

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE STATUS OF WORKPLACE COUNSELLING IN
CHAINAMA HILLS COLLEGE HOSPITAL AND MUNALI BOYS SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN LUSAKA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA.**

BY

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**Title: An investigation of the status of workplace counselling in
Chainama Hills Hospital and Munali Secondary School in Lusaka
District, Zambia**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the Degree of Master of Science in Counselling.

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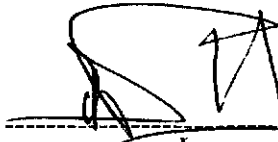
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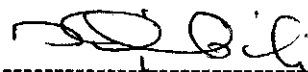
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, children and the entire family for giving me access 'keys' to spend part of their time on studies. I also dedicate it to the two universities, the University of Zambia and University of Zimbabwe for organising this Masters and completing the studies on time.

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Abstract

In many workplaces, workers face widely differing challenges that people as individuals or groups experience which range from social, economic, institutional/ organizational, individual and or family difficulties. Scholarly literature has shown that work and workplaces are rapidly evolving making the 21st century social and occupational medicine susceptible to manage a different set of emerging work related problems. This present study investigated the status of workplace counselling in Chainama Hills College Hospital and Munali Secondary School in Lusaka District, Zambia.

This was a qualitative participatory study informed by the Job Performance Theory. The aim was to assess the status of workplace counselling and determine possible factors that influence workers to seek workplace counselling. Primary data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and Key Informant Interviews for employees and managers. 40 respondents fourteen at Chainama and twenty six at Munali participated respectively. Of these, twenty three were males and seventeen females.

Findings showed that the provision of occupational health, psychological, HIVandAIDS, disciplinary support and career development through procedural, individualised and progressive types of workplace counselling characterise employee interventions in the two selected institutions. Further, expected benefits from counselling service, counselling procedures, and counsellor qualifications were some of the factors that influence employees to seek workplace counselling. Although no standards in workplace counselling existed such as secure rooms, procedure for counselling and specialised staff, the study concluded that workplace counselling existed in the two targeted institutions because employees indicated that they received services which could be described as workplace counselling.

This study, however, demonstrated that for workplace services to qualify as workplace counselling, there should be set standards that secure the confidentiality of information as defined in the field of counselling. It is argued that workplace counselling should focus on employee welfare and link employee support to improved job performance. In this regard, although this study deduced that workplace counselling existed in the two targeted institutions, the services did not meet standards of workplace counselling.

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List of abbreviations

- EAP - Employee Assistance Program
HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus
KII - Key Informant Interviews
OHS - Occupational Health and Safety
ZNUT - Zambia National of Teachers

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Overview

In this section, the researcher presents the background information to the study including the statement of the problem, study objectives, statement and theoretical framework. In addition this section also provides for the definitions of terms used in the study.

1.1 Background

Work dominates our lives. According to Freud, the aim of adult life is 'to love and to work' (Coles , 2003). However, in many workplaces, workers face widely differing challenges that people as individuals or groups face. These experiences range from social, economic, institutional/organizational, individual and or family difficulties. While some of these challenges may have been conscious, others are deeply unconscious (McLeod , 2008). These challenges require individuals or groups to be helped through counselling. Historically, counselling was associated with serious personal problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and marital breakdown. In recent years, counselling is widely used in management to improve worker productivity. Over the years, workplace counselling has been practiced to provide timely professional and confidential help to employees whose experiences might lead to work impairment, absenteeism, reduced productivity and burnout. As such, counselling enables workers to explore alternative solutions to the problems with greater health and well-being resulting into better work performance.

Globally, the provision of workplace counselling has steadily expanded over the past 20 years, with more than 75% of medium and large organisations making counselling available to their staff (Caroll & Walton, 1999). In Britain, external Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) provide counselling services for approximately 2.26 million employees, or 10 percent of the working population in 1137 organizations (Coles , 2003). In North America the number of organizations

using EAPs and counselling services accounts for a much higher proportion of the national workforce. It can be argued, that workplace counselling provides an opportunity for workers to adapt and adjust their experiences within the work environment to enhance performance resulting into from both effective health and improved work outcomes.

To this end, workplace counselling enables workers to explore alternative solutions to their problems (Coles , 2003). In so doing, workplace counselling has been seen to enhance communication between staff and employers (Egan , 2010). By applying methods of brief relationship-focused psychological intervention, workplace counselling has shown to be effective in different settings (McLeod & Henderson , 2003). However, the acceptability of workplace counselling is linked to worker acceptance, stigma, availability of services and shifts in the movement away from collective to more individual modes of worker services. These are intriguing factors that are worth exploring and understanding in contemporary counselling practices.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Work and workplaces are rapidly evolving making the 21st century social and occupational medicine susceptible to manage a different set of emerging work related problems. However, where previously a link between exposure and illness was clear, such exposure could have occurred only in the workplace. In contemporary work challenges, many complaints have vague, non-specific symptoms and signs and multi-factorial aetiology as the norm (Coles , 2003). Workplace stress implies that work is the causative factor. Thus, employee counselling services either deal with personal problem or with career development. Scholars have pointed out that employee counselling programs that deal with personal problems will focus on employees' mental and physical health and deal with personal problems that might directly, even indirectly, affect job performance. On the other hand, the career development counselling, focuses on individual or

group to help individual or groups make career plans and act on their decisions within context of the organization human resources plans (Lewis & Lewis , 1986). Each of the two approaches is built on the theory that individual and organizational needs are compatible

However, it is poised that treatment for heterogeneous problems emanating from work related stress with a single therapeutic modality would seem almost impossible. For critics, different counselling approaches have potential for adverse effects and this holds true for psychotherapeutic interventions for workers (Deale & et al, 1997). In Zambia, most research has shown the availability of HIV/AIDS workplace counselling with little information on general psychological and behavioural workplace counselling being practiced. Further, scholars have observed the availability of counselling services that target pupils in secondary schools and students in tertiary institutions of learning (Ndhlovu, 2015). This study therefore, established the status of workplace counselling that targets workers at workplaces within the two selected institutions of in Lusaka District of Zambia. The question asked was: Are there workplace counselling services that targeted workers in the selected institutions?

1.3 Purpose of the study

The main aim of this study was to investigate the status of workplace counselling in two public institutions Lusaka District of Zambia. By doing so, the study aimed at understanding the two organisational arrangements on the implementation of workplace counselling and examines the types of counselling services provided in the two workplaces.

1.4 Objectives

To assess the status of workplace counselling, the study was guided by the following objectives.

1. To establish the existence of workplace counselling in the target institutions.

2. To examine the types of existing workplace counselling services provided to employees in the targeted workplaces.
3. To determine the factors that influence workers to demand and seek workplace counselling services.

1.5 Research questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. Is there workplace counselling that targets employees in the two selected institutions?
2. What is the nature of workplace counselling services provided to employees and other staff who have personal or work related stress in the Targeted organisations?
3. What factors influence workers to or not to seek workplace counselling?
4. How can workplace counselling be effectively adopted in the work place as a mechanism of addressing the challenges workers face in the workplaces?

1.6 Significance of the Study

As was hoped, the findings in this study provided a picture of employment conditions within the organizations and it was hoped to contribute to the knowledge and current literature on the status of workplace counselling in organization and employees support systems in the public institutions. On behalf of the management, it was expected that the findings would help them in their staff evaluation and planning in order to evaluate and enhance the importance of counselling in problem-solving for improved organizational and employee performance. It was also assumed that the findings would contribute to policy formulation and implementation of worker – policy issues.

1.7 Delimitation

This study assessed the status of workplace counselling at two public institutions in Lusaka District of Zambia. In these institutions, the study selected managers and employees who were thought to be better placed to provide useful information for the study (Creswell, 2013).

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by two main theories that are the job performance theory and the Personal Career Theory (PCT). The job performance refers to an individual's proficiency with which he or she performs activities which contribute to the organization's objectives. From the organization perspective, performance is behaviour that can be evaluated in terms of how effective it is, in achieving the goal(s) of the organization or individual (Cambell , et al., 1993). Campbell proposed an eight-factor model that is embedded in a broader, causal theory of performance. He also distinguishes performance components in terms of the extent of which they are unique or common job. Job performance theory asserts that when assisting clients who lack the confidence required changing jobs, it is worth emphasizing those aspects that are common across jobs such as demonstrating effort and maintaining personal discipline. An alternative and more parsimonious model, which has been extensively examined in empirical studies, is Borman and Motowidlo's 1993 division of performance into task and contextual performance.

On the other hand, Personal Career Theory (PCT) fits within the holistic context of workplace counselling in that it emphasizes a client-centered approach to counseling and facilitates discovery of information about the client's whole life experience (Holland , 1997). Specifically, Holland argues that everyone has a PCT, which is an individualized conceptualization of how careers and work unfold and operate (Holland , 1997). People develop ideas about (1) how individuals may be categorized along various dimensions, (2) how environments may be classified, and (3) how people and environments interact. Further, people have a concept of self that includes ideas about their abilities, interests, goals, and personality. They also have assumptions about what will contribute to their having satisfying work and non-work activities, and how to achieve career and life goals. Each person's PCT results from their unique life experience.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

1.9.1 Counselling

Counselling has been defined in some quarters as a form of help that is responsive to the individual needs with the primary aim of advancing the psychological, and behavioural functioning of individuals (McLeod, 2007). In this study, counselling was understood as a process that provides another person with an opportunity to develop further understanding about the people they work with. According to Egan, (2010), counselling is an activity that has value 'only to the degree that it leads to valued outcomes in the client's day to day life'. In this study, counselling is used to understand the psychological and behavioural support that is provided to staff in the targeted institutions as a result of institutional support or guidance.

1.9.2 Workplace

There are many dimensions of workplaces. A workplace has been viewed as a physical location where someone works. Such locations can range from a home-office, community, public or private spaces to a large office building or factory (Koopmans, et al., 2011). Thus, the size of an organisation is likely to influence the type of a workplace that is available to employees. An examination and analysis of workplaces indicates that larger organisations generate enough demand for individual and group psychosocial and behavioural demands (Coles, 2003). In this regard, workplace is taken as an organizational pattern with relationships between people under the direction of the employer working towards a common purpose.

1.9.3 Workplace Counselling

Workplace counselling is understood as the provision of brief psychological therapy for employees of an organisation with services paid for by the employer (McLeod & Henderson, 2003). Such services, typically comprises face-to-face counselling, a telephone helpline, legal advice and critical-incident debriefing. This study therefore, understood workplace counselling as

a service that is expected to be provided to employees and employers alike as part of the provisions to enhance staff well-being, job satisfaction and productivity.

1.9.4 Job Performance

Job performance refers to the effectiveness of individual behaviours that contribute to organizational objectives (Motowidlo , 2003). Sinha (2004) explains that job performance is related to the willingness and openness to try and achieve new aspects of the job which in turn will bring about an increase in the individual's productivity.

In conclusion, this chapter has laid the background information to the study. The chapter first provided the information on the gaps existing in the field of work workplace counselling as well as the statement of the problems. Additionally, study objectives and questions have been provided as well as the definition of key terms used in the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Overview

This chapter explored the literature based on previous studies and existing text in the area of workplace counselling. The researcher began with the review of literature on the status of workplace counselling and proceeded with the review of the types of workplace counselling services and presented the existing literature on the factors that influence staff up-take of workplace counselling services. Finally present a theoretical approach that informed this research which is the job performance theory.

2.1 Perspectives into the status of workplace counselling

The history of counselling in the workplace is not a clear, logical or easy one to determine. However, numerous scholarly literature and studies into the status of workplace counselling have been carried out. In order to place the present review into context, Blum, and Roman in 1992, conducted a descriptive study to establish the status of workplace counselling for workers using employee assistance programs (Blum & Roman, 1995). The aim of the study was to identify patterns of employee assistance program use, with particular focus on alcohol problems (McLeod, 2008). This study utilized Key Informant Interviews with administrators in institutions who completed questionnaires for each client concerning information about demographics, referral categories, treatment history and assessment. A total of 3,000 Employees also completed a self-administered questionnaire, which included items on job function and performance, satisfaction with relationships, influences on referral, alcohol use and depression. The participants were drawn from a sample of 6,400 employees covering 84 work sites in the USA.

Findings showed that the status of workplace counselling existed through a range of EAP provisions which included the employees behavioral and health related treatment linked to

alcohol, drug, mental health and family issues. In addition, it was found that the status of workplace counselling targeted female, younger, black, unmarried, longer in post and depressed employees. EAPs existed through the use of both manual and managerial/professional employees. Findings further showed that in the institutions studied, work place counselling existed and was implemented through coworkers and supervisors.

Methodologically, this study had a weak methodological approach in that averages of 80 cases (respondents) were collected from each site. It is likely that a substantial number of EAP clients at these sites were not included in the study. In addition, the study did not focus at the nature of work employees and supervisors are engaged in with regard to the need for workplace counselling. This is part of what this current study addressed. The study was however, relevant to our current study as it provided insights into a wider programme of research into the status and epidemiology of workplace counselling and common problems in the case of the United States Workplaces. It was also a useful reference point to this and other studies in the area of workplace counseling regarding the indicators of the needs for workplace counselling services.

2.2 A review of the types of workplace counselling services

Studies into the review of types of workplace counselling targeting employees takes various dimensions. In line with the objective of the study, this review focuses on the services offered to employees. For example, in a study entitled cognitive therapy and behavioural coping in the management of work-related stress: an intervention study, Gardner evaluated the effectiveness of cognitively orientated or behavioural group-based brief intervention for work stress, in comparison to a waiting list condition (Gardner & et al, 2005). Using questionnaires, the study interviewed National Health Service staff working in the areas of mental health and intellectual disability. The study investigated two groups: the cognitive and behavioral groups. The individual

therapy group emphasized negative thoughts, positive self-talk and imagery. The behavioral group emphasized time management, assertion, problem-solving and muscle relaxation.

Findings showed that the cognitive type of counselling intervention was more effective than the behavioral focused counselling focused counselling. 90% of participants in the cognitive therapy group moved from 'case' status to 'non-case' status, compared to 50% in the behavioral group and 20% in the waiting list condition (Gardner & et al, 2005). A noticeable feature of the results was that the counselling that focused on individuals attitude, psychosocial and mental problems helped improve individual relations in the initial stages of work relations. On the other hand, behavioral counselling resulted into improvements in reduced absentseem and rate reporting. The study investigated two types of workplace counselling, that is, the cognitive and behavioral therapeutic experiences for participants; so on balance the two can be considered as types of workplace counselling intervention.

Further research has focused on examining the use of brief psychodynamic psychotherapy in a case of occupational stress (Anderson , 2003). This qualitative study used woman with diagnosis of bipolar disorder and experiencing difficulties in coping with stressful situations at work. Findings showed that the therapeutic work focused on the self-image of the client, specifically acceptance of oneself as a person with a mental health disability, and their relationships with co-workers was important in improving their relationships and working conditions. One of the cases under investigation established that individual focused psychotherapy helps individuals adjust to the work environment (Anderson , 2003). Anderson further, observed that most clients were initially reluctant to enter therapy, but 'perhaps the threshold of seeking therapy was lowered when job security was threatened' (p.100). However, methodologically there was little information provided in most cases studied about the therapy process; no independent outcome measures were used hence, results could not be generalized.

2.3 Factors that influence the up-take of workplace counselling services

Several studies have examined the factors associated with differences in levels of utilization of workplace counselling. Csiernik conducted a study on an employee and family assistance programming in Canada (McLeod, 2008). The aim was to describe the characteristics of EAP provision in Canada. The study utilized questionnaires that were developed in collaboration with key EAP sector stakeholders. The questionnaires were distributed to EAP coordinators with a sample of 154 organisations (Csiernik , 2002).

Findings showed that the mode of service delivery, qualifications of staff providing workplace counselling as well as availability of services and its management influences the levels of access to counselling services (Csiernik , 2002). The study further established that a staff was more willing at 80% to seek workplace counselling that are offered by counsellor with a Master's degree. Others preferred workplace counselling services that increasingly use a hybrid model that involved the use of internal volunteers and externally sourced counselling staff.

The impact of problems on clients beyond resolution of presenting issues has shown to be factors that that influence the experience of clients in receiving counselling through an in-house service (Millar, 2001). In the UK police, utilising a qualitative methodology involving qualitative semi-structured interviews and grounded theory analysis with thirteen study respondents counselling was reported to be helpful to workers. Counselling significantly helps employees with much lower levels of distress at follow-up, alongside improvements to physical and psychological health, social functioning and work performance. Counselling has an added value' or in some ways, impacts on employees beyond their presenting problem. Further, adherence to stipulated stages of initial engagement with the counselling service, involving learning about the counselling process, which then led into a stage of deep self-examination has an influence on the follow-up of and utilisation of workplace counselling services.

According to Borman & Motowidlo, task performance refers to technical aspects of a job, involving either executing the technical processes or maintaining and servicing the technical requirement (Borman & Motowidlo , 1997). Contextual performance refers to activities that contribute to maintaining the broader organizational, social, or psychological environment. Examples include helping co-workers, cooperating, following rules, supporting the organizations goal, and volunteering for additional tasks (Borman & Motowidlo , 1997). Campbell model use was relevant to this study because it helps counsellors identifying sources of client performance difficulties so that intervention can be more specifically targeted.

Researchers have adopted various perspectives for studying performance. On the most general level one can differentiate between three different perspectives: (1) an individual differences perspective which searches for individual characteristics such as general mental ability, personality as sources for variation in performance, (2) a situational perspective which focuses on situational aspects as facilitators and impediments for performance, and (3) a performance regulation perspective which describes the performance process. Depending on the existence of workplace counselling and the types of counselling services, these are some of the factors that may make counselling services respond to the needs of employees and enhance up-take or detract employees from accessing workplace counselling services.

The existence of workplace counselling and job performance should contribute to our knowledge of the complexity of the relationship that exists between them. Problems faced by workers in the organization also occurs in the organizational environment, and often cause pressure and guilty among workers within the organization. Although this study focused on the status of workplace counselling in the organisations, this theory helps to link workplace counselling to individual wellbeing and organisational productivity.

2.4 Summary

Research into workplace counselling provision has largely focused on the impact of interventions on three distinct areas of psycho-social functioning: (i) psychological functioning, for example symptoms of stress, depression, anxiety and low self-esteem, (ii) the meaning of work, for example job commitment and satisfaction; and (iii) work behaviour, for example sickness absence, job performance and accidents. In addition, several studies have used client satisfaction as an indicator of the effectiveness of counselling programmes. The findings of research into these three specific areas of outcome, and into client satisfaction, are very clear. It is important to acknowledge that there are significant methodological problems associated with research into counselling services. It is usually difficult to carry out a rigorous, controlled study of workplace counselling that reflects the conditions of everyday service provisions. It is also difficult to carry out a study of workplace counselling under normal circumstances that meet the criteria for best scientific practice, since there is little control over the quality of counselling that is delivered while many clients choose not to complete questionnaires.

The above studies were relevant to this current research in understanding workplace counselling. For instance, types of employee assistance were important in understanding the existence and status of workplace counselling. Thus, while the studies provide relevant empirical data on the status of workplace counselling, types of counselling services and factors that may influence employee up-take of workplace counselling, the context on the status of workplace counselling as well as the types of counselling services and factors that influence staff up-take of counselling services in the *Zambian* context has not been effectively explored. In the global context and *Zambia* in specific, literature has not linked the existence of workplace counselling to the types and up-take of the counselling services in the workplace by employees. Consequently, this study considered it relevant to assess the status of workplace counselling in the *Zambian* institutions and

establish the types of counselling services being offered and the factors that influence or hinder the up-take of counselling services. This gap allowed the study to focus on how the types of workplace counselling approaches and other variables enhance the uptake of workplace counselling services.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Overview

This section outlines the processes the study followed to complete the aim of assessing the status of workplace counselling in the targeted public institutions. Thus, the section firstly presents the research design and methods, population and sample. Further, it presents the sampling procedure, study instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis and ends with ethical considerations.

3.1 Research design and method

This study utilised participatory methods in data collection with an effective engagement of the selected study participants.

3.1.1 Study population and sample size

This study was conducted in two public institutions in Lusaka District of Zambia. Managers and employees were selected from Chainama Hills Hospital and Munali Secondary School as they were considered key personnel to provide relevant information useful for the study (Whittaker, 2009 and Creswell, 2013). Thus, a total of 40 respondents were sampled 16 from Munali Secondary School and fourteen from a health institution. The study was gender insensitive and workers were identified by the Agency based on their availability (Bryman, 2012). Based on the sampled population, the study generated information on; the status of workplace counselling. In this regard, informants were asked contextual questions in the self-administered questionnaires and Key Informant Interviews. The researcher also gathered narrative data from institutional employers and managers.

3.2 Research Instruments

3.2.1 Self-Administered Questionnaire Interviews

Questionnaires helped to capture information on on the status of workplace counselling, types of

workplace counselling services and factors that influence the up-take of workplace counselling in the institutions studied. Here, the research tools were delivered to employees and selected management staff and explained the aim of the study to those who provided responses (Rubin & Babbie , 2011). This technique aimed at collecting appropriate and straightforward information on the status of workplace counselling and factors that influence the utilisation of such services by employees and other staff (Whittaker , 2009). Understanding the different situations between the interviewer and the interviewee in relation to their fears and expectations helped to produce relevant data (Alston & Bowles , 2003). Therefore, questionnaires were an easy access to respondents and clarifying important issues. Overall, respondents had the time to reflect on the questions being asked and responded according to issues of health and wellbeing in real-time.

3.2.2 Interview guides and In-depth Interview schedule

Individual Key Informant interviews were conducted with institutional help generate in detailed information on the questions of status of workplace counselling and factors that influence the utilisation of workplace counselling. In-depth interviews were based on one-on-one interaction with informants and helped to learn more about participants' experiences, perceptions and feelings about workplace counselling (Vanderstoep & Johnston , 2009). Additionally, the method provided information that was necessary to learn about the context of workplaces counselling which were beyond the researchers' thinking (Whittaker , 2009). Hence, semi-structured interview techniques were used to gather data by engaging and probing informants to solicit their opinion and experiences. This method was helpful in consolidating data from other methods such as questionnaire administration (Alston & Bowles , 2003). Thus, the study used KII interviews to gather detailed information about the status of workplace counselling and employer experiences on issues of workplace employee assistance.

3.3 Data collection procedure

Field work took place between the months of May and June, 2016. Data generation involved physical visits to targeted institutions during which common interview protocols (administration of questionnaires to employees and administration of Key Informant Interviews) with managers and workers. At first, formal consent form respondents were obtained that indicated the confidentiality and benefits of the study to participants (Creswell, 2013). Information was then, generated. In this regard, informants were asked contextual questions in the self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews. I also gathered narrative data from managers and employees. Narrative interviews were collected to gain a deeper understanding of the status of workplace counselling and employee experiences of workplace support services.

3.4 Data Analysis

This was a qualitative study whose desire was to assess the status of workplace counselling in the targeted public institutions. To achieve this objective, the study used qualitative data analysis methods and categorised data into two sets; contextual and narrative using thematic methods as preferred choice for data analysing (Creswell, 2013). This method involved extracting responses from informants' interview transcripts and systematic reviews and generating themes on the context of the status of workplace counselling. Hence, the study followed three procedures in analysing qualitative data. The first step was to thoroughly read the responses and transcribed interviews individually from their rough written note form to typed form and organised the data into computer files. This happened immediately after data was generated to avoid difficulties in recalls and missing information. Data transcripts were generated, printed and severally read to understand the data and notes were generated in the margins of the transcripts. These were then categorised into concepts relevant to research objectives. Finally, data were coded by arranging the interview responses into categories of information in form of a table (*see table 1*).

In the early stages of data analysis, the study used inductive methods. In this methodology, the study used patterns, categories and themes from the bottom-up by organising data into workplace counselling, types of counselling services and factors that influence counselling services up-take (Creswell, 2013). This approach was relevant in analyzing the relationships between workplace counselling, types of counselling services and factors that influence the utilisation of workplace counselling services. Focus was placed on identifying, summarizing, and retaining data similarities, differences, and new emerging themes. This process helped in developing a list of common codes. This process was the basis in constructing knowledge of status workplace counselling in the two institutions.

Table 1: Table for data analysis

Streamed Codes	Classified Categories	Main Theme
Employee support	Institutional status of workplace counselling	Status and existence of workplace counselling
Policy and support systems		
In-House		
Standardisation of employee support	Organisation and delivery of workplace counselling	
Guidelines and protocol	Procedural	Types of workplace counselling services
Contextual view of problems	Individualised	
Problem focused		
Empowerment approach	Progressive	
Individual development		
Individual behaviour	Willingness and preferences	Factors affecting the Up-take of Workplace counselling
Institutional policy and guidelines		
Externally sourced service	Methods and communication models	
Internally sourced service		
Issues of confidentiality	Professionalism	
Professional training		

Source: James Nyimbili, July, 2016

3.5 Ethical considerations

Workplace counselling is a sensitive area of study, thus, the confidentiality and anonymity of informants were important. Firstly, confidentiality agreements were given to informants. Additionally, data generation tools did not request informants to provide individual details that would lead to their identification (Berg, 2001). However, those who agreed to be identified had their details concerted to (Flick, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2012). Participates also acknowledged that information was not going to be discussed by others after the interviews were completed (Alston & Bowles , 2003; Berg, 2001). Additionally, records were kept in a secure place only accessed by the researcher.

Informed consent and autonomy

Research often, though not always, represents a disturbance into the lives of the informant by virtue of invitation to participate (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). In this study, the involvement of the informants was made voluntary and was free to withdraw by giving notice to the researcher (Rubin & Babbie , 2011). In practice, a consent form and individual invitation letters were provided to informants (*see Appendix B*). These contained details of the purpose of the research and the description of informant's involvement (Creswell, 2013). The need to maintain an ethical obligation of 'Beneficence' and 'Non-maleficence' was maintained by making the research risk free to participants (Berg, 2001; Alston & Bowles , 2003). Additionally, this study ensured that all the psychological, social and emotional risks from participants were minimised and avoided. One of the measures was to avoid individual informant life events that triggered the risks of re-traumatising the informants. Thus, Informants recognised the benefits from the study such as having the opportunity to contribute to knowledge generation about workplace counselling.

Chapter Four: Presentation of the findings

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents study findings with focus on the objectives of the study.

1. To assess the status of workplace counselling in the targeted study institutions
2. To establish the types of workplace counselling services offered in the two study sites
3. Determine factors affecting the Up-take of workplace services

Based on the objectives above, the following were the findings of the present study

4.1 Social Economic background

In this study, 40 respondents participated in the study representing twenty six from an educational institution and fourteen from a health institution. From the health institution, four managers and ten employees were interviewed. At the educational institution on the other hand, a total of 26 respondents participated in the study, of which eight were managers and eighteen employees. Of all the respondents, twenty three were males and seventeen females with the age ranging from 26 to 53. Of the employees, six were cleaners and secretaries with basic education of grade twelve. On the other, nineteen respondents were teachers with a teaching qualification while nine of them were Nurses and six were administrative staff. The length of work for all the respondents was more than three years, while twelve of the teachers and six of the nurses had been working for more than seven years. For the managers, three two from an educational institution and one from the health institution had been working for more than eight years in different institutions.

4.1.1 Status of workplace counselling

When asked on what was the status of workplace counselling in the workplace, managers stated that:

“As an institution, we endeavor to provide Guidance and Counselling services to all our employees as part of our workplace policy” ----, We provide support internally using our staff”, ---, where we have a gap, we source for external assistance”---, “Our workplace counselling seeks to create a functional Guidance and Counselling system responsive to the challenges at the workplace¹”, (KII – Manager 2)

Further, in expressing their understanding of workplace counselling, respondents expressed that:

“Workplace counselling is where the institutions has a department where professional counsellors provide counselling services to employees on different issues”, Q4E – Health Centre and School Employees

In this regard, findings indicated that the nature of workplace counselling did not follow procedures as defined by employees’ definition above. It was indicated that *“the status of workplaces counselling services in the two public institutions did not target employees with support from employers through established procedures”*. Study results further showed that respondents who indicated that workplace counselling existed understood counselling from the view point of a formal or an informal advice provided to an individual during their work time. On the other hand, those who indicated that workplace counselling does not exist perceived workplace counselling as a service provided by the employer through the Human resource office. However, staff indicated that the existing workplace counselling services did not meet standards.

“We have the counselling services that support staff, ----, however, the activities should use standardized tools and validated techniques to support employee needs with designated staff”, (Q4E – Employees)

The findings above indicated that various factors from within and outside work environment gave rise to the need to provide employee support. For most managers, worsening health status and stagnating productivity on the part of the employees were major concerns for the need to have workplace counselling. They expressed that they were experiencing alarming increases in staff absenteeism and a growing number of claims for short- and long-term family and medical Leave.

It was further expressed that stress and mental health and substance-use conditions among employees were high and needed workers council to address it in the workplace. Scholars have also argued that “factors such as mental health conditions sleep problems; mental health stigma and substance use and abuse affect business performance by reducing productivity and increasing both planned and unplanned absences” (Wyatt, 2010). In this regard, the provision of varying support to employees in the two institutions could be perceived as workplace counselling.

According to responses obtained on the counselling services presented, the following forms of employee support were said to be provided in the targeted workplaces presented in the study sites

	Health Institution	Educational Institution
1	HIV/AIDS Counselling	Career Counselling
2	Disciplinary Counselling	HIV/AIDS counselling
3	Behavioural Counselling	Disciplinary counselling
		Behavioural counselling

According to findings at Munali Secondary school, it was reported by managers and employees that they introduced a comprehensive workplace counselling. The activities dealt with the services indicated in the table above as a way of supporting employees as well as management.

During the interviews on the types of workplace counselling provided, one teacher stated that:

“Unlike private schools, at this public school, I am able to receive career development support, ----, counsellor teachers also provide career talks to my children”, Q4E - Employees

On the health front, the study found that comprehensive workplace programme to fight HIV and AIDS existed in both institutions. As part of the programme, the study found that most employees had been trained to provide HIV/AIDS specific support to other workers in the workplaces and their families. Moreover, managers at the health institution reported that the institution was promoting the distribution of male and female condoms to all the staff as part of workplace support.

Finally, in both institutions, there is a deliberate policy of reaching to individuals outside the workplace with HIV and AIDS support. Thus, some families have benefited from such activities by having coupled counselling where the employees come with their spouses to test together.

4.1.2 Whether organisations had resources to support employees

On whether or not organisations had resources to assist their employees as part of workplace counselling, the responses varied from one institution to the other as evidenced by the respondent who stated that:

“Here, there are no set models of providing employee assistance, ----, most of the time, and depending on employee needs, we offer support”, KII- Manager,

The study asked the respondents to discuss the actual services provide to employees. The majority of respondents reported of engaging their employee support in the area of disciplinary case management. A few employers reported tapping their workplace counselling for the strategic development of the workforce and worker personal life styles which defines typical work place counselling services. These findings seem to attempt is made by management to support workers through workplaces but not formalized.

4.2 Types of workplace counselling

4.2.1 Procedural types of workplace counselling

Respondents were asked on the types of workplace counselling services they are offering as institutions and there description. Responses were that:

“Our employee support ensures a consistent and equitable approach and management of the consequences of the services, --, for health, we include care and support of employees and their dependents living with HIV and AIDS. The policy ensures compliance with the ILO code of practice on HIV and AIDS and commits the institution to implement an HIV and AIDS programme.” KII with managers at Health and Educational institutions

4.2.2 Statutory and prescribed types of workplace counselling

In answering the questions on the types of workplace counselling, findings showed that most of the employee support were prescribed either in institutional policy documents or formal procedure set within the institution. Types of workplace counselling services which followed procedures or rules were classified as procedural types of workplace counselling as they relate to approaches that follow laid down regulations as set in professional and institutional rules (Beckett , 2010).

The study asked employers and supervisors whether their institutions had policies that supported workplace counselling: Common responses were that:

“Our work in supporting employees is bound by national and institutional law with actions firmly and unavoidably in touch with the regulating text related to employee-employer relations”, KII- Health and Educational institutions

Findings indicated that employee support and workplace counselling to employees is provided after a through needs assessment. Responses indicated that staff support is provided to staff following their needs, *“based on the assessment results, employees receive support”*. In exemplifying the types of workplace counselling, findings showed that the provision of workplace counselling and other related support to employees followed procedures as stipulated in individual employee contracts and national laws. For instance, employers stated that *“in addressing staff health, the institutions follow the rules as stipulated in the Occupational Safety and Health Act No. 36 of 2010 of the republic of Zambia”*. We may deduce thus, that institutional, national and international laws play a role in the support provided to employees in public institution. In this regard, managers talked to indicate that, the rules do not only guide employers on the types of support provided to staff but also stated that:

“It is a requirement that for staff to receive institutional support, they have to undergo an inquiry to determine their needs using an assessment form that defines their needs”,

It was found that the **process** and **findings** from assessment was core to providing employees with appropriate support. For instance, employees reported that the processes of inquiry assess the gaps in individual staff performance and attachment to work. For some, their approval for study leave and sponsorship for career development were as a result of a successful inquiry. On the other hand, employees who are not compliant with institutionally set rules are provided with disciplinary counselling. Findings showed that, issues of procedural fairness and fair outcomes restrict support provided to employees.

To the contrary, statutory practice may generate stereotyping and dissatisfaction with services (Lipsky , 1980). For example, employers stated that *'being professionals, policies associate their work with having a professional degree of autonomy', ---, in reality, however, they stated that they are bound by managerial rules and policies which eliminate their professional discretion'*. Further, this study found that employees were not happy with aspects of individual assessment when seeking institutional support. Scholarly articles have also argued that while procedural actions advance the availability of employees support within institutions by identifying areas of immediate need, "issues of eligibility indicators such as individual life styles may alienate employees as they may feel distressed" (Beckett , 2010, p. 36). These findings, may suggest that procedural as a type of workplace counselling relate to employee support services that are based on rational change rooted in contextual needs of institutional staff.

4.3 Individualized workplace counselling

"Because workplace counseling is intended to be a discussion between a supervisor and an employee, it is generally best to confine attendance at the session to the supervisor and the employee. The presence of additional parties, whether they are supervisors,

--, *“On the basis of documentary evidence of individual needs, matters of administrative decisions are issued” (KII-Managers – both institutions)*

union representatives or family, increase the perceived level of conflict and pressure on both sides,” stated managers.

As indicated in the manager’s statement above, work related stress where risk thinking and vulnerability has become dominant, rationality is directed at helping employees to control risks and achieve better health and performance. For instance, the study findings showed that employees seek support due to the desire to meet their needs while employers provide individual employee support to help them rationally perform their tasks (Q14E – both Institutions).

4.3.1 Employee problem focused understanding of workplace counselling

In answering the question of whether it was necessary for organisations to help individual employees in dealing or solving their personal problems, most managers indicated that

“Part of our job is to work with employees to advance their best interest and help them to be good workers and attain positive life styles”, (KII-Managers in both institutions)

Study findings showed that the interactions between the employer and individual employee in a counselling session help improve individual staff performance on the deliverable set. When employers were asked to cite the cases presented by employees, answers were that; most staff feels depressed when they experience a breakdown in their relationships or suffer disappointment and when the pressures of work or family life build up. In this regard, offering individual support services for employees experiencing these problems is an important benefit for enhancing the image of the organisation to its employees. It was found that the goal of such interventions are a direct impact on the level of employee satisfaction and thus on the value of high level production in the institution (KII with Managers). These findings suggest that employers may be involved in developing their own models in assisting employees addressing individual problems. On the other

hand, it may be suggested that the scope of employee support measures is affected by nature of standardization, measurement, evaluation and, most importantly, quality improvement in the support provided to workers.

For instance, it was found that most employees had limited knowledge of the type of workplace services they receive in the workplace as stated by institutional managers:

“Most employees lack knowledge and information on preventive health especially HIV prevention”, --“for such staff, we provide specialist support to enable them access the services they need”, (KII-Managers in both institutions

Could this be pathologising users? Without judging, the following interventions were perceived as common types of workplace counselling under this category: The provision of psychosocial support, physiotherapy, negotiating health and social services which in some literature have been classified as “individual pathological support” (Watson & West, 2006, p. 17) were found to most prevalent one-on-one employee support services provided. This study found, psychosocial support and disciplinary counselling to be the most visible individualised ‘pathological’ interventions. For example, employees and managers stated that:

“Workplace counselling with staff on disciplinary action are focused on improving problem areas such as psychosocial problems and or behavioural management for employees”---, “Our aim is to address individual vulnerabilities and risks associated with psychological, emotional and physical needs,”-- “We target individual problems and behaviours to help them learn, initiate, manage and maintain positive life styles that will support their performance”, (KII-Managers)

According to study findings, poor staff performance, absenteeism, work related violence, substance abuse and mental illness were addressed through psychosocial support and counselling. Further, employers stated that strengthening employee resources to manage individual needs and social services were critical to manager’s work in enhancing staff performance. In the some line, it may

be deduced that staff wellbeing and performance can be promoted by emphasising the role of attitude rather than behaviour in the therapeutic context.

4.4 Progressive types of workplace counselling

Born of a plethora of writings about interventions on class struggle of the 1970's and 80's, (Mullaly , 2001), progressive types of workplace employee support represent an amalgamation of actions that challenges the hegemony of traditional workplace counselling of case management in advancing fundamental employee and institutional business (Wilson, et al., 2008). This suggests that employees are not only recipients in the institutional support system but active participants.

4.4.1 Employee engagement in workplace counselling

In assessing the role of employee support in enhancing staff wellbeing, findings showed that managers provided employee support services related to employee capacity growth, Career development and to some extent disciplinary counselling were some of the common shared progressive intervention (Q14E – both institutions). For example, employees respondents reported that;

“We are supported by employers to go for training to advance our skills and knowledge”, ---, “through progression in career development, we improve performance” (Q14E)

One employee stated that support in career development enlightens staff on understanding the linkage between knowledge and work performance (Q14E). Findings further showed that targeting performance improvements for staff was important in improve their performance and institutional productivity (KII- MEI). Most managers recommended that staff retreats and open career talks with testimonies of those that have succeeded to be a modern form of employee motivation. Thus, professional awareness was considered a progressive type of workplace counselling that results into effective employee capacity, wellbeing and improved performance.

4.5 Factors affecting employee Up-take of workplace counselling

In this thematic area, the question was: *What are the factors that influence workers to or not seek workplace counselling?* The presentation begins with a review of behavioral issues indicated by the respondents. It will proceed with the review of the influence resulting from the methods and communication models in the existing forms of workplace support and conclude with the findings attached to ethical concerns in the counselling process.

4.5.1 Behavioural and systemic influences on Employee assistance services

In establishing the factors that may influence up-take of workplace counselling, this study asked the respondents to share personal experiences in accessing workplace counselling. Findings showed that individual behaviour influences of workplace counselling up-take. It was reviewed that *'employees valued workplace support based on how effective it responded to their needs'*. Results showed that most employees lacked material and financial support to take care of their family and individual needs. They indicated that this pressure, leads to health and psychological problems which influences them to seek counselling services. However, it was said that individual employee willingness and preferences as well as attitude towards the uptake of counselling service influenced their views about making a decision to seek counselling organized by the organization.

On the question preferences to different forms of workplace counselling services, most of the participants indicated that, they would support any counselling provision set up by the workplace as they felt that the initiative would be perceived as *"staff being considered"* by the organization. They also indicated that such initiatives would be a symbol of *"good"* working conditions. These findings imply that employees appreciated employee support services that targets individual employee needs in which employees further stated that.

“As staff, any institutionally supported workplace assistances and counselling would be a symbol of good conditions of service that are considerate of employee welfare”, (Q14E)

Responses also reflected issues of adoption and utilization of either internal or external counselling provision. Employees indicated that externally sourced counselling was preferred as it would influence staff to seek services as stated by employees.

“Counselors from within the institution, it is highly probable that information will be shared with supervisors”,--,” Friendships developed between the counsellor and work colleagues would make staff feel uneasy.”

Stated the Employees

A smaller number of participants, on the other hand, preferred an internal counselling arrangement. They believed that an internal counsellor would understand them better with greater understanding of organizational systems and culture. In such a case, in their opinion, the counselling process would be much more time saving and effective. However, they indicated that using the word *“counsellor for staff tasked to do workplace counselling”*, would reduce the fear of employees towards the up-take of workplace counselling. It was thus, suggested that using titles such as *“educators”* would motivate employees to seek workplace counselling in an informal way thinking it would provide an escape from being stigmatized.

When respondents were asked about preferred approach to workplace counselling, findings indicated that, specific staff with specialization in specific employee needs should be handled under the guidance of human resources within the scope of employee support agenda to allow employees seek workplace support. Participants who believed that psychological counselling should be differentiated from career counselling stated that:

“With no clear guidelines and specialised counsellors for specific employee needs may pose an apathy towards the services.” Stated Employees (Q14E)

Counsellor specialization deemed as desirable as indicated by the participants referred to characteristics related to the personality, expertise, and ethical attitude of the counsellor. The respondents preferred a counsellor who was reliable, secretive, objective, friendly, and genuine. They emphasized that it was quite important for the counsellor to be an experienced professional with appropriate training to inspire employees seek the services being offered. The most critical issue was about confidentiality, as one participant stated:

“A counsellor who keeps confidentiality strictly, changes the perceptions of employees and anxieties of going to a counsellor may be eliminated.” (Q14E)

A few participants' indicated that expectations about the possible benefits of the counselling service were critical indicators that influence employee to seek workplace counselling. These expected benefits were basically related to personal well-being issues and positive outcomes related to work life. The respondents indicated that the hope to gain increased self-awareness and development of effective coping skills were key determinants for seeking support. For others, clarity of career goals, and interpersonal relationships were among the areas that they mostly looked for improvement in seeking workplace counselling and other related support.

A few negative opinions were also expressed. Some study participant were against the initiation of the workplace service and believed that it would be a waste of financial resources to start a counselling provision without considering employees important and urgent needs that require attention. A few participants mentioned that problems experienced by employees are mostly caused by the organization system and psychological aid will be far from eliminating such complicated difficulties. In all, these findings showed that the nature of the problem presented by

the employee as well as individual support services available are factors that contribute to individual willingness to seek or not to seek workplace support

Chapter Five: Discussion of findings

5.0 Overview

This chapter discusses the findings from the study in relation to the study objectives. Empirical and primary data from employees and employers revealed several issues that could be discussed, but for the purpose of this document, the discussion will focus on key themes from the preceding chapter in accordance with the aim of this study; The status of workplace counselling, and the types of counselling services offered as well as factors affecting the Up-take of workplace services.

5.1. Workplace counseling in context

5.1.1 What is the status of workplace counselling in the two institutions?

This study established the status of workplace counselling at Chainama Hills Hospital and Munali Secondary School. A scholarly understanding of workplace counselling indicates that it is the provision of counselling services to employees by their employer with institutionally supported counsellors (Brammer & Shostrom , 1997). ‘Counselling therefore, takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of purpose (Hughes & Kinder, 2007). Workplace counsellors are also expected to have an understanding of organisational cultures and workplace factors that might impact on their work (Coles , 2003). An interpretation of the findings indicates that employee support services provided to staff in the two institutions did not have appropriate delivery mechanisms for counselling. Further, this study did not find ‘*appropriate*’ levels of professional indemnity required of counselling and related activities to qualify the service as workplace counselling.

For instance, all employee respondents told the researcher that in the existing employee support services; there were no quality standards such as complaints procedure, facilities for the counselling sessions that will protect confidentiality for in-house requirements or external standards. According to Hughes et al (2007: 12), Confidentiality is not absolute, but follows standards which safeguard clients, counsellors and organisations during the therapeutic process. Further, in line with standards which ensure that workplace counselling standards are in place to ensure there is a clear and unequivocal commitment and support from senior management (Hughes & Kinder, 2007), the study concludes that although workplace counselling existed in the two institutions, the provision of the services did not follow standard procedure as indicated in this section above.

In all fairness, this paper does not intend to construct the workplace counselling programs in the institutions visited as non-procedural workplace counselling. The idea however, is to understand how the practice of workplace counselling is expected to be done in providing support to employees to increase their coping resources through counselling, stress management and mental health awareness training. The idea is to ensure that Organisations have a duty to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for employees. For instance, based on the findings, the study concludes that preventive health related occupational health strategically occupied the attention of most employers and the responses may not typically be classified as workplace counselling. In the preceding presentation of findings, therefore, workplace counselling will be used interchangeably with workplace employee support in view of the non-existence of workplace counselling in the institutions investigated.

Therefore, in assessing the status of workplace counselling, employers and employee responses revealed that institutions provided support to employees that were not in line with the definition and understanding of workplace counselling above (Hughes & Kinder, 2007). As such, although

findings in this study suggest that workplace counselling existed in the two institutions, employee responses indicated that the activities that supported staff were not standardized in terms of having specialized staff, tools and validated techniques to support employee needs. We can deduce therefore that the status of workplace counselling that existed took the features of employee support that did not meet the criteria of being workplace counselling. Most of the responses on the status of workplace counselling indicated subjects considered as consultancy services provided to employees at workplace.

From different studies of workplace counselling (McLeod , 2008) and (Brummett, 2000) the Organisation of services and policy guidelines are important in shaping workplace counselling practice. For example, this study found that employees in the two institutions had limited opportunities to decide the content of workplace counselling services they receive (Q4E²). It was reported that workplace counselling in the two institutions does not restrict staff to only receiving support from internal staff. One of the transformational issues found in this study was the application of employment equity in Zambia which seems to have shaped the way employees and employers alike, are treated. According to ZNUT policy on HIV for instance, there are endeavors to establish counselling structures for its members and encourage employees to make use of other existing professional counselling services where necessary (ZNUT, 2010). The study thus, concludes that occupational health services available to employees in the two institutions were routine health services provided to the employees, and could not qualify the services to be called workplace counselling.

² Q4E – Questionnaire for Employees

5.2 Does progressive type of workplace support improve performance?

Empowering employees to manage work demands and stress is emphasised as an agenda in organisational management (Rivest & Moreau, 2014). For instance, this study found institutional managers engaging employees in institutional coaching and career development programs. This suggests that workplace counselling (employer assisted support) is related to the idea of empowerment rooted in the belief that employees are capable of managing work related needs provided barriers that thwart their capabilities are removed. Findings related to employee knowledge, skill and capacity development indicates that workplace counselling is fostering staff capacities using emancipatory employee support methods. However, progressive workplace support to employees may seem to be value-free; alas, they are value laden that reflect the political beliefs in institutions that aim at long-term institutional productivity.

Conversely, critics make a point of departure that global contemporaries in the labour market suggest that advanced employee knowledge and skills, is directly related to high turn-over, making employee support hostile for those who believe that workplace support leads to that. This study concludes with the acceptance that progressive types of workplace counselling services call for professional scepticism in attempts to create an efficient employee support environment. Generally, progressive employee support foster authentic voice for institutional staff in service delivery over and above produce practical life enhancing benefits that challenge many of the ideas, concepts and discourses reflected in the notion of the employee protection and emancipatory project.

5.3 Employee support an interface between wellbeing and performance

In the contemporary world of workplace counselling, rapid changes are reshaping the nature and modus operand of employee support. For example, aspects of routine evaluation of key aspects of workplace counselling in relation to quality, such as waiting times, equity of access to the service,

risk assessment, efficient delivery of therapy and overall effectiveness are expected to be observed in a counselling set-up (Coles , 2003).

Counselling is one of the instruments that can help improve work performance in any human organization (Cambell , et al., 1993). There are different kinds of counseling for work organizations. This part of the service is largely delivered and is used by staff in need of further support to help them return to work or to help them deal with issues that would otherwise have impacted on their attendance or performance. Performance counselling is designed to help non performing workers identify the causes of work-related problems that result in poor performance. The employer or manager should not personally try to identify and solve the causes of personal problems such as depression, alcoholism or marital problems for an employee. If personal problems become apparent and persistent, employers should refer the employee to experts in performance counselling to identify and solve the causes of such personal problems (Hughes & Kinder, 2007). The confidential counselling service is designed to help employees deal with personal problems, some of which may be affecting performance at work.

It was found that issues to be brought for counselling included a combination of personal and job-related problems. Consequently, benefits expected from counselling also pertained to these work and non-work areas. In a study review by (McLeod, 2008), it was reported that problems of clients fell into the categories of marital, work, health, family, colleagues, legal, and financial were common factors that influence employees to seek workplace support. The findings in this study were not different. This implies that although the social and cultural contexts of workplaces change, the difficulties that lead employees to seek help do not change much. As to the effectiveness of the service, the same research participants stated that rather than resolving the problem, counselling had enabled them to better advance their skills and knowledge through progression in career development.

5.5 Summary of the discussion

In line with the objective of establishing the status of workplace counselling, the discussion showed that some limited workplace counselling services or employee support services existed in the two institutions. However, the interpretation of the findings showed that the existed support services did not have appropriate delivery mechanisms as per counselling standards. It was also concluded that, in line with workplace counselling standards there were no employee support guidelines in place in both institutions to ensure a clear commitment to employee support from senior management.

With regard to the objective of examining the types of existing workplace counselling services provided to employees, the discussion highlights that employee support services that target knowledge, skill and capacity development for employees were key to fostering staff coping mechanisms. For instance, alongside the third objective of establishing factors that influence staff up-take of workplace counselling services, it has been discussed that aspects of routine evaluation of workplace counselling in relation to quality of services, risk assessment, efficient delivery of therapy and overall effectiveness were key to enhancing employee support. Consequently, benefits expected from employee counselling as well as employer perspectives were discussed.

The study has also discussed employee behaviour and feedback as factors that influence the up-take of workplace counselling. From the discussion, it has been seen that encouraging workplace counselling that targets employee needs related to work stresses and individual self-esteem are factors that can facilitate in improving workplace counselling utilisation. More so, a discussion on the concerns about confidentiality, trust, and professional skills as factors that influence services up-take, imply that counsellors need to be knowledgeable and sensitive to the ethics and principles of counselling.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations

6.0 Overview

The previous chapter presented the discussion of the findings of the study. Data was interpreted using themes so that the research questions are answered. This chapter gives the summary of the study and recommendations.

6.1 Conclusion

This study assessed the status of workplace counselling in the targeted institutions. Using a combination of methods in data collection, such as self-administered questionnaires and Key Informant guide, 40 respondents participated in the study representing 26 from an educational institution and 14 from a health institution. Findings indicated that the nature of workplace counselling did not follow procedures as defined in different literature and as understood by employees and employer. It was indicated that the status of workplaces counselling services in the two public institutions did not target employees with support from employers through established procedures. Study results indicated that respondents who indicated that workplace counselling existed understood counselling from the point of view of formal or an informal advice provided to an individual during their work time. On the other hand, those who indicated that workplace counselling does not exist perceived workplace counselling as a service provided by the employer through the Human resource office.

Hitherto, workplace counselling in Zambia and world over is at the edge of a serious structural, policy, education and practice integration and strengthening in actualising the welfare and needs of employees in the workplaces. It may also be considered that the implications for workplace counselling could be in promoting employee wellbeing as well as improved institutional productivity. In this regard, it is important that public or private institutions should consider

developing and adopting new and various existing forms of providing workplace counselling and support to employees within workplaces.

6.2 Recommendations

After examining the current models of workplace counselling, results from the current study showed several areas that required recommendations for further action. The experience in this study has shown that workplace counselling interventions are interlinked with and exacerbated by various outcomes in addressing employee health, individual development, and work performance among others. This study also presents recommendations whose implementation is expected to lead into improvements in the implementation of workplace counselling and employee support and how services are designed, implemented and evaluated. These recommendations are broken into four sections but all reflect the need for a rethink into the enhancement of workplace counselling:

1. Recommendations for rethinking workplace counselling
2. Recommendation for counselling professionals
3. Recommendation for counselling education
4. Recommendation for recognizing workplace counselling as a performance issue

6.2.1 Recommendation for counselling professionals

Lack of clear employees support guidelines and standards in addressing specific employee needs was found to pose apathy towards the services. It is recommended that organisations (private or public) should engage the services of professional counsellors or social workers who should help in setting professional Standards of practice for workplace counselling and other employee support program. A lack of standardization exists in the type and training of professionals selected to lead workplace employee support systems. Workplace counselling and employee support in

institutions should be based on an informed set of expectations, which will have an impact in the strategic objectives of the company. The focus of management with the use of workplace counselling should not only be to meet the organizations' business objectives, but to achieve optimal utilization of organizational resources as well as human beings.

6.2.2 Recommendation for counselling education

One of the factors that was said to affect the up-take of workplace counselling was the issue of confidentiality. The professional management of confidentiality concerns the protection of personally identifiable and sensitive information from unauthorized disclosure (Hughes & Kinder, 2007). In order to address issues of lack of confidentiality and trust for workplace counselling administrators, it is *recommended that individuals tasked with the provision of workplace counselling should be train in ethical issues in counselling*. Desired attributes considered by the participants referred to characteristics related to the personality, expertise, and ethical attitude of the counsellor. The respondents preferred a counsellor who was reliable, secretive, honest, objective, friendly, and genuine. They emphasized that it was quite important for the counsellor to be an experienced professional with appropriate training.

6.2.3 Integrating workplace counselling with employee performance

Research findings suggest a positive correlation between the provision of counselling and net workplace benefits (McLeod, 2008). The adoption and implementation of workplace counselling and other employee support Services has not developed sufficiently. It is recommended that institutions should consider adopting workplace counselling services and regularly assessing individual performance drivers as part of routine employers work. In the first place, it should be understood that counselling support can have a significant positive impact on sickness absence 'Counselling interventions have been found, in the majority of studies to reduce sickness absence rates in employees over and above contributing to significant improvements on most attitude-to-

work factors. It is relevant therefore, that through standardization of practice mechanisms like workplace counselling could enhance performance and productivity in the workplace.

6.2.4 Recommendation for rethinking workplace counselling

It is common place that the strategic and operational tasks of employee assistance programs are currently being influenced by market pressures rather than a systematic method of operation that makes employee assistance and workplace counseling respond to employee needs. To maximize the value for workplace employee support, employers should direct develop and adopt new and various existing forms of providing workplace counselling and support. Provide consultation with, training of, and assistance to junior supervisors with interest in managing troubled employees, enhance the work environment or improve job performance. These are expected to bring about confidential and timely problem identification, assessment of services to employees with personal concerns that may affect job performance, present behavioral risks or promote a healthy and safe workplace. Workplace counselling and support should thus, focus on crisis response incident debriefing, staff psychological fitness for duty.

6.3 Areas for further research

Some of the findings in this study have not received wide publication and should be the focus for future research. One such finding is on service inconsistencies and inadequency. Research should be instituted to establish the standards used in providing employee support which most employees classified as workplace counselling. This is important in ascertaining the levels, accessibility and equity of access to workplace support for employees. Further research is needed to establish the role of managers in workplace counselling and how regulations shape practice and the way users and citizens perceive workplace counselling.

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Appendix

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
AND
ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYERS/MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Dear Respondent

I am a University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University student pursuing a Master of Science in Counselling Degree. I am trying to find out the existence of workplace counselling in your organisation.

The information sought through this questionnaire will be used to determine the existence of workplace counselling in your organisation.

Your honest answers to the questions below will be greatly appreciated. This study is strictly academic and your responses will be treated with utmost veracity and confidentiality they deserve and the data will be used for academic purposes only.

INSTRUCTIONS:

**DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME UNLESS YOU WANT TO
FILL IN THE BLANKS AND TICK THE CORRECT ANSWER WHERE NECESSARY**

1. Sex: Female [] Male []
 2. Age: [..... years]
 3. Name of your organisation
 4. For how long have you been working for this organisation? [..... years]
 5. What is your understanding of workplace counselling?
-

-
-
6. Does your organisation offer workplace counselling services to its employees?
 1. Yes []
 2. No []
7. If your answer to question 6 is yes, what type of counselling services does your organisation offer to its employees?
-
-
-
8. If yes to question again, what have been some of the benefits to the organisation for offering counselling services to its employees?
-
-
-
9. From your honest point of view, do you think workplace counselling could enhance the performance of an employee(s)?
-
-
-
10. If your answer to question 9 is Yes, state some of the ways in which that is achieved:
 (i)
-
11. What is your general understanding of job satisfaction?
-
12. What do you think could be some of the ways in which a good working relationship can be enhanced between subordinate employees and their supervisors?
-
13. Do you have any policies as an organisation that supports workplace counselling?
 1. Yes []

2. No []

14. In your honest opinion, do you think it would be necessary for an organisation like yours to help individual employees in dealing or solving their personal problems?

1. Yes []

2. No []

3. Not sure []

15. If your answer to question 14 is Yes, of what benefits would that be to the organisation? State the benefits:

(i)

16. From your personal experience, what are some of the common issues for which employees normally would seek counselling help? State the issues:

(i)

17. Apart from low emoluments what has been some of the other reasons, why some good employees could have left your organisation?

.....

18. What do you think are some of the ways in which your organisation can retain its best employees apart from offering them higher salaries?

.....

19. What do you think are some of the ways in which your organisation could reduce the rate of absenteeism among its employees due to personal problems such as alcohol addiction, marital problems or financial problems?

.....

20. What do you think could be some of the ways in which effective communication can be improved between the employees and employers?

.....

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Employer

Introduction:

Dear Respondent (Employee)

My Name is----- I am a University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University student pursuing a Master of Science in Counselling. As part of the fulfilment of this degree, we are tasked to conduct research studies on issues that affect the well-being of society to add value to solution. Thus my research is based on establishing the existence of workplace counselling in organisation. The information sought through this questionnaire will add value to the development of workplace counselling in organisations. No personal information is asked in this questionnaire and your honest answers to the questions below will be greatly appreciated.

Background

Interview Number:

Date of interview :

Designation :

Sex of respondent:.....

Interview

1. What are some of the immediate and long term employment needs and concerns of workers?
2. What is your comment regarding the availability of workplace counselling services in this organisation?
3. What in your experiences, influence workers to seek counselling services?
4. How does your organisation provide counselling services to workers?
5. As an institution, what workplace counselling services are you doing?
6. Why did you decide to implement such activities?
7. How do you work around employee job satisfaction?
8. To what extent are the activities you mentioned tarried towards employee job satisfaction?
9. In your view what challenges or barriers exists in implementing workplace counselling?
10. How would you rate institutional support to employees?
11. What measures can be recommended for initiating and strengthening workplace counselling?

Thank you for your TIME

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
AND
ZIMBABWE OPEN UNIVERSITY
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYEES**

Dear Respondent

I am a University of Zambia and Zimbabwe Open University student pursuing a Master of Science in Counselling Degree. I am trying to find out the existence of workplace counselling in your organisation.

The information sought through this questionnaire will be used to determine the existence of workplace counselling in your organisation.

Your honest answers to the questions below will be greatly appreciated. This study is strictly academic and your responses will be treated with utmost veracity and confidentiality they deserve and the data will be used for academic purposes only.

INSTRUCTIONS:

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME UNLESS YOU WANT TO

FILL IN THE BLANKS AND TICK THE CORRECT ANSWER WHERE NECESSARY

1. Sex: Female [] Male []
2. Age: [..... years]
3. Name of your organisation
4. Position in your organisation.....
5. For how long have you been working for this organisation?
Less than 2years []
2-5 years []

6-10 years []

11-20 years []

6. What is your understanding of workplace counselling?

.....

.....

6. Does your organisation offer any counselling services to its employees?

Yes [] No [] Not sure []

7. If **YES** to question 6, what counselling services does your organisation offer?

Career Counselling []

HIV and AIDS Counselling []

Behavioural Counselling []

Disciplinary counselling []

Any other specify:

.....

.....

.....

8. Are there staff offering workplace counselling services in your organisation?

Yes []

No []

9. Do you think workplace counselling can contribute to organisational productivity?

Yes []

No []

Not sure []

10. How would you rate the importance of workplace counselling in your organisation?

Very important []

Important []

Not important []

11. Have you ever had access to counselling services at your workplace?
 Yes []
 No []
12. If your answer to question 11 is yes, which of the following counselling services have accessed in your organisation? (Tick which apply)
 Career counselling []
 HIV and AIDS counselling []
 Behavioural counselling []
 Disciplinary counselling []
 Any other specify:

13. Does your organisation refer any of its workers/employees to organisations that offer workplace counselling services?
 Yes []
 No []
14. In your personal experience what have been some of the common factors that have made workers/employees seek counselling?
 Financial problems []
 Alcohol addictions []
 Personal problems []
 Disciplinary issues []
 Health issues []
 Any other specify:

15. What do you think could be some of the reasons that can influence some workers/employees not to seek counselling at the workplace?
 Perceived as sign of weakness []

Lack of confidentiality []

It is difficult to access the service []

Any other specify:

.....
.....
.....

16. Finally in your honest opinion, what do you think are some of the benefits of workplace counselling?

Reduces work related stress []

Improves productivity []

Reduces disciplinary cases []

Reduces cases of absenteeism []

Enhances job satisfaction []

All of the above []

None of the above []

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND ASSISTANCE