

An Investigation of the Influence of Emotional Exhaustion on the Psychological Wellbeing of Counsellors in Selected Drug Rehabilitation Centres Within

Nairobi County, Kenya.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of emotional exhaustion on the psychological wellbeing of counsellors in drug rehabilitation centres. The target population for the study was 98 respondents composed of all counsellors in addiction treatment centres within Nairobi County. Inferential statistics for testing research hypotheses were done through linear regression at a level of significance of 0.05. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0.0 was used to perform the linear regression. When emotional exhaustion was analysed in contrast to psychological wellbeing, emotional exhaustion was established to be majorly impacting the interpersonal relationships of the counsellors. It is therefore recommended that counsellors should take a proactive role in safeguarding their interpersonal relationships by implementing measures aimed at alleviating themselves from emotional exhaustion. Treatment centre administrators should also play an active role in creating a conducive work environment for the counsellors to implement these measures.

Keywords: Emotional exhaustion, Work motivation, Interpersonal relationships, Self-esteem, Psychological wellbeing.

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1. Introduction

Emotional exhaustion is a chronic state of physical and emotional depletion that results from excessive job demands and continuous hassles. It describes a feeling of being emotionally overextended by one's work. It is manifested by both physical fatigue and a sense of feeling psychologically and emotionally drained. Emotional exhaustion has been established as a causal factor for psychological distress among counsellors (Winard, 2017). It will start to manifest itself by the counsellor being more cynical or pessimistic than usual, the counsellor will progressively lose their motivation to work, socialize or perform simple tasks. Eventually these feelings will grow stronger and they will then lead the counsellor to feeling trapped or disconnected.

Carlton & Servil (2014) identified four major domains of the counsellor's psychological wellbeing that are particularly impacted by emotional exhaustion, these are:

- a) Moods- Emotional exhaustion was said to have a negative impact on the general moods of the counsellor, frequently contributing towards experiences of anger and irritability, apathy and feeling sad.
- b) Cognitive functioning- Emotional exhaustion was identified as a causal factor for problems such as difficulty concentrating, confusion, forgetfulness and poor memory among counsellors going through periods of the said emotional exhaustion.
- c) The quality of sleep- Emotional exhaustion was said to negatively impact sleep quality, leading to cases of counsellors finding it hard to fall asleep or to maintain sleep through the course of the night, thus leading to daytime fatigue and sleepiness.
- d) Social relationships- Emotional exhaustion was said to have a detrimental impact on the nature of the counsellors' social relationships through tendencies such as a likelihood of the affected counsellor withdrawing into isolation and away from

established support networks and a diminished ability to connect with others at an emotional level.

Carlton and Servil (2014) pointed out that these four domains were all critical to a healthy state of the mind and thus emotional exhaustion among counsellors was bound to lead to a further deterioration of the affected counsellor's general mental health if there was failure to mitigate it.

Emotional exhaustion was identified as a key burnout factor by Allan and Gretson (2019) when they investigated the manifestation of service delivery burnout among a group of 300 counsellors practicing in Buenos Aires Argentina. They asserted that emotional exhaustion was the most dominant domain of service delivery burnout among the study subjects as compared to the two other domains of depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

Wang (2016) postulated that emotional exhaustion was positively correlated with major psychological distress including symptoms of insomnia among counselling psychologists working in drug rehabilitation centres within Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. Within Africa, Osman and Rushad (2020) have identified emotional exhaustion among addictions counsellors in Rabat Morocco and have linked it to various indicators of psychological distress including psychosomatic symptoms.

In Kenya, emotional exhaustion was implicated as the most damaging domain of psychological burnout by Ombati (2017) when he examined a selected number of counsellors operating in private practice within the cities of Nairobi and Mombasa.

1.2 Hypothesis of the Study

The study was guided by the null hypothesis that there was no statistically significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and the psychological wellbeing of counsellors in selected drug rehabilitation centres within Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The study focussed on counsellors working within the drug rehabilitation setting and it geographically involved Nairobi County in Kenya. A sample of selected drug rehabilitation centres were included in the study and four standardized psychological assessment tools were used to aid in meeting the objectives of the study, these are the Maslach Burnout Inventory, Work-Motivation Inventory, Social-Functioning Questionnaire for Interpersonal Relationships and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

1.4 Operational Definition of Key Terms

The following technical terms were defined based on their use in the study:

Counsellor- Referred to an individual employed in a drug rehabilitation centre for the provision of counselling services to persons in treatment for substance use disorders.

Drug Rehabilitation Centre- Referred to all facilities specializing in the treatment of persons with substance use disorders and operating under license from the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA).

Psychological Wellbeing- Referred to a state of adaptive emotional, cognitive and behavioural functioning as exemplified through the parameters of self-esteem, work motivation and interpersonal relationships.

2. Literature Review

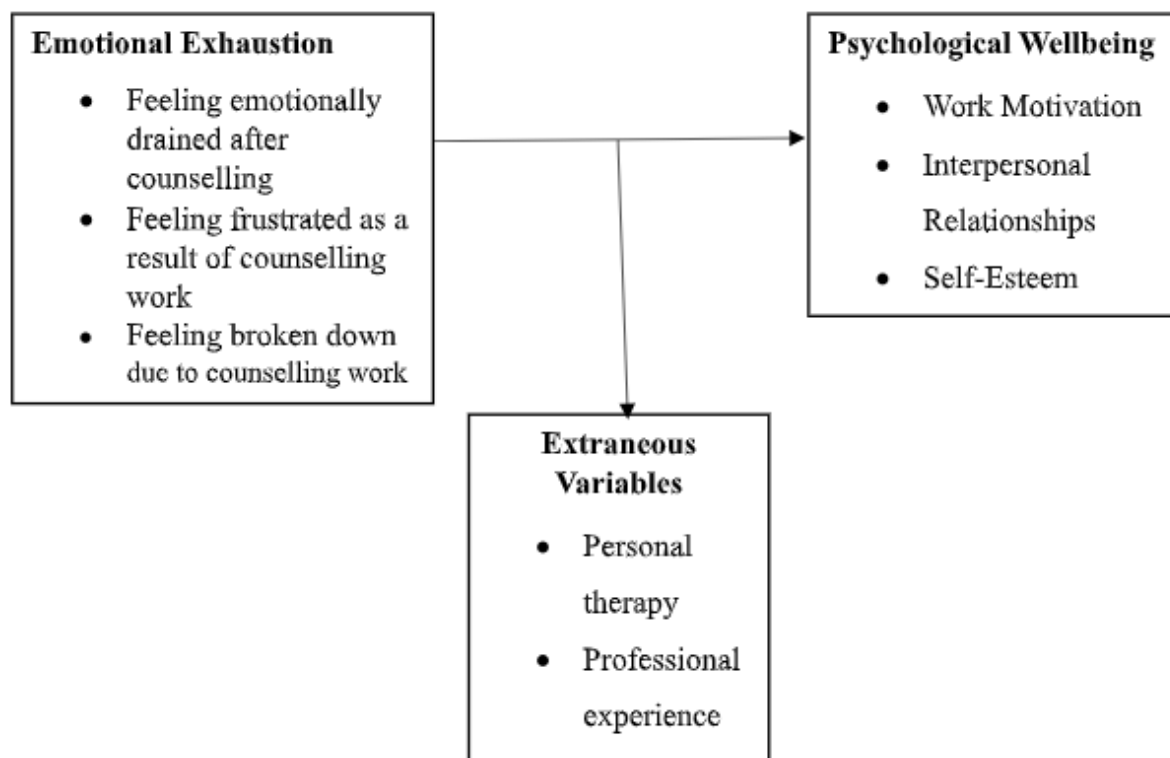
2.1 Theoretical Framework

The multidimensional theory of Burnout as postulated by Maslach (2010) conceptualizes service delivery burnout in terms of its three core components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. According to this theory, service delivery burnout is an individual's stress experience embedded in a context of complex social relationships. It involves the person's conception of both self and others.

Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources. The major sources of this exhaustion are work overload and personal conflict at work. Workers feel drained and used up, without any source of replenishment. They lack the energy to face another day or another person in need. The emotional exhaustion component represents the basic individual stress dimension of service delivery burnout.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

In trying to conceptualize how various variables interacted within the study, it was concluded that the independent variable was emotional exhaustion and the dependent variable was psychological wellbeing. Psychological wellbeing is manifest through indicators such as work motivation, interpersonal relationships and self-esteem. Emotional exhaustion is as a result of various factors including lack of supervision, excessive workload and un conducive work environments. When these factors interact, they can exacerbate the counsellor's experience of service emotional exhaustion. The extraneous variables were factors other than emotional exhaustion that may have affected the psychological wellbeing of these counsellors such as the professional experience of the counsellor (including the years spent in active practice and personal therapy experience)



Source: Author 2023

Figure1: *The Relationship between Emotional Exhaustion and Psychological Wellbeing*

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The researchers employed the correlational research design to determine the relationship between the independent variable of emotional exhaustion and the dependent variable of psychological wellbeing as exemplified by the indicators of work motivation, interpersonal relationships and self-esteem.

3.2 Location of the Study

The study was carried out in Nairobi County, Kenya. The County borders Kiambu County to the North, East and West and Machakos County and Kajiado County to the South. The

researcher carried out the study in Nairobi Country because it is the most populated and most heterogenous county in Kenya, thus a good representation of Kenya's social fabric. Nairobi County also has the highest concentration of addiction treatment centres as compared to the other counties in Kenya, thus it represents a good picture of the addiction treatment landscape in Kenya. According to NACADA (2021), only 16 addiction treatment centres had been licensed and accredited to operate within Nairobi County, all 16 were included in the study as part of the sample.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study was addictions counsellors working in drug rehabilitation centres within Nairobi County in Kenya. There were sixteen addiction treatment centres within Nairobi County that had been accredited and licensed by NACADA. The total number of Counsellors working in these sixteen addiction treatment centres was 98.

3.4 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

The researcher employed purposive sampling in the selection of the 16 addiction treatment centers that had been accredited by NACADA for operation within Nairobi County. In each of these 16 addiction treatment centres, three addiction counsellors were selected to take part in the study. Gal et al. (2003) postulated that a representative sample for a population of less than 10,000 should be at least 10% of it. The researcher thus selected three counsellors per facility since all of the 16 identified facilities had a total of 10 counsellors or less, hence three counsellors for each facility met the 10% threshold. Simple random sampling was employed in the selection of the three participant counsellors within each facility. The total sample size thus consisted of 48 counsellors.

3.5 Research Instruments

The researchers utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory for the measurement of emotional exhaustion, Work Motivation Inventory for the measurement of work motivation, Social-Functioning Questionnaire for Interpersonal Relationships for the measurement of functioning in interpersonal relationships and the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale for the measurement of self-esteem

4. Research Findings and Discussions

4.1 Inferential Analysis of Emotional Exhaustion

The study sought to establish the influence of emotional exhaustion on the psychological wellbeing of counsellors in select drug rehabilitation centres within Nairobi County, Kenya. Respondents were thus presented with the Maslach Burnout Inventory and scores on the Emotional Exhaustion section were analysed in relation to those of the Work-Motivation Inventory, Social-Functioning Questionnaire for Interpersonal Relationships and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Linear Regression Analysis of Emotional Exhaustion

Table1: *Analysis of Variance for Emotional Exhaustion and Self-Esteem*

		Df	Mean Square	Sum of Squares	Sig.
Regression	16.727	1	16.727	.191	.664 ^b
Residual	4033.190	46	87.678		
Total	4049.917	47			

a. Dependent Variable: Scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Exhaustion as measured on the Maslach Burnout Inventory

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated a significance value of .664 which is more than .05, the model is thus not significant. It can hence be concluded that emotional exhaustion as

measured on the Maslach Burnout Inventory is a poor predictor of self-esteem as measured by Scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Table2: *Analysis of Variance for Emotional Exhaustion and Social Functioning Within Interpersonal Relationships*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	251.782	1	251.782	9.125	.004 ^b
Residual	1269.218	46	27.592		
Total	1521.000	47			

a. Dependent Variable: Scores on the Social Functioning Questionnaire for Interpersonal Relationships

b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Exhaustion as measured on the Maslach Burnout Inventory

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated a significance value of .004 which is less than .05, the model is thus significant.

Table3: *Model Summary for the Linear Regression Analysis of Emotional Exhaustion and Social Functioning Within Interpersonal Relationships*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.407 ^a	.166	.147	5.25278

a. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Exhaustion as measured on the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Based on the above model summary, the adjusted R squared is 0.147, thus 14.7% of the variance in social functioning within Interpersonal Relationships can be explained by one's level of Emotional Exhaustion.

Table4: *Analysis of Variance for Emotional Exhaustion and Work Motivation*

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	451.295	1	451.295	.402	.529 ^b
Residual	51597.518	46	1121.685		
Total	52048.813	47			

a. Dependent Variable: Scores on the Work Motivation Inventory

b. Predictors: (Constant), Emotional Exhaustion as measured on the Maslach Burnout Inventory

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated a significance value of .529 which is more than .05, the model is thus not significant. It can hence be concluded that emotional exhaustion as measured on the Maslach Burnout Inventory is a poor predictor of work motivation as measured by Scores on the Work Motivation Inventory.

4.2 Discussion of Research Findings

The study objective was to investigate the influence of emotional exhaustion on the psychological wellbeing of counsellors in selected drug rehabilitation centres within Nairobi County, Kenya.

The inferential statistics presented a mixed picture, psychological wellbeing was investigated through the three variables of interpersonal relationships, work motivation and self-esteem. Of all three variables, a significant relationship was established between Emotional Exhaustion and a reduced quality of Interpersonal Relationships only. This relationship manifested through a significant linear regression. These findings lend credence to previous works by Carlton and Servil (2014) who highlighted the detrimental impact of emotional exhaustion on interpersonal relationships among counsellors. However, the finding that the other two indicators of psychological wellbeing i.e., work motivation and self-esteem were

not significantly affected by emotional exhaustion is contrary to the postulations of Winard (2017) who asserted that there was a significant link between the occurrence of emotional exhaustion and the lowering of work motivation and self-esteem.

5. Recommendations

When emotional exhaustion was analysed in contrast to psychological wellbeing, emotional exhaustion was established to be majorly impacting the interpersonal relationships of the counsellors i.e., leading to a reduction in the quality of their interpersonal relationships. It is therefore recommended that counsellors should take a proactive role in safeguarding their interpersonal relationships by implementing measures aimed at alleviating themselves from emotional exhaustion. Treatment centre administrators should also play an active role in creating a conducive work environment for the counsellors to implement these measures. Further research on these measures is needed.

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