like rejection or exclusion) and physical health issues.

Loneliness can be caused by different experiences, for example, the breakup of a relationship you treasured, the loss of a loved one, a move to a new place where you don't know people, lack of social skills, living alone when you are used to being with people, however living alone does not necessarily mean one will be lonely. Loneliness can also stem from past experiences of neglect, isolation, or abuse, or feeling lonely despite being with people, having a busy life and not able to socialize with people, physical separation from friends and family as occasioned by the current pandemic that we are all struggling with. So loneliness is something that people experience at one time or another and there is something that can be done to manage it.

COVID-19 has caused a feeling of loneliness among several people. This could be as a result of the regulations that were put in place by the government in the bid to alleviate spreading of the virus. Some of the regulations that are likely to cause loneliness are; reduced social interaction as a result of most activities including learning and some jobs being conducted online. The closure of schools and universities means most learners are away from their peers and don't have the luxury of:

- ✓ Meeting with their friends as they used to,
- ✓ Engaging in physical school club activities to keep themselves occupied,
- ✓ Engaging in sports activities, as they were used to before the pandemic struck,
- ✓ Meeting their classmates physically in class,
- ✓ Hanging out with friends among other activities.

Signs and symptoms of loneliness

When lonely, you may experience emptiness, sadness or feel as if there is something important missing when you are alone. Some of the symptoms you are likely to experience when you are lonely are;

- ✓ Sleep disruption, or sleep related issues;
- ✓ Feeling restless or anxious;
- ✓ Decreased appetite;
- ✓ Low energy levels;
- ✓ Feelings of self-doubt, worthlessness, self- doubt;
- ✓ Body pain;
- ✓ Increased desire to binge watch TV, social media;
- ✓ Excessive consumption of alcohol or drugs;

Part two of the article will cover strategies on how you can manage loneliness during this time. If you feel overwhelmed and need help, contact a counselor. You can reach us on 0730116748/750 or email: counsel@usiu.ac.ke.

School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension hosts colloquium on maternal mental health among adolescent mothers

By Caroline Githara

Colloquium

Topic: Digital Mental Health Game and Mentoring for Treatment of Common Perinatal Mental Disorders in Young Refugee Mothers

25 November, 2020
12.30pm-1.30pm

Presenter:
Lucy. W. Kiama

Co-Presenter:
Annie Bonnz

Register today:
<https://bit.ly/3IKFRMV>



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On Wednesday, November 25, the School of Graduate Studies in conjunction with HIAS, hosted a colloquium on maternal mental health among adolescent mothers, based on a paper titled, 'A Blended Intervention: Digital Mental Health Game and Mentoring for Treatment of Common Perinatal Mental Disorders in Adolescent Refugee Mothers'.

The paper was developed with funding from the Gates Foundation, and it sought to blend a digital mental health game smart phone application with ongoing mentorship for young refugee mothers aged 18-25 in Nairobi.

Adolescent mothers face the dual challenges of negotiating the significant developmental tasks of adolescence and transition to adulthood, while simultaneously facing the physical and mental health challenges that motherhood entails. Effectively treating common perinatal mental health disorders (CPMDs) in adolescent mothers requires interventions that are evidence-based, scalable (e.g., do not require specialist services), accessible and address both life transitions.

To achieve this goal HIAS applied for funding from the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation. HIAS developed and tested an adolescent specific intervention for CPMD which blended a digital mental health game with mentoring for refugee adolescent mothers in Nairobi. The outcomes of the pilot project were to support young refugee mothers to manage common perinatal mental health concerns during the postnatal period and increase protective factors, address challenges experienced by young mothers, address stigma attached to mental health problems, and bring mental health services closer to the young mothers.

Lucy Kiama, HIAS Country Director, noted that the application had a curriculum developed by a team which identified some of the key areas that young mothers needed support, including mentorship, health services, and psychosocial support.

“The application was piloted among 14 mothers, who spent an average of 4.7 hours on the application over the course of 6 weeks. On average, 22 games were played, with one mother playing 224 games and 9 young mothers not playing any games during the 6-week period,” she says.

The young mothers agreed that the Young Mummy Application was useful and relevant to supporting mothers with common perinatal mental health conditions. They indicated that the exercises within the App helped them to relax, they were also able to form bonds with their new babies and the community.

“I taught myself how to deal with stress, how to keep my baby safe, which foods to eat, my health and that of my baby and now I can even teach other mothers what I learnt from the App,” said a respondent from the study.

Among the study’s successes was the fact that the mothers with high risk depression and suicidal ideations were able to access counselling. This was amplified through the WhatsApp and Chat section that enabled them to share their experiences and increase protective factors. Through the articles on the application, the mothers were able to access knowledge on personal mental health, baby’s wellbeing and having positive relationships with their baby and other people.

In closing, the study noted that there was a high level of distress among youth refugee mothers that needed to be addressed, which would involve the development of strategies to effectively treat common perinatal mental health disorders.

Caroline Githara is the Hof Programs at HIAS.

[USIU-Africa students studying Japanese language hold virtual cultural exchange](#)

By Katsuji Nakamura

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CHAPTER 2: CULTURE

- Another aspect of Kenya which is amazing is the culture which is very diverse. In fact, there are more than 20 ethnicities intermingled in the country.
- A major part of tourism is due to the various cultures, especially the Maasai ethnicity which Kenya is widely associated with.
- In addition, the name of the capital city, Nairobi, comes from a Maasai word, Enkare Nairobi, which means cool water. This is in reference to the Nairobi river which flows through the city.

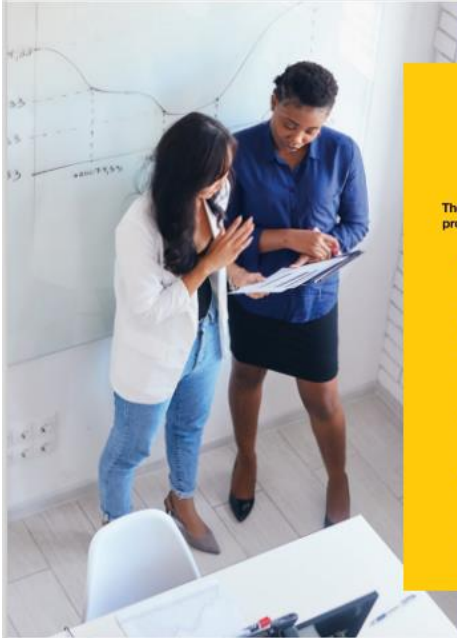
Mute Stop Video Participants 4 Chat Share Screen Record Breakout Rooms Reactions Leave Room

The students from USIU-Africa held two interactive sessions with students from the Miyazaki Senior Commercial High School, to exchange cultures and learn more about each country. The next interactive session is scheduled for February 2021.

Students from the Japanese language (JPN 4001) class recently had the first-ever virtual cultural exchange program with students from the Miyazaki Senior Commercial High School located in Japan. The sessions saw students from the two institutions learn more about their respective countries, and for the USIU-Africa students, presented a chance to learn and practice the Japanese language.

The five students, Kena Wandia, Kelvin Chepkwony, Hannah Ketra, Baraka Munene, and Theresa Wahu, have so far taken part in two interactive sessions, held in September and November, in which they held exchanges on some of the unique aspects of Kenya and the Miyazaki prefecture in Japan.

The second session, held on November 17 was covered by several outlets, including two TV stations, MRT and UMK, and an online platform, Yahoo Japan, one of the most visited news sites in Japan. The next session will be held in February 2021.



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