

Non-Directive Counselling Strategy and Staff Performance in Selected Public Universities in Kenya

Vudembu Pamela Inzai¹, Dr. Janet Manyasi² and Dr. Rev. Otuya Willis³

¹Master student, ^{2,3}Lecturers, Department of Business Administration and Management Science, P.O. Box 190-50100, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya

Accepted 19th Aug 2016, Available online 26th Aug 2016, Vol.4 (July/Aug 2016 issue)

Abstract

In today's world of business, employees are perceived to be the greatest assets an organization can have in order to sustain a competitive edge and remain relevant in the business world. For an employee to be beneficial in terms of greater production and attainability of the organizational goals, they must be well taken care of by the employer. Staff in Public Universities in Kenya is faced with a lot of challenges both at their place of work and in their homes, which in turn affects their performance. Implementation of non-directive counselling strategy is therefore an intervention for better staff performance, which when done correctly and objectively, will achieve better results. The purpose of this study was therefore to establish the effect of non-directive counselling strategy on staff performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya. The study used descriptive survey research design. The study population comprised of both academic and non-academic staff drawn from three universities namely Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Maseno University and Kibabii University. Target population of 4, 300 respondents was used for the study. The study utilized Yamane formula to come up with a sample size of 366 respondents out of which 250 questionnaires were returned and completely filled by the respondents, giving a response rate of 68.31%. To test the reliability of research instruments, Cronbach's Alpha of coefficient of 0.891 was obtained which is higher than the accepted 0.7 in social sciences, this implies that the tools for data collection were reliable. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Inferential statistics were aided by the use of Spearman's rank-order correlation and regression model. Data was presented in form of tables and figures using frequencies and percentages. The study found out that non-directive counselling strategy is positively and significantly related to staff performance. The study recommends that public universities need to use non-directive counselling strategy in order to address their work related problems, this may lead to increase in staff performance. This can be effected through establishing an operational counselling department packed with professional counselors to ensure that staff in Public Universities have easy access to counselling services.

Keywords: Workplace counseling, non-directive counseling strategy, staff performance

Background to the study

Non-directive counselling or client-centered counselling is the process where a counselor will listen to a counsellee narrate the situation at hand skillfully as he encourages the individual to explain the problems that are really difficult and later helps the client understand those issues and decide on the action to take (Molewijk, 2003). In this type of counselling the main focus is on the client, rather than on the counselor as a judge and advisor. It is basically known as "client-centered".

This type of counselling is used by professional counselors, but nonprofessionals may use its techniques to work more effectively with service members. The outstanding benefit of non-directive counselling is that it makes the client relook at himself or herself and discovers

what needs to be redone. The client is able to reorient him or herself. The emphasis is on changing the person rather than working on the immediate problem in the usual way of directive counselling (Oduncu, 2002). The counselor will try to ask discerning questions, repeats the some statements made by the counsellee, recasts the thoughts or idea, clarify thoughts, and even tries to understand why the thought or feelings do exist.

A counselor who is a professional will treat a client as an equal. He will carefully and skillfully listen to the client and endeavour to help him come up with an improved course of action and be able to adapt it. He will read between the lines of every statement made by the client and discover the underlying meaning of the client's feeling. The main reason of why the counselor ask

discerning questions is that he is looking for the hidden meaning of the clients statements and why the client may have avoided talking about certain issues. The counselor's main focus is only the revealed feelings and emotions. The true problem is at the bottom and the client is not willing to expose it or rather talk about it. (Oduncu, 2002).

Statement of the research problem

Productivity in an organization can only be attained if the workers are effective and efficient in their job performance. According to Yizengaw (2008), unresolved personal issues will make employees not to meet their targets therefore for organizations to meet their targets and objectives, they need to have a healthy workforce. Personal challenges like excessive anxiety erupting from workplace related issues such as meeting deadlines and targets, lack of time for self and family commitments, lack of skills to perform a given task and grief can lead to reduced staff performance. Due to increase in demand for higher education which later led to a consistent increase of student enrollment over the years has also led to the increased workers frustrations in public universities. Studies done so far have found out that rapid growth in Kenyan Public Universities has led to scrambling for the meager funding from government, congestion and poor working conditions (Sifuna, 1998). Studies also show that employees are experiencing a lot of work related pressure that emanate from work overload and under load, lack of skills for specific tasks, lack of consistent career development, unhealthy working conditions, relational challenges, organizational culture and lack of work life balance (Dewey & Cooper, 2004). Deliberate literature review shows that little is documented on the non-directive counselling strategy and staff performance in organizations from developing countries, Kenya included, yet the problems that employees experience in workplace are quite numerous. This presents a motivation for the present study in Public Universities in Kenya. The aim of this study was therefore to establish the effect of non-directive counselling strategy on staff performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya.

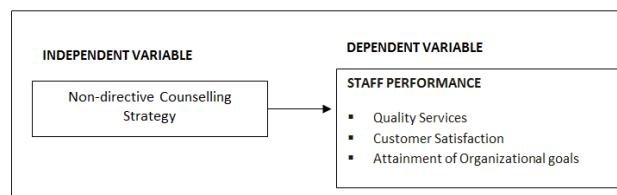
Research objective

To establish the effect of non-directive counselling strategy on staff performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya.

Research hypothesis

Ho There is no significant effect of non-directive counselling strategy on staff performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya

Conceptual framework



Source: Researcher Conceptualization (2016)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework showing Workplace Counselling Strategies and Staff Performance.

Literature Review

Client-Centered Counselling Theory

This theory was expounded by Rogers in 1961. This theory explains that people are what they choose to become and achieve this by fighting the forbidding environment to strive towards self-actualization by expressing their good (Moloney, 2005; Hough, 2006; Mutie and Ndambuki, 2002).

The counselor role in this theory is to provide a client a warm atmosphere through development of a relationship which is trustworthy, through empathic understanding as well as concern for friendship. This is aided by giving the client positive regard that make the client strive towards self-actualization. Counselors are required to demonstrate effective utilization of client-centered approaches while counselling which involves use of principles that guide counselling. Counselors are required to be competent in the use of principles that guide counselling such as being empathic, genuine, concrete, unconditional regard, upholding client confidentiality among other principles (Mutie and Ndambuki, 2002).

Existential theory

This is a model of counselling which has borrowed heavily from the existentialist philosophers. The existential approach is one, which, more than any other, stresses the individual's capacity for freedom and choice (Hough, 2006). Existentialists argue that the search for meaning is at the core of existence and the inability to find this meaning is the source of people's problems (Hough, 2006; Beckie, 1964). The role of a counselor using this model is to assist the clients to find meaning in their lives and consequently reduce the anxiety-causing emotions which motivate maladjusted behavior. Individuals who lack meaning in their lives are characterized by such behavioral tendencies as hopelessness, personal neglect, disorderliness, untidiness and filth, lack of imitiveness and focus, together with harboring suicidal tendencies. The role of the counselor is to assist the client to get out of these negative and life threatening behavioral inclinations. The client after counselling interventions is

able to adjust effectively to the demands of everyday living as well as being able to make rational decisions and choices in life.

Workplace counselling and staff performance

Employee wellbeing is paramount in delivery of quality service in an organization. Both welfare programs and services should be adequate to avoid having a negatively impact on delivery of services and performance of the employees. Finger (2005) declares that employee morale and spirit will be improved only by addressing the issues affecting their motivation. An employer should take care of his staff by having measures that relate to activities such as transformation facilities, housing facilities, health facilities, leisure time and recreational facilities, cultural facilities libraries, and plus many more hoping gyms among others. Zemke, Ron, Schaaf & Dick (2009) states that, counselling reduces health related issues in an organization. Their argument is that stress related issues are some of the greatest reasons for almost all health associated problems at the workplace. Most organizations now have seen the need of employing a counselor whose responsibility is to help the employees handle with stress and pressure at workplace.

Ultimately this will lead to a higher level of productivity and efficiency and it will also increase and improves employee job satisfaction. Staff perform best and more when they tend to enjoy their job which from the business point, it is highly desirable. If workers can improve their behavioral issues, then they are able to raise their job satisfaction and by large their happiness, which will generally, is a plus for much better worker (Zemke, Ron, Schaaf & Dick, 2009).

Carroll (1996) records that the main aim of workplace counselling is to facilitate individual autonomy and encouraging self-care. Significance of counselling is to help: employees gain pleasure and maturity in the course of their working; understand their work problems and their own selves; and release work tensions (Coles, 2003; Hill, 2000). According to Cummins and Hoggett (1995); Coles, (2003), workplace counselling can be used to release staff tension which in turns lead to organization performance. Strebler (2004), asserted that poor performance is when behaviour or performance of employees falls below the expected standard. A study conducted by Zetlin (2013) found out that 47% attributed poor work performance to personal problems.

More than 16 percent of employees used for the study reported that their personal challenges resulted in absenteeism, while about half the respondents admitted that it makes it difficult for them to concentrate on their jobs. If personal problems become apparent and persistent, employers should refer the employee to experts in performance counselling in order to identify and then solve the causes of such personal problems (New South Wales Government, 2013). The confidential counselling service is designed in a way to handle employees' personal problems, which might affect their

work performance. Research by McLeod (2001) found out that there is a positive correlation between counselling provision in the workplace and net workplace benefits. Research findings reported by Hughes and Kinder (2007) showed that counselling support can have a significant positive impact on employees' job performance. Similarly, Sutherland and Hatton (2002) found out that an organization that provides confidential help (counselling services) to employees is likely to be highly productive. Chan (2011) conducted a study on the effectiveness of workplace counselling to improve employee well-being (workplace burnout, stress, and depression) and performance.

The result of the study indicated that workplace counselling improves employee well-being; the intervention helps employees in alleviating symptoms of workplace stress, burnout and depression. An analysis of counselling at work and its associated activities has found a range of benefits to individual employees and the organization. McLeod (2001) in his research reported a positive relationship between the provision of counselling to employees in an organization and the overall workplace benefits. Another Research findings reported by Hughes and Kinder (2007) showed that counselling support can have a significant positive impact on employees' job performance. Izzat (2014) in his study on significance of workplace counselling on increasing job performance in an organization revealed a significant effect of workplace counselling on employee job performance. Today's managers are turning to counselling because they have realized that it is one of the way of effective employees' management. Managers without doubt feel accountable for the wellbeing of their staff. More and more employers appreciate the fact that productivity is the key thing and it is only a healthy and vibrant corporate environment that can produce positive results. Similarly the result of a study on evaluating the workplace effects of counselling by David, John and Richard (2012) revealed that workplace counselling resulted in a positive impact on the workplace as measured using the scales of the Workplace Outcome Suite.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to establish the effect of workplace counselling strategies and staff performance in Public Universities in selected universities in Kenya. The study was done in three universities namely Masinde Muliro University, Kibabii University and Maseno University. These universities were chosen due to their proximity from each.

The study targeted 4, 300 respondents from the selected Public Universities in Kenya out of which 366 respondents were selected for the study using Yamane T. (1967) formula of calculating the sample size.

Yamane T (1967) formula, where N=Target population, n=Sample size, e=Probability error at 95% confidence level.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{4,300}{1 + 4,300(0.05)^2} = 365.95 \sim 366$$

The researcher used stratified sampling procedure to ensure that each category of employees was proportionally represented. Sample was obtained from each stratum using simple random sampling where employees were chosen in such a way that each had an equal chance of being selected as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sampling frame

University	Target Group	Target Population	Sample Size
MMUST	Academic staff	700	60
	Non-academic staff	1,000	85
Maseno	Academic staff	970	83
	Non-academic staff	1,230	105
Kibabi	Academic staff	160	13
	Non-academic staff	240	20
Total		4,300	366

Source of target population: HRM departments: MMUST, Kibabi and Maseno Universities (2016)

Data was collected by use of questionnaires, observation and interview schedules.

The study used pilot study to test for the validity and reliability of the research instruments. Pilot study was conducted at Moi University in Uasin Gishu County involving 37 staff of the university, that is, 20 non-academics staff and 17 academic staff.

The data obtained from the field was organized, edited by the researcher to ensure completeness and consistency, classified and coded according to research questions and objectives for analysis. The data was then analyzed by use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 software. Each question related to a variable was assigned a score or numerical value by use of five-point Likert scale method. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics. Inferential statistical tools included Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient and regression analysis. The study used a regression model in the form of $P = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{NDCS} + e$ where, P = staff performance β_0 = intercept term, β_1 = Beta coefficients, NDCS=Non-directive counselling strategy, and e = Error term at 95% confidence level. The analyzed data was then presented in form of frequency tables.

Data Analysis and Discussions

The study generated Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.891 as shown in Table 2. Since it is above 0.7 threshold

accepted in social research according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008), the items in the questionnaires produced reliable data for the study.

Table 2: Reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.891	30

Field data (2016)

Table 3: Respondents response rate

Response	Academic staff		Non-academic staff		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Successful	105	67.31%	145	69.05%	250	68.31%
Unsuccessful	51	32.69%	65	30.95%	116	31.69%
Total	156	100%	210	100%	366	100%

Source: Field data (2016)

The respondents’ response rate in Table 3 was 68.31% which is considered as adequate to use for data analysis according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008).

Descriptive thematic results

Presence of counseling department in the university

Table 4: Presence of counselling department

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	70	28	28	28
	No	180	72	72	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field Data (2016)

Table 4 results show that there is absence of counselling functioning counselling departments in the sampled Public Universities show by the high number of respondents who said that there is no counselling departments in their institution 180(72%). These results show that workplace counselling is mostly unpracticed in Public Universities in Kenya.

Presence of professional counsellor in the university

Table 5: Presence of professional counselor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	59	23.6	23.6	23.6
	No	191	76.4	76.4	100
	Total	250	100	100	

Source: Field Data (2016)

Table 5 results reveal that most of the sampled Public Universities have not employed professional counsellor to

handle workplace counselling in their institutions shown by majority of respondents agreeing that they do not have professional counsellor in their workplace 191(76.4%). On few respondents agreed that they have professional counsellors who also doubled as the HR managers 59(23.6%).

Descriptive statistical analysis

The study sought to establish the effect of non-directive counselling strategy on staff performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya. The respondent responses were rated on a five point Likert Scale showing to what extent the respondents agree or disagree to the researcher statements, where: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree. The researcher used total responses to interpret the findings.

Non-directive counselling and staff performance

Table 6 Non-directive counselling and staff performance totals

Responses	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
Non-directive counselling best for emotional release	54	104	39	42	11	250
Non-directive counselling changes employees personality	49	125	23	38	15	250
Non-directive counselling leads to clarity of feelings	51	111	57	26	5	250
Non-directive counselling improves staff performance	82	113	18	22	15	250
Total	137	453	137	128	46	1000

Source: Field data (2016)

According to Table 6 results, it is clear that the use of non-directive counselling strategy leads to a change in staff personality shown by 174(69.6%) level of agreement, followed by high clarity of feelings 162(64.8%) and finally staff emotional release 158(63.2). These findings are consistent with past findings conducted by Molewijk (2003) and Oduncu (2002) regarding the importance of non-directive counselling which is client-centered counselling that it leads to clarity of feelings, emotional release and change in client’s personality.

Table 7: Relationship between non-directive counselling strategy and staff performance

			Staff performance	Non directive counselling
Spearman's rho	Staff performance	Correlation Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1	
		N		
	Nondirective counselling	Correlation Coefficient	.527**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0	1
		N	250	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field data (2016)

Table 8: Regression results of non-directive counselling strategy and staff performance regression results

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.496 ^a	0.246	0.243	0.43626		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Nondirective counselling						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.397	1	15.397	80.901	.000 ^b
	Residual	47.199	248	0.19		
	Total	62.597	249			
a. Dependent Variable: Staff performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Nondirective counselling						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.687	0.125		21.489	0
	Nondirective counselling	0.296	0.033	0.496	8.994	0
a. Dependent Variable: Staff performance						

Source: Field data (2016)

It is also important to note that sampled staff agreed to a greater extent that non-directive counselling leads to high staff performance 195(78%). The results confirmed the findings conducted by Izzat (2014); David *et.al* (2012); Hughes and Kinder (2007); Clark (2000); and Zemke *et.al* (2009) studies on positive effect of workplace counselling on job performance.

Inferential statistical analysis

Correlation analysis

Table 7 shows that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between non-directive counselling strategy and staff performance at 99% confidence level ($r=0.527$, $\alpha=0.000$ and $p\text{-value}=0.01$ hence $\alpha < p\text{-value}$). This implies that public universities that use non-directive counselling strategies are likely to benefit from high staff performance in terms of quality service, customer satisfaction and attainment of organizational goals. The results in Table 4.10 are in agreement with past studies conducted by McLeod (2001); Hughes and Kinder (2007); David *et.al* (2012); and Izzat (2014) that found out that workplace counselling have a significant and positive relationship on employees' performance.

Regression analysis

Regression results in Table 8 on summary of model show that there is a positive relationship between non-directive counselling strategy and staff performance ($R=0.496$) which are in agreement with the results obtained from correlation results in Table 7.

It is also evident from the results that 24.6% in variability in staff performance can be explained or attributed to non-directive counselling strategy ($R^2=0.246$). From the ANOVA results in Table 8, the overall regression model can be viewed to be significant in measuring the study variable ($F=80.901$, $\alpha=0.000$ and $p\text{-value}=0.05$ hence $\alpha < p\text{-value}$).

Regression analysis results of regression coefficient generated a simple linear regression model in the form of; $P=2.687+0.296DCS +e$. This results imply that non-directive counselling strategy contributes 0.296 units for every one unit increase in staff performance. The regression results also reveal that non-directive counselling strategy is statistically significant in explaining staff performance in selected Public Universities ($\alpha=0.000$ and $p\text{-value}=0.05$ hence $\alpha < p\text{-value}$).

The study used regression coefficient, β to test the research hypothesis, "HO: There is no significant effect of non-directive counselling strategy on staff performance in selected Public Universities in Kenya. Since the β -value from the study results was not equal to zero, the null hypothesis of the study was rejected at 0.05 significant level ($\beta \neq 0$, $0.296 \neq 0$) hence the study concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between non-directive counselling strategy and staff performance.

The study results concur with research findings done by McLeod (2001); Hughes and Kinder (2007); David *et.al* (2012); and Izzat (2014) that found out that workplace counselling have a positive and significant effect on employees' performance.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that non-directive counselling strategy is not widely used in selected Public Universities. However sampled respondents agrees that non-directive counselling strategy is used in changing employees' personalities; clarifying feelings of workers; and workers emotional release. However the study found out that there is lack of counselling departments and professional counsellors to provide counselling services to workers. The study further concluded that non-directive counselling strategy is positively and significantly related to staff performance. An increase in use of non-directive counselling strategy leads to an increase in staff performance.

Recommendations

From the study conclusion, it is evident that use of non-directive counselling strategy leads to high staff performance hence the study recommends that public universities should invest its bulk resources in formulating, developing and implementing non-directive counselling strategy. The strategy entails establishing an equipped counselling department packed with professional counsellors.

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