



The Impact of Workplace Counselling on Employee Performance

Maletlatso Motsomotso

Limkokwing University of Creative Technology

Corresponding Author: Maletlatso Motsomotso,

motsomotso.maleh@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Organizations take care of their employees through workplace counselling which enables them to effectively perform the duties assigned to them. This paper aimed to examine the impact of workplace counselling on employee performance. 22 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to collect data in employees working in the ministry of transport. The findings of this study indicate that workplace counselling affects employees through financial stability, reduced emotional disorders, increased work morale, ability to resolve issues and good communication/interaction with others. The findings of this study add more knowledge on workplace counselling in the context of Lesotho. Therefore, future studies may focus on other districts, to get more insights on the issue of workplace counselling and employee performance.

INTRODUCTION

In the present-day, workplace counselling has become the main focus of human resource managers in most organisations worldwide. This is because it helps to address different human resource issues and other areas which may have an emotional impact on employees. Focusing on the needs of the employees is very important as it helps in improving their workplace performance, because it is through the employees that organizations are able to reach their goals. Numerous organisations usually provide the wellness programs to employees that mainly focus on good health and address the physical and psychosocial conditions of employees (Daniels, Tregaskis, Nayani and Watson, 2022; Mattke, Liu, Caloyeras, Huang, Van Busum Khodyakov and Shier, 2013). These programs are provided to individual employees, groups or organizations at large (Baicker, Cutler, and Song, 2010). The aim of workplace counselling programs is to touch on the health and well-being of employees as well as for organisations to benefit through decreased healthcare costs and improved employee productivity (Baicker, Cutler, and Song, 2010; Lowensteyn, Berberian, Belisle, DaCosta, Joseph, and Grover, 2018). Employee performance refers to how employees behave in their workplace and how well they do the duties assigned to them. Employees are the most valuable resources in any organization. However, they come across issues in both their personal and work life which significantly affect their wellbeing. This is why it is important for employers to take note of the fact that employees are greatly attached to their work and when dealing with personal or work-related issues, their workplace performance and productivity may decline. All these speaks to the fact that workplace wellness has constantly grown together with the workplace wellness industry (Jensen (2024). Hence, this study aims to assess the impact of workplace counselling on employee performance.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Counselling

Employee counselling is a method of understanding and assisting people whose technical, personal and emotional adjustment issues interfere with their work performance, (De Cenzo and Robbins, 2008). The authors further mentioned that employee counselling can be viewed as dealing with emotional problems and as an act of communication. Successful counselling depends on the face-to-face communication where one person's emotions can be shared with another. Also, counselling helps to understand and reduce employees' emotional disorder. Counselling can also be viewed as the assistance provided by the supervisor to the subordinates regarding the behaviors on the job, in order to improve their performance (Dennis, 2004). Counselling is also sometimes used in the sense of coaching and reviewing one's performance. Such a review identifies not only the potential for development but also the training needs for further improvements (Dennis, 2004). Bohlander, Snell and Sherman (2011) stated that counselling is widely applied both within and outside the organizational context. Employee counselling is a vital part of performance review and potential appraisal that helps to improve and develop employees (Bohlander, Snell and

Sherman, 2011). Unless carefully handling issues affecting employees, employees may express more dissatisfaction after the counselling than before.

Employee Performance

Performance refers to a way in which employees complete tasks assigned to them (Cascio, 2000). Armstrong (2009) asserts that efficient performance maximizes employee contributions while assisting organizations in reaching their objectives. The ability of individuals to use organizational resources to accomplish both personal and organizational goals is another definition of employee performance given by Armstrong (2012). A record of tasks finished in a specified amount of time is called performance. Multifunctional coverage at the institutional, organizational, technological, and human levels improves employee performance (Armstrong, 2012). Organizational performance is directly impacted by personnel performance, which is indicated by financial or non-financial results (Armstrong, 2012). Employee performance is basically the capacity to finish the work assigned and the outcomes obtained. The following metrics can be used to measure employee performance: quantity, which indicates how the employee feels about the activities and results; quality, which indicates how the employee feels about the caliber of the work, skills, and ability to produce a flawless job; attendance, which emphasizes the presence of the employee at work; and cooperation, which refers to the ability of the employee to work in a team, either horizontally or vertically.

Employee Counselling Programs and Job Performance

In numerous organizations, the increasing number of problematic employees has significantly contributed to the increasing growth rate of employee counselling programs. According to Arthur (2000), employee counselling programs are services provided to employees experiencing personal, emotional, psychological, legal as well as the financial challenges. As noted by Yamatani, Santangelo, Maue and Heath (2018), employee counselling programs significantly assist employees with the legal, medical, family, psychological, personal, family and financial issues. McCann, Azzone, Merrick, Hiatt, Hodgkin and Horgan (2010) indicated that employee counselling programs are designed to jointly address both the personal and work issues of employees. The authors further explained that employee counselling entails the following areas: supportive counselling, problem assessment, wellness education and training, referrals to higher levels of treatment and follow-ups for employees and family members.

Moreover, employees' job performance is an area of concern to many employers. Many organizations strive to create a good working environment for employees with expectations of high job performance. Yun, Takeuchi and Liu (2007:745) defined job performance as the expected behaviors that are directly involved in producing goods and services, or activities that provide indirect support for the organization's core processes. Therefore, high concentration at work, increased work morale as well as good interpersonal relations among employees can lead to improved job performance. On the other hand, researchers

(Kirk and Brown, 2013:138; Konrad and Mangel, 2000:1226) noted that employee counselling programs are crucial in reducing employee turnover and absenteeism while at the same time increasing employee morale.

Effect of Counselling on Employee Performance

Implementing the counselling programs is one of the commonly used ways of managing employees' personal problems that affect their job performance by most organizations. According to Zarkin and Garfinkel (2004:103), organizations that value their employees provide counselling programs as a tool to improve job performance, enhance productivity, and protect its investments. In the modern society, employees are faced with numerous challenges that can create an imbalance in their careers. However, Konrad and Mangel (2000:122) have recommended employee counselling programs as a tool that can assist employees to balance work and personal life such that they are able to resolve conflicts arising from both spheres of life. Hughes and Kinder (2007) found out that counselling results in increased employee productivity. A study by Chan (2011) on employee well-being (workplace stress, burnout and depression) found that workplace counselling improves employee well-being. Other studies (Izzat, 2014; David, John and Richard, 2012) also found out a positive significant effect of workplace counselling on employee job performance.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow's needs theory of motivation is used in this study to explore how workplace counseling affects employee performance. Human wants are categorized into five categories by Maslow's theory of motivation, which states that in order to activate higher needs, lower needs must be met (DuBrin, 2012:393). Basic needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs are all included in the hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow's needs theory of motivation, people are driven by hierarchical needs, motivation typically results from a variety of motivational factors, people are constantly motivated, and if one need is met, another one takes its place. According to this study, employee counseling services are crucial to meeting and satisfying workers' safety demands. French (2012) asserts that employee counseling boosts morale by lowering the psychological and physical suffering that workers endure at work as they move up the organizational ladder. Employee job security and stability are increased as a result. In order to address the requirements of their employees, these counseling programs also provide services including behavioral modification, emotional or psychological counseling, and skills training.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative case study design. The population for this study was the employees in the Ministry of Transport in Maseru, Lesotho and the sample for this study was selected through the purposive sampling technique. A total of 22 participants consisting of 9 male and 13 female employees were used as a sample for the study. Semi structured face-to-face

interviews were used to collect data in this study. Before data collection, permission was obtained from the respondents where the researcher briefed them about the study aim. The interviews took place in the participants' place of work as the researcher found it to be conducive for the participants. Also, the date and time of the interviews were chosen based on the availability of respondents. The duration of the interviews was mostly 55 minutes to one hour depending on how detailed each respondent was. Interviews were held until no further new information was obtained and this happened after interviewing 20 participants. Data in this study was analyzed through the thematic analysis. The different steps involved in thematic analysis were used during analysis of the data. The researcher started by learning and understanding the data collected where the collected transcriptions were read and re-read two to three times. After that, the codes were generated where important information was highlighted and classified. The themes were identified by grouping the same concepts together and describing them at the end, major themes were considered related to workplace counselling experiences.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Employees

This section consists of the demographic information of the respondents which includes gender, age, and years of service in the organization.

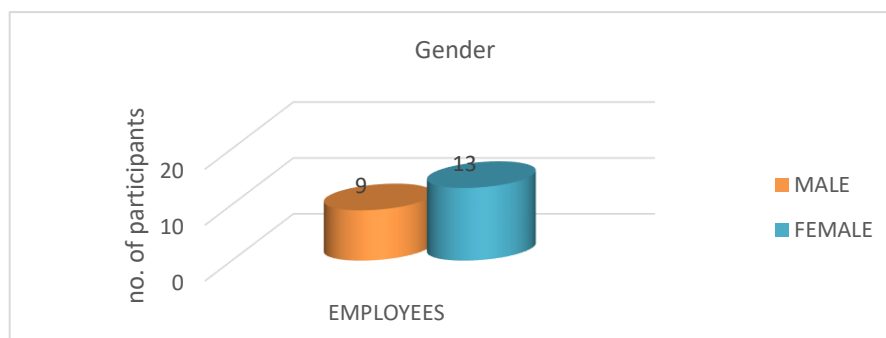


Figure 1. Gender

Figure 1 above shows the gender distribution of the respondents who participated in this study. The results show that 22 employees participated in this study where 13 employees were female and 9 employees were male.

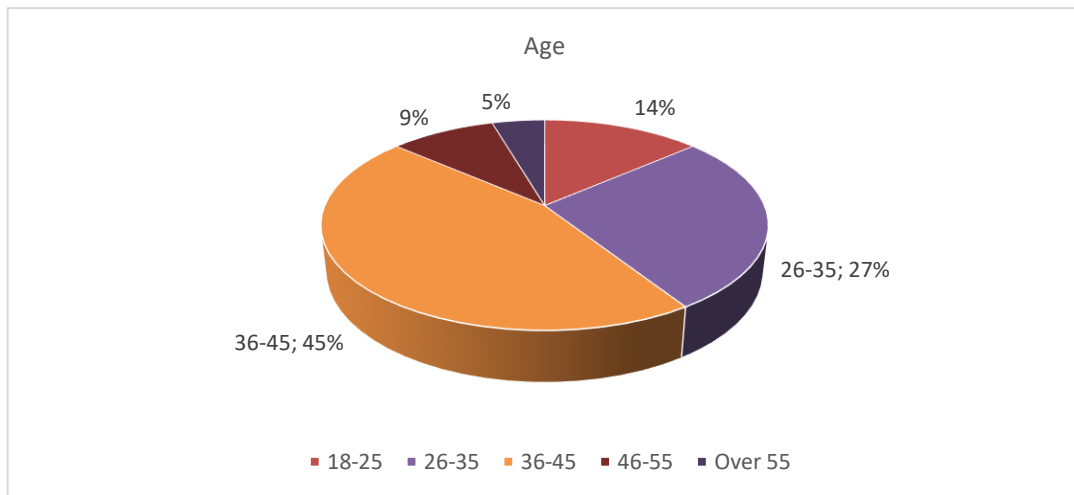


Figure 2. Age

Figure 2 above shows the age groups of participants that participated in this study. The results showed that 14% of the respondents range between the ages of 18 to 25 years. It is also shown that 27% of the respondents range between the ages of 26-35. Those between the ages of 36 to 45 years make 45% of the respondents. Again, the number of employees between the ages of 46 to 55 make 9% of the respondents. Those who are 55 years and above make 5% of the respondents. The results thus indicate that the workforce in the organization is clustered around employees between the ages of 36-45 which has the highest percentage (45%).

Table 1. Years of Service

YEARS OF SERVICE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	%
0-5	5	22.7%
6-10	8	54.5%
11-15	4	14%
16-20	2	4.5%
Over 20	3	4.5%
Total	22	100%

Table 1 above shows years of service of the respondents. The results show that majority of the respondents fell in the bracket 6-10 years of service in the organization, which forms 54.5% of the workforce. The analysis indicate that majority of the employee are relatively new to the organization.

Presentation of Themes

In understanding the impact of workplace counselling on employee performance, the following themes were identified: financial stability, reduced emotional disorders, increased work morale, ability to resolve issues and good communication/interaction with others.

Financial Stability

Participants in this study have indicated that workplace counselling has helped them to attain financial stability. Participants expressed the positive gains in their lives. In particular, the financial issues, for them it was about moving from worse to better in terms of handling of their finances. They narrated their stories as follows:

Participant 2 said:

"Before attending the counselling sessions, I used to be very reckless with money. But I'm a better person now".

"I never believed in budgeting the salary that I earn. All that mattered to me was spending and yet it caused me stress afterwards. ..You cannot believe when I tell you that I'm now careful of how I handle my finances. (Participant 15) "

"I've always wished to have counselling sessions in our workplace. So when I finally attended I came back with a lot of lessons learned such as how to remain stable in the little that I earn (Participant 6)".

Reduced Emotional Disorders

The workplace counselling focused on the betterment of the participants' workplace. Participants noticed that the wellness being established from the counselling sessions radiated out into their personal lives. Some of the participants in this study found that being in control of their emotions was what they learned from the sessions they attended.

"I'm always nervous whenever I think of attending such sessions. I'm never free. But surprisingly with the sessions held here, I was open and felt relaxed to talk without any emotions being evoked in me. Even when I'm with my colleagues, I'm the calmest person ever" (Participant 10).

Participant 4 also shared:

"I'm someone who likes to keep things to myself and not share with anyone and that makes me to burst out most of the time when I get irritated. But ever since attending the counselling sessions in our workplace, I'm a new person. I'm able to avoid situation that will make me lose my temper. I can say I'm less emotional now than before".

Participant 1 said:

"It's been helpful to have someone to talk to while in the workspace. I've been able to talk about personal issues that I never thought could be told to anyone and that has helped me to be relieved and I'm now able to control my emotions. "

Increased Work Morale

Another aspect of workplace counselling program was work morale. Participants indicated that they experienced an increase in work morale after attending the counselling sessions in their workplace.

“The few sessions that I’ve had have helped to improve my self-confidence. I used to doubt myself in most of the duties that I do here. But is in the past now (Participant 20)”

“Whenever I came to work, I used to feel very demoralized .I sometimes felt that quitting the job was the best option for me. Looking back up to now, I’d give the thumbs up to our management for providing the counselling sessions in our workplace because my work morale has highly increased. (Participant 12)”

Ability to Resolve Issues

An important aspect of the workplace counselling process identified was the ability to resolve issues. Participants appreciated the tips they got from the counselling sessions on how to handle issues they face. They indicated that they were now able to smoothly resolve issues they faced after attending the counselling sessions in their workplace.

“I was never good at coming up with solutions in most cases whether at home or here at work. After going through counselling, I have discovered something different about myself that I’m now able to resolve issues facing me (Participant 29)”.

“..Well, resolving issues was never what I’m good at no matter how much I tried, but I tell you now that the tips I’ve got from the few sessions that I’ve attended have really changed my life for the better. I no longer leave issues unresolved (Participant 8)”.

“Resolving any kind of issues is not an easy task for most people including myself. However, I think it’s safe to say I am now among the few people that are good at it...Well that’s how I consider myself these days as part of the positive changes that I see in my life (Participant 11)”.

Good Communication/Interaction with Others

In describing their experiences, the participants expressed an appreciation for the counselling sessions in positively changing their communication abilities. Specific aspects of counselling sessions included improved communication in their workplace or families. In narrating their experiences, they said:

“Before attending the sessions, I was never good at communicating and that used to make life very difficult for me. Of late, things are better for me in terms of communicating with other people, whether here at the workplace or at home (Participant 19)”.

“For as long as I can remember, communication has never been my strong point. But I’m telling you that now I seem to be better at it. All thanks to the idea of conducting counselling in our workplace (Participant 25)”.

“I’m known to be a loner, but I tell you that the counselling sessions have brought so much life into me. I now find it easy to communicate and interact with my colleagues (Participant 7)”.

DISCUSSION

While workplace counselling has been active within various workplaces, the results of this study suggest that workplace counselling can provide positive developments in employees' lives. This has been established through the themes that emerged in this study. These themes include financial stability, reduced emotional disorders, increased work morale, ability to resolve issues and good communication/interaction with others. The themes identified represent the important aspects in achieving employee wellness in the workplace. Studies such as Jensen (2024) have shown that although the concept of workplace counselling is constructed differently across organizations and careers, it is deemed to serve the same purpose of handling issues of employee well-being in the workplace which ultimately affects the overall performance of employees in their place of employment. Another important factor pointed out from the results of this study is how the workplace counselling sessions delivered have numerous effects on employees who attended them. These include the strategies designed to promote wellness in the workplace that can even extend into different elements of participants' life. To some extent, this could be because participants manage to make use of the wellness promoting lessons learned in the sessions attended. Therefore, this has the ability to have a huge impact as wellness promoting behaviours applied in the workplace can be applied at home as well. Jarden, Sandham, Siegert and Koziol-McLain (2018) also noted that workplace wellness programs can impact wellness beside the workplace environment into the participants' family lives adding more to the usefulness of workplace counselling. This speaks to the positive impact of delivering workplace counselling programs within the work environment. The results of this study add to the body of literature suggesting that the workplace is the best place to provide workplace counselling services to employees.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The practice area of workplace wellness is currently achieved through workplace counselling. The findings of the current study emphasize that wellness in the workplace can be achieved through workplace counselling as a means of addressing the work-related needs of employees. In particular, workplace counselling focuses on employee well-being in the workplace which highly influences the performance patterns of employees. Further, customized workplace counselling does not only affect wellness within the work environment but may also have a positive effect on other areas in employees' lives.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research could explore the long-term effectiveness of workplace counselling on employee productivity and retention. It is also important to

examine how personalized counselling impacts well-being outside the workplace, including social life and mental health. Comparative studies between different counselling approaches could also be conducted to determine which methods are most effective in different industry contexts. Finally, the role of technology in expanding the access and effectiveness of workplace counselling, such as through digital platforms or mental health apps, could also be examined.

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