

Effects of Counselling Programmes and Performance of Prison Officers in Kenya: A Case of Nakuru Women Prison

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of counselling programmes on performance of prison officers in Kenyan prisons. Data were collected via secondary and primary sources. From the descriptive analysis, the study found that employee performance is enhanced by stress management counseling, spiritual nourishment counseling promotes high levels of job performance and engagement at work, counseling on mental health improves employee performance, and counseling on financial literacy provides financial development and thus improves employee performance. Based on the multiple regression model, the study established that counseling programmes positively and significantly influence the performance of prison officers. The recommendation was that the Kenya Prisons Service department should streamline policies on counseling programs with an aim of strengthening their impact on employee performance. The study also recommended that the Nakuru women prison management should encourage employees to utilize the counseling programmes available such as stress management, spiritual nourishment, mental health and financial literacy.

Keywords: *counselling programmes, performance of prison officers, Nakuru Women Prison*

Introduction

According to the Reward & Employee Benefits Association (2017), stress and mental health are the second most common reasons for extended absences from work in the UK. Employees in the UK believed that workplace counseling programmes benefited both their physical and emotional wellbeing. Counseling programmes give people access to methods for improving their ability to lead healthy lives, engage in healthy habits, and have a constant perception of their utmost physical, emotional, social, and religious well-being (Zhang *et al.* 2014).

Top and well-known Malaysian companies have embraced EAP. According to Ranstad (2021), by providing consultation support programmes in the form of proactive and preventive treatments to their staff members who are dealing with mental health concerns that could affect their performance at work. Shell Malaysia is one of these businesses. Employee counseling programmes, such as employee assistance programs (EAPs) that provide individual counseling to help workers cope with personal and work-related pressures, include cognitive behavioral therapy and private therapy sessions

Counseling programmes in Ghana help to lessen the causes of stress. Most counseling initiatives are created to assist women in achieving better work-life balance (Owusu – Poku, 2014). Furthermore, counseling programmes were deemed necessary in the South African Police Service in order to increase police officer productivity. Counseling programmes were critical in ensuring police officers' psychological well-being. 54% of respondents who participated in counseling programmes for a variety of issues saw a 100% improvement in their job performance (Rajin, 2012). According to Aremu (2006), the performance of the Nigerian Police Service improved significantly after officers participated in problem-solving and social skills training as part of counseling programmes. Police officers' performance increased though after taking part

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in the counseling programmes because they learned new skills and developed their ties with the public.

Development of counseling programmes allow prison officers to share their stressful experiences with the counsellor. For basic information about counseling programmes, they need to look at non-prison counseling programmes. This study attempts to close the knowledge gap by investigating the impact of counseling programmes on the underperforming Kenyan prison officer's performance. One of the prisons run by Kenya Prison Service, within the Ministry of the Interior and Coordination of National Government, is Nakuru Women Prison. The Senior Superintendent of Prisons, Mary Muhoro, is the officer in charge. The facility has 250 prison officers, among whose duties is keeping offenders inhumanely safe custody. This study pursued to determine the effects of counseling programmes on performance of prison officers, specifically in Nakuru Women Prison, because the employer, the Kenyan Prison Service, has embraced counseling programmes in their daily performance due to the difficult working environment.

Statement of the Problem

According to MOH (2015), at most 25% outpatients in health centers have mental health disorders, with depression, substance abuse, stress, and anxiety being the most commonly diagnosed. Suicide, homicide, and domestic violence are all on the rise as a result of mental illness. Employee counseling programmes have evolved globally from a focus on workers' physical health and safety to a variety of initiatives.

Prison officers are not performing well. This is due to high levels of stress, mental health disorders, high levels of absenteeism, transfer levels have gone up and also the intentions to quit. These employees deal with serious criminals and they are even threatened by the inmates so they will need to go home in order to get some counseling since the employer does not provide and this resulted to the problem of this study.

Study Justification

The study focused on Prison officers since they are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of high levels of work-related stress. The work is naturally difficult and emotionally taxing because they are in charge of protecting and rehabilitating criminals whose behavior may be resistant, unpredictable, or aggressive. Therefore, they require appropriate counseling programmes to safeguard their security and well-being. As a result, this study is significant because it provides a clear picture of whether or not employee counseling programmes are having the desired impact. Prison officers will benefit personally from the study's findings by better understanding the function of employee counseling programmes and how they might improve their work performance, mental health, and everyday lives.

Empirical Literature

Gowri (2002) conducted research on the need for employee counseling at a manufacturing company in Mumbai, India. Employee counseling advancement, according to the study, assists an employee in need by providing counseling, building self-esteem and personal development, addressing issues that are personal and professional, as well as enhancing workplace culture and employee interactions. The earlier study, which was carried out in India using an explanatory research approach, contrasted with the current study, which sought to close methodological and scope gaps.

Tuyisenge, Mugambi and Kemirembe (2015) used the Urwego Opportunity Bank as a case study to investigate how financial literacy influences loan repayment among Rwanda's small- and

medium-sized business owners. The 109 small- and medium-sized business owners at the Urwego Opportunity Bank were the subject of the study. Data for the inquiry were gathered using a survey and a questionnaire. The results of the investigation showed that the standard of financial information that financial institutions have access to be quite low. It also showed that lending choices, collateral requirements, and interest rates are all high, which makes it harder to get credit and more difficult to manage the loan book. The study did not take into account how microfinance might affect the social growth and wellbeing of prison officers. By examining how counseling programmes affect Kenyan prison officers' performance, the current study's contextual and scope deficiencies are filled by a study that was conducted in a bank and in a different country.

Workplace spirituality is crucial because it gives employees a fresh perspective on how to give their workdays meaning. For instance, spirituality increases the perceived importance of work and control over goal fulfillment, which improves employee outcomes. This shows how faith may act as a source of inspiration for an individual and can encourage high levels of work engagement and job performance (Bickerton *et al*, 2014). Higher levels of hope, optimism, thankfulness, and compassion are found in more spiritually inclined workers, and these traits are associated with happier and higher quality of life (Kim Prieto & Diener, 2009). The study left out some aspects of counseling programmes, leaving gaps that the current study attempted to remedy.

Previously encountered challenges and their causes are discussed in Counseling Psychology and Employee Assistance Programs. Counseling psychologists have not used EAPs for a number of reasons (Lawrence, Gerstain, Gregory & Bayer's, 2005). Additionally, it explores some of the ways counseling psychologists might support these initiatives as well as the parallels between the practices and research of EAP practitioners and researchers.

Stress counseling is a crucial supervisory skill utilized for a number of purposes, based on the findings of McConnel and Charles' (2006) study on effective employee counseling for first-line health managers. The need for guidance is as continuous as any manager's, yet there are a number of common roadblocks that usually prevent useful counsel from being given. Before taking any disciplinary action, Counseling is frequently a necessary and essential step in improving employee performance

Tata Consultancy Service, an Indian company, performed employee counseling research in 2005. As a result, a network called maitree was developed to inform its 30,000 employees of the locations of family reunions and events like dance, yoga, and theater. To support the physical and mental wellness of employees, workshops are held. The consulting service provided by the company, TCS Maitrees, has won accolades. It's interesting to note that employees rarely talk about personal matters; instead, they address problems at work. Employees feel more at comfortable speaking to counselors than they do to department heads in a professional setting, which adds to the popularity of counseling services. In order to address issues as soon as possible, Tata Consultancy Service administration is informed of some of these worries by Maitree consultants. The current study was conducted in Kenya as opposed to the preceding study, which was conducted in India.

Theoretical Framework

Abraham Maslow, an American psychologist, is the main proponent of the theory (Nyameh 2013). He goes on to say that Maslow developed a five-level model of human needs in his scholarly works *The Theory of Human Motivation* from 1943 and 1970. He invented the term "hierarchy of human needs." The satisfaction of a given set of requirements in increasing order limits human well-being. The author goes on to say that this concept still holds true in the current economic climate across all sectors of industry.

On a scale of one to five, the five degrees of human wants are: physiological needs, security needs, love and belonging (belonging/social), esteem needs, and self-actualization needs (Zeynep & Mert, 2014). Family, friends, relationships, love, and community, according to Maslow, are examples of the third level of needs, also known as belonging/social needs. He continues by stating that members of clubs and families will always want to be a part of them and that they will have a place in such groups. Workplace safety performance plans and safe and healthy working conditions can help a business meet its safety standards. Employers should endeavor to promote harmony between professional and personal lives by balancing employees' responsibilities in the office and outside of it.

Level four on Maslow's hierarchy of needs for people is self-esteem. People aspire to be respected, esteemed, and accepted by others, claims (Ogolla, 2013). He continues by saying that people frequently choose a career or a pastime in an effort to elevate their status and attract attention. Conflict results from the mismatch of needs in terms of job and non-work activities, which causes low self-esteem. On the other hand, when there is balance, there is work-life balance, and this results in improved prison officer performance at work. A person cannot advance if they do not feel fulfilled on each level of the hierarchy of importance since, they will not be motivated to do so. According to Maslow, a worker who is famished or ill and unable to work will not be able to meaningfully contribute to performance, which will make it harder to attain the institutional goals and ambitions. This theory can be used in this study to explain how different staff members become motivated by participating in the many counseling programmes provided by Kenya Prison Service. Prison officer's performance will be influenced by their motivation as a result of these services.

Table 1 Summary of Gaps

Researchers	Focus of the Studies	Findings	Research Gaps	Focus of the Current Study
Gowri (2002)	Examining the organization's need for staff counseling.	Employee counseling helps in providing counseling, building self-esteem & personal development, solving their personal and work-related problems & improving employee relationship.	gaps in context, methodological, and scope	Focus in Kenya It uses descriptive research design Focus on recreational facilities, drug and substance cessation programs apart from counseling services.
McConnel and Charles (2006)	Effective employee counseling is essential for the first-line health care manager.	Prior to taking disciplinary action, counseling is essential, and it is always a crucial step	gaps in context, content, and scope	Emphasis on Kenya Putting an emphasis on recreational spaces for drug and substance abstinence programs other

		in raising performance		than counseling services
Tata Consultancy Service (2005)	Employee counseling in the organization	It created a network called Maitree to advice employees	Scope Content gaps	emphasis on Kenya Putting more of an emphasis on recreational facilities and drug and substance abuse treatment than counseling services
Mugambi, Kemirembe, and Tuyisenge (2015)	Financial literacy's impact on small- and medium-sized business owners' ability to repay loans	Shown that the financial data that is provided to lending institutions is of poor quality. High interest rates make it tough to make credit decisions.	Gaps in context, content, and scope	emphasis on Kenya instead of therapeutic services, focuses on recreational facilities and substance abuse cessation

Conceptual Framework

The variables were laid out conceptually to show how the independent factors influence the dependent variable. The three criteria that were utilized to choose which employee wellness programs to include in the study were workplace recreation areas, drug and substance addiction cessation programs, and employee counseling services.

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable

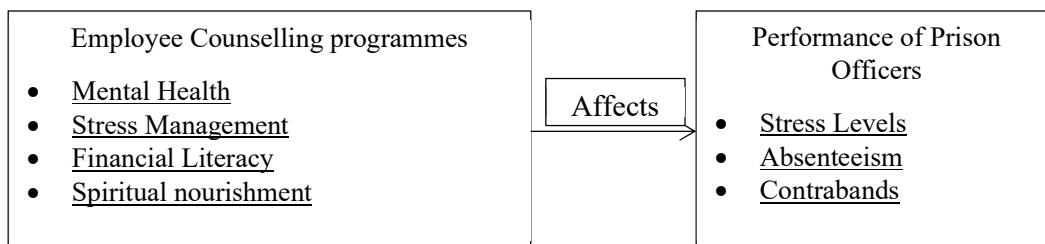


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2022)

Counseling programmes taken into account in this study include programmes for spiritual upliftment, stress management, mental health counseling, and stress management for prison officers. In order to increase prison officer efficiency and effectiveness, stress, absenteeism, and contraband prevention are used to determine how well they function.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive research design. 154 respondents were selected at random from this population using a stratified random sampling technique. A systematic questionnaire was utilized to gather primary data. The questionnaires were distributed to the administrative staff at Nakuru Women's Prison. The questionnaire, however, was distributed in person to allow for further investigation. A pilot study was carried out in Nakuru Women Prison to assess the validity and reliability of the research questionnaire. The reliability and validity were evaluated using the Cronbach Alpha and an expert evaluation, respectively. 10% of the sample population were involved which targeted prison officers. As a result, pilot research was chosen out 15 respondents from a sample of 10% of the 154 respondents of which were excluded from the main study. The reliability was examined using the most widely used internal consistency indicator, Cronbach Alpha, which is created by SPSS. The reliability criterion for this study was chosen at the recommended value of 0.7, demonstrating the validity of the questionnaire.

When the data had been gathered, evaluated, and updated to ensure its accuracy, coding was carried out. While the data were described using descriptive statistics like mean, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviation, inferences and predictions were made based on the data using inferential statistics. Using multiple linear regression, the effectiveness of the Nakuru Women Prison officers was connected with the study's independent factors. To create quantitative reports using tabulations and percentages, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) application was utilized. The study adhered to all required ethical principles for research, including research permits, confidentiality, informed consent, informed participation, objectivity, honesty, and integrity in reporting. The findings revealed that the Nakuru Women's Prison counseling programmes had a favorable and significant influence on the performance of prison officers

Findings And Discussion

According to the study's findings, this section provides demographic information on the respondents. The categories include; gender, age, marital status, education level, designation and length of service.

Table 2: Demographic Data

DEMOGRAPHIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE %
Gender		
Female	139	90
Male	15	10
Age		
26-35	53	39.8
36-45	31	23.3
18-25	25	18.8
46-55	20	15
over 55	4	3
Marital Status		
Married	86	64.7
Single	29	21.8
Widowed	4	3
Divorced	2	1.5
Others	12	9
Education Level		
Others	73	55
Diploma	37	28
Degree	18	13

Masters	5	4
Designation		
Constable	87	65
Corporal	23	17
Sergeant	7	5
Senior Sergeant	4	3
Inspector	5	4
Chief Inspector	4	3
Superintendent	2	2
S.C.O	1	1
Length of Service		
Below 5 Years	28	21.1
5-10	33	24.8
10-15	24	18
16-20	23	17.3
Over 20 Years	25	18.8

Prison Officers Counseling Programmes

The respondents were asked for their thoughts on how the counseling programme affected the overall effectiveness of the prison/detention staff. The following Likert scale was used: 5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 do not know, 2 disagree, 1 strongly disagree.

Table 3: Programs effect on prison officers' overall performance

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Mental Health	4.5%	1.5%	4.5%	62.1%	27.3%	4.1	0.9
Stress Management	1.5%	8.3%	7.5%	66.2%	16.5%	3.9	0.8
Financial Literacy	9.8%	6.8%	8.3%	61.7%	13.5%	3.6	1.1
Spiritual Nourishment	1.5%	3.8%	0.8%	25.6%	68.4%	4.6	0.8

Source: Research Data (2022)

Table 3 shows that most of the participants (62.1%) agreed that the mental health affected the overall performance of the prison officers (mean of 4.1) and this implies that mental health is a critical counseling programme that is key in influencing employee performance. The respondents' views about mental health were varied slightly (standard deviation of 0.9), and this denotes that most of the participants' held similar opinion on mental health. The results agree with the findings of Tata Consultancy Service (2005) who observed that mental counseling is necessary in improving employee performance.

The respondents (66.2%) agreed that stress management affected the overall performance of the prison officers (mean of 3.9) and this implies that stress management is a critical counseling program that is key in influencing employee performance. The respondents' views about stress management were varied slightly (standard deviation of 0.8), and this denotes that most of the participants' held similar opinion on stress management. The results agree with the findings of McConnel and Charles' (2006) who observed that stress counseling is frequently a necessary and essential step in improving employee performance.

The respondents (61.7%) agreed that financial literacy affected the overall performance of the prison officers (mean of 3.6) and this implies that financial literacy is a critical counseling program that is key in influencing employee performance. The respondents' views about on financial literacy were varied slightly (standard deviation of 0.9), and this denotes that most of the respondents' held similar opinion on financial literacy. The results agree with the findings of

Tuyisenge, Mugambi and Kemirembe (2015) who observed that financial literacy is frequently a necessary and essential step in improving employee performance.

Majority of the respondents (68.4%) strongly agreed that spiritual nourishment affected the overall performance of the prison officers (mean of 4.6) and this implies that spiritual nourishment is a critical counseling program that is key in influencing employee performance. The respondents' views about spiritual nourishment were varied slightly (standard deviation of 0.8), and this denotes that most of the participants' held similar opinion on spiritual nourishment. The results agree with the findings of Bickerton *et al* (2014) who observed that spiritual counseling is critical in influencing employee performance.

Counseling and Employee Performance

The respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statements regarding employee performance and counseling. The Likert scale listed below was employed: One highly disagrees, two disagree, four agree, three don't know, five strongly agree.

Table 4: Counseling and Employee Performance

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Employee performance is enhanced by stress management counseling.	0.0%	2.3%	3.0%	50.4%	44.4%	4.4	0.7
Spiritual nourishment counseling promotes high levels of job performance and engagement at work.	0.0%	0.8%	1.5%	16.5%	81.2%	4.8	0.5
Counseling on mental health improves employee performance	1.5%	4.5%	4.5%	56.4%	33.1%	4.2	0.8
Counseling on financial literacy provides financial development and thus improves employee performance	5.3%	6.0%	2.3%	49.6%	36.8%	4.1	1.1

Source: Research Data 2022

Table 4 shows that 50.4% of the participants agreed that employee performance is enhanced by stress management counseling (mean of 4.4), and this implies that stress management counseling is central in enhancing employee performance. The respondents' views stress management counseling varied slightly (standard deviation of 0.7), and this denotes that most of the participants' held similar opinion on stress management counseling and employee performance.

The respondents (81.2%) strongly agreed that spiritual nourishment counseling promotes high levels of job performance and engagement at work (mean of 4.8), and this implies that spiritual nourishment is critical in enhancing employee performance. The respondents' views spiritual nourishment varied slightly (standard deviation of 0.5), and this denotes that most of the participants' held similar opinion on spiritual nourishment and employee performance.

Majority of the respondents (56.4%) agreed that counseling on mental health improves employee performance (mean of 4.2), and this implies that mental health is key in enhancing employee performance. The respondents' views mental health varied slightly (standard deviation of 0.8), and this denotes that most of the participants' held similar opinion on mental health and employee performance.

Majority of the respondents (50%) agreed that counseling on financial literacy provides financial development and thus improves employee performance (mean of 4.1), and this implies that financial literacy is essential in enhancing employee performance. The respondents' views financial literacy varied slightly (standard deviation of 1.1), and this denotes that most of the respondents' held similar opinion on financial literacy and employee performance. The results

support Gowri (2002) observation that counseling is typically a crucial and important step in enhancing employee performance.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	β	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-0.13	0.297		-0.438	0.662
Counselling programs	0.471	0.075	0.5	6.301	0.000

a Dependent Variable: Performance

Source: Research Data 2022

The multiple regression equation is summarized in the following equation form:

$$\text{Performance of prison officers} = -0.13 + 0.471 \text{ Counselling programs}$$

The regression analysis performed to establish how the independent factors (counseling programmes) affected the dependent variable is shown in Table 5 (the productivity of prison staff). The study was based on a 95% confidence level to identify the predictor variables of the model. The results showed that the counseling program ($\beta_1 = 0.471$; p-value = 0.000) had a positive and significant effect on the performance of prison staff. This means that when counseling programs increase by one unit, performance of prison officers will increase by 47.1%. The findings concur with that of Gowri (2002) who established that employee counseling advancement enhances workplace culture and employee interactions. The finding also agreed with a study by Bickerton *et al.* (2014) who found that spirituality serves as a motivating personal resource and encourages high levels of work engagement and job performance.

Conclusion

The study came to the conclusion that counseling sessions at Nakuru Women Prison had a favorable and significant impact on the performance of prison officers. The study identified stress management counseling as a key counseling program in enhancing employee performance. The study also identified spiritual nourishment counseling as critical in improving employee performance. The study also concluded that mental health counseling plays an important role in improving employee performance. In addition, financial literacy counseling was found to be vital in promoting employee performance. The implication is that counseling programs including stress management, spiritual nourishment, mental health and financial literacy are likely to promote employee performance.

Recommendations

The study established that counseling programmes significantly influence employee performance. The recommendation was that the Kenya Prisons Service department should streamline policies on counseling programs with an aim of strengthening their impact on employee performance. The study also recommended that the Nakuru women prison management should encourage employees to utilize the counseling programmes available such as stress management, spiritual nourishment, mental health and financial literacy.

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