

EFFECT OF COUNSELING SERVICES ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE COUNTY GOVERNMENTS IN KENYA: A CASE OF NYAMIRA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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Abstract

Counseling system is a tool used to improve employee performance and increase productivity in an organization. These systems are assets to employees as well as the organization. The general objective of this study therefore was to assess the effect of employee counseling on the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to find out the effect of counseling services on the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira, to ascertain the effect of psychological support on the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira, to determine the effect of established counseling the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira, and to establish the effect of career counseling on the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira. The study was guided by the Person-centered Theory, the psychoanalytical theory, and the Cognitive Behavioral theory. The study employed a descriptive research design. The study was conducted in all departments of the County Government of Nyamira. The target population was 3,818 employees comprising from all the nine (9) departments in the County Government of Nyamira. The researcher adopted stratified random sampling to obtain a sample size of 381 respondents. The sample size for each department was obtained proportionately. Primary data was collected using structured, self-administered questionnaires then fed onto the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for analysis. The findings were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The resultant data was expressed as percentages, graphs, and pie-charts so as to generate meaningful information to describe the findings on the effect of employee counseling on the performance of employees. Statistical measures of central tendencies: mean, mode, median, standard deviations, and weighted averages were used to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. In this study, the researcher adhered to strict ethical guidelines in order to uphold participants' privacy, confidentiality, dignity, rights, and anonymity.

Keywords: employee counseling, counseling services, performance, psychological support, career counseling

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the world of ever increasing complexities stress in the people's lives, especially at the workplaces of the employees, employee counseling has emerged as the latest human resource tool to attract and retain its best employees and also to increase the quality of the workforce. In today's fast-paced corporate world, there is virtually no organization free of stress or that has stress-free employees. The employees can be stressed, depressed, and suffer from too much anxiety arising out of various workplace related issues like managing deadlines, meeting targets, lack of time to fulfill personal and family commitments, bereavement and getting disturbed due to some personal problems (Noe, 2008).

In the United States, guidance and counseling movement was adopted first by neighboring Canada, a British Commonwealth member, and then spread to the United Kingdom and other commonwealth countries like Malaysia during the 1960s. An informal arrangement certainly pre-existed during British colonial rule in which guidance and counseling in schools were traditionally practiced through a system of classroom teachers, housemasters, and hostel masters. Counseling services mainly concentrated on career guidance which was almost entirely based on the voluntary efforts of services who somehow felt motivated to provide the success or failure of an organization is largely dependent on the caliber of the people working therein. According to Kaila (2005), counseling helps employees to cope with problems and thus there is an assumption that it should improve both organizational performance and the employee performance since the employee becomes more cooperative, will worry less about personal problems thus improve in other ways (Egbochuku, 2008).

Presently, Human Resource (HR) practitioners are trying to create fresh and innovative methodology to attract and retain quality workforce. One such tool gaining popularity in the corporate world is employee counseling. It has become an innovative tool of retaining employees. When employee's problems affect their performance or that of the work group, the workplace environment also could lead to the unsafe and unhealthy environment in an organization (Chandrasekar, 2011). At this point, the HR practitioner must intervene. Companies that care for their employees are perceived as more meaningful and purposeful.

Makinde (1987) defines it as an interaction process co-joining the counselee, who is vulnerable and who needs assistance and the counselor who is trained and educated to give this assistance with the goal of helping the counselee learn to deal more effectively with himself and the reality of his environment. Efficiency of counseling mostly is contingent on the approaches and techniques together with the skills used by the counselor. Approaches and practices of counseling change from individual to individual and from condition to condition (Landry & Vandenberg he, 2012).

In Nyamira County, there have been a few reported cases over the quality of service, interpersonal conflicts and stress-related issues touching on a few employees. The main reason cited for interpersonal conflicts is work-related stress. However, researchers have not taken time to find out what brings these conflicts and contributes to work-related stress at the county's work environment. Moreover, we do not have sufficient empirical research on the effect of counseling on employee performance in county governments. This has challenged the researcher to examine the effect of counseling services on employee performance in the County Government of Nyamira. Understanding such factors could enable the county to raise the employees' performance so as to provide satisfactory services and generally lead to improved performance in the county.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Employees' performance is the most important aspect towards the growth of organizations. The job aid, supervisor support and physical support are the factors of workplace environment in an organization that can affect the employees' performance. However, it is unclear the extent to which counseling services influence performance of public institutions. Employee stress has been cited as a factor likely to influence employee turnover. The sources of employee stress are diverse but the effect of counseling services on employee performance remains a concern in most public institutions. Moreover, it has been reported that employee counseling results in employee confidence, improved service delivery and improved awareness on new career possibilities includes leisure, learning and work opportunity which promote the balance of life and work.

Izzat (2014) carried out a study on significance of workplace counseling on increasing job performance in an organization. The results of the study revealed a significant effect of workplace counseling on employee job performance. Likewise the result of a study on assessing the workplace effects of counseling done by David, John and Richard (2012) exposed that workplace counseling occasioned a positive impact on the workroom as measured through the scales of the workplace result. Though these studies have looked at the issue of counseling, they

fail in one key aspect: establishing the direct link between counseling and employee performance. Thus, this study intends to fill this gap in knowledge with specific reference to the County Government of Nyamira, Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to assess the effect of employee counseling services on the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- To establish the effect of career counseling on the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira
- To ascertain the effect of psychological support on the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira
- To determine the effect social support services on the performance of employees in the County Government of Nyamira

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This section discusses the relevant theories that support the study. The study was based on three main theories as explained below.

2.1.1 Person-Centered Theory

This theory was introduced first by Carl Rogers (1902-1987). According to this theory, it was very important to have the relationship between the client and counselor as equal as possible. He believed that it was in the human's nature, and indeed all of life's nature to grow to fulfill its potential. He saw life's natural course as being self-actualizing. By this, he meant that it was within the nature of each and every organism to be motivated to be the best it could be. He did not believe in original sin, believing instead that we were born with this self-actualizing tendency, which in our childhood got blocked from us as we developed a 'false-self' in order to survive. (Chiaburu&Tekleab, 2005).The focus therefore in this therapy is on the relationship

between the counselor and the client and the attitudes and qualities of the counselor being congruence or genuineness, honesty, respecting the client in a non-judgmental way and empathetic understanding (Kidd, 2006). If, for example, an employee is shocked by the behavior, approach or action of his superior; he would continue to avoid that superior. It thus becomes difficult for such superiors to be effective counselors, unless they prove otherwise through their behavior or action on the contrary, (Mulube, 2009). The Person-centered theory will be appropriate for this study because it will form a basis on which this study will be hinged. How do employees of Nyamira County Government relate. Does this relationship help to make them better workers? If it does, does this lead to better performance?

2.1.2 Psychoanalytical Theory

This approach is derived from the psychoanalytic tradition, which has its origin in the work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). It is used to describe his theory of human psychological development, and his hypothesis about the structure of the human mind. Freud believed that talking was as effective as hypnosis in helping clients to locate the cause of their problems, and this belief in the value of the 'talking cure' was, and is, central to psychoanalysis and to all theoretical models which derive from the 'talking cure' are just one aspect of Freud's original work; there are several other important ideas. They include: the role of the unconscious, the structure of personality, the psychosexual stages of development, the importance of the past and childhood experience, the use of ego defense mechanism, transference and the nature of the therapeutic relationship, the significance of dreams, free association or the 'talking cure' and interpretation, (Clements-Croome, 2006; Harmon, 2011). Thus, this theory provides the tools for in-depth understanding of a person's development. Freud contends that feelings of love and trust dealing with negative feelings and developing a positive acceptance of sexuality are social areas that are cemented in the first six years of life. Later, personality development is built on this period of life. This theory therefore will help the researcher understand what motivates employees' behavior in Nyamira County Government and thus form a basis for understanding the reason they perform as they do.

2.2.3 Cognitive Behavioral Theory

According to Hough (2006), this approach views human personality as a collection of learned behaviors. This in effect means that when anyone is rewarded for certain types of behaviors; he/she will tend to repeat them. When they are not rewarded, however, the behavior tends to diminish. This approach was mainly used by D'Zurilla and Goldfried through the Problem-solving therapy (PST) and focused on training in constructive problem solving attitudes and skills (Dobson, 2010). This theory emphasizes the connection between the work, workplace, tools of work and performance. This therefore will form a basis in this study because it will help

the researcher to find out whether the work environment affects performance thus help to deal with the situation before it gets out of hand. In a way, this theory provides a solid ground on which employee counseling services are hinged to help improve performance.

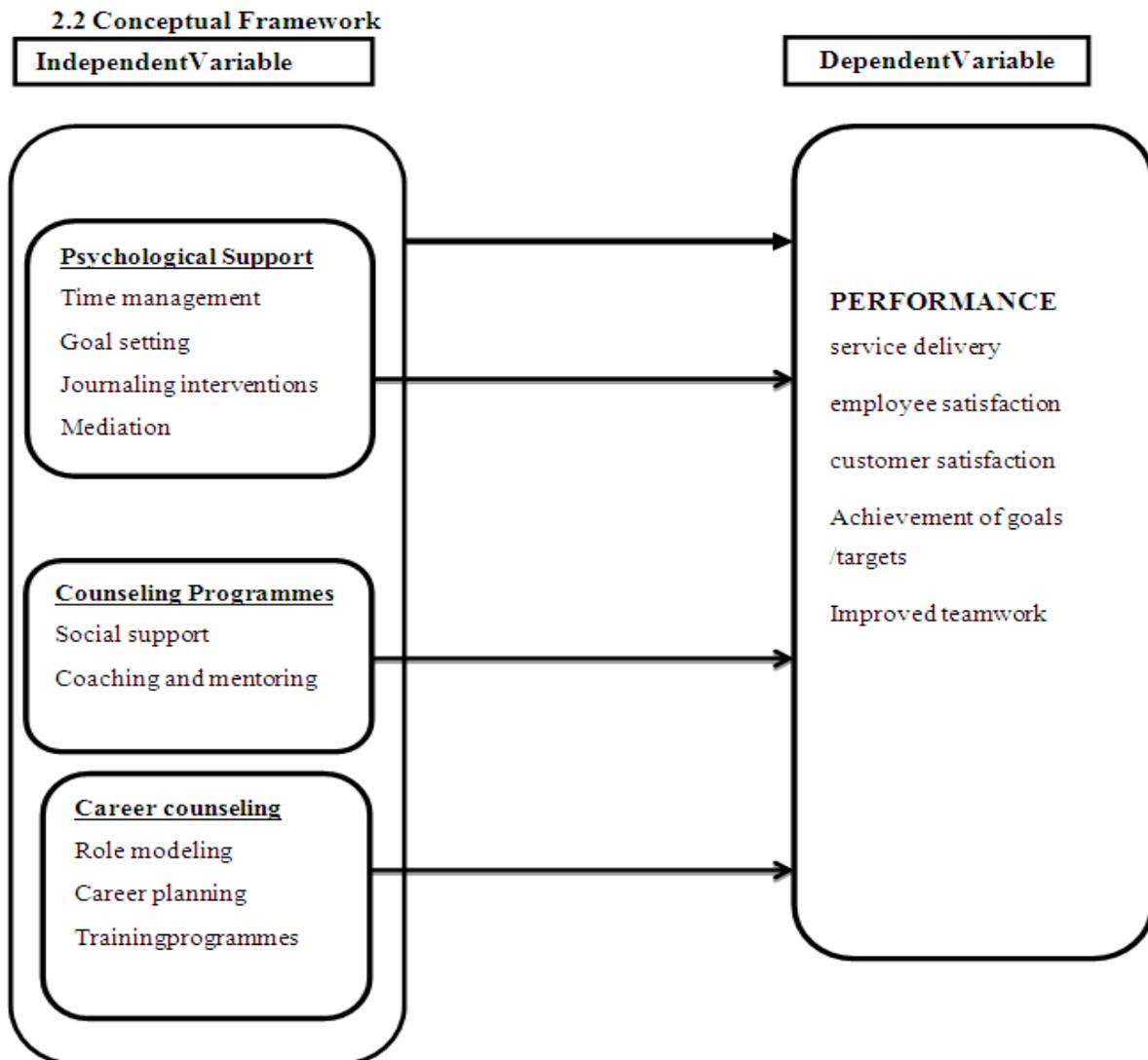


Figure 2. 1 Conceptual Framework

2.4 Empirical Review

Gichinga (2011) defines counselling as a helping relationship in which one person helps another to understand and solve their problems. Nthangi (2007) views career counselling as a personalised process that helps a person understand themselves, explore career options, and clarify and obtain desired career goals. It combines both intuitive and cognitive techniques. The counselling offers insights, guidance and support to help a person understand and manage varied career choices. A career counsellor advises people making and validating career decisions and choices. Effective career counselling at the work environment may assist employees to discover themselves and take bright options. Career counselling is a two way process in which the counsellor and the counselee both contribute to make career counselling efficient and effective. Counselling hence develops a rationale to interrelate internal and external factors.

Cognitive behavioral interventions are designed to educate employees about the role of their thoughts and emotions in managing stressful events and to provide them with the skills to modify their thoughts to facilitate adaptive coping (Bond & Bunce, 2000). These interventions are intended to change individuals' appraisal of stressful situations and their responses to them. For example, employees are taught to become aware of negative thoughts or irrational beliefs and to substitute positive or rational ideas (Bellarosa & Chen, 1997).

Bergmark (1986) points out issues such as reduced attendance at work, poor concentration, and not relating well with other co-workers as indications of a problem. He further states that, external factors such as divorce, death of a family member or a friend, problems with a child at home, and adjusting to new location, alcohol dependence, and domestic conflict are important in determining outcomes of employee performance.

According to Zarkin and Garfinkel (1994), organizations that value its employees will provide counseling programs as a tool to improve job performance, enhance productivity, and protect its investments. In the modern society, employees are faced social, economic, and political challenges that would create an imbalance in their profession. However, authors such as Konrad and Mangel (2000) have recommended employee counseling services as a tool that could aid workers to balance work and personal life such that they are able to resolve conflicts arising from both work and personal life. On the other hand, employee counseling services benefit the organization in a number of ways. Konrad and Mangel (2000) notes that employees are able perform their work better due to these counseling programs while the organization is able to record low numbers of absenteeism and reduced employee turnover. Also, the organization is able to safe on time and monetary resources in the long run.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive case study research design to establish the effect of counseling on employee performance in the County Government of Nyamira - Kenya. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), a descriptive survey is appropriate because it can help in gathering information about the characteristics, actions or opinions of a large group of people with the aim of obtaining information from large samples of the population.

3.2 Target Population

This study focused on 3818 employees in the nine departments at the County. These departments include: Health and medical, Agriculture, Human resource, Finance, Procurement, Lands and housing, Trade and industry, Gender and sports, Public administration, Environment and natural resources, and ICT.

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The respondents were picked using simple random sampling procedure. Mugenda and Mugenda (2007) assert that a sample size of 10% of the total targeted population is sufficient. To sample out the respondents, the researcher therefore took 10% of the total target population thus: $N = 3,818$ represented the entire employee population while sample size was represented by (n) which was 10% of N , $n = 381$ representing sampled respondents.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

DEPARTMENT	TARGET POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE
Health and medical	1213	121
Agriculture	252	25
Finance and procurement	315	31
Lands and housing	57	6
Trade and Industry	30	3

Gender and sports	30	3
Public administration	614	62
Env and natural resources	144	14
Education	1163	116
TOTAL	3,818	381

Source: Human Resource Data - NCG (2018)

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

This study collected primary data for analysis. It was collected using self-administered questionnaires. A questionnaire was preferred in this study because respondents of the study were literate and quite able to answer questions asked adequately. Also, information required could easily be described in writing as indicated by (Oso, 2009). The questionnaires were administered to the 381 County employees.

3.5 Data Analysis and Presentation

The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistical tools (SPSS version 20 and Excel) helped the researcher to describe the data. The Likert scale was used to analyze the mean score and standard deviation. The findings were presented using tables and graphs for further analysis and to facilitate comparison, while explanation to the table and graphs were given in prose. This generated quantitative reports through tabulations, percentages, and measures of central tendency.

The researcher used linear regression model to analyze and test the suitability of the relationship between the variables. The regression model was as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Employee performance

β_0 = Constant Term

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ and β_4 = Beta coefficients

X_1 = career counseling

X_2 = psychological support
 X_3 = counseling programmes
 ε = Error term.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate

The study targeted a sample of 381 participants but only 300 questionnaires were returned making a response of 79% which is an acceptable representation for the sample in a study which can be used for recommendations. The response rate concurs with de Vos *et al*, (2011) who points that in social sciences a response rate of 50% and above is acceptable for analysis.

4.2 Effect of Career Counseling on Performance of Employees in Nyamira County

The study was investigating if mentorship programmes, training programmes, role models and a chance for exploring new career options in the work environment have significant relationship with performance of employees in any work place especially in Nyamira County.

Table 2 Correlations between Career Counseling Variables on Performance

Correlations of career counseling variables		Mentorship	Training	Role Modelling	Exploring Career Options
Mentorship	Pearson Correlation	1	.270	.776	.342
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Training	Pearson Correlation	.270	1	.427	.495
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Role Modelling	Pearson Correlation	.776	.427	1	.209
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300	300
Career Options Exploration	Pearson Correlation	.342	.495	.209	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300

The analysis in table 2 was carried out to establish if the relationship exist between career counseling variables that affect performance of the employees in the offices especially in Nyamira County. The table 4.4 revealed that mentorship programmes for employees and employees having role models in the work place had strong positive significant relationship of $r = .776$ on work performance. It was also clear that when new employees are allowed to explore career options for their profession with different training programmes it provided a positive significant relationship on performance of employees at work place at $r = .495$. This study conquers with the study of Nthangi (2014) who views career counseling as a personalized process that helps a person understand themselves, explore career options, and clarify and

obtain desired career goals. It contributes intuitive and cognitive techniques. The counseling offers insights, guidance and support to help a person understand and manage varied career choices. A career counselor advises people making and validating career decisions and choices. The study therefore claims that effective career counseling at the work environment may assist employees to discover themselves and take bright options. It is true from this study as it agrees with Lufthans (2011) that specific techniques of socializing new employees would include the use of mentors, role models, training programs, reward systems and career planning this will help new employees to marry well the culture of the organization hence succeed in their performance. Robert and Hill (2006) argue that problems related to performance are perhaps the most obvious kind to precipitate the need to visit a career counselor.

4.3 Influence of Psychological support on performance of employees in Nyamira County

The variables that were under investigation included time management, journaling, meditation and setting of clear goals for employees would inspire them to achieve a better result at the end.

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Table 3 Psychological Support on Performance Of Employees In Nyamira County

		Time management	Setting of goals	journaling	meditation
Time management	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2- tailed)	1	.156	.231	.630
			.007	.000	.000
Setting of goals	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2- tailed)	.156	1	.481	.203
		.007		.040	.000
journaling intervention	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2- tailed)	.231	.481	1	.471
		.000	.040		.000
meditation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2- tailed)	.630	.203	.471	1
		.000	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300

Table 3 revealed that psychological support especially time management and meditation for an employee had a strong positive significant relationship on performance of employee at $r = .63$. Investigating journaling and meditation, the study found out that there was a strong positive significant relationship since $r = .481$. It was also clear from table 4.3 that all the variables explaining the psychological support had positive relationship with performance of employees at work place. This agrees with literature since Kabat-Zinn et al. (1992), states that there is growing evidence that the use of meditation reduces stress after four weeks of practicing meditation, all participants reported to have significantly reduced their stress and anxiety. The effects of meditation could be seen in as little 16 as one 20-minute session (Rausch et al., 2006).

4.4. Effects of social support on performance of employees in Nyamira County

The objective was looking at the effect of social support and coaching variables have on the employees' performance in Nyamira County as handled below.

Table 4 Correlations of Social Support Variables on Employees' Performance

		Support by managers	Feedback	Discussion on improvement of work
Support by managers	Pearson Correlation	1	.260	.301
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
Feedback	Pearson Correlation	.260	1	.172
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.003
Discussion on improvement of work	Pearson Correlation	.301	.172	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.003	

Investigation was carried out to establish whether social support had any effect to employees' performance. From table 4.6 it was revealed that support given by managers to employees on

discussing about how to improve the performance had a positive relationship even although it was weak relationship $r = .301$ but it was significant to the performance. Therefore, the study marries the views of Bakker et al., (2004) that Social support from supervisors and colleagues is frequently reported to be negatively associated with stress. Thus, we may expect that not only will individuals with strong social support be better placed to cope with stressful work environments, but effective coping strategies may also result in increased social support from supervisors and colleagues.

4.5 Regression model for the analysis of counseling services and performance of employees

Linear Multiple Regression was used to measure the effect of counseling services on the performance of Nyamira County employees.

Table 5 Regression Coefficient

Model	R	R Square
1	.883 ^a	.780

The table 5 indicated the coefficient of relationship between the counseling services and the performance of the employees in Nyamira County. The coefficient of regression revealed that $r = 0.78$ which explains that 78 percent of the variables caters for the explanation of counseling services affecting the performance of the employees in the counties in their performance while 22 percent will account for the error of sampling and any other factors that were not include or sampled for the study. Therefore, career counseling, psychological support and counseling programmes can be said to be effectively affecting the performance of the employees in any setting especially in Nyamira County.

Table 6 ANOVA Analysis

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	318.269	6	53.045	45.565	.000 ^b
	Residual	341.101	294	1.164		
	Total	659.370	300			

a. Dependent Variable: Counselling leads to improved performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), It leads to increased efficiency, it leads to economical use of resources, It leads to effective service delivery, Helps the organization to achieve goals and targets, leads to improved employee satisfaction, Improved teamwork.

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From the table 6 the Anova analysis revealed that all the variables that all the means of various variables are different and the F analyzed is greater than F calculated. Since F is greater than calculated and the p- value is less than alpha (0.05), then the variables were important in defining the relationship between counseling services and performance of employees in Nyamira County.

The table 7 provides the effect of individual variables on the dependent variable. The coefficients indicated that increase in the value of the dependent variable for each led to unit increase in the predictor variable. The standardized coefficient or the Beta column provides a common scale (Z score; all variables had a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one and are expressed in the same unit of measurement). Those values gave the following regression model:

Table 7 Regression Coefficient

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.102	.742		.137	.001
	There are clear aspects of career planning for all employees	.142	.082	.133	1.734	.004
	Employees are subjected to training programmes	.429	.148	.362	2.888	.004
	all employees are encouraged to have role models	.074	.093	.073	.796	.027
	All employees are encouraged to use meditation whenever they have personal problems	.277	.086	.290	3.202	.002
	Managers give strong social support to	.176	.054	.166	3.234	.001

employees

a. Dependent Variable: Counseling leads to improved performance

Where:

$$\hat{Y} = .16 + .17CX1 + .25PX2 + .42X3CP$$

\hat{Y} = dependent variable; Counseling leads to improved performance

C = Career counseling

P = Psychological support

CP = Counseling programmes

V = Intervening variables

The regression model indicates a positive relationship between counseling services and performance of county employees in Nyamira County because improved career counseling causes the increase in performance of employees by 17 percent, while providing psychological support to employees it promotes the performance of employees by 25 percent and increase in counseling programmes for employees it will improve the performance by 42 percent. This means that when counseling programme is increased by one unit it causes increase in productivity by 42 percent. Therefore, organizations should major on increasing counseling programmes such Social support, coaching and mentoring to new employees and even the old employees in order to increase productivity of the employees in the company.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident from this study that counseling services are important in any organization for bringing emotional stability for employees in order to achieve maximum output from each employee. Variables in the organization such as County policy on employment, personal problems and work place challenges affect the performance they need to minimized so that performance can be maximized. The administrators seem to have a role to play in making employees to develop positive attitudes towards work. Their over-emphasis on return without counseling services without communication is not helping matters in making employees realize that this work is as important as others.

From the statistics, most departments have inadequate employees who understand counseling programmes who can be used for counseling services; therefore, the study recommends that other materials for alternative use should be provided to assist in the process of counseling

employees. Thus department heads and other administrators need to purchase all the resources necessary for counseling and even outsource these services to assist the employees. From the statistics, 70% of the employees indicated that county employment police should be reviewed to assist in succession plan since turnover of employees was very high

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