



Employees' perceptions on the benefits of workplace counselling: a case of selected schools in Choma District.

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A Dissertation report submitted in partial fulfillment

Of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Counselling

Zimbabwe Open University in Partnership with University of Zambia

2016

Declaration

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Approval

This report by HAZELE PRECIOUS is approved as partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Science in Counselling of the Zimbabwe Open University in partnership with the University of Zambia.

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Dedication

This report is dedicated to my lovely children Muchindu .H. Munkombwe II and Muchindu .N. Mutinta. It is also dedicated to the memory of my dear late mother Ms Hazele .M. Clementinah.

Acknowledgement

There are many people who contributed to the accomplishment of this report. Since it is impossible to mention everyone, I remain grateful to them all. However, there are some to whom I am particularly indebted. My first thanks go to the Almighty God for his great love for me throughout the entire period of writing this report. I am grateful as well to the faculty at the University of Zambia's Institute of Distance Education and Zimbabwe Open University for their guidance, moral and material support.

My sincere gratitude to Dr Ndhlovu D, for taking time to impart knowledge in me. I would like to thank my brother Hilary for his encouragement, financial and moral support.

Special thanks go to my husband, Muchindu Munkombwe and children, Munkombwe II and Mutinta for their love, encouragement and support.

Abstract

This study was set in five secondary schools in Choma District of Southern Province of Zambia. The study sought to explore the benefits of workplace counseling secondary schools. Participating schools included four co-education schools and one single sex school which comprised two grant aided mission schools and three government schools. The schools were conveniently selected. Using quantitative methodology, primary data was collected from teachers and head teachers using a questionnaire. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences using descriptive tables. Results suggest that employees see workplace counseling to be very beneficial by contributing to the adjustment of the workforce, contributing to employees' motivation and job satisfaction levels. These benefits are shown by a cumulative percentage of 95.3% feeling that workplace counseling has a positive contribution toward helping employees make correct and informed decisions, 96.5% of them being of the view that it contributes to a motivated and satisfied workforce and the same percentage being of the view that it contributes to reduced absenteeism. Furthermore, 91.7% felt workplace counseling contributes to reduction in work related anxieties and depression, 92.9 felt it contributes to increase in job satisfaction while 91.8% felt it contributes to improved mental well-being. Results also indicated that there is no structured workplace counseling policy or programme in the workplaces except for that which targets HIV/AIDS. Where it exists, it is embedded in the day to day responsibilities of a manager. This is evidenced by 87.1% of the respondents being of the view that administration does use it to improve workers' motivation levels while 81.2 feel administrators use it to deal with work related disciplinary cases.

However, some of the teachers felt they had never received any workplace counseling before. This is evidenced by 30.6 % of them saying they have never received workplace counseling.

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Chapter One

The Problem and its Setting

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, study objectives and questions, limitations and delimitations, significance of the study, scope of the study, theoretical perspective, operational definitions and ethical considerations.

1.2 Background to the study.

Workplace counselling is an activity that has sometimes been undertaken on the assumption that benefits always accrue. The value of this important activity has not been established adequately by managers and stakeholders in all situations. To give meaning and relevance to such a process, it is important that its impact is understood. This study therefore sought to investigate the perceptions of people on the benefits of workplace counselling to employees in selected secondary schools in Choma District of Zambia.

Elsewhere in the world where it has been exploited, workers have received enormous benefits from workplace counselling (Nathan & Hill, 2011). Workplace counselling, however, generally has not been exploited in Zambia. The benefits of workplace counselling services to employees in Choma district have equally not been established. Therefore, there is need to explore how employees view workplace counselling.

Workplace counselling policies usually are aimed at allowing the employees to learn how to deal with various challenges as well as how to deal with their personal problems such as

family or financial challenges. Workplace counselling also promotes high levels of discipline, concentration and performance among the work force.

Lack of counselling services in workplaces results in a number of problems to individuals as well as the workplace itself (Hughes, 2015). Studies by Hughes (2015), Llon et al. (2007), and Mintz (2014) have shown that problems and challenges are more costly to the employee and the workplace when compared to the cost of providing counselling services to the employees. For example, lack of counselling services may force the managers to frequently change or fire employees who have problems in the workplace. The most likely consequence of such an action being increased personnel costs due to pay-offs to laid-off workers and costs associated with acquisition and establishment of new workers.

Toten (2005) advises that when a manager needs to take action over an employee's unsatisfactory work performance or conduct when dismissal is not justified, instead of warning, counselling or possibly suspension may be ideal. It is important to choose an action that is appropriate to circumstances as the aim should be to improve performance or prevent recurrence of unsatisfactory conduct rather than to dismiss an employee. One way of doing this is through workplace counselling.

Workplace stress, depression, sickness and illness are some of the problems and challenges that usually affect employees in the workplace leading to high levels of absenteeism. It is the manager's duty to handle employees' needs and interests. There is need to take care of these challenges in order to have a workforce that is physically, mentally and emotionally healthy. This is exactly one of the things that workplace counselling does. It further reduces employees' levels of frustration, thereby allowing them to work towards the achievement of workplace goals and objectives.

Gishinga (2011) resounds the importance of counselling in the workplace by saying that anybody who is facing a challenge for which they are not prepared on or are unable to cope with needs the assistance of another person to pull through. Many challenges rise at workplaces that need expertise intervention in the form of guidance, advice, and provision of relevant information for decision making. The Ministry of Education is one of the largest employers in Zambia and is responsible for deploying trained human resource in the nation. There is need therefore, for its workforce to be catered for in both its personal and professional life through workplace counselling. An ailing workforce would spell an ailing nation. In Zambia, and indeed world over, it is one of the manager's duty to offer counselling to the subordinates. This is to say that in Zambia in particular, there is no structured workplace counselling per se. The counselling that takes place in the workplace is embedded in the day to day roles and responsibilities of the manager.

Therefore, it is important that employees and employers discuss job related as well as personal problems in workplaces in order to reduce various challenges and problems in the workplace. This study, therefore, explored how teachers view workplace counselling in schools. Teachers, by the nature of their job, come into contact with people on a daily basis. They are tasked with the job of shaping minds of the nation's future human resource (pupils), a task which can be stressing. Stress from work and personal challenges can render them ineffective both at work and in their personal lives. Hence they need such services as workplace counselling. Until it is ascertained whether employees think workplace counselling is beneficial or not, it remains unclear what workplace counselling can do to the workforce in Choma District.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The researcher observed that Zambian workplaces, including those found in Choma District, bring together employees from diverse backgrounds who bring with them diverse attitudes and perceptions on issues. In addition, they face different kinds of problems at different times which affect their life at work as well as at home. There is need therefore to assist them deal with these problems and workplace counselling services for employees is one such help that can be provided. Elsewhere in the world where workplace counselling has been provided, it has shown enormous evidence of benefiting its users (Nathan & Hill, 2011). However, how teachers in Choma District view workplace counselling to benefit them is yet to be explored. It therefore, became apparent that a study of this nature was necessary.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers in selected schools in Choma District viewed workplace counselling in terms of benefits to them.

1.5 Study objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. establish workers' perceptions on the benefits of workplace counselling to employees.
2. determine how workplace counselling benefits employees.
3. explore the relationship between workplace counselling and employee commitment to work.
4. investigate ways in which workplace counselling can reduce stress in employees.

1.6 Study Questions

The following specific research questions helped address the study objectives:

1. What are the workers' perceptions on the benefits of workplace counselling to employees?
2. What are the benefits of workplace counselling to employees?
3. What is the relationship between workplace counselling and employee commitment to work?

1.7 Delimitations.

The study was conducted in Choma District of the Southern Province of Zambia. Four secondary schools in the district were conveniently sampled.

1.8 Limitations

The study had some limitations, the most of which were as follows.

- Collection of information during teaching hours may have affected the data collected from the teachers as they may have preferred to be preparing for lessons or be in class attending to their learners.
- What people say may not be what they think or feel. Therefore, the findings may not be a true reflection of what actually is in the sampled schools.

1.9 Significance of the study

The study endeavoured to explore employees' perception on the benefits of counselling in schools in Choma District of Zambia. Such a study was important to show why it is necessary to have counselling services for employees in the workplace especially when people are becoming more and more susceptible to depression. The study would further show the relationship between workplace counselling and employee commitment to work. It was

hoped that the findings from this study would help management of various workplaces and the Ministry of Labour know the benefits of counselling in workplaces and ,hence, promote it.

1.10 Theoretical Perspective

The study was guided by the Transformational Model of Management. It comes from the Transformational Model of Leadership by McGregor James Burns. It borrowed ideologies from Humanistic psychology. According to McGregor in Bolden et al,(2003) , the leader shapes, alters and elevates the motives, values and goals of the followers achieving significant change in the process. Furthermore, the role of the leader is to transform followers' self interest, increase confidence of followers, encourage behavioural change and motivate followers to a higher level of personal achievement.

According to the model, among others, the responsibilities of a manager include sponsorship, coaching, exposure, counselling, protection and providing challenging assignments (Sosik and Godshalk, 2000).

This study used this model to explain how it is one of the manager's duty and responsibility to offer counselling services to their subordinates. It was also used to show how counselling in the workplace can be used as a tool for motivating and helping employees to understand and solve their concerns.

1.11 Operational definitions

- Benefits: a helpful or good effect. A good or positive end result of a situation or activity.
- Counselling: The MacMillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (2002:316) defines counselling as advice and help given to someone experiencing problems. Hansen, Rossberg and Crammer (1994) state that counselling is largely concerned

with helping the so-called normal individuals in a bid to increase such individuals' self-awareness, helping improve problem-solving skills, educating the individual and supporting that individual. In this study, counselling meant guidance in resolving personal conflicts and emotional problems. It implied helping individuals make personally relevant decisions that they could live with.

- Workplace counselling: the provision of counselling to employees at workplaces with the view to help them understand themselves, their environment, make decisions and take responsibility of their descisions to solve their problems or concerns.
- Employee: an individual who works part time or full time under a contract of employment, whether oral or written, express or implied, and has recognised rights and duties.
- Manager: a person responsible for supervising and motivating employees and for directing the progress of an organisation.
- Challenges: (situations of being faced with) something that needs great mental, emotional or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability. For example, suffering, loss, disappointment,disease etc.
- Employer: every person, firm, corporation, state, town, city, village, school, any public or quasi public corporations as well as any agent, manager or representative having control or custody of any employment, place of employment or of any employee.
- Workplace: occupational settings, stations and places where workers spend time for employment or learning i.e provincial offices, district offices,schools,colleges, universities etc.

1.12 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were considered during this study by treating the participants with respect as well as by obtaining consent from participants and gatekeepers before they participated in the study. The researcher further ensured that confidentiality was maintained.

Chapter two

Literature review

This chapter presented literature review related to the views on the benefits of workplace counselling to employees. The chapter begun with historical overview of workplace counselling. It proceeded by presenting reviewed related literature according to themes derived from the study objectives.

2.1 Historical overview of Workplace Counselling

In the late 1970s, Employee Assistance Programs began in the United Kingdom with a scant scope as dealing with addiction problems and alcoholism issues. Today, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) otherwise known as Employee Support Programmes are covering personal, couples and family counselling, legal and financial services, information, and advice. It also includes workshops, short training sessions, days on specific topics, alcohol awareness, stop smoking campaigns, stress management, taking care of one's health to mention but a few. It has spread to other parts of the world. In other parts of the world, Employee Support Programme is known as workplace counselling, offering counselling services that help employees in dealing with problems efficiently (Uzel & Aydogbu, 2010).

Many challenges face employees in the workplace. Challenges such as lack of appropriate environmental motivation, personality problems, inappropriate assignments, inappropriate supervision, lack of training and failure to determine the level of the assignment. Other challenges include lack of motivation, laziness, lack of personality, foot truancy, drug and alcohol addiction, sickness, and sexually related issues. There are also outside influences that include family problems, social norms, government action, and trade and climate policy.

Such problems can bring about stress. When stress increases, it can affect the stability and ability of the employee to perform efficiently.

Whether a manager can take up the counselling role for his workers is still a debate. Though not very wide spread, there is a tendency in some workplaces to view managers as quasi counsellors or informal helpers for their staff. Since much of their managerial time and many of their tasks are involved with managing people, they are propelled to take the counselling role not exactly, as professional psychotherapists would do but by understanding the basic human behaviour and enabling or improving communication by interacting positively with others. Blurring the boundaries between managerial and counselling roles, Anubha (2011) sees managers as on-going counsellors who regard counselling as part of a manager's everyday life.

Much workplace counselling is not counselling in the modern definition of the term but relates to situations that require the use of counselling skills such as interpersonal and communication skills which are often regarded as counselling skills. These are part of all interactive situations in the organizations. For this reason, the managers are required to undergo a brief training in counselling skills that will help them to recognize signs of disturbance in employees, for it is part of the manager's responsibility to get the employees fit and ready for work. This is mainly to help the employees realize their self-actualization related to the workplace that will eventually fix the performance problem of the employees. The objective of this counselling is to get the employee back to efficient work as quickly as possible. (Anubha, 2011).

Workplace counselling can be divided into two major categories, namely, career counselling and individual or personal counselling. Career counselling mainly deals with career development. These services focus on career development of individual workers and includes

assessment, counselling, planning, and training to help individuals make and act on career decisions within the context of the organisation's human resources plan. Individual or personal counselling, on the other hand, focuses on the workers' physical, mental, social and emotional health and mainly deals with personal problems that might directly or indirectly affect job performance. (Nathan and Hill, 2011).

Gishinga (2011) defines counselling as a relationship in which one person helps another to understand and solve their problems. The ultimate goal is a helping relationship.

Available literature on benefits of workplace counselling to employees shows that there are numerous benefits to it. Some of the benefits include improved sense of well being, concentration and belonging to a workplace. Further, it leads to well adjusted and stress free workforce with good interpersonal relationships. All these translate into a productive and efficient workforce. There still remains knowledge gap about how work place counselling benefits employees in selected workplaces in Choma district.

2.2 Benefits of workplace counselling to employees

Research findings by Nthangi (2007) who conducted study in Kenya with the aim of finding out how one can choose and advance a career show that workplace counselling assisted employees to discover themselves and take correct decisions and options about life. The employees discovered themselves and their potential, thus empowering them to make informed and independent decisions. The study concluded that workplace counselling services contributed to a well adjusted workforce. A research done by Ombayo, Otuya and Shiamwama in Kenya on the relationship between counselling and employee productivity revealed that lack of counselling services in the work place resulted in demotivated and dissatisfied workforce, resulting in low productivity (Ombayo et al. 2013).

Hughes (2015) reports that provision of workplace counselling has steadily improved in the last 20 years, with more than 70% medium and big organisations in Britain and North America making workplace counselling available to their staff. Review of research into the outcomes of workplace counseling identified 34 studies. The benefits of workplace counselling were that employees who were counselled became highly satisfied and believed workplace counselling had helped them resolve their problems. Workplace counselling was also attributed to reduced levels of anxiety and depression in 60-75% of the employees and reduction in absenteeism from work.

A systemic study by McLeod on the research evidence, showed that workplace counselling interventions have been found to reduce workplace absence rates by 50%. This fact demonstrates the benefit of workplace counselling (McLeod, 2001).

However, whether teachers in Zambia and Choma District in particular think workplace counselling has anything good to offer them is not yet clear. Therefore, a question arises; what are the perceptions of teachers on the benefits of workplace counselling to teachers?

2.3 How work place counselling leads to enhanced concentration and sense of belonging in employees.

A United Kingdom Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) study revealed that majority of the clients of the EAP improved in their performance following workplace counselling intervention (Hughes, 2015).

A research done in Hong Kong with the aim of exploring the benefits of workplace counselling revealed that workplace counselling on employees led to increased job and life satisfaction, and improved mental well being. It further showed that workplace counselling

empowers employees with skills for dealing with stress for personal life and stress for work. Other scholars, such as Fikri (2005) and Anubha (2011) have added more positive messages such as lowering turnover rate, accidents and formal grievances, rising staff morale and job satisfaction and performance generated by improvement of interpersonal relations (Cheng, 2012).

2.4 Relationship between workplace counselling and employee commitment to work

The provision of workplace counselling has steadily improved in the last 20 years, with more than 70% medium and big organisations in Britain and North America making counselling available to their staff. Review of literature on the outcomes of workplace counseling done by Hughes (2015) showed that employees had a lot of problems they needed counselling in. The findings further showed improved commitment and high levels of satisfaction with the counselling services from those who were counselled. They believed that it had helped them resolve their problems.

Another study done in Kenya on the relationship between Career Counselling and Employee productivity in Sugar firms in Kenya showed that there is a relationship between workplace counselling and improved commitment to the work (Ombayo et al. 2013).

2.5 How workplace counselling can reduce stress in employees

Mintz (2014) reports that workplace counseling helped employees understand their situations and look at them with new perspective and positive outlook. Such services helped employees in making better decisions, and gave them ability to look at alternative solutions to their problems. Workplace counselling services also helped employees cope with difficult situations and stress.

A Cambridge University (2012) study which aimed at looking at workplace counselling showed clearly that the effect of counselling on a distressed employee is positive. Evidence drawn from a treatment group suggested that such counselling leads to an increased sense of wellbeing. The study found that workplace counselling contributed to significant improvements on most attitude to work, opportunity for control, skill use, job demand, clarity, feeling valued, interpersonal contact, competence, work spill over, adequacy of pay and satisfaction. To put it another way, counselling leads to happier, more positive and secure employees (Hughes, 2015).

2.6 Summary

Most of the studies done on workplace counselling are from the western world. There are few studies done in Africa. One of the few studies done in Africa was by Oramah with the aim of investigating the problems and prospects of workplace counselling in Nigeria. Its results showed that workplace counselling was appreciated by its users, and had a positive impact on reducing stress in the work force (Oramah, 2013).

In Zambia, little or no research on employees' views on the benefits of counselling in the workplace or on the benefits of workplace counselling has been done. Most of the research concerning counselling in the work place has been on HIV and AIDS counselling in the workplace. Examples of such research includes those done by Kasole & Mwiya, 2012 and Llon et al, 2007. Other researches include those by Chilekwa (2014); Smart & McKenna (2006), and Atlas & Copco: (2013). What is clear from all these researches is that employees seem to be benefiting from HIV and AIDS workplace counselling through workshops, seminars, free medication, voluntary counselling and testing, and prevention of mother to child transmission. All these services boosted the morale of employees in the workplace.

However, none of these authors mentioned anything on the perceptions on the benefits of having general counselling services for employees in the workplace, thereby still leaving a knowledge gap. Consequently, this study sought to explore employees' views on the benefits of workplace counselling to employees from selected schools of Choma District, in the Southern Province of Zambia.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The study used the quantitative paradigm. This paradigm was chosen because it sought to describe and analyse the behaviour and culture of humans from the point of view of those being studied. Further, it used the natural setting, therefore, the findings were not artificial. It was also chosen because it allowed for a flexible and interactive research, hence the findings were as natural as possible. Quantitative method of data analysis using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used.

3.1 Research design

The Descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The major purpose of the descriptive design is description of the state of affairs as it exists. The descriptive research design is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample. It can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits, or any of the variety of educational or social issues. (Orodho, 2003).

The researcher picked this design because it enabled her to collect quantitative data from respondents in their natural setting. In addition, it helped her describe the data and views of respondents in relation to benefits of workplace counselling to employees in selected schools in Choma district by drawing on strengths of relations of the variables involved.

To be specific, the researcher used the Cross-sectional survey which enabled her to collect information from a sample that had been drawn from a particular population. This type of descriptive survey design was used because the study was restricted to respondents from the field of education only. It drew respondents from secondary schools within the district only.

3.2 Study population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all teachers and administrators in four secondary schools in Choma District. The sample comprised twenty (20) teachers and three (2) administrator per sampled school while one sampled school comprised of twenty five teachers due to the size of the school, which brought the total number of respondents to Ninety Seven (93). These provided information on the problems they face that affected their life at work and home, how these problems affected their work input and relations at work, as well as how they thought workplace counselling was beneficial to employees. These figures were arrived at by getting atleast 15% of the teaching staff per sampled school.

3.5 Sampling techniques

The study used multi stage sampling technique. Firstly, Convenience Sampling technique was used in selecting the participating schools, a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in the study (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). The technique was chosen because it allowed the researcher to choose respondents that were immediately available. Further, it was cost effective and could be used in short duration.

The study also used the Purposive Sampling technique. This is a technique where the researcher purposively targeted a group of people believed to be reliable for the study. Here, the researcher purposely selected a sample to include people of interest and exclude those who did not suit the purpose (Palys, 2008). This technique was used on the school administrators. It was picked because it was most suitable for a small sample and when the researcher wanted to access a particular subject of people.

The study also used simple random sampling to select the rest of the teachers to respond to questionnaires. This technique was chosen because it is free of errors in classification, free from bias and prejudice and for its ability to guarantee representativeness.

3.6 Instruments for Data collection

The instrument for data collection that were used were the questionnaire. The questionnaire included closed ended type questions in collecting primary data from respondents. The questionnaire was developed this way to ensure that it was more convenient and less time consuming for the respondents. However, in order to ensure that adequate data was collected (to add depth to the instrument), the researcher grouped the questions under major themes that were in line with the research objectives. Secondary data was collected through document analysis schedule from previous works done on the topic.

3.7 Reliability and validity of the instruments

Reliability and validity of the instruments was maintained by the researcher by carefully planning and designing the questionnaire. Furthermore, the instrument was pilot tested on a smaller but similar sample.

3.8 Procedure for Data collection.

Before beginning the process of data collection, the researcher sought permission from the District Education Board Secretary's office as well as the respective school headteachers of the four sampled schools.

The researcher then administered questionnaires to the respondents.

3.9 Data analysis

The main purpose of collecting data in research is to find solutions to research questions. When the relevant data has been collected, it is in raw form and does not make much sense to the researcher until it is properly organised. Therefore, data analysis refers to those techniques that enable the researcher to obtain and summarise information to enable the researcher to make reliable inferences that are generalizable to the population from which the sample is drawn.

The study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in analysing data. This is computer software for Social Sciences used to analyse data.

The data collected was first cleaned and then coded. Coding is simply assigning numerals to the raw data. It involves sorting the data into discrete categories so that the computer package, SPSS, could process it well. This data was then entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software Version 16.0 and analysed using descriptive table and graphs. The results were then discussed in a narrative form.

Chapter Four

Presentation and Interpretation of findings

This chapter presents the findings, analysis and interpretation of data gathered through the survey questionnaire. Inferences, meanings and implications were drawn from the results of the data analysis compared with the literature where necessary. Discussions of the results were presented sequentially according to the research questions.

What are the demographic characteristics of the respondents?

The demographic characteristics surveyed in this study were age and gender. The study showed that males constituted a larger composition represented by a percentage score of 55%. In terms of age, the study showed that respondents below the age of 40 were in the majority represented by a percentage score of 65%. Tables 1a and 1b below shows this demographic data.

Table 1a

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid below 40 years	55	64.7	64.7	64.7
above 40 years	30	35.3	35.3	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 1b

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	47	55.3	55.3	55.3
female	38	44.7	44.7	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Research question 1

The first research question sought to establish whether workplace counselling does benefit employees. The question was divided into subquestions as follows.

To what extent do you think workplace-counselling helps in making correct and informed decisions?

The study revealed that majority of the respondents represented by 52% was of the view that workplace counselling largely helped in making correct and informed decisions. The results analysis showed that as many as 95% of the respondents thought that there was a positive relationship between workplace counselling and ability to make good decisions. This simply means that there is a relationship between workplace counselling and the ability to make informed and correct decisions. Workers who have an opportunity to receive advice and guidance on work, personal or career related matters have a tendency to make good decisions in comparison to those that do not. The table 1 in the appendix illustrates this result.

To what extent do you think workplace counselling contributes to a motivated and satisfied workforce?

The study showed that 97% of the respondents felt there was a relationship between workplace counselling and having a motivated and satisfied workforce. Of the 97%, 41% felt workplace counselling influence the motivation and satisfaction of a workforce largely while

45% felt the influence was to a moderate extent. Only 4% felt there was no relationship. Table 2 in the appendix illustrates this result.

To what extent do you think workplace counselling contributes to reduced absenteeism among employees?

The study showed that 39% of the respondents felt that did contribute to reduced absenteeism among employees while 44% and 14% felt the impact of workplace counselling on the rate of absenteeism among employees was to a moderate and minor extent respectively. This means that majority of the respondents feel that workplace counselling is important in reducing absenteeism rates in the workplace. Table 3 in the appendix illustrates this result.

To what extent do you think workplace counselling contributes to reduced work related anxieties and depression?

The study results showed that 33 of the 85 respondents representing 39% felt that the contribution was to a large extent, 30 (35%) felt it was to a moderate extent, 14 (17%) to a minor extent while 7 (8%) felt workplace counselling had no bearing at all on reduction in work related anxiety and depression. These results are shown in table 4 in the appendix. This simply means that majority of the respondents felt that there was a positive relationship between workplace counselling and reduced work related anxiety and depression.

To what extent do you think workplace-counselling leads to increased job satisfaction among employees?

The study findings revealed that 35% of the respondents feel that to a large extent, workplace counselling does contribute to increased job satisfaction. 34% felt this relationship was to a moderate extent while 24% felt it was to a minor extent. This shows that majority of the respondents (93%) consider workplace counselling to lead to job satisfaction among the workforce. Table 5 in the appendix illustrates these results.

To what extent do you think workplace-counselling leads to improved mental well-being of employees?

From the study results, one can infer that workplace counselling does contribute to improved mental well-being. This can be deduced from the study findings that show that 92% of the respondents feel there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Of the 92%, 39% felt this relationship is very strong, 27% felt the relationship was moderately strong while 26% felt it is to a minor extent.

Research question 2.

The second research question sought to determine employers' and employees' opinion on workplace counselling. This question was sub divided into subquestions.

How often do you think employees receive workplace counselling?

It was apparent from the study findings that workplace counselling is not a very common feature of Zambian workplaces. Where it exists, it is not structured and most of the people involved do not even realise that they are counselled. This conclusion can be arrived at by the fact that only 4 % of the respondents felt workplace counselling was being offered to a large extent, 28% said to a moderate extent, 38% to a minor extent while 31% felt it was to a moderate extent.

How often do you think administrators use workplace counselling to motivate employees?

The study findings show that majority of the respondents feel administrators do not use workplace counselling to motivate their workers to a large. The findings were that 8% felt that the administrators used it to a large extent, 29% to a moderate extent, 49% to a minor extent while 13% feel administrators do not use it at all. Table 6 in the appendix illustrates this result.

How often do you think administrators use counselling to discipline employees?

The study findings show that majority of the respondents do not think administrators use counselling to discipline workers to a large extent. Majority feel administration uses it to a minor extent or not at all. The table 7 in the appendix illustrates these results.

Research question 3

The third question of the research sought to investigate the contribution made by workplace counselling, if any, to improved well being and productivity of workforce.

To what extent do you think teachers' personal problems affect their ability to work effectively?

The study results show that majority of the respondents feel that personal problems have the potential to affect one's ability to work effectively. This finding stresses the need for the workforce to receive assistance and guidance with their personal problems when need arises. Table 8 in the appendix shows these results.

To what extent do you think personal problems affect your relationship with colleagues and administration?

The study showed that the effect of personal problems on relationship between colleagues and administration, though present is not overly strong. Table 9 in the appendix illustrates these results.

To what extent do you think administration uses counselling to help employees deal with problems that affect their work?

The study findings show to some extent, administrators do use workplace counselling to help employees deal with problems that affect their work. Table 10 in the appendix shows these results.

How often do you think administration uses counselling in settling disputes amongst employees?

The findings show that majority of the respondents, amounting to 93%, felt that workplace counselling is being used to sort out disputes between employees. Table 11 shows this result.

The findings show that employees do have personal problems and these problems do have a bearing, though it may not be a very big one, on their life at work. Personal problems do have an impact on the way employees perform at work.

The study also sought to see how the administrators viewed workplace counselling in terms of its benefits to employees.

The first question asked was whether they (administrators) thought workplace counselling would be helpful in helping workers deal with personal problems that affect their work. The study findings show that workplace counselling has the potential to aid administrators in dealing with workers' personal that affect their work. This inference can be made from the study findings that show that 100% of the respondents felt that workplace counselling would be beneficial. Table 12 in the appendix illustrates the results.

The second question was whether they thought workplace counselling would help employees and administrators deal with issues of professional development of employees. The findings show that workplace counselling would be helpful in helping employees and administrators deal with issues of professional development. An illustration of these results is in table 13 in the appendix.

In addition, the administrators were asked to what extent they thought workplace counselling helped them in dealing with employee disciplinary cases. The research findings showed that in all disciplinary cases, administrators used counselling. This means that the administrators do take time to talk to and counsel any employ that has a disciplinary case. This result is shown in table 14 in the appendix.

The administrators were also asked to what extent they thought workplace counselling helped in enhancing employees' motivation levels, sense of belonging to the workplace and commitment to work. All the respondent felt that workplace counselling has the ability to enhance employee motivation and commitment to work. Table 15 in appendix illustrates these findings.

Lastly but not the least, respondents were asked to what extent they thought workplace counselling was beneficial to employees. The study results show that majority of the workers felt workplace counselling was beneficial to the employees. This result is illustrated in table 16 in the appendix.

To the question of to what extent they believed workplace counselling to be effective in reducing stress among employees, all the respondents felt that workplace counselling did play a large role in reducing the stress levels in the workforce. Equally all the administrators sampled felt that workplace counselling was very beneficial to employees. These results are illustrated by tables 17 and 18 in the appendix respectively.

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

The research findings above simply mean that some of the contributions that workplace counselling has to the world of work included a well-adjusted workforce mentally, a satisfied and contented workforce with reduced absenteeism rate and work related anxiety and depression. In other words, these are some of the ways in which individuals and the workplace can benefit from the workplace.

These findings are in agreement with the findings in the literature review. For example, the findings are in congruence with McLeod (2001), Hughes (2015), Ombayo et al (2013) and Ntagi (2007) whose research findings showed that workplace-counselling was beneficial to both the individual and the workplace by reduce absence rates, contributing to a highly committed ad satisfied workforce and aiding the workforce into making of correct and informed decisions.

These research results show that the use of workplace counselling in workplaces in Choma district is yet common. Administrators do not use this seemingly powerful too to mange their human resource and run their workplaces. This finding show a discrepancy in the use of workplace counselling between workplaces in Zambia, Choma District in particular and other parts of the world like in the United Kingdom where it is rapidly growing, as shown by Hughes (2015).

These findings show that employees do have personal problems and these problems do have a bearing, though it may not be a very big one, on their life at work. Personal problems do have an impact on the way employees perform at work. The findings further show that administrators believe that workplace counselling is an important tool in the running of a workplace as well as in the management of a workforce. These findings are in line with the

researches done by others, such as Mintz (2014), Cambridge University, (2012), Chang (2012) and Fikri (2005).

New knowledge contributed

The following were the findings:

1. Employees feel that workplace counseling is very beneficial to them. This is evidenced from a cumulative percentage of 95.3% feeling that workplace counseling has a positive contribution toward helping employees make correct and informed decisions, 96.5% of them being of the view that it contributes to a motivated and satisfied workforce and the same percentage being of the view that it contributes to reduced absenteeism. Furthermore, 91.7% felt workplace counseling contributes to reduction in work related anxieties and depression, 92.9 felt it contributes to increase in job satisfaction while 91.8% felt it contributes to improved mental well-being.
2. Workplace counseling does exist in workplaces. This is evidenced by 87.1% of the respondents being of the view that administration does use it to improve workers' motivation levels while 81.2 feel administrators use it to deal with work related disciplinary cases. However, its existence is silent as it is incorporated into the day-to-day roles and duties of administrators. As a result, some of the employees felt they had never received any workplace counseling before. This is evidenced by 30.6 % of them saying they have never received workplace counseling.
3. Workplace counseling contributes to employ well-being and productivity. This conclusion comes from the pattern of responses from the study.
4. Therefore, employees believe that workplace counseling is beneficial to employees.

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study carried out a descriptive research on the employees' perception of the benefits of workplace counselling. The study was carried out at selected secondary schools within Choma town of Choma District. The objectives of the study were to: (a) establish employees' perceptions on the benefits of workplace counselling to employees, (b) determine how workplace counselling benefits employees, (c) explore the relationship between workplace counselling and employee commitment to work and (d) investigate ways in which workplace counselling can reduce stress in employees.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the findings from the study show that majority of the employees that responded to the questionnaire think that workplace counselling is beneficial to employees and organisations.

Some of these benefits include reduction in work related stress, anxiety and depression, contributing to the employees feeling part of the workplace. This will not only improve their commitment to work and their workplace, it will also improve their attitude, work culture and productivity.

Workplace counselling further contributes to improved job satisfaction and helps employees make informed and correct decisions concerning their career.

In addition, by using workplace counselling to deal with employee disciplinary cases and disputes with and among employees, administrators will cultivate a culture of unity and togetherness in the workplace, thereby creating a conducive environment for employees to

effectively perform their tasks. It also serves workplaces unnecessary cost of replacing dismissed or suspended employees.

However, workplace counselling in the country is still in its infancy stage. In fact, it is still somewhat silent. It is difficult to draw a line to say an employee is now receiving workplace counselling and not just getting advice. This is because workplace counselling is embedded in the day-to-day management responsibilities of an administrator. Nevertheless, work place counselling does exist in Zambian workplaces too.

Recommendations

To the Administrators

Silently offering work-place counseling to their employees is not enough, there is need advocate for a deliberate policy on workplace counseling. There is need to advocate for a structured workplace counseling programme.

To the Government

It is not enough to formulate and implement an HIV/AIDS workplace policy when there are other problems and challenges that people face in the workplace that have a negative effect on their ability to work effectively as well as to be well functioning beings.

While the government has revised the National Policy for HIV and AIDS and Wellness in the Education and Skills Sector to be fully inclusive of all aspects of the Ministry, workplace counseling targeting other challenges teachers face in their line of work, such as work burnout, stress to mention but a few, is still silent. There is need, therefore, for Government and other policy makers to come with a deliberate national workplace counseling policy to be implemented in the workplaces.

Future Research

The present study focused on the perception of employees on the benefits of workplace counselling in Choma district. What has been apparent according to the study is that employees think workplace counseling would be of great benefit to them.

Therefore, future research can be done to find out how workplace counseling can be made into a workplace policy, like the HIV/AIDS Work policy, to be implemented in all workplaces. The researcher recommends also that further study should be done in the whole province.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Frequency Tables

Employees' questionnaire

age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	below 40 years	55	64.7	64.7	64.7
	above 40 years	30	35.3	35.3	100.0
Total		85	100.0	100.0	

*

sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	47	55.3	55.3	55.3
	female	38	44.7	44.7	100.0
Total		85	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.

helps in correct and informed decisions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid to a large extent	44	51.8	51.8	51.8
to a moderate extent	33	38.8	38.8	90.6
to a minor extent	4	4.7	4.7	95.3
not at all	4	4.7	4.7	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

contributes to motivated and satisfied workforce

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid to a large extent	35	41.2	41.2	41.2
to a moderate extent	38	44.7	44.7	85.9
to a minor extent	9	10.6	10.6	96.5
not at all	3	3.5	3.5	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

contributes to reduced absenteeism among employees

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid to a large extent	33	38.8	38.8	38.8
to a moderate extent	37	43.5	43.5	82.4
to a minor extent	12	14.1	14.1	96.5
not at all	3	3.5	3.5	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 4

contributes to reduced work related anxieties and depression

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	to a large extent	33	38.8	39.3	39.3
	to moderate extent	30	35.3	35.7	75.0
	to a minor extent	14	16.5	16.7	91.7
	not at all	7	8.2	8.3	100.0
	Total	84	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		85	100.0		

Table 5

leads to increased job satisfaction of employees

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	to a large extent	30	35.3	35.3	35.3
	to a moderate extent	29	34.1	34.1	69.4
	to a minor extent	20	23.5	23.5	92.9
	not at all	6	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 6

leads to improved mental wellbeing of employees

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	to a major extent	33	38.8	38.8	38.8
	to a moderate extent	23	27.1	27.1	65.9
	to a minor extent	22	25.9	25.9	91.8
	not at all	7	8.2	8.2	100.0
	Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 7

how often employees received workplace counseling

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid to a large extent	3	3.5	3.5	3.5
to a moderate extent	24	28.2	28.2	31.8
to a minor extent	32	37.6	37.6	69.4
not at all	26	30.6	30.6	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 8

how often admin uses counselling to motivate employees

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid to a large extent	7	8.2	8.2	8.2
to a moderate extent	25	29.4	29.4	37.6
to a minor extent	42	49.4	49.4	87.1
not at all	11	12.9	12.9	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

Table 9

how often admin uses counselling to discipline employees

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid to a large extent	15	17.6	17.6	17.6
to a moderate extent	25	29.4	29.4	47.1
to a minor extent	29	34.1	34.1	81.2
not at all	16	18.8	18.8	100.0
Total	85	100.0	100.0	

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age as at last birth birthday	Below 40	Above 41
Sex	Male	Female
Type of school where teaching	Co-education	Single-sex
Duration at current school		
Duration in service		
Duration in current position		

SECTION B:

1. To what extent would you say workplace counselling is effective in:

1. To a large extent. 2. To a moderate extent. 3. To a minor extent. 4. Not at all

Help workers deal with personal problems that affect their work?	1	2	3	4
Help employees and supervisors deal with issues of professional development of employees?	1	2	3	4
Help supervisors deal with employees' disciplinary cases?	1	2	3	4
Enhancing employee motivation, sense of belonging and commitment to work?	1	2	3	4
Reduce stress amongst employees?				

2. To what extent would you say workplace counseling is beneficial to employees?

1	2	3	4
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Thank you for your participation in the study.