Relationship between mental health service utilization and employee work engagement in Narok County Government, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Mental health support programmes play an important role in promoting employees' psychological well-being, reducing work-related stress, and strengthening work engagement in public institutions. This is particularly relevant in county governments, where employees operate within demanding service delivery environments. Despite growing recognition of workplace mental health support, many public institutions continue to experience challenges related to limited-service utilization, inconsistent treatment adherence and inadequate resource allocation. This study examined the relationship between mental health service utilization and employee work engagement in Narok County Government. The study was guided by the Andersen's Behavioural Model of Health Services Use and utilized a cross-sectional correlational survey design. The target population comprised 5,545 employees drawn from twelve departments of Narok County Government. A sample of 149 respondents was selected using the stratified random sampling method out of which 138 usable questionnaires were returned. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. The findings showed that service utilization had a positive and statistically significant relationship with employee work engagement ($\beta = 0.381$, $p < .001$). The study concluded that mental health service utilization was significantly associated with employee work engagement in Narok County Government. The study recommended strengthening mental health awareness and improving accessibility of mental health services for enhanced employee engagement.

Keywords: Employee Work Engagement, Mental Health Support Programs, Service Utilization

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee work engagement is essential in public sector organizations because it reflects the extent to which employees demonstrate energy, commitment and deep involvement in their duties. Engaged employees are more likely to provide quality services, remain committed to institutional goals and contribute to organizational performance (Ginbeto et al., 2023). In this study, employee work engagement was understood through vigour, dedication and absorption. Recent empirical studies confirm the importance of employee work engagement on the job performance of staff in service-oriented institutions (Diriba et al., 2025; Giauque et al., 2022).

The connection between mental health support programmes and employee work engagement is based on the idea that employees engage more fully when their psychological needs are recognized and supported. Mental health support programmes are important in strengthening employee work engagement because they help employees manage psychological strain, workplace stress, burnout and emotional exhaustion (Kato et al., 2023; Tu et al., 2022). Such programmes include counselling services, stress management activities, mental health awareness training, referral support and supportive supervision. Service utilization is critical because the existence of workplace mental health services does not automatically mean that employees will use them. Utilization depends on awareness, accessibility, confidentiality, trust, perceived usefulness and absence of stigma (Moore et al., 2023).

Direct institutional evidence from Narok County Government demonstrates challenges centring on maintaining sustained employee work engagement. County strategic reviews, departmental summaries and human resource audits indicate a critical variance in employee commitment and productivity metrics across key service delivery units (Adisa & Juma, 2026; Narok County Government, 2023). These internal records highlight visible fluctuations in employee motivation, challenges in baseline performance consistency and administrative difficulties in tracking organizational dedication (Narok County Government, 2023). Although broader national and international literature strongly suggests that such drops in employee engagement are frequently caused by occupational stress and could be mitigated by functional workplace mental health support programs (Chebeth & Wamwayi, 2024; Onyango & Juma, 2025), there is currently no empirical evidence to support or verify this relationship within Narok County Government. The precise

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operational linkages between workplace mental health factors and employee work engagement remain completely unexamined and unproven in this localized public sector context.

This empirical vacuum is highly problematic given that Narok County operates with a vast, heterogeneous workforce of 5,545 employees distributed across twelve highly demanding departments namely: Public Service Management, Agriculture, Education, Finance, Public Health and Sanitation, Lands, Public Works, ICT and E-Government, Trade and Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources, the County Public Service Board, and the Governor's Dedicated Unit (Narok County Government, 2025). Because prior county-level evaluations have failed to look past isolated health-sector data, county administrators currently lack the localized scientific baseline needed to determine whether workforce engagement challenges are truly connected to mental health programmatic factors. Without this critical data, it is impossible to design responsive, trusted and evidence-based workplace interventions or optimize welfare strategies for county civil servants. Therefore, this study sought to addresses these gaps by providing an examination of the significance of mental health service utilization on employee work engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Public sector organizations are expected to sustain high levels of employee work engagement because service delivery depends heavily on a civil service that demonstrates consistent vigour, dedication and absorption in its duties. Ideally, structured human resource initiatives and workplace mental health support programmes should anchor this engagement by fostering robust service utilization and supporting continuous treatment adherence for employee welfare.

However, direct institutional data from Narok County Government demonstrates challenges related to critical variances and drops in employee work engagement across its departments. Internal strategic reviews and human resource registries reveal rising employee absenteeism, declining workforce commitment indices and a measurable decay in administrative output across key service delivery units (Adisa & Juma, 2026; Narok County Government, 2023). Broader national and international literature strongly suggests that such drop-offs in public workforce engagement are frequently linked to unmanaged occupational stress and could be mitigated by functional workplace mental health support programmes (Chebeth & Wamwayi, 2024; Onyango & Juma, 2025). However, there is currently no empirical evidence to support or verify this relationship within Narok County Government.

This complete empirical vacuum is highly problematic within Narok County Government, which operates with a vast, heterogeneous workforce of 5,545 civil servants distributed across twelve highly demanding municipal departments. Without localized scientific evidence, county administrators lack the empirical baseline needed to determine whether their documented workforce engagement challenges are truly connected to mental health programmatic factors. If this empirical gap remains unaddressed, administrators will continue designing workplace interventions blindly, without knowing whether they are accessible, consistently used or capable of recovering workforce vigour. This study sought to addresses these gaps.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between service utilization and employee work engagement in Narok County Government.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H_{01}: Service utilization has no statistically significant relationship with employee work engagement in Narok County Government.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on the Andersen's Behavioural Model of Health Services Use, developed by Andersen in1968 and later revised by Andersen (1995). This theory explains health service utilization through three main categories: predisposing factors, enabling factors and need factors. Predisposing factors include demographic characteristics, attitudes and beliefs; enabling factors include access, affordability, institutional support and availability of services; while need factors refer to perceived or evaluated need for care. Recent studies continue to support the relevance of the model in explaining health service utilization. Alkhawaldeh et al. (2023) found that Andersen's model remains widely applied in health service utilization research because it explains both individual and access-related factors. Lederle et al. (2021) similarly found that the model is useful in health services research because it links personal characteristics, enabling resources and perceived need. Krzyż et al. (2023) further emphasized its relevance in studying mental healthcare utilization, especially where access, culture and system-level barriers influence help-seeking behaviour.

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Despite its usefulness, Andersen's Behavioural Model has been criticized for giving greater attention to individual-level determinants of service use while paying less attention to broader structural, institutional and policy factors. This limitation is important in public sector settings, where service utilization may be affected not only by employee attitudes but also by workplace culture, confidentiality, leadership support, resource availability and administrative procedures. Krzyż et al. (2023) observed that the model often requires adaptation when applied to mental healthcare because service utilization is shaped by cultural, institutional and population-specific barriers. Lederle et al. (2021) also noted that qualitative and contextual approaches are needed to capture complex service-use experiences that may not be fully explained by the model's traditional categories. Alkhawaldeh et al. (2023) further indicated that the model is more useful when expanded to include contextual and system-level determinants.

Andersen's Behavioural Model was relevant to this study because it helped explain why employees may or may not use available mental health support services. In this study, service utilization was measuring in terms of availability, accessibility, awareness, confidentiality, perceived need and workplace support. The model therefore provided a useful basis for examining whether employees who were aware of and able to access mental health support services demonstrated higher levels of vigour, dedication and absorption. It was particularly relevant in a county government context where access to mental health support may be shaped by departmental structures, resource limitations, stigma and employees' perceptions of need.

2.2 Empirical Review

In the United States, Moore et al. (2023) examined the low utilization of Employee Assistance Programs among public health workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study used survey data from 26,174 public health workers and found that non-use of Employee Assistance Programmes was mainly associated with difficulty accessing services at 53.1%, use of external services at 21.5% and lack of awareness or motivation at 11.3%. The findings showed that the availability of workplace mental health services does not automatically lead to utilization. However, the study focused on public health workers in the United States and did not examine how service utilization relates to work engagement in county government settings. The current study addressed this gap by examining the relationship between service utilization and employee work engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government, Kenya.

In Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam, Abdul Aziz and Ong (2025) investigated access to Employee Assistance Programmes and employee well-being among 15,302 employees. The study found that only 29.04% of employees reported access to Employee Assistance Programmes. It further established that access to these programmes was significantly associated with improved mental health, thriving, productivity and reduced turnover intention. These findings confirmed that access to mental health support contributes to positive workplace outcomes. Sevov et al. (2025) found that employee preference, intention, barriers and facilitators shaped use of employee mental health programmes. Abdul Aziz and Ong (2025) also found that access to Employee Assistance Programmes was associated with improved mental health, productivity and reduced turnover intention. However, the study was conducted in Southeast Asian work settings and did not focus on African public sector employees or county government structures. The current study addressed this limitation by examining how mental health service utilization relates to employee work engagement among employees of Narok County Government, Kenya.

In South Africa, Dipela and Mgwenya (2025) examined social workers' perspectives on the utilization and effectiveness of Employee Assistance Programmes in the Department of Social Development in Gauteng Province. The study adopted a qualitative approach and found that Employee Assistance Programmes were often viewed as intervention programmes rather than comprehensive workplace wellness programmes. It further revealed that fear of stigmatization, poor marketing and limited visibility of Employee Assistance Programmes reduced utilization. The study recommended decentralization, better communication and specialized services to improve programme use. However, the study focused on social workers and did not statistically examine the relationship between service utilization and work engagement. The current study addressed this gap by quantitatively examining the relationship between service utilization and employee work engagement in Narok County Government, Kenya.

In Ethiopia, Ginbeto et al. (2023) examined mental health service utilization and help-seeking behaviour in rural communities. The study found that many individuals with mental health problems first sought support from traditional or religious healers, while only a small proportion accessed biomedical mental health services. The findings showed that cultural beliefs, stigma, distance to formal services and limited awareness significantly shaped mental health service utilization. Although the study provided important evidence on barriers to mental health service use in an African context, it focused on community mental health rather than workplace mental health support or employee engagement. The current study addressed this gap by examining service utilization within a public sector workplace and linking it to vigour, dedication and absorption among employees of Narok County Government, Kenya.

In Kenya, Marangu et al. (2021) assessed mental health literacy among 212 primary healthcare workers in four counties and found that only 13.0% had formal mental health qualifications, 8.7% had received recent mental health-related continuing professional development, 35.6% correctly identified depression and 15.7% correctly recognized schizophrenia. Kwobah et al. (2023) also found that mental healthcare services in Busia, Bungoma, Uasin Gishu and

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Trans-Nzoia counties were typified by weak mental health structures, inadequate documentation, and limited human and financial resources. These studies showed that county-level mental health service capacity remains constrained. However, they focused mainly on mental health system capacity rather than employee work engagement. The current study addressed this gap by examining how service utilization relates to vigour, dedication and absorption among employees of Narok County Government, Kenya.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional correlational survey design. The design was appropriate because it enabled the study to establish the nature and strength of the relationship between service utilization and employee work engagement without manipulating the study variables.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Narok County Government. It is one of the 47 devolved governments in the republic of Kenya. The study covered employees drawn from the twelve departments of the county government including public service management, agriculture, education, finance, public health and sanitation, lands, public works, ICT and e-government, trade and tourism, environment and natural resources, the County Public Service Board, and the Governor's Dedicated Unit.

3.3 Target Population

The study targeted 5,545 employees drawn from 12 departments of the Narok County Government **(**Narok County Government Strategic Plan, 2025). This population was appropriate because employees in these departments were directly positioned to provide relevant information on mental health support service utilization and employee engagement.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

The sample size was determined using Yamane (1967) finite population formula because the target population was known.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:
n = required sample size
N = population size
e = margin of error
Given that:
N = 5,545
e = 8.1% or 0.081

$$n = \frac{5545}{1 + 5545(0.081)^2} = 148.34 \approx 149$$

This study used stratified random sampling. The twelve departments of Narok County Government formed the strata, and respondents were selected proportionately from each department based on its share of the total employee population.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

A structured self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire contained closed-ended items designed to collect quantitative data on service utilization and employee work engagement. The instrument was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect standardized responses from a relatively large sample, making the data suitable for statistical analysis. The questionnaires were administered to the sampled employees of Narok County Government using the drop-and-pick method after approvals were obtained from the Institutional Review Board and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

3.6 Data Analysis

In this study, quantitative data collected through questionnaires were coded, cleaned and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. The research instrument was screened for directional

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alignment. Any negatively worded or reverse-valenced items within the scales were reverse-coded to ensure that higher values uniformly indicated a more positive manifestation of the underlying construct. The analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. The linear regression model was expressed as follows:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$

Where:

Y = Employee work engagement
β_0 = Constant/intercept
β_1, = Regression coefficient for service utilization
X_1 = Service utilization
ε = Error term

3.7 Ethical Consideration

The researcher obtained approvals from the Institutional Review Board and NACOSTI. Participants were informed about the study including its purpose, benefits and risk. Written informed consent was obtained from each respondent using a separate signature sheet completely detached from the questionnaire itself. Participants were informed that they retained the right to skip any specific questions or withdraw from the study at any stage of the process without providing a justification and without facing any professional, administrative or personal penalty. Questionnaires did not collect any personal identifying information or personal clinical histories. Participants placed their completed questionnaires directly into an unmarked, blank envelope and sealed it before handing it to the researcher.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Mental Health Service Utilization by Employee in Narok County

The independent variable of the study was utilization of mental health services among public sector employees in Narok County Government. To establish utilization levels, respondents were present with seven items and asked to indicate their level of agreement with each on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Support Program Service Utilization

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev
I am aware that my organization provides mental health services	1	5	3.84	0.912
I know how to access the mental health services provided by my employer	1	5	3.71	0.968
I have utilized one or more mental health services offered by my organization	1	5	3.42	0.981
The mental health services available meet the needs of employees	1	5	3.58	0.995
I feel comfortable seeking mental health support in my workplace	1	5	3.49	0.994
Services are accessible during work hours and outside work if needed	1	5	3.63	0.948
Services are offered in both physical and online formats	1	5	3.54	0.973
Average	–	–	3.60	0.967

The results presented in Table 1 demonstrate that awareness of organizational mental health services recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.84, SD = 0.912), implying that employees were generally aware of the existence of mental health support services within Narok County Government. The relatively low standard deviation further reflects consistency in respondents' perceptions regarding service awareness.

Knowledge regarding access procedures for employer-provided mental health services produced a mean score of 3.71 and a standard deviation of 0.968. This suggests that employees generally understood how to access the available services, although the lower rating compared to overall awareness implies that not all employees were equally familiar with access procedures and referral pathways. Utilization of one or more mental health services generated the lowest mean score (M = 3.42, SD = 0.981). This demonstrates that actual uptake of mental health support services remained comparatively moderate despite relatively high awareness levels. The finding suggests the existence of barriers that may have limited employees from actively seeking support, including stigma, confidentiality concerns, fear of discrimination, or limited confidence in service effectiveness.

Perceptions regarding whether available mental health services adequately addressed employee needs recorded a mean score of 3.58 and a standard deviation of 0.995. This reflects moderate agreement that the services were relevant to employee psychological well-being needs, although the result also suggests that the interventions may not have fully addressed the diverse mental health concerns experienced by employees across departments. Comfort in seeking workplace mental health support recorded a mean score of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 0.994. The result indicates

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moderate confidence among employees in openly seeking support within the workplace environment. The variation in responses suggests that organizational culture, privacy concerns, and perceived stigma may still have influenced employees differently.

Accessibility of services during and outside normal working hours generated a mean score of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 0.948. This suggests that respondents generally perceived the services to be reasonably accessible in terms of timing and availability. The finding implies that the organization had established flexible support arrangements intended to accommodate varying employee schedules and support needs. Availability of both physical and online service delivery formats recorded a mean score of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 0.973. This indicates moderate agreement that employees could access mental health support through multiple channels. However, the variability in responses implies that awareness or actual availability of these delivery formats may not have been uniformly experienced across the organization.

The average mean score of 3.60 and standard deviation of 0.967 indicate that mental health service utilization was moderately established within Narok County Government. The descriptive pattern demonstrates that awareness and accessibility of services were stronger than actual utilization and comfort in seeking support. This implies that although the organization had established visible mental health support structures, practical uptake of the services remained comparatively lower among employees.

These findings agree with Wu et al. (2021), who established that employee awareness and accessibility of workplace mental health services are critical determinants of psychological well-being and employee engagement. Similarly, Shiri et al. (2023) found that accessible and properly implemented workplace mental health interventions positively influence employee well-being, productivity, and work-related outcomes. The findings are further supported by Andersen's Behavioral Model of Health Services Use, which explains that health service utilization is influenced by predisposing factors, enabling factors, and perceived need. In the context of this study, awareness, accessibility, and comfort in seeking support represented enabling conditions influencing employees' utilization of mental health support services. However, Fleming (2024) argued that workplace well-being interventions may yield limited engagement outcomes where broader organizational stressors and working conditions remain unresolved, indicating that service availability alone may not be sufficient to strengthen employee engagement.

4.1.2 Employee Engagement among Public Sector Employees

The dependent variable of the study was employee engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government. Engagement was measured using five Likert items that were rated on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Employee Engagement among Public Sector Employees

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Access to mental health services has helped reduce my work-related stress and I feel a sense of purpose and accomplishment in my role	3.79	0.881
I feel more focused and productive after using mental health services and therefore proud to work for this organization	3.71	0.914
Mental health support has improved my work-life balance and therefore I am emotionally committed to my organization	3.66	0.937
I feel that the organization values my well-being thus I feel enthusiastic about my job	3.82	0.863
Mental health programs have made me more motivated to contribute to my work therefore I am willing to go beyond my job requirements to help my organization succeed	3.75	0.892
Average	3.75	0.897

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that respondents generally agreed that the level of employee engagement within Narok County Government is moderate, as reflected by the overall mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 0.897. The descriptive pattern suggests that mental health support initiatives moderately enhanced employee motivation, psychological well-being, productivity, emotional attachment and commitment to organizational goals. Perception that the organization values employee well-being recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.82, SD = 0.863). This demonstrates that employees generally felt recognized and supported by the organization, thereby strengthening enthusiasm and positive attitudes toward work. The relatively low standard deviation further indicates consistency in employees' perceptions regarding organizational concern for their well-being.

Reduction of work-related stress through access to mental health services generated a mean score of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 0.881. This suggests that mental health support interventions contributed positively toward employees' psychological functioning and sense of purpose within the workplace. The result further implies that employees associated mental health support with improved emotional stability and work accomplishment. Improved

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motivation to contribute beyond normal job requirements recorded a mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 0.892. This indicates that mental health programs moderately strengthened employees' willingness to exert additional effort toward organizational success. Increased focus and productivity after utilizing mental health services also generated a relatively high mean score (M = 3.71, SD = 0.914), suggesting that mental health support interventions positively relate to employees' concentration, efficiency, and work performance.

Improvement in work-life balance and emotional commitment to the organization recorded the lowest mean score (M = 3.66, SD = 0.937). Although the result still reflected general agreement, it suggests that work-life balance improvements resulting from mental health support programs were comparatively moderate relative to other engagement dimensions. This may imply that workplace demands, workload pressures, and external personal responsibilities continued to affect employees despite the availability of support services. Overall, the average mean score of 3.75 and standard deviation of 0.897 indicate that mental health support programs moderately enhanced employee engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government. The relatively high ratings across the engagement indicators suggest that employees associated mental health support initiatives with improved morale, productivity, motivation, commitment, and organizational attachment. Nevertheless, the comparatively lower score relating to work-life balance suggests the need for additional organizational interventions aimed at strengthening employee well-being and long-term engagement.

These findings agree with Schaufeli (2021), who established that supportive workplace conditions and employee well-being interventions is positively associated with vigor, dedication, and absorption at work. Similarly, Bakker et al. (2023) found that psychological support systems and workplace well-being initiatives significantly improve employee motivation, commitment, and job performance. The findings are further supported by Andersen's Behavioural Model of Health Services Use, the Health Belief Model (HBM), and Mental Resource Allocation Theory. Andersen's Behavioural Model explains that access and utilization of supportive services influence employee well-being outcomes through enabling conditions such as accessibility and perceived usefulness. The Health Belief Model explains that employees are more likely to engage positively with organizational support systems when they perceive clear psychological and occupational benefits. Mental Resource Allocation Theory further explains that allocation of sufficient organizational and psychological resources enhances employee cognitive functioning, resilience, and engagement. Collectively, the theories support the argument that awareness, utilization, adherence, and institutional support mechanisms jointly contribute toward improved employee engagement outcomes. However, Nielsen (2022) argued that employee engagement may remain low where workplace stressors, excessive workloads, and unfavourable organizational climates persist, indicating that mental health support programs alone may not fully eliminate disengagement in the absence of broader organizational reforms.

4.1.3 Mental Health Utilization and Employee Engagement

Linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between mental health service utilization and employee engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government.

Table 3

Regression Results for Mental Health Service Utilization and Employee Engagement

Variable	***B***	***SE***	**β**	***t***	***p***
Constant	0.480	0.201	—	2.388	.018
Service Utilization	0.381	0.071	0.359	5.366	< .001
Model Summary					
R	.808				
R^2	.654				
Adjusted R^2	.646				
F (1, 136)	84.246				< .001

Note. *N* = 138. Dependent Variable: Employee engagement.

The findings indicated that the combined correlation between the mental health service utilization and employee engagement was strong, as reflected by an R value of 0.808. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.654$) demonstrates that service utilization explained 65.4% of the variation in employee engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government. Additionally, the standard error of the estimate of 0.437 indicates relatively low unexplained variation between observed and predicted values of employee engagement, suggesting that the regression model provided a reasonably good fit to the data. The ANOVA statistics indicated that the regression model was statistically significant, as reflected by an F-statistic of 84.246 and a significance value of 0.000, which was below the 0.05 threshold. This demonstrates that service utilization had a statistically significant effect on employee engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government.

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Service utilization had a positive and statistically significant effect on employee engagement (B = 0.381, t = 5.366, p = 0.000). This means that a one-unit increase in service awareness and utilization was associated with 0.381-unit increase in employee engagement, holding treatment adherence and resource allocation constant. Since the p-value was below 0.05, the null hypothesis H_{01}, which stated that there is no relationship between service utilization and employee engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government, was rejected. Therefore, service awareness and utilization had a positive and statistically relationship with employee engagement. This statistically aligns with Abdul Aziz and Ong (2025), who found across Southeast Asia (N=15,302) that functional access and active utilization of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) directly boost workforce vitality, thriving, and productivity while significantly reducing turnover intentions.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that service utilization significantly relate to employee engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government. The positive and statistically significant correlation and regression results showed that employees who were aware of available mental health services, understood how to access them, and utilized them were more likely to report higher levels of engagement. This implies that the existence of mental health services alone is not sufficient; employees must also be adequately informed about the services and feel able to use them. Therefore, mental health support programs contribute to employee engagement when they are visible, accessible, trusted, and responsive to employee needs.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends that Narok County Government should strengthen employee awareness of existing mental health support services. Although the findings showed that employees were generally aware of the availability of mental health services, actual utilization was comparatively lower. The county government should therefore conduct regular sensitization programs to inform employees about available services, access procedures, confidentiality safeguards, and the benefits of seeking mental health support. This would help reduce stigma and improve service uptake.

Second, the county government should improve accessibility and trust in mental health support services. Mental health services should be available through both physical and digital platforms to accommodate employees working in different departments and locations. The county should also ensure that employees can access support confidentially and without fear of discrimination or victimization. Strengthening confidentiality mechanisms would encourage more employees to seek help when experiencing work-related stress or psychological distress.

This study focused on employee engagement among public sector employees in Narok County Government. Further research should be conducted in other county governments in Kenya to establish whether similar findings apply in different public sector contexts. Future studies should also examine the role of workplace culture in influencing the utilization of mental health support services. This is important because employees may be aware of available services but fail to use them due to stigma, fear of disclosure, or concerns about confidentiality. Further research should investigate the influence of leadership support on employee mental health and engagement. Since supervisors and managers play an important role in shaping workplace climate, future studies should examine how leadership practices affect employee willingness to seek mental health support and remain engaged at work.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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