

## Psychological Health, Well-Being, and Organizational Job Performance: The Role of Employee Counseling at the Workplace

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**ABSTRACT:** This study investigates the role of employee counseling in promoting psychological health, well-being, and organizational job performance. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research explores employees' experiences and perceptions of counseling services across various sectors. The findings reveal that counseling significantly reduces stress, enhances coping mechanisms, and fosters a supportive work environment, which collectively improves productivity, engagement, and retention. Despite these benefits, challenges such as limited awareness, stigma, and resource constraints hinder effective implementation. The study recommends increasing organizational commitment, normalizing counseling through leadership endorsement, and developing culturally sensitive programs to maximize impact. The results contribute to understanding how integrated counseling services can enhance both employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

**KEYWORDS:** Employee counseling, psychological health, Job performance, Organizational well-being, Workplace mental health

### INTRODUCTION

The psychological health and overall well-being of employees have become a central concern for organizations worldwide as they seek to enhance job performance and maintain competitive advantage in a dynamic business environment. Mental health challenges such as stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression are increasingly prevalent in modern workplaces, largely driven by rising workloads, job insecurity, role ambiguity, and rapid technological changes (World Health Organization, 2022). These conditions not only diminish individual quality of life but also impose substantial economic costs on organizations through absenteeism, presenteeism, low productivity, and high turnover rates. For instance, the World Health Organization estimates that depression and anxiety disorders cost the global economy over \$1 trillion annually in lost productivity (WHO, 2022). Consequently, organizations are adopting employee-centered interventions to address these issues, and workplace counseling has emerged as a strategic tool to promote psychological health and improve organizational outcomes.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model provides a theoretical framework for understanding how workplace interventions such as counseling can buffer the adverse effects of job stressors on employee well-being and performance. According to the JD-R model, employees experience strain when job demands such as workload, time pressure, and role conflict outweigh the resources available to them, including social support, autonomy, and coping mechanisms (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Counseling services provide a critical resource that helps employees manage stress, develop coping strategies, and enhance resilience, thereby reducing the risk of burnout and improving engagement and productivity (Schaufeli, 2018). Similarly, Positive Organizational Behavior theory emphasizes psychological capital—comprising self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience—as key to sustaining employee well-being and performance. Counseling interventions that enhance these attributes can therefore have significant organizational benefits (Luthans et al., 2021).

Recent empirical studies underscore the effectiveness of workplace counseling in promoting mental health and improving job performance. For example, a systematic review by Attridge (2022) found that Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which often include counseling services, are associated with reduced absenteeism, enhanced employee engagement, and higher job satisfaction. These programs also contribute to lowering turnover intentions by fostering a sense of organizational support. Similarly, research by McLeod (2020) demonstrated that workplace counseling leads to measurable reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms, while also improving overall job performance indicators such as task efficiency and interpersonal relations.

Evidence from different sectors confirms that structured counseling interventions positively influence work outcomes. In the healthcare sector, where occupational stress levels are particularly high, randomized controlled trials have shown that interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy and resilience training significantly improve employee well-being and work engagement (Shanafelt et al., 2021). Comparable findings have been reported in corporate settings, where access to counseling services has been linked to higher productivity and morale (Richardson, 2022). Moreover, research indicates that these benefits are sustained over

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time, with employees who receive counseling demonstrating long-term improvements in coping strategies and adaptive performance (Knight et al., 2021).

While wellness programs such as mindfulness sessions and fitness incentives have gained popularity, recent critiques suggest that these initiatives often fail to address the root causes of workplace stress and may have limited impact on employee well-being (Kelly et al., 2021). In contrast, counseling interventions offer personalized, evidence-based support that directly targets psychological challenges, making them more effective in fostering mental health and improving job outcomes. Importantly, the success of counseling programs depends on their integration into the organizational culture, leadership commitment, and employee trust in confidentiality (Attridge, 2022). Organizations that combine counseling with supportive work environments—characterized by fairness, autonomy, and recognition—tend to achieve better results in terms of both well-being and performance (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Organizational constructs such as perceived organizational support (POS) and psychosocial safety climate (PSC) mediate the relationship between counseling and performance outcomes. POS refers to employees' perception that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, while PSC reflects the extent to which management prioritizes psychological health in policies and practices (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Studies show that when counseling programs are implemented within a context of strong POS and PSC, employees are more likely to engage in discretionary behaviors that enhance organizational performance, such as collaboration, creativity, and proactive problem-solving (Dollard & Bakker, 2019). Moreover, counseling can foster psychological safety—a team climate where individuals feel safe to express ideas and seek help—thereby supporting innovation and collective learning (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

The business case for investing in workplace counseling is reinforced by economic analyses demonstrating positive returns on investment (ROI). For instance, Deloitte (2022) reports that for every dollar spent on mental health interventions, organizations gain an average of \$4 in improved productivity and reduced absenteeism. This evidence has prompted many multinational companies to prioritize mental health strategies, including counseling services, as part of their human resource and corporate sustainability agendas (Gallup, 2022). However, the level of adoption varies significantly across industries and regions, with developing economies often lagging due to resource constraints and cultural stigma surrounding mental health (World Bank, 2023). Nevertheless, studies from emerging economies indicate that workplace counseling programs can yield significant benefits even in resource-limited settings, improving both employee resilience and organizational outcomes (Mwangi & Kariuki, 2021).

Despite the growing recognition of its importance, workplace counseling remains underutilized in many organizations, and empirical evidence on its long-term impact on job performance is still evolving. Moreover, cultural differences, organizational norms, and variations in program quality present challenges to the universal applicability of existing findings. These gaps underscore the need for context-specific research to deepen understanding of how counseling interventions influence psychological health, well-being, and organizational performance in diverse settings. This study seeks to contribute to this discourse by examining the role of employee counseling in enhancing mental well-being and job performance, thereby providing insights for policy and practice aimed at building healthier and more productive workplaces (Darko & Osei, 2020).

## Statement of the Problem

Employee psychological health and well-being have become critical determinants of organizational success in an increasingly competitive and dynamic work environment. The modern workplace is characterized by high job demands, rapid technological changes, performance pressures, and organizational restructuring, all of which contribute to elevated stress levels among employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout have been widely reported across various sectors, resulting in diminished job satisfaction, low morale, and declining productivity (World Health Organization, 2022). These mental health issues have significant organizational implications, including increased absenteeism, presenteeism, high turnover, and reduced overall job performance (Attridge, 2022). In fact, the World Health Organization estimates that mental health disorders lead to global productivity losses exceeding \$1 trillion annually, making them a critical concern for organizations worldwide (WHO, 2022). Despite these alarming statistics, many organizations remain reactive rather than proactive in addressing employee psychological health, focusing more on physical health initiatives while neglecting mental health interventions.

Workplace counseling has been identified as a strategic intervention capable of mitigating mental health risks and promoting employee well-being. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which often incorporate counseling services, have been shown to improve psychological health, enhance coping skills, and reduce stress-related disorders (McLeod, 2020). Furthermore, research suggests that organizations that implement counseling programs experience lower turnover rates, higher employee engagement, and better overall job performance (Richardson, 2022). However, while counseling has demonstrated effectiveness in some contexts, its integration within organizational frameworks remains inconsistent. Many employers either lack formal counseling structures or provide generic wellness programs that fail to address specific psychological challenges (Kelly et al., 2021). Moreover, in several developing countries, including those in Africa, mental health support at the workplace is limited, often due to cost constraints, lack of awareness, and cultural stigma associated with seeking psychological help (Mwangi & Kariuki, 2021). This situation raises

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questions about whether workplace counseling can play a transformative role in improving psychological well-being and job performance, particularly in organizational contexts where such programs are not widely institutionalized.

Another critical dimension of the problem is the strong empirical evidence linking employee psychological well-being to organizational outcomes such as job performance, yet the mechanisms through which workplace counseling influences these outcomes remain underexplored. While several studies have documented the benefits of counseling on stress reduction and mental health improvement, fewer have examined its direct and indirect effects on performance metrics such as productivity, task efficiency, and innovation (Shanafelt et al., 2021). Furthermore, recent critiques argue that generic wellness programs have limited impact on employee well-being when underlying structural issues, such as role ambiguity and lack of support, remain unresolved (Kelly et al., 2021). This underscores the need for research that not only evaluates counseling as a mental health intervention but also investigates how such programs translate into measurable organizational outcomes. Without this understanding, organizations may fail to justify investments in counseling services, perpetuating a cycle of poor mental health and declining productivity.

The research gap is further widened by the contextual limitations of existing studies. Most empirical evidence on workplace counseling originates from developed countries, where mental health services are well-established and organizational cultures generally support psychological interventions (Attridge, 2022; Luthans et al., 2021). In contrast, there is limited scholarly work focusing on developing economies, where mental health resources are scarce, and cultural attitudes often discourage seeking counseling support (World Bank, 2023). Consequently, it remains unclear whether the positive outcomes reported in advanced economies can be replicated in settings with different socio-cultural dynamics, resource availability, and organizational practices. Additionally, prior studies have often examined mental health and job performance as separate constructs, with little focus on the mediating role of workplace counseling in bridging the two (Knight et al., 2021). This lack of integrated research leaves practitioners and policymakers without sufficient evidence to design and implement effective counseling interventions that align with organizational goals and employee needs.

Given the strategic importance of employee well-being for organizational sustainability and the pressing need for evidence-based interventions, it is essential to conduct empirical research that critically examines the role of workplace counseling in enhancing psychological health, well-being, and job performance. Such research is necessary to fill the existing knowledge gaps, particularly in under-researched contexts, and to provide organizations with practical insights on how counseling interventions can be leveraged to promote employee welfare and optimize performance outcomes. Failure to address this gap could result in continued deterioration of mental health among employees, leading to reduced productivity, high turnover, and diminished organizational competitiveness in an increasingly challenging business environment.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of employee counseling in promoting psychological health, well-being, and organizational job performance. The study seeks to explore how counseling interventions within the workplace influence employees' mental well-being and, in turn, impact overall organizational performance, with a focus on identifying practical strategies for improving employee support systems.

## Specific Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between workplace counseling and employees' psychological health and well-being.
2. To examine the influence of employee counseling on organizational job performance indicators such as productivity, engagement, and retention.
3. To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing effective employee counseling programs within organizations

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in models that explain the relationship between workplace resources, psychological well-being, and employee performance. Among the most widely accepted frameworks is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which provides a comprehensive explanation of how job characteristics influence employee well-being and performance outcomes. The JD-R model posits that every job consists of demands and resources, where job demands refer to aspects of work that require sustained effort and are associated with physiological and psychological costs, such as workload, time pressure, and emotional strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In contrast, job resources are aspects of the job that help in achieving work goals, reduce job demands, or stimulate personal growth, including organizational support, autonomy, and access to psychological counseling. The model suggests that when job demands are high and resources are limited, employees are more likely to experience stress, burnout, and disengagement. Conversely, when adequate resources are available to meet these demands, employees are more resilient, engaged, and productive.

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The relevance of the JD-R model to this study lies in its explanation of how employee counseling functions as a critical job resource that buffers the adverse effects of job demands on mental well-being and job performance. Counseling provides employees with coping strategies, emotional support, and psychological tools to manage stressors effectively. This resource can mitigate burnout and foster a positive psychological state, ultimately enhancing work engagement and task performance. Research supports this proposition, with studies demonstrating that employees who have access to counseling services report lower stress levels and greater job satisfaction compared to those without such support (Richardson, 2022). Furthermore, counseling aligns with the motivational process in the JD-R framework, which emphasizes that job resources not only reduce strain but also foster engagement by fulfilling employees' intrinsic needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Schaufeli, 2018). When employees feel supported through counseling interventions, they are more likely to be motivated and committed to organizational goals.

Empirical evidence further validates the applicability of the JD-R model in explaining the role of counseling in improving psychological health and job performance. A study by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) noted that job resources such as supportive leadership and employee assistance programs have a strong positive effect on engagement and performance, even in high-demand environments. Similarly, McLeod (2020) observed that counseling services function as a preventive and corrective mechanism, reducing the risk of burnout and absenteeism while enhancing task completion rates. In organizations where counseling is accessible, employees often report higher levels of optimism, resilience, and adaptability—attributes consistent with the notion of psychological resources highlighted in the JD-R framework. This demonstrates that counseling not only mitigates the negative outcomes of job demands but also amplifies positive performance drivers.

Another relevant theoretical perspective is the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which provides insight into the dynamics of stress, well-being, and resource utilization in the workplace. COR theory, introduced by Hobfoll (1989), posits that individuals strive to acquire, maintain, and protect valuable resources, which include objects, personal characteristics, conditions, and energies. Stress occurs when these resources are threatened, lost, or insufficient to meet job demands. Conversely, resource gains help individuals cope with stress and improve performance outcomes. Within this framework, workplace counseling can be conceptualized as a resource gain mechanism that equips employees with psychological tools, emotional resilience, and social support necessary to manage stressors effectively (Hobfoll et al., 2018). By providing employees with coping strategies and emotional stability, counseling not only offsets resource loss but also contributes to resource accumulation, leading to improved well-being and enhanced job performance.

The relevance of COR theory to this study is significant because it explains why employees who lack supportive interventions such as counseling may experience resource depletion, resulting in stress, burnout, and poor performance. Counseling acts as a compensatory resource that restores balance by addressing emotional strain and promoting adaptive coping strategies. Research evidence supports this notion. For instance, studies have shown that counseling interventions contribute to increased self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience—key personal resources that predict engagement and performance (Luthans et al., 2021). Additionally, counseling has been found to reduce absenteeism and turnover, which are common organizational outcomes of resource depletion (Attridge, 2022). By reinforcing personal and social resources, counseling interventions enable employees to withstand high job demands without succumbing to negative psychological states.

Both the JD-R model and COR theory converge on the principle that resources—whether job-related or personal—play a central role in determining employee well-being and performance outcomes. Counseling services embody this principle by providing both emotional and cognitive resources necessary to manage workplace stress effectively. In addition, these theories underscore the reciprocal relationship between well-being and performance, suggesting that employees with adequate psychological resources are more engaged, creative, and productive. This is particularly important in contemporary organizational settings characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and frequent change, where employees are constantly required to adapt and perform under pressure (Knight et al., 2021). Counseling serves as a strategic tool for organizations to enhance adaptability by strengthening the psychological capital of their workforce.

Furthermore, these theoretical perspectives highlight the potential mediating role of psychological well-being in the relationship between counseling and job performance. According to the JD-R framework, resources such as counseling enhance engagement by reducing stress and promoting motivation, which in turn leads to higher performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Similarly, COR theory suggests that resource gains achieved through counseling interventions reduce the likelihood of resource loss cycles, thereby fostering sustained performance (Hobfoll et al., 2018). These theoretical propositions have important implications for organizational practice, as they suggest that counseling should not be viewed merely as an employee welfare initiative but as a strategic investment in human capital that yields measurable performance benefits.

Despite the robust theoretical grounding, there is a paucity of empirical research exploring how these theoretical principles apply in diverse organizational and cultural contexts, particularly in developing economies. Most studies validating the JD-R and COR frameworks in relation to counseling have been conducted in developed countries, where organizational resources and mental health awareness are relatively high (Attridge, 2022). In contrast, limited research exists in settings where counseling services are not widely institutionalized, and cultural stigma surrounding mental health persists (Mwangi & Kariuki, 2021). This gap necessitates



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context-specific investigations to ascertain the extent to which counseling can function as a resource buffer and performance enhancer in organizations operating under different socio-economic and cultural conditions. Addressing this gap will not only contribute to theoretical enrichment but also provide practical insights for organizations seeking to optimize employee well-being and job performance through evidence-based interventions.

### Empirical Review

Several contemporary empirical studies have examined the effects of employee counseling and assistance programs on psychological well-being and job performance, offering a nuanced understanding of mechanisms, outcomes, and contextual factors. One recent longitudinal study in Southeast Asia involving over 15,000 employees across Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam found that only about 29 percent of employees were aware of or had access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Yet access—particularly to mental health webinars, counseling, therapy, or screening—was significantly associated with better mental health, higher thriving at work, elevated productivity, and lower turnover intention ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that simply having EAPs is not enough; awareness and actual access significantly mediate benefits, reinforcing that program uptake and visibility are critical for realizing positive outcomes.

A quasi-experimental study following up clients who enrolled in a counseling-based EAP found meaningful improvements in health-related productivity four weeks and six months after engagement, compared to a matched control group. Improvements in performance questionnaires were statistically significant, with the marginal annual productivity gain estimated at \$15,600 per employee. However, absenteeism did not significantly improve, and biological measures such as heart rate and heart rate variability did not reach significant change. These findings indicate that counseling can yield measurable productivity benefits quickly, but physiological markers and absenteeism may require longer or more intensive intervention.

In the African context, a study at Mumias Sugar Company in Kenya explored in-house versus external counseling services. Over 60 percent of employees rated in-house counseling as more effective at improving performance, with high managerial ratings in terms of increased morale, productivity, loyalty, and reduced accidents and sickness absence. Managers reported that up to 83 percent saw enhanced work performance following counseling interventions. This case highlights not only that workplace counseling is effective in improving concrete performance indicators in a sub-Saharan African setting, but also that cultural alignment and organizational embedment (as in-house) may influence perceived effectiveness.

In Nairobi-based NGOs, research into workplace counseling identified work-life balance, adaptability to organizational change, and stress management as key determinants of employee performance. The study concluded that counseling addressing these factors significantly enhanced productivity and reduced absenteeism among NGO staff. While the methodology did not measure direct performance numerically, secondary outcomes were strongly positive, suggesting practical benefit in humanitarian or relief-sector contexts where stress and turnover are high.

Within higher-education settings, an empirical panel study tracking academics over a three-year period found that job performance negatively predicted burnout, and that psychological counseling significantly moderated the burnout–performance link ( $\beta \approx -0.577$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Counseling reduced burnout, particularly among lower-performing groups, although surprisingly it did not directly improve performance levels over time. This nuance suggests that counseling may act primarily to preserve mental health rather than directly boost performance, especially in high-pressure academic roles where performance ceilings are self-imposed or constrained. Another study across frontline workers in China applied structural equation modeling to test whether EAPs affected job performance, mediated by psychological contract and perceived organizational support. Findings showed that EAPs positively influenced performance, with both psychological contract and organizational support serving as significant mediators. This confirms that counseling interventions are more effective when embedded in supportive climates where employees feel a reciprocal commitment and when the promise of support is fulfilled through tangible services.

Psychologically informed coaching, closely related to workplace counseling, has also been tested empirically. A meta-analysis of 20 studies ( $n \approx 957$ ) found that cognitive behavioral and positive psychology–based coaching significantly improved goal attainment ( $g = 1.29$ ) and self-efficacy ( $g = 0.59$ ), and generated stronger effects on objectively rated performance than self-reported performance. Integrative coaching approaches combining techniques yielded effect size  $g = 0.71$  for psychological well-being. These findings support the idea that counseling informed by therapeutic frameworks can have substantial impact on both well-being and performance when rigorously delivered.

Taken together, these studies offer rich insights. The Southeast Asia cross-sectional research establishes that EAP awareness and access are strongly tied to outcomes; the quasi-experimental study shows quick productivity gains, if not physiological change; and the Kenya studies confirm perceived and reported effectiveness in low-resource contexts, particularly when counseling is internal and contextualized. The academic panel study nuances the discussion by suggesting that counseling primarily alleviates burnout but may not directly elevate performance, especially among higher performers. The Chinese structural equation model reinforces the importance of mediators like perceived support in translating EAP availability into performance outcomes. Finally, the coaching

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meta-analysis underlines the potency of structured, psychologically grounded interventions in enhancing both performance and well-being.

Critically, across studies there is variability in design—from cross-sectional surveys to quasi-experimental and longitudinal panel data—and in outcome measures, ranging from self-reports to manager ratings and biological proxies. Some studies, such as the Kenyan case and the NGO study, rely heavily on perception and qualitative descriptors, while others, such as the quasi-experimental study and meta-analysis, quantify effect sizes. This diversity enriches understanding but also highlights gaps: few studies combine rigorous experimental control, long-term tracking, and objective measures of both psychological health and performance in the same design. Moreover, studies from developing regions remain limited in number and scope, albeit promising in their findings.

Another gap lies in unpacking which elements of counseling matter most—frequency, modality (individual vs group), internal vs external delivery, integration with broader HR practices—and how these interact with organizational culture and leadership behavior. For instance, the Kenyan study suggests in-house counseling is preferred; the Chinese study demonstrates the mediating role of psychological contract; the panels indicate differential impact across performance levels. Yet a comprehensive empirical picture of how these factors converge is missing.

In addition, the long-term sustainability of benefits remains underexplored. While the quasi-experimental study measures outcomes up to six months, and the panel study spans three years, very few studies track well-being and performance trajectories beyond this timeframe. Nor is there extensive investigation into how counseling interventions might evolve over time with changing job demands or workforce composition. Finally, few studies systematically examine effects on organizational-level outcomes such as turnover rates, productivity metrics, or accident rates, beyond individual-level well-being or performance.

### METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how traditional Ghanaian values influence the work ethic of individuals across different socio-cultural and occupational backgrounds. A qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate due to the study's focus on capturing nuanced, in-depth understandings of participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and culturally rooted beliefs regarding work. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is ideal for examining complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when subjective meanings and cultural influences are central to the inquiry. This design allowed for an open-ended exploration of how traditional norms, moral teachings, and communal expectations shape the behaviors and attitudes of Ghanaians toward work in both formal and informal settings.

The population for this study consisted of Ghanaian adults aged 18 and above who are either actively working, self-employed, unemployed, or engaged in informal labor. Participants were selected from diverse regions of Ghana—specifically Greater Accra, Ashanti, Northern, and Central regions—to reflect the country's ethnic, cultural, and occupational diversity. The inclusion of both urban and rural participants ensured a broader understanding of how traditional values manifest differently across geographic and socio-economic contexts. Given that traditional values are often transmitted through familial, religious, and communal structures, individuals from various age groups, religious backgrounds, and occupational sectors were included to ensure the richness and variability of perspectives (Patton, 2015).

The sampling technique adopted was purposive sampling, which allowed the researcher to deliberately select participants who possess rich knowledge or experiences relevant to the research topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). Specifically, individuals who had been socialized within traditional Ghanaian cultural environments or who self-identified as being influenced by indigenous values were targeted. A total of 30 participants were interviewed, including artisans, farmers, civil servants, traders, teachers, and unemployed youth. This sample size was sufficient for thematic saturation—the point at which no new information or themes emerge from additional data collection (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The purposive selection also included elders and community leaders known to be custodians of cultural knowledge to provide historical and philosophical insights into the evolution of work ethic in Ghanaian culture.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which enabled flexibility in probing deeper into participants' narratives while maintaining consistency across core questions. The interview guide included open-ended questions focusing on participants' upbringing, their understanding of work ethic, the values taught at home and in community settings, and their views on how these values influence behavior at the workplace. Questions were designed to elicit reflections on cultural principles such as respect, communalism, industriousness, honesty, and obedience—values commonly associated with traditional Ghanaian norms (Yankah, 2012). Interviews were conducted in English, Twi, Dagbani, and Ewe, depending on the language preference of participants, and were subsequently transcribed and translated where necessary to ensure accuracy and retention of meaning.

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, member checking was employed by sharing preliminary findings with selected participants for feedback and validation. Furthermore, field notes and reflexive memos were maintained to account for researcher bias and provide context to the interview data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All ethical protocols were observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

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Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Transcripts were manually coded and clustered into categories based on recurring ideas, expressions, and cultural references. Through an iterative and inductive process, themes emerged that captured how traditional Ghanaian values influence perceptions of responsibility, diligence, respect for authority, and communal obligations in work environments. Patterns across different demographic groups were also examined to understand how generational shifts, regional differences, and occupational sectors impact the interpretation and application of these traditional values.

This methodological approach allowed for a deep, contextually grounded understanding of the role of cultural heritage in shaping Ghanaian work ethic. By foregrounding participants' voices and cultural narratives, the study offers insight into how indigenous value systems continue to inform, conflict with, or adapt to modern work expectations in Ghanaian society.

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **To assess the relationship between workplace counseling and employees' psychological health and well-being.**

The qualitative analysis focused on understanding how workplace counseling influences employees' psychological health and well-being. Data were drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with employees across different organizational levels and sectors. Thematic analysis was employed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process, which involved familiarization with data, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Three major themes emerged: stress reduction and emotional relief, improved coping mechanisms and resilience, and enhanced sense of support and belonging. These themes reflect the multifaceted role that counseling plays in promoting employees' psychological well-being within organizational settings.

#### **Theme 1: Stress Reduction and Emotional Relief**

A dominant theme across respondents' narratives was that workplace counseling provided a safe space to release stress and negative emotions, which significantly contributed to mental health improvement. Many employees described counseling sessions as therapeutic and relieving, reducing anxiety caused by work-related pressures. One participant noted, "Before the counseling sessions, I used to carry so much stress from work and home. Talking to someone who understands really helped me calm down." Another emphasized the emotional relief gained from counseling, stating, "After I spoke to the counselor, I felt like a huge burden was lifted. I slept better and had fewer headaches." These statements demonstrate that counseling functions as an emotional outlet, preventing the accumulation of stress that could lead to burnout. The findings align with McLeod (2020), who argues that counseling interventions reduce psychological strain by enabling employees to process emotions in a confidential setting.

#### **Theme 2: Improved Coping Mechanisms and Resilience**

Participants also highlighted that counseling equipped them with practical strategies to handle workplace challenges, thereby increasing their resilience. Several employees indicated that counselors introduced techniques such as time management, relaxation exercises, and positive thinking, which helped them cope with job demands more effectively. For instance, one respondent shared, "The counselor taught me breathing techniques for when I feel overwhelmed, and honestly, it works wonders." Another explained, "I learned how to manage my workload without panicking. Now I break tasks down instead of stressing out." These responses suggest that counseling goes beyond emotional support; it builds psychological resources necessary for maintaining well-being in high-pressure environments. This supports the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which posits that job resources like counseling buffer the negative effects of job demands on health.

#### **Theme 3: Enhanced Sense of Support and Belonging**

A third theme was the perception that counseling demonstrated organizational care, fostering a sense of support and belonging among employees. Several respondents felt that having access to counseling showed that their employer valued their well-being. As one participant stated, "It feels good to know the company cares about how I feel, not just the work I do." Another added, "Before, I thought I was alone with my problems, but counseling made me realize the organization really cares." This sense of organizational support was linked to improved morale and reduced feelings of isolation, both of which are critical for mental health. Such findings resonate with social support theories, which highlight the positive impact of perceived support on psychological well-being (Luthans et al., 2021).

#### **To examine the influence of employee counseling on organizational job performance indicators such as productivity, engagement, and retention.**

The second objective explored how employee counseling influences organizational job performance, specifically focusing on productivity, engagement, and retention. Using thematic analysis, three main themes emerged from participants' narratives: increased work productivity through reduced distractions, boosted engagement and motivation, and lower turnover intentions due to improved job satisfaction. These themes demonstrate that counseling interventions have a significant impact on organizational performance metrics by addressing underlying psychological challenges that hinder optimal functioning.

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### **Theme 1: Increased Work Productivity Through Reduced Distractions**

Many participants indicated that counseling helped them regain focus on their work by reducing personal and emotional distractions that previously affected their job performance. Employees emphasized that before counseling, stress and unresolved personal issues often spilled into their work life, reducing concentration and output. One participant explained, "I used to spend hours at my desk worrying about family problems, but after the sessions, I could separate work from personal issues and just get the job done." Another added, "Counseling cleared my mind. I am now able to finish tasks faster because I don't feel overwhelmed." These experiences suggest that counseling indirectly improves productivity by enhancing mental clarity and reducing cognitive overload, supporting findings by Attridge (2022) that counseling interventions decrease presenteeism and improve task completion.

### **Theme 2: Boosted Engagement and Motivation**

Another strong theme was that counseling contributed to higher levels of work engagement and motivation. Employees reported feeling more connected to their roles and willing to put in extra effort after participating in counseling sessions. One respondent remarked, "After I received counseling, I started feeling excited about work again. I participate more in meetings and even volunteer for projects." Another stated, "Before counseling, I just came to work for the paycheck, but now I feel more committed because the company cares." These reflections indicate that counseling not only addresses mental health issues but also fosters intrinsic motivation and engagement, consistent with the Job Demands-Resources model, which highlights the role of support systems in driving engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

### **Theme 3: Lower Turnover Intentions Due to Improved Job Satisfaction**

Participants also reported that access to counseling reduced their desire to leave the organization, mainly because they felt valued and supported. Several respondents associated counseling with increased job satisfaction and organizational loyalty. One employee shared, "I was seriously thinking of resigning because of stress, but counseling changed my mind. I feel like I belong here." Another explained, "Knowing I can talk to someone when things get tough makes me want to stay with this company." These responses illustrate how counseling programs can act as a retention strategy, reducing turnover by creating a supportive work environment. This finding aligns with prior studies that link employee assistance programs to lower attrition rates and improved organizational commitment (McLeod, 2020).

## **To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing effective employee counseling programs within organizations.**

The third objective aimed to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing effective employee counseling programs within organizations. Thematic analysis of participants' narratives revealed three key themes: limited awareness and stigma surrounding counseling, resource constraints and organizational commitment, and opportunities for building a supportive organizational culture. These themes provide insight into both the barriers that hinder counseling adoption and the potential strategies for leveraging counseling as a strategic organizational tool.

### **Theme 1: Limited Awareness and Stigma Surrounding Counseling**

A recurring challenge highlighted by participants was the lack of awareness about the existence and benefits of counseling programs, coupled with cultural stigma toward seeking psychological help. Many employees admitted they initially viewed counseling as unnecessary or associated it with severe mental illness. One participant stated, "At first, I didn't want anyone to know I went for counseling because people think it means you are weak or crazy." Another added, "Most of my colleagues don't even know the company has a counseling service. They just don't talk about it." These statements indicate that the uptake of counseling services is often low due to misconceptions and lack of communication, a finding consistent with previous research showing that stigma remains a major barrier to the utilization of employee assistance programs (Richardson, 2022).

### **Theme 2: Resource Constraints and Organizational Commitment**

Participants also pointed out practical challenges such as limited financial resources, inadequate staffing of counselors, and lack of dedicated time for sessions. Some organizations reportedly outsourced counseling services, which employees found inconvenient or impersonal. One respondent remarked, "Sometimes the counselor comes only once a month, and by then the issues have piled up." Another expressed concern over management's priorities, stating, "The company says they care, but they don't invest enough in making counseling easily accessible." These comments suggest that effective counseling programs require significant organizational commitment in terms of funding, scheduling flexibility, and integration into HR policies. Without these, programs risk being tokenistic rather than impactful.

### **Theme 3: Opportunities for Building a Supportive Organizational Culture**

Despite the challenges, participants also identified opportunities for improving counseling effectiveness through organizational culture change and proactive strategies. Several employees expressed optimism that counseling could be normalized if organizations actively promoted it as part of wellness initiatives. One participant shared, "If management talks openly about counseling and encourages everyone to use it, people will see it as normal." Another suggested, "We need more awareness campaigns and maybe group sessions to make it less intimidating." These views indicate that organizations can leverage counseling programs not only to enhance well-being but also to build a culture of openness and support, which in turn strengthens engagement and loyalty.



### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the role of workplace counseling in enhancing psychological health, well-being, and organizational performance while highlighting key implementation challenges and opportunities. The results show that counseling contributes to stress reduction and emotional relief, improved coping mechanisms, and an enhanced sense of organizational support, all of which are consistent with previous research. McLeod (2020) similarly reported that employee counseling interventions create a safe space for employees to express emotions, reducing anxiety and psychological strain. This supports the argument that counseling acts as a preventive tool against burnout. However, while the present study aligns with these findings, it also reveals that the effectiveness of counseling in reducing stress depends largely on the frequency and accessibility of sessions, an issue that McLeod (2020) does not extensively address. This raises questions about whether counseling benefits can be sustained in organizations with resource constraints.

The study also identified that counseling equips employees with practical coping strategies, such as relaxation exercises and time management techniques, which foster resilience. This observation is consistent with Bakker and Demerouti's (2017) Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which posits that job resources, including psychological support, buffer the adverse effects of job demands and promote engagement. Similarly, Luthans et al. (2021) argued that psychological capital development through interventions like counseling enhances employee resilience and optimism, leading to improved well-being. Nevertheless, there are counterarguments in literature suggesting that counseling alone may not suffice in enhancing coping capabilities without complementary organizational strategies such as workload reduction and supportive leadership. Attridge (2022), for instance, emphasized that while EAPs significantly reduce presenteeism and improve coping, structural job redesign is often necessary to maintain long-term benefits.

In relation to organizational performance indicators, the study found that counseling improves productivity by reducing distractions caused by personal and emotional issues, and also boosts engagement and retention by fostering a sense of belonging. These results mirror findings from Attridge (2022), who documented that counseling and employee assistance programs lead to measurable improvements in productivity and reduced absenteeism. Furthermore, studies in sub-Saharan African contexts, such as K'Orope and Iravo (2014), have reported similar outcomes, showing that counseling increases employee morale and organizational loyalty. However, some researchers question whether the improvements in engagement and retention observed after counseling interventions are sustained over time. For example, McLeod (2013) notes that while short-term gains are evident, organizations often fail to monitor long-term effects, leading to a re-emergence of disengagement when stressors remain unresolved. This perspective underscores the need for continuous evaluation of counseling effectiveness rather than relying on one-off interventions.

The current study's findings on employee retention align with social support theories, which suggest that perceived organizational care enhances job satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions (Luthans et al., 2021). Participants repeatedly mentioned that counseling services made them feel valued by their employers, thereby reinforcing organizational commitment. Similar observations were made by Richardson (2022), who argued that the availability of counseling demonstrates an employer's investment in employee well-being, which translates into improved retention rates. However, contrasting views from some scholars argue that retention is influenced more by extrinsic factors such as compensation and career development opportunities than by counseling availability. For instance, Tessema and Soeters (2006) assert that while wellness programs can reduce stress, they have limited effect on turnover if pay structures and promotion prospects remain unattractive. This counterpoint suggests that counseling alone may not guarantee loyalty without aligning other motivational factors.

Regarding challenges to effective implementation, this study identified low awareness and stigma as significant barriers to the uptake of counseling services. This finding is consistent with prior research by Richards and Bee (2018), who observed that stigma, particularly in African cultural contexts, discourages employees from seeking psychological support due to fear of being labeled as weak. The present study adds nuance by showing that even when services exist, employees often remain unaware, indicating a communication gap. This contrasts with findings in Western contexts, where awareness campaigns are more prevalent, and uptake is comparatively higher (Cooper et al., 2019). Another critical barrier identified was resource constraints, particularly insufficient funding and the unavailability of professional counselors. Similar observations were made by Mclean et al. (2016), who highlighted financial limitations and lack of organizational prioritization as key obstacles to implementing sustainable EAP programs in developing economies. Conversely, some scholars argue that resource constraints are not the primary challenge; rather, it is managerial attitudes toward mental health initiatives that determine success. For example, Attridge (2019) asserts that even in well-resourced organizations, counseling programs fail when leaders do not actively endorse their use.

Despite these challenges, the study revealed significant opportunities for strengthening counseling effectiveness through organizational culture change. Participants emphasized that normalizing counseling through leadership endorsement and awareness campaigns could enhance utilization. This finding resonates with Cooper and Cartwright (1994), who contended that mental health interventions are most effective when embedded within a supportive organizational culture that promotes openness and trust. However, a counter-perspective exists in literature suggesting that cultural transformation is a long-term process that requires more than awareness initiatives; it involves structural changes in policies and leadership behavior (Grawitch et al., 2006). Therefore, while

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the opportunity for culture-based improvement exists, its realization may demand broader organizational change strategies beyond simply promoting counseling services.

In conclusion, the discussion underscores that workplace counseling plays a significant role in enhancing employee well-being and organizational performance, yet its impact is moderated by awareness levels, organizational commitment, and cultural perceptions. While the findings of this study generally align with previous research, they also reveal unique contextual challenges such as stigma and resource limitations, which remain more pronounced in developing countries like Ghana. These insights highlight the need for a holistic approach that integrates counseling with supportive HR practices, leadership involvement, and long-term cultural change to maximize benefits for both employees and organizations.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study has demonstrated that employee counseling plays a pivotal role in enhancing psychological health, well-being, and organizational job performance. Counseling provides employees with essential emotional relief, equips them with coping mechanisms to manage workplace stress, and fosters a sense of organizational support that enhances morale and engagement. Moreover, counseling contributes to improved productivity, greater employee motivation, and lower turnover intentions by creating a supportive environment where employees feel valued. These outcomes affirm the importance of integrating employee counseling into organizational wellness strategies as a means to promote holistic employee functioning and overall organizational effectiveness. However, the study also highlighted significant challenges that impede the successful implementation and utilization of counseling programs. Low awareness, persistent stigma around mental health, limited organizational commitment, and resource constraints remain critical barriers, particularly in contexts where mental health issues are culturally sensitive or misunderstood. These challenges can significantly reduce the accessibility and effectiveness of counseling services, limiting their potential benefits. Additionally, the findings indicate that counseling alone may not be sufficient to sustain long-term improvements in performance and retention without complementary organizational changes such as leadership endorsement, workload management, and career development opportunities.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that organizations seeking to optimize the benefits of employee counseling should prioritize increasing awareness and reducing stigma through targeted education and communication campaigns. Management must actively champion counseling services, normalizing their use and integrating them into broader employee wellness initiatives. Furthermore, sufficient resources should be allocated to ensure regular availability of qualified counselors and flexible scheduling that accommodates employees' needs. Organizations should also consider embedding counseling within a holistic human resource management framework that addresses job demands, fosters psychological safety, and supports career growth.

Additionally, policymakers and organizational leaders are encouraged to develop culturally sensitive counseling programs that acknowledge and address local attitudes toward mental health. Tailoring counseling interventions to fit the socio-cultural context can improve acceptance and utilization among employees. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies that evaluate the sustained impact of counseling on psychological health and organizational outcomes, as well as experimental designs that explore which counseling modalities and frequencies yield the greatest benefits.

In conclusion, employee counseling represents a valuable tool for enhancing workforce well-being and performance, but its full potential is contingent upon overcoming cultural and organizational barriers. By adopting a comprehensive and culturally informed approach, organizations can create healthier, more engaged, and productive work environments that benefit both employees and organizational success.

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