

Mental wellbeing programs and performance of academic staff in selected chartered public universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Performance of academic staff in Kenya drives the country's economic growth and the well-being of the society, and the universities are central in the development of the human capital that is required for national progress. Despite the critical role they offer in higher education through teaching, carrying out research, and engagement in community service, it is only one university in Kenya that appeared at position 1425 in the 2023 Global 2000 list. This was a drop from the year 2022, and this was due to reduced employability of graduands and academic staff research performance. Statistics indicate that about 91% of public universities in Kenya face challenges in their service delivery. There is also criticism about low-quality education, inefficiencies, limited quality research, and poor performance in their teaching, carrying out research, and engagement in community service. This study therefore sought to establish the effect of mental wellbeing programs and performance of academic staff in selected chartered public universities in Kenya. The study employed positivism philosophy, and the study was drawn upon a theoretical framework informed by social exchange theory and the social ecological model. The study used both descriptive and cross-sectional designs. The study population comprised 7,090 academic staff, with a sample of 379 from eight public universities that were purposefully selected. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling were used to select academic staff. Data was gathered using semi-structured questionnaires based on a 5-point Likert scale. A pilot study was conducted to establish the study's suitability and appropriateness during data collection. The content analysis technique was used in analyzing qualitative data that was presented in narrative form. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data in close-ended questions comprising frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation. The study used both simple and multiple regression with inferential analysis to assess the association of the hypothesized constructs. The research used a 95% confidence level to test the hypothesis. The study established that the mental wellbeing programs were statistically significant and had a positive effect on the performance of academic staff in chartered public universities in Kenya. To enhance academic staff performance, the research recommends the public universities promote inclusive recognition and enhance counseling and promotion of communication and feedback. It is imperative to enhance participation of academic staff in mental wellbeing programs since this fosters a supportive environment that supports sustainable staff performance. To further enhance employees' performance, the institution should strengthen research support and community engagement and integrate mental wellbeing initiatives into performance systems.

Keywords: Academic Staff Performance, Chartered Public Universities in Kenya, Community Service, Mental Wellbeing Programs, Research, Teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a crucial factor in organization's success (Chauke et al., 2022; Al-kharabsheh, et al., 2023). As observed by Oaya et al. (2017) performance of employees is a key element in success of organization, and high performing employees drive success in every business enterprise across borders and economies. The work environment in the twenty-first century is very stressful, there is intense competition; the demand of work, pressures both the organization and employees to push beyond their boundaries in the relentless pursuit of success. Although employees are the driving force behind organizational success, even more importantly is a workforce that is healthy and productive. Dawad and Hoque (2016) emphasized that employee wellbeing is a top priority in today's competitive environment, both locally and globally. Stepanek et al. (2019) suggested that mental health, job characteristics, and organizational support are key factors influencing employee productivity, either directly or indirectly.

Recently, there has been a global call for public service employees to boost productivity and performance (Gitonga, 2018). In the global scale, organizations are recognizing the critical role of investing in the wellbeing of their employees who are the greatest assets. Universities, along with other institutions, are grappling with many challenges

that compromise morale, wellbeing, and staff productivity. Recent research indicates that the primary objective for employers investing in wellbeing in the workplace worldwide is to improve productivity and performance (Wellness Designs, 2018). As Agustian et al. (2023) postulated establishing work culture which supports the wellbeing of employees is an investment that is worthwhile.

A study in Nigeria by Bosede (2024) examined how wellbeing of employees is associated with performance of workers. The research uncovered a strong positive association between wellbeing encompassing; intellectual, mental and physical aspects and performance of the organization. Right to wellbeing in Kenya is enshrined in the 2010 Kenyan Constitution. Furthermore, the Kenyan Administration has initiated a number of institutional structures as a guide in mainstreaming citizens' good health for instance Occupation Safety and Health Act (2007) is the law that governs workplace safety and wellness of employees (Republic of Kenya, 2007). The Ministry of Interior and National Administration came up with a policy on prevention, management and control of alcohol, drugs and substance abuse to promote wellness of the people (National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), 2025).

University academic staff plays a vital role in promoting academic excellence within institutions (Ntarangwe et al., 2021). Mande (2020) highlighted that higher education institutions are key to growth of the nation because they produce labor force that is skilled and provides vital research in a number of economic sectors that is crucial in this contemporary global technology. According to Kenya Vision 2030, universities' performance contributes to the overall country economic competitiveness. Performance of academic staff which was the dependent variable was operationalized as teaching, publishing of research papers and community service.

Jones et al. (2019); Song and Baicker (2019) touted wellbeing programs as a way to boost productivity, improve morale, lower healthcare costs, reduce turnover, and improve the overall wellbeing. British Columbia University had a conference in year 2015 where they discussed promotion of health. The organizations that were present comprised of educational and health institutions which included World Health Organization who developed Okanagan Charter This charter that was developed outlined the importance of promotion of all-inclusive wellbeing in the universities, indicating the higher education's crucial role in shaping people, societies, and cultures from the local aspect to global impact (Okanagan Charter, 2015). In Kenya, the Government came up with the Kenya Mental Health Policy 2015-2030 which provides a framework on interventions for ensuring that citizens are mentally health as part of the systems reforms (Ministry of Health, 2015).

Investing in employee wellbeing is paying off for modern organizations, as it directly boosts performance and strengthens the bottom line (Doorgapersad & Surujlal, 2015). According to a report by Brassey et al. (2022) more than ever before, many employers are prioritizing comprehensive wellbeing support programs. Across the world, 80% of human resource leaders in organizations report that they prioritize mental health and wellbeing for their employees. Mental wellbeing is a lifelong process which enables people to recognize their capabilities, work productively, cope with daily stresses, and make significant contributions to family, society and the community (Bodeker et al., 2020). Ombasyi (2019) explored mental wellbeing and staff performance, the study operationalized mental wellbeing as recognition and rewards, managing change, coaching and mentoring, supporting environment, employees' self-efficacy and communication and feedback. The current study operationalized mental wellbeing as recognition, communication and counseling.

Bailey et al. (2011) noted that the origin of university education in Kenya can be traced back to 1947, when the colonial government released a blueprint for establishing the Royal Technical College in Nairobi which admitted its first group of students in 1956. This institution later became the University of Nairobi in 1970, which was Kenya's first fully-fledged university. Over the past decade, Kenya's university education has grown rapidly over the last ten years such that by year 2022, public universities that are chartered had increased to 35 in terms of numbers (Commission for University Education [CUE], 2022). Public universities have for a long time played a role that is very crucial to further the agenda of the national higher education, satisfying unique responsibilities while adapting to changing demands of the society and diversifying their roles (Gumport, 2017). The Government of Kenya underscores the critical role of higher education in national development, as highlighted in the Vision 2030 blueprint, which places advanced skills and technological innovation as key drivers of progress (Chege, 2015). Odhiambo (2018) stated that the core mission of universities revolves around three key functions: providing quality teaching, advancing research, and promoting community outreach together forming the foundation of institutional performance and academic excellence.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ogunode and Adamu (2021) observed teaching staff are the driving force in institutions of higher learning and the people who shape students' knowledge and character. As assessed by Mwenda et al. (2019) and Migosi et al. (2012) across the world, the performance of teaching members of staff in universities is based on their effectiveness and efficiency in their teaching, research work carried out and engagement in community service and universities' ranking system is based on the output of research. Lifelong learning in Kenya that is promoted by Vision 2030, is the foundation of Kenya's path in achieving sustainable development, with universities serving a key function. However, in as much as

they play a pivotal function in teaching, carrying out research, and engagement in community service, the top-ranked university in Kenya in the 2023 edition of the Global 2000 list was at position 1,425 (Center for World University Rankings, 2023). According to Muchungu (2023), this was 20 positions lower compared to the ranking of year 2022, and this was as a result of decline in employability of graduands and academic staff research work. Teaching, research and engagement in community service in the universities as postulated by Giteru and Bula (2023) was ineffective which therefore resulted to poor performance and as reported by Kwanya (2020) in the Kenyan Standard newspaper of 20th July, 2017, top scholars decried that the levels research carried out by the academic staff are not adequate in terms of quantity and quality. According to Kyondo et al. (2023), Human Resource Management (HRM) practices such as inadequate staffing, biased human resource policies and inadequate physical resources are the factors that lead to underperformance of staff in public universities. Kilonzo et al. (2021) postulated that earlier studies established that the rising numbers in students' enrolment in public universities has not corresponded with increase in staff and facilities which has made the existing academic staff to carry the burden of growing responsibilities which affect their wellbeing.

1.2 Research Objective

The objective of the study was to establish the effect of mental wellbeing programs and performance of academic staff in selected chartered public universities in Kenya and the hypotheses was stated in null form

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Mental wellbeing programs have no significant effect on performance of academic staff in selected chartered public universities in Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The section presents social exchange theory and social ecological model as advanced by various scholars and have been employed to elucidate the relationship between mental wellbeing programs and performance of employees.

2.1.1 Social Exchange Theory

The foundational principles of the theory originated from the structural anthropological framework, Skinner's 1954 behavioral psychology, Bandura in 1986, Homans' 1974 sociology, Blau in 1964, and Thibaut and Kelly 1959's social psychology (Ng'eno, 2020). Social exchange model stands as a towering figure in management landscape and also in social psychology and sociology fields (Cropanzano et al., 2017). This theory suggests that effective human resource management practices serve as investments that employees reciprocate with increased abilities, engagement, and drive (Gould-Williams, 2016). When employees believe that the employer has fulfilled their obligations, employees feel obligated to fulfill their duties. Repeated exchanges over time are seen as beneficial and brings positive feelings (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Social exchange theory highlights the role of mutual expectations in shaping workplace outcomes. When employers provide mental wellbeing programs, employees feel cared for and are likely to be more committed, more motivated, and perform better. On the other hand, absence of wellbeing programs may lead to dissatisfaction, reduced engagement, and lower performance.

2.1.2 Social Ecological Model

The Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) was advanced to explain human development by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the 1970s and became a theory in the 1980s (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1986). According to Sallis et al. (2008), within this model, health was viewed as key factors that influenced it. According to Kilanowski (2017), SEM suggests that interactions among an individual's traits, community, and living environment impact their well-being. In leveraging this comprehensive framework of the socio-ecological model (SEM), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) adapted the Social Ecological Model in its health promotion initiatives, encompassing organizational, community and framework aspects. (Sallis et al. (2008).

Social-ecological model was applied as the lens to mental wellbeing. SEM is a framework of value which is used for designing and implementing mental wellbeing programs. The social ecological model acknowledges that while people are responsible for instituting and maintaining changes in lifestyle that are essential for reduction of risks and improvement of health, behaviour in people is influenced by factors at diverse levels within their social surrounding (Busza et al., 2012). In the social ecological model, universities can enhance mental wellbeing by offering supportive resources at the organizational level, encouraging peer connections through shared health goals, and implementing policies that foster a culture of wellbeing among academic staff.

2.2 Empirical Review

This section explores relevant empirical literature on mental wellbeing programs and performance, while also identifying and addressing existing research gaps.

2.2.1 Mental wellbeing and Employees Performance

Assaf (2022) focused the research on employee mental health, wellbeing, and their performance in Jordan. The study adopted a qualitative methodological approach, and data was collected using a structured one-on-one interview method. To analyze transcripts, an inductive narrative analysis was used. Results found a significant association between mental health and employees' job performance. This study has contextual, conceptual, and methodological gaps since it was carried out in Jordan, was qualitative and used interviews. The current study bridged the gap by employing both quantitative and qualitative data, and used questionnaires to collect data.

Hennekam et al. (2020) carried out an exploratory qualitative study that focused on mental health and job performance. Analysis was done using 257 responses from the questionnaires and 17 interviews. The study that was carried out in France established that lack of mental health negatively affected job performance in increased mistakes, low work quality and slow work pace. The study has a contextual and conceptual gap since it was carried out in France and conceptualized performance as job mistakes, work quality and work pace. The current study which was carried out in Kenya conceptualized mental wellbeing as recognition, communication and counselling.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Below is the study's conceptual framework which illustrates how mental wellbeing programs which were conceptualized as recognition, communication, and counselling are hypothesized to influence the academic staff performance which was measured through efficiency and effectiveness in teaching, research papers published and engagement in community service.

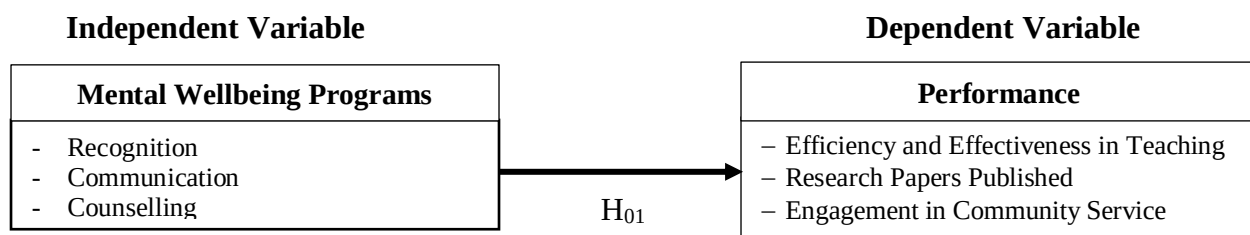


Figure 1

Schematic Diagram

Source: Researcher (2025)

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Philosophy

The research employed positivism theory which streamlines complex research designs, enables critical evaluation of methodologies, and fosters creativity in adapting previously used methods. Positivism philosophy emphasizes on application of theories through data to find the truth rather than moral assessment and is demonstrably accurate and free from errors (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.2 Research Design

The study employed both descriptive and cross-sectional research designs. This design was used since as Kerlinger (1969) explains, descriptive studies not only describe things as they are but may go further to formulate important ideas and solutions to real problems.

3.3 Target Population

The study focused on 35 public universities, from which 8 were purposively selected. These 8 institutions had a combined target population of 7,090 academic staff. A sample size of 379 was drawn and the study used stratified and simple random sampling techniques to select the academic staff.

3.4 Pilot Test and Data Collection Analysis

A pilot test was conducted with 38 academic staff, representing 10% of the total sample size of 379. Data was gathered using semi-structured questionnaires rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

The validity of the research instrument was established through face validity, content validity, and construct validity to ensure it accurately captured the intended concepts. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient threshold of 0.7 indicating acceptable internal consistency.

3.6 Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests for sampling adequacy, linearity, normality, and multicollinearity were conducted to ensure the reliability of the linear regression analysis results. These tests were essential in verifying the assumptions underlying the Classical Linear Regression Model.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response Rate Analysis

Out of 341 self-administered questionnaires distributed to respondents, 321 were completed and returned, resulting in a 94% response rate, with only 6% not returned.

4.2 Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

This section outlines the demographic profile of the respondents, providing contextual insight into the study participants. The demographic variables examined include gender, age, education level, years of service in the university, and current designation.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 321)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	204	65
	Female	111	35
	Total (n = 315)		100
	Abstained	6	—
Age Bracket	29 years and below	16	5
	30–39 years	72	23
	40–49 years	106	33
	50–59 years	84	27
	60 years and above	39	12
	Total (n = 317)		100
	Abstained	4	—
Education Level	PhD	206	65.5
	Master's Degree	92	29
	Bachelor's Degree	17	5.5
	Total (n = 315)		100
	Abstained	6	—
Years Worked in the University	Less than 1 year	10	3
	1–5 years	53	17
	6–10 years	92	29
	11–15 years	85	27
	16 years and above	76	24
	Total (n = 316)		100
	Abstained	5	—
Present Designation	Graduate Assistant	34	11
	Assistant Lecturer	26	8
	Tutorial Fellow	25	8
	Lecturer	146	46
	Senior Lecturer	59	18
	Associate Professor	16	5
	Professor	13	4
	Total (n = 319)		100
	Abstained	2	—

Note. Percentages are based on valid responses.

In Table 1, there was fair distribution in terms of gender with 65% male and 35% female, this was close to CUE (2018) data for chartered public universities which was 68% male and 32% female. Six participants which was 1.9%

did not disclose their gender, this possibly could have been due to sensitivity of gender identity. In terms of age, 5% were below 29 years, those between 30–39 years were 23%, between 40–49 years were 33%, those between 50–59 were 27%, while those that were 60 years and above were 12%. The group which was between 40–49 was the largest with 106 at 33%, this indicated quite a large number of mature academic workforce. Almost 72% of staff were 40 years and above in terms of age, this suggested that the academic staff were experienced but there was need for succession planning. There was only 5% of academic staff who were below 30 years, this pointed to low recruitment of younger academic staff. Four participants which is an equivalent of 1.25% did not give their age. In regard to educational qualifications, 65.5% of the academic staff had PhD degrees, those with master's degrees were 29% while those with bachelor's degrees were 5.5%. The figures portray a well-qualified academic staff, although the statistics indicates the need for undertaking PhD degree for the teaching staff with master's degrees. Six participants which is an equivalent of 1.9% did not indicate their level of education. In work experience, those with less than 1 year were 3%, those with experience of between 1–5 years were 17%, staff with 6–10 years' experience were 29%, 11–15 years' work experience were 27% while those with over 16 years of work experience were 24%. Overall academic staff who had more than 5 years' experience were about 80%, which portrayed a workforce that was stable. Nevertheless, staff who had less than one year experience were 3% which indicates low recruitment. The long-serving staff were 24% which points to institutional memory but however indicates the need for succession strategies for career progression. According to the statistics 1.58% which is an equivalent of 5 participants did not indicate the years they had served.

In terms of designation, there were 13 professors which was 4%, 16 associate professors which was 5%, 59 senior lecturers which was 18%, 146 lecturers which was 46%, 26 assistant lecturers which was 8%, 25 tutorial fellows which was 8%, and 34 graduate assistants which was an equivalent of 11%. The results shows that lecturers were the majority at 46%, while senior academic ranks who are professors and associate professors were only 9.1% which portrays a narrow leadership tier. Academic staff in the early-careers who are the assistant lecturers, tutorial fellows, and graduate assistants accounted for 26.7% of the total, which suggests a substantial number of the junior faculty. Two respondents which was 0.63% did not indicate their job titles.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

This section presents the descriptive analysis of mental wellbeing programs and their influence on academic staff performance.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics on Mental Wellbeing

SN	Sub-Construct	Item	Response Distribution (1–5)	M	SD	Min	Max
1	Recognition	The institution recognizes outstanding lecturers	1=47, 2=38, 3=79, 4=91, 5=65	3.28	1.32	1	5
		Academic staff involved in administrative duties are recognized	1=33, 2=39, 3=82, 4=106, 5=58	3.37	1.21	1	5
		The institution recognizes outstanding researchers	1=14, 2=22, 3=51, 4=132, 5=97	3.87	1.06	1	5
		The institution recognizes grant-winning proposals	1=10, 2=14, 3=40, 4=129, 5=124	4.08	0.99	1	5
		The institution recognizes participation in community service	1=17, 2=22, 3=66, 4=125, 5=88	3.77	1.09	1	5
2	Communication	I am satisfied with the channels of communication within the institution	1=13, 2=25, 3=48, 4=153, 5=79	3.82	1.03	1	5
		I am well-informed about important institutional news and developments	1=10, 2=28, 3=44, 4=147, 5=89	3.87	1.02	1	5
		I have the information I need to do my job effectively	1=5, 2=21, 3=31, 4=166, 5=93	4.02	0.90	1	5
		The university does timely communications	1=7, 2=29, 3=55, 4=141, 5=85	3.85	0.99	1	5
		There are opportunities to provide feedback to management about communication	1=33, 2=54, 3=78, 4=95, 5=57	3.28	1.24	1	5
3	Counseling	There are free counseling services available for employees	1=18, 2=31, 3=65, 4=106, 5=95	3.73	1.16	1	5
		I often attend counseling sessions	1=111, 2=79, 3=73, 4=31, 5=20	2.27	1.22	1	5
		The university encourages staff to attend counseling sessions	1=43, 2=38, 3=67, 4=100, 5=68	3.35	1.31	1	5
4	Narrative Response	Do you consider mental wellbeing programs important in enhancing performance in your institution?	Yes=287, No=10	—	—	—	—
Average Score (All Items)				3.58	1.12	1	5

Note. Response scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree; Frequencies for each item reflect the number of respondents selecting each response option; M=Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

In Table 2, the data analysis of mental wellbeing on academic staff performance showed favorable perception. The overall mean was 3.5809 with an average standard deviation of 1.1181. The results indicated a moderate to high agreement on the institution's mental wellbeing programs initiatives, though there was a noticeable variation in the responses. In the recognition sub-construct, the recognition of grant-winning proposals had the highest agreement with a mean of 4.0820, and standard deviation of 0.9870, with 253 respondents selecting ratings of either 4 or 5. This reflected a strong emphasis on academic achievement in the institutions. Similarly, recognition of outstanding researchers which had a mean of 3.873 and standard deviation of 1.0645, and participation in community service which had a mean of 3.7704 and standard deviation of 1.0923 were also rated positively. Recognition of lecturers which had a mean of 3.2781 and standard deviation of 1.3157 and administrative contributions which had a mean of 3.3679 and a standard deviation of 1.2124 were perceived less favorably, which suggested that there could be potential gaps in consistent appreciation across the academic roles.

In the communication sub-construct, the study results were largely positive, the respondents expressed satisfaction with the channels of communication which had a mean of 3.8176 and a standard deviation of 1.0256 and access to necessary information which had a mean of 4.0158 and a standard deviation of 0.8961, indicating that there was an effective internal dissemination of information. The statement on being informed about institutional news and developments which had a Mean of 3.8711 and a standard deviation of 1.0199 and timely communication which had a mean of 3.8454 and standard deviation of 0.9927 further affirmed these strengths. However, the statement on opportunity to provide feedback was slightly lower with a mean of 3.2808 and a standard deviation of 1.2376 indicating a potential aspect for improving a two-way communication.

In contrast, the counselling sub-construct showed mixed results. While availability of free counselling services was positively acknowledged with a mean of 3.7270 and a standard deviation of 1.1600, the actual attendance of the counselling was notably low with a mean of 2.2675 and a standard deviation of 1.2196, with more than 190 respondents giving a rating of 3 or below, which indicated limited engagement. Encouragement to attend counselling sessions was rated moderately with a mean of 3.3544 and a standard deviation of 1.3121, which suggested that while the services existed, more proactive promotion may be required. In the open ended question, almost all the respondents; 287 out of 297 acknowledged the importance of mental wellbeing programs in enhancing performance, stressing a broad agreement on their relevance. The findings are similar to the views that were expressed by Deka et al. (2024) that mental wellbeing programs improve performance of tasks for sustainable workplaces.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics on Performance of Academic Staff

SN	Sub Construct	Questions	Response Distribution	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1	Teaching	I adhere to the teaching timetable	1=3, 2=0, 3=5, 4=85, 5=225	4.6635	0.6075	1	5
2	Teaching	I create time to mentor my students	1=0, 2=3, 3=26, 4=120, 5=169	4.4308	0.6832	2	5
3	Teaching	I administer continuous assessment tests on time	1=2, 2=3, 3=12, 4=104, 5=197	4.5440	0.6761	1	5
4	Teaching	I prepare examinations drafts on time	1=2, 2=1, 3=10, 4=85, 5=219	4.6341	0.6253	1	5
5	Teaching	I complete marking examinations on time	1=3, 2=8, 3=6, 4=92, 5=207	4.5570	0.7432	1	5
6	Teaching	The students I supervise are able to complete their studies on time	1=6, 2=10, 3=49, 4=121, 5=130	4.1361	0.9209	1	5
7	Teaching	I attend work scheduled meetings	1=4, 2=2, 3=10, 4=112, 5=169	4.4815	0.7216	1	5
8	Publishing	I have published at least one paper in peer reviewed and indexed journals in the last academic year	1=35, 2=28, 3=30, 4=71, 5=152	3.8766	1.3849	1	5
9	Publishing	I have written a grant winning proposal in the last academic year	1=82, 2=58, 3=57, 4=57, 5=62	2.8703	1.4754	1	5
10	Publishing	I have attended an academic Conference in the last academic year	1=43, 2=40, 3=26, 4=82, 5=126	3.6562	1.4469	1	5
11	Publishing	I have presented a research paper in the last academic year	1=53, 2=45, 3=31, 4=77, 5=111	3.4669	1.4978	1	5
12	Community Service	I am engaged in at least one community/service activity this academic year	1=20, 2=14, 3=26, 4=96, 5=162	4.1509	1.1466	1	5
13	Community Service	I am a board member of an institution/organization in the community	1=62, 2=28, 3=20, 4=75, 5=133	3.5943	1.5592	1	5
14	Community Service	My institution recognizes my participation in community service	1=44, 2=34, 3=55, 4=74, 5=108	3.5333	1.4124	1	5
15	Narrative Responses: Relevance of Wellbeing to Employee Performance		Narratives=176				
	Average Score			4.0425	1.0644	1	5

The analysis of Table 3 on employees' performance revealed trends that were quite strong and that had meaningful variations in teaching, research publishing, and engagement in community service. This was based on the distribution of the responses, the mean scores, and standard deviations. Teaching subcontract showed quite high levels of agreement and consistency among the respondents. Items such as 'I adhere to the teaching timetable' had a mean of 4.66 and a standard deviation of 0.61, 'I prepare examinations drafts on time' had a mean of 4.63 and a standard deviation of 0.63, while 'I complete marking examinations on time' had a mean of 4.56 while standard deviation was 0.74. The three statements showed high means and low standard deviations. The results points to a strong and consistent commitment to teaching responsibilities, with dispersion that was minimal which suggested agreement among the staff. Other statements like 'I create time to mentor my students' had a mean of 4.43 and a standard deviation of 0.68, and 'I attend work scheduled meetings' had a Mean of 4.48 and a standard deviation of 0.72 also scored high. Notably, the statement on 'The students I supervise complete their studies on time' showed a slightly lower mean of 4.14 and a relatively higher standard deviation of 0.92, indicating more variation in results that are likely influenced by factors that are beyond the academic staff direct control.

The publishing subcontract, however, showed a more modest engagement and wider variability. For instance the statement on 'I have published at least one paper in peer reviewed and indexed journals in the last academic year' recorded a mean of 3.88 with a standard deviation of 1.38 which was high. This suggested a considerable disparities in the research output. The statement 'I have written a grant winning proposal in the last academic year' had a lower mean of 2.87 and had the highest standard deviation of 1.48. This reflected a significant variability and a lower overall participation in the grant activities. The statements on 'I have attended an academic conference in the last academic year' had a mean of 3.66 and a standard deviation of 1.45 and 'I have presented a research paper in the last academic year' had a mean of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 1.50 also presented a moderate means and high dispersion, thereby indicating that while some academic staff are active in research, a significant proportion were not as involved in research work.

In the community service sub contract the statement on 'I am engaged in at least one community/service activity this academic year' had a mean of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 1.15 which was relatively high with a moderate variability. 'I am a board member of an institution/organization in the community' statement had a lower mean of 3.59 and a high standard deviation of 1.56, this showed that while some academic staff are highly engaged as board members, others are not involved at all. 'My institution recognizes my participation in community service' which had a mean of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 1.41 also showed moderate consensus with variability that was notable. In summary, the results indicated that while teaching responsibilities were strongly upheld with minimal variability, publishing of research papers and community service engagements were more unevenly distributed among the academic staff, with higher standard deviations highlighting disparities in participation. The insights drawn from the results can inform targeted institutional support to enable balance the performance of academic staff across all academic responsibilities.

The open question captured qualitative insights on wellbeing and employee performance with 176 narrative responses which indicated strength in teaching, research and community service. These narratives enabled understanding of the quantitative patterns observed in the three areas of academic staff performance which are teaching, publishing, and community service.

4.4 Test of Hypotheses

Linear regression analysis was employed to empirically test the study's hypothesized relationships, with conclusions drawn based on a 95% level of statistical significance.

4.4.1 Mental Wellbeing on Academic Staff Performance

The regression analysis used 319 valid responses to test the null hypothesis H_{01} : Mental wellbeing has no significant effect on performance of academic staff in selected chartered public universities in Kenya.

Table 4

Regression Model Summary

R^2	Adjusted R^2	F-statistic	p-value	N
0.100	0.097	35.20	7.81×10^{-9}	319

Note. P-value = significance of the F-statistic. N = number of observations.

Table 5

Mental Wellbeing Regression Coefficients

Predictor	β	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	95% CI for β
Intercept	3.0822	0.165	18.684	< .001	[2.758, 3.407]
Mental Wellbeing	0.2674	0.045	5.933	< .001	[0.179, 0.356]

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; β = coefficient.

The simple linear regression model used to assess the relationship between mental wellbeing and employee performance was expressed as: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$. Substituting the estimated coefficients, the model becomes: $\text{Performance} = 3.0822 + 0.2674 \times \text{mental wellbeing} + \varepsilon$. This implied that a one-unit increase in mental wellbeing was associated with an average increase of approximately 0.2674 units in employee performance. Additionally, a mental wellbeing score of zero corresponded to a predicted employee performance score of 3.0822.

Table 4 and 5 shows that the simple linear regression analysis conducted to examine the relationship between mental wellbeing and the dependent variable revealed a statistically significant model. The summary of the model reported an R-squared value of 0.100, which suggested that mental wellbeing accounted about 10% of the variance in academic staff performance. The adjusted R-squared was lower though slightly at 0.097, this confirmed a modest but a meaningful fit. The F-statistic which was 35.20 with a p-value of 7.81×10^{-9} indicated that the overall regression model was statistically significant. The results as shown above indicated a positive and statistically significant relationship with a $\beta = 0.2674$ and a $p < 0.001$. This meant that for every one-unit increase in mental wellbeing programs, the performance of academic staff members increased by about 0.267 units, this is in assumption that other factors remained constant. The 95% confidence interval for this coefficient was in the range of 0.179 to 0.356, which shows that the estimate was reliable. The results also shows that the intercept was statistically significant with $\beta = 3.0822$ and $p < 0.001$ which means that when mental wellbeing program is zero, the expected performance score of academic staff would be about 3.08. These results showed the importance of mental wellbeing programs as a meaningful predictor in the model. Since $p < 0.001$, the null hypothesis was rejected and the conclusion was that mental wellbeing had a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance. This predictive relationship on mental wellbeing and performance which was significant was in alignment with the earlier findings of Lu et al. (2022). **Note.** N = 319. Mental wellbeing is positively associated with staff performance ($p < .001$).

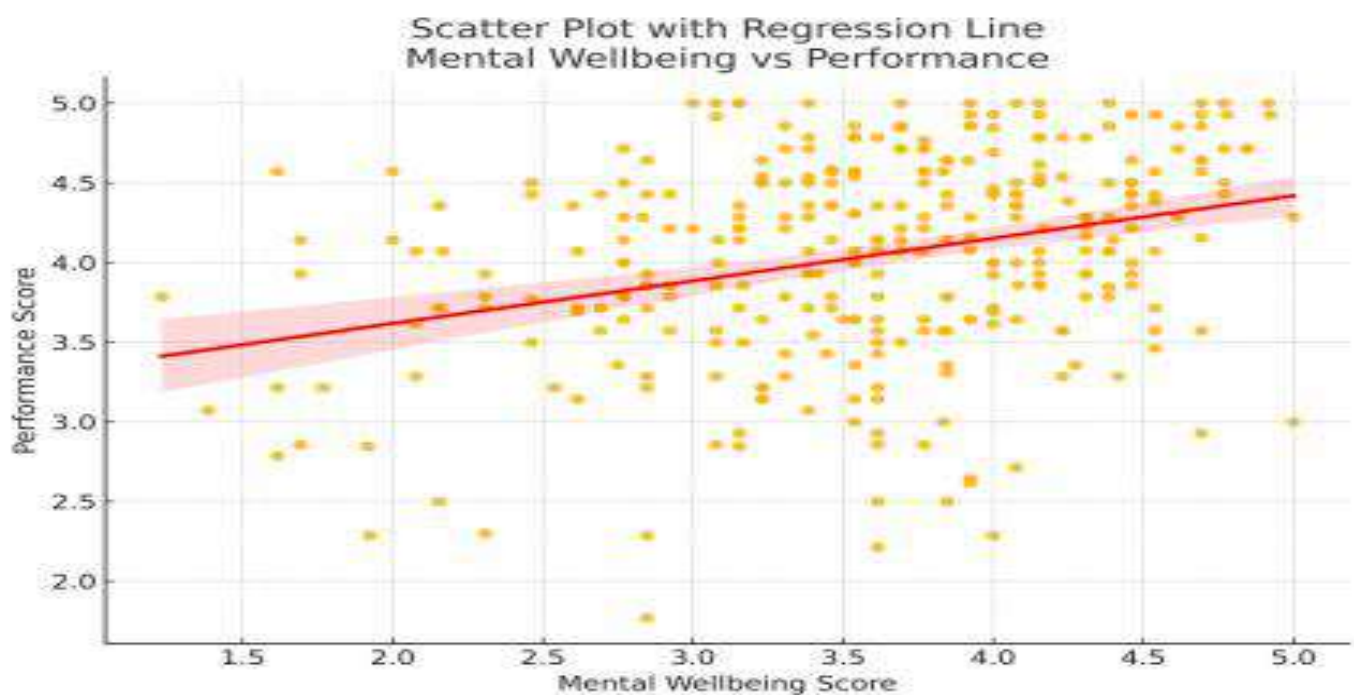


Figure 2
Relationship between Mental Wellbeing and Employees Performance

The scatter plot in figure 2 shows the relationship between mental wellbeing program scores and performance of academic staff scores. The red line indicates the line of best fit, with 95% confidence interval, highlighting the accuracy of the regression estimate.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The academic staff in the public universities largely held a positive perception of the mental wellbeing initiatives in their institutions as established in the overall mean score. However, there was relatively high standard deviation in some of the statements and this indicated that while many staff were in agreement with provision of the mental wellbeing

programs, there were clear differences in experiences across the academic staff. In the areas of recognition for academic achievements, outstanding researchers and grant-winning proposals emerged as the strong areas in regard to satisfaction. On the other hand, the lower ratings in the aspect of recognition of lecturers and administrative contributions established that there were gaps in inclusive recognition practices. This indicates that the universities' efforts of appreciation may be inclined more on research work than on teaching or engagement on administrative roles which may lead to perceived inequities.

From the analysis data, the academic staff showed confidence in the universities' system of communication, especially in information access. Nevertheless, the relatively lower ratings on feedback opportunities pointed to a gap in the two-way communication. While information is effectively shared from the university management to staff, the channels for staff in expression of their views seemed limited. Although there was availability of free counselling services the data indicates that the services were moderately acknowledged and academic staff engagement with them was low. This indicates that there could be barriers such as stigma, lack of encouragement or awareness from the universities. The study findings suggested that providing services was insufficient without proactive promotion and supportive culture that can enhance use of the services. In teaching, research works, universities have successfully cultivated a culture of accountability but faced challenges in fostering consistent participation in research and community service. Publishing and grant activity had high variability which indicated possible constraints such as workload, resource limitations, or lack of institutional incentives. Correspondingly, community service had uneven participation which may have reflected the academic staff awareness of opportunities that are there.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings offer policy insights for enhancing employee management in Kenya's public universities and potentially others nationwide and worldwide. To improve mental wellbeing, public universities should proactively promote the counseling services among the academic staff by addressing issues to do with stigma and should increase awareness by employing targeted campaigns and offer more flexible and accessible counseling services. Recognition of staff should be enlarged to ensure all staff are included. This is by acknowledging not just the academic staff who are outstanding in research and community service but also academic staff who are involved in teaching and other administrative aspects. Improvement of feedback mechanisms is also critical, coming up with more structured and open opportunities for academic staff where they can give their input will foster a more participatory environment. While internal communication channels results were strong, it is imperative that the institutions will further improve and sustain their efficiency to support transparency and trust.

Universities should reinforce the support systems for research work and engagement in community service by facilitating support in terms of finances and time for publishing, offer grant writing mentorship, and ensure there are formal recognition of community service engagements. Additionally, incorporating mental wellbeing programs into performance management can encourage greater engagement across all academic roles which can foster a more balanced and holistic staff performance.

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