

## **Influence of work engagement on burnout among Kenya Universities professional counsellors**

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**Abstract:** This century has witnessed a paradigm shift in studies on psychological wellness of workers and researchers have shown an increasing interest in positive aspects of personal functioning in the workplace. Engagement and burnout variables have received very little attention in research among Kenya universities professional counsellors. This paper explores the relationship between work engagement and self-reported burnout scores among Kenya universities professional counsellors. The study utilized cross-sectional survey design. A sample of 180 professional counsellors in 75 institutions of higher learning in Kenya filled a self-response questionnaire comprising items derived from the Work Engagement Scale and Burnout Inventory. Data collected was quantitative and descriptive statistics (tables, percentages and cross-tabulations) and inferential statistics (chi-square, Kendall's tau-b Correlations Coefficient) were used in the analysis. All posited hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant level and analysis done with aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. The study established that job burnout level was moderate while work engagement was high. Work engagement components were positively related to each other and negatively correlated to job burnout. The study has generated new knowledge on work engagement and job burnout among Kenya universities professional counsellors and demonstrated the importance of these variables to the promotion of positive occupational health psychology as well as the implications for future research. This could help Human Resource Departments (HRD) to come up with policies that would promote their institutions' organisational psychological health and increase work engagement.

**Keywords:** Existential fulfilment; engagement; burnout; psychological wellness; counsellors

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Significant shifts in the global economy have accelerated the need for organizations to find innovative ways to address new technological, demographic and marketplace realities. As a result, Human Resource Practitioners have been forced to re-evaluate costs associated with talent, necessitating a need to maximize productivity with minimal work force. Consequently, a proliferation of work and wellness research resulted, since human resource capital can be the biggest asset as well as its biggest liability in any organization [1]. The ripple effect of promotion of positive occupational health psychology could be initiated at the preparation level of professionals. This is where universities play a key role in promoting psychological wellness through research, training and development of human resource in the helping professions. However, related research conducted in these institutions of higher learning has not paid much attention to professional counsellors whose nature of work predisposes them to stress and burnout. Three gaps are therefore apparent: first, the level of counsellor psychological wellness in Kenyan universities is not known with special reference to

engagement and burnout. Second, it is unknown the two variables (W.E and J.B) interact among counsellors working in higher learning. Lastly, the contribution of engagement to burnout among university counsellors in Kenya is also unknown. This study set out to bridge that gap by investigating the relationship between work engagement and job burnout among Kenya universities professional counsellors as well as the contribution of engagement to burnout.

As observed by Kiarie, Sisera and Mwenje [2] Kenya has invested highly in human resource development as a strategy of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. However, Kiarie et al. also aver the outcomes do not match the individual, institutional and national expectations. This could be attributed to the state of work and well-being since it has been established that it predicts employee outcomes, organisational success, and financial performance [3, 4]. GALLUP [5] conducted a global study across 142 countries on the state of engagement in the work place. Only 13.6% of employees worldwide were engaged at work, 61.7% are disengaged and 23.3% actively

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disengaged. AON-Hewitt (2014) report on trends in global engagement indicates that 22% of workers globally are engaged, 39% moderately engaged, 23% passive and 16% as actively disengaged.

The studies established that at the global level, Northern America (that is, the U.S. and Canada) have the highest proportion of engaged workers, at 29%, followed by Australia and New Zealand, at 24%, Western European countries, at 14% [6]. AON-Hewitt [7] report similar trends with Latin America having highest engagement levels at 31% followed by North America (27%), Africa/Middle east 23% and the least engagement levels reported in Europe (19%). According to GALLUP (2013) the highest proportions of actively disengaged workers are found in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and sub-Saharan Africa regions, at 35% and 33%, respectively. This is supported by AON-Hewitt [8] that indicates highest active disengagement in Europe and Africa/Middle East, at 19% and 16% respectively. The difference in percentages could be attributed to the fact that GALLUP employed a three factor scale of measurement that ranged from engaged, disengaged and actively disengaged while AON-Hewitt used a four factor scale (highly engaged, moderately engaged, passive and actively disengaged).

Studies have found that environmental variables that predict burnout phenomena include workload, social support and organizational administration [9-11]. The personal variables that have been identified in research include personality traits [12], perceived self-efficacy [13], existential fulfilment [14] constructive thinking [15], and work engagement [16]

Current socioeconomic and political strategies implemented by governments competing in the global economy are increasingly impacting negatively on the availability of talent in Higher education [17]. Rapid expansion of institutions of higher learning that is being witnessed in Kenya today has serious implications for organisational loyalty and occupational wellbeing of university employees including counsellors. However, much of the research on positive occupational health psychology in Kenya has mainly focused on High School set up [18] [19] [20] [21]. Higher education in Kenya, as in elsewhere, plays a critical role in the generation and dissemination of knowledge that is instrumental in perpetuation and sustainability of future talent and socioeconomic development [22]. In higher learning, researchers tend to focus on psychological well-being of the other staff and not much has been published on mental health providers with special reference to professional counsellors. This poses a knowledge gap with regard to work and wellbeing of the employees charged with the responsibility of

occupational mental health through psychological interventions.

University counsellors are actively involved in capacity building in the profession through counselling, training, consultancy and supervision of other counsellors and trainees. Studying their psychological wellness at work could therefore strengthen the endeavours aimed at combating job ill-health in other settings. It is against this background that this study set out to investigate the relationship between work engagement and job burnout among professional counsellors in universities in Kenya as well as the contribution of engagement and to burnout.

### **Work Engagement and Job Burnout**

Whereas research on burnout has produced thousands of articles during the past four decades, research on work engagement has just begun to emerge [23]. This is despite the trend in modern organizations where employees are expected to be proactive and show initiative, take responsibility for their own professional development, and to be committed to high quality performance standards. Thus, they need employees who feel energetic and dedicated, and who are absorbed by their work, i.e., who are engaged with their work [24].

Interestingly, it is research on burnout that has stimulated most contemporary research on work engagement. Consequently there has been a ranging controversy regarding whether work engagement and job burnout are distinct constructs or positioned at opposite ends of a common continuum [25]. Initially, the two constructs were operationalized as each other's opposites and job burnout was viewed as an erosion of work engagement [26]. Accordingly, engagement is characterized by energy, involvement and efficacy - the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions. However, Schaufeli and Bakker [27] argue that despite their antithetical nature, burnout and engagement are distinct psychological states each of which should be operationalized in its own right and assessed using separate measures.

Individuals typically begin a new job feeling energetic, dedicated to excellent performance and confident in their effectiveness; they usually are engaged rather than burned out [28][29]. Under stressful conditions, however, fulfilling and meaningful work can gradually become unfulfilling and meaningless [30]. From this perspective, burnout is an erosion of engagement, and, thus, burnout and engagement logically represent opposite ends of a common continuum. By consequence, the three dimensions of burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy) are viewed as direct opposites of the three dimensions of engagement (energy, involvement, and efficacy). In the case of burnout, energy turns into exhaustion, involvement into cynicism, and efficacy

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into ineffectiveness. The practical significance of this perspective is that work engagement represents a desired goal for work-based interventions designed to reduce job burnout [31].

Given this logic, Maslach and Leiter [32] contend that the three dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measure burnout as well as employee engagement. By implication, engagement is assessed by the opposite pattern of scores on the three dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory [33]: low scores on exhaustion and cynicism, and high scores on professional efficacy.

### **Job Burnout**

Job burnout caught the attention of researchers almost 40 years ago but has grown to be the most widely recognized construct of employee wellness in theory and practice as well as one of the most researched topics in occupational psychology [34]. The term burnout came to social sciences from the language of aerospace [35]. A New York psychiatrist Freudenberger [36], has been credited as the first to coin the term as a description of a condition observed among people in the helping professions that is characterized by overwork resulting in exhaustion and fatigue.

In the most widely used definition which was done by Maslach [37], burnout is described as a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity. Emotional exhaustion refers to the depletion of psychic energy characterized by mental, emotional and physical tiredness. Depersonalization refers to the development of negative, cynical attitudes toward their work or the recipients of their services – an extreme and therefore dysfunctional kind of detachment and loss of concern. Reduced personal accomplishment is the tendency to evaluate one's own work with recipients negatively, an evaluation that is often accompanied by feelings of insufficiency, self-doubt and poor self-esteem [38].

It therefore follows that counsellors with high levels of emotional exhaustion report feeling psychologically drained. They have little energy or motivation left of them to give to their clients or to their job. Individuals with high levels of depersonalization report feeling cynical, pessimistic, and apathetic towards their clients. Low levels of personal accomplishment are associated with feelings of negativity towards oneself, especially in the context of one's relationship to clients. A broad range of occupations can experience burnout. Because of this, various studies have been done on different occupations such as doctor, nurse, police, teacher, librarian, manager. In these studies, a lot of factors were found to be considerable predictors of burnout. In general, these

factors are divided into two groups: Personal (demographics) factors and environmental (organizational and work) factors. Several studies have found that organizational factors and work features were more highly correlated with burnout than personal factors [39][40][41]. Some demographic characteristics, such as age, gender and marital status were found to be related to burnout in several studies [42]. In addition, personality characteristics, such as extraversion, neuroticism, introversion and aggression were found to be related to burnout in several studies [43].

### **Conceptualisation of Job Burnout**

First researchers in the field, Freudenberger [44] and Maslach [45], based their work on the assumption that burnout occurs due to interaction between providers and receivers in occupations providing services and care [46]. Later research has shown that burnout relates to other professional activities and occupations as well [47].

Maslach, Jackson and Leiter [48] conceptualised burnout as a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a sense of diminished self-efficacy that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity. Burnout occurs as a response to emotional and interpersonal stressors among individuals [49]. Emotional exhaustion is the first reaction to the stress of job demands and basic element of the syndrome. Exhausted individuals feel emotionally and physically drained up, and unable to recover. Depersonalization or cynicism reflects negative responses to work and people at work with cold and distant attitude. The final dimension, self-evaluation component of burnout – reduced professional efficacy, is a state of ineffectiveness and loss of confidence in own abilities [50]. All three dimensions respectively correspond to the level of energy (e.g. feeling used up), attitude (e.g. being cynical), and self-evaluation (e.g. doubting personal abilities) [51].

### **Consequences of Job Burnout**

Burnout has an importance in business and social life because of its effects. Firstly, burnout has negative impacts on the psychological and physical health of individuals. Burnout is a putative factor in the development of family discord, drug and alcohol abuse, insomnia, and fatigue [52]. Also, burnout is positively correlated with reports of headaches, sleep disturbances, and other somatic symptoms of stress. Secondly, burnout has an effect on job productivity and performance [53] [54]. In general, burnout decreases job performance, job satisfaction, job commitment and quality of service, and increases absenteeism, low morale, and job turnover [55].

Burnout is associated with decreased job performance [56], reduced work engagement and

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predicts low existential fulfilment [57], and stress related problems [58]. Cherniss [59] identified that, in the process of burnout, both attitudes and behaviours change in an unconstructive manner in response to work stress. Cedoline [60] depicted the physical and behavioural symptoms of burnout as the reluctance to go to work, disappointment with performance, an extension of work problems into the person's home life, and an ultimate feeling of worthlessness.

Pines [61] reported that burnout symptoms include, but are not limited to, fatigue, poor self-esteem, inability to concentrate on a subject, and a tendency to blame others. Maslach and Colleagues [62] further asserts that individuals suffering from burnout experience a depletion of physical and emotional resources, develop cynical attitudes, and feel a loss of professional self-efficacy. Dunham and Varma [63] stated that the most pervasive symptoms of burnout are a noticeable lowering level of job commitment, a loss of enthusiasm and interest, and feelings of disaffection and alienation. In addition to negative effects of burnout on individuals, organizations also face significant implications and costs associated with burnout [64]. Among these negative impacts, organizations experience lower individual work performance, high rates of turnover, lower levels of organizational commitment, lower reported job satisfaction, high health care costs, and decreases in creativity, problem solving and innovation [65].

## METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey was utilised in the study. The research phenomena were deemed to have occurred and therefore were examined in their existing condition as indicated by Borg and Gall [66]. Data was collected using structured self-response questionnaire that were distributed to 193 randomly selected professional counsellors from all chartered universities in Kenya. The questionnaire was derived from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) and Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS). The 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale contains three dimensions - vigour, dedication, and absorption. The measure uses a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranges from *never* (0) to *always* (6). The UWES has been found to be a reliable and valid self-report questionnaire [67]. In this study, the vigour dimension consisting of 6 items such as “*At my work, I feel bursting with energy*”, and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76, whereas the dedication dimension comprising 5 items like “*My job inspires me*” yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.80. The absorption dimension consisted of 6 items such as “*Time flies when I'm working*” and yielded an internal consistency of 0.76.

The overall reliability coefficient for this scale was 0.91 which was higher than the mean of the three sub-scales and since it was higher than the threshold for

acceptance it was deemed sufficient for purposes of research. The difference on overall correlation coefficient with the mean of the three alphas can be explained in Seppala and Colleagues [68] who argue that the high correlations between the three factors indicate substantial overlap between them, and thus restrict their use as separate dimensions. Each sub-scale had a maximum score of 30 with the overall possible core being 120. High scores on these scales indicate greater work engagement. The reliability results for this study correlated with a study by Ugwu [69] that yielded coefficients of 0.73, 0.79, 0.70 and 0.85 for vigour, dedication, absorption and overall engagement respectively. Schaufeli and Bakker [70] observed that an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.93 which was closer to that yielded in this study.

Burnout was measured with the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Service Survey [71]. The MBI – HSS (22 items) consists of 3 sub-scales: emotional exhaustion (8 items); depersonalization (5 items); and self-efficacy (7 items) based on a 7-point scale, from “*never*” to “*always*”. This study yielded reliability coefficients of 0.83, 0.94 and 0.71 for emotional exhaustion, efficacy and depersonalisation respectively. This was in line with the MBI reliability tests [72] were between 0.80 and 0.90 for emotional exhaustion and between .70 and .80 for cynicism and inefficacy. The overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was  $\geq 0.83$  which was regarded as sufficient for research purposes according to Fraenkel and Wallen [73]. The reliability coefficients were similar to Loonstra, Brouwers and Tomic [74] study that yielded 0.91 for emotional exhaustion, 0.66 for depersonalisation and 0.79 for professional efficacy.

## RESULTS

A sample of 180 respondents filled the questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 94%, which was considered good for survey research not only according to Babbie [75], but also according to the findings of Asch and Colleagues [76]. The modal age group was 41 – 45 years who accounted for 25% followed by 46 – 50 years group who represented 18.9% of total respondents. It was observed that 13.3% of the respondents were aged 36 – 40 years, 11.1% were aged 31 – 35 years while 12.8% was accounted for by those aged 51 – 55 years. Respondents aged 26 – 30 accounted for 6.7% of total respondents, 7.2% were aged 56 – 60 years, 4.4% were aged 21 – 25 years and 0.6% were aged over 60 years. Among respondents 78% of respondents were married, 17% single, 3% separated and 2% widowed. 70% of respondents were employed on permanent basis, 28% were on contract and 2% were engaged on other terms which include consultancy basis and practicum attachment.

## The Relationship between Work Engagement and Job Burnout

Since work engagement was viewed as the positive antipode of job burnout, it was expected that all engagement and burnout dimensions were negatively correlated with professional efficacy reversibly scored as reduced efficacy [77]. Negative correlations were particularly expected between exhaustion and vigour and between depersonalization and dedication since they present of the activation and identification dimensions respectively.

To achieve  $H_01$ : There is no statistically significant relationship between work engagement and job burnout among Kenya universities professional counsellors the research posited a dummy hypothesis to test for the relationship between the variables. Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficients were calculated and a correlation matrix generated to show how the variables and their components correlate. The findings are presented in Table 4.8.

**Table-1: Correlation Coefficient between Engagement and Burnout Dimensions**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Vigour	-						
2. Dedication	.644**	-					
3. Absorption	.690**	.649**	-				
4. Overall Engagement	.881**	.840**	.899**	-			
5. Emotional Exhaustion	-.224**	-.207**	.145*	-.083	-		
6. Professional Efficacy	.473**	.251**	.168*	.327**	-.288**	-	
7. Depersonalization	-.146*	-.137	-.125	-.154*	.134	.181*	-
8. Overall Burnout	.197**	-.018	.135	.129	.326**	.658**	.606**

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The first level of analyses for correlations between work engagement and job burnout dimensions were based on four hypotheses.  $H_01$  stated that there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension vigour and job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion. A Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient was conducted to test this hypothesis. It was observed that the weak negative correlation coefficient of -0.224 with a 2-tailed significance of 0.00 which was less than the 0.05 and therefore statistically significant. Accordingly, the hypothesis was rejected and it was inferred that higher levels of work engagement dimension vigour predicted lower levels of job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion among university professional counsellors. This observation confirms Schaufeli and Bakker [78] observation that the work engagement dimension (vigour) is characterised by high levels of energy, resilience and mental flexibility while working. This translates to the willingness to invest effort in one's work and gives the counsellor the ability not to be easily fatigued (get emotionally exhausted) and be persistent in the face of challenges. These finding confirm the assertion by Schaufeli and Bakker [79] that vigour is characterized by high levels of energy, resilience and the mental flexibility while working. It is also defined by the willingness to invest effort in one's work and the ability to not be easily fatigued and his leads to the tendency to be persistent in the face of difficulty.

$H_02$  averred that there is no significant relationship between work engagement dimension vigour and job burnout dimension professional efficacy.

The observed positive correlation coefficient of 0.473( $p=0.00<0.05$ ) which led to the decision to reject the null hypothesis. It was inferred higher levels of work engagement dimension vigour predicted and higher levels of job burnout dimension professional efficacy among university professional counsellors.

$H_03$  stated that there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension vigour and job burnout dimension depersonalisation. An observed negative correlation coefficient of -0.146( $p=0.05\leq 0.05$ ) ensured that the null hypothesis was rejected. It was inferred that higher levels work engagement dimension vigour predicted lower levels job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion among university professional counsellors.

Lastly,  $H_04$  stated there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension vigour and overall job burnout. The statistical test yielded a weak significant positive correlation coefficient of 0.197( $p=0.00<0.05$ ) which led to the decision to reject the null hypothesis. It was inferred that work engagement dimension vigour predicted higher job burnout levels.

Similarly, the second level of analyses for correlations between work engagement and job burnout dimensions were based on four hypotheses.  $H_01$  stated that there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension dedication and job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion. A Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient was conducted to test this

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hypothesis. It was observed that the weak negative correlation coefficient of -0.207 with a 2-tailed significance of 0.01 which was less than the 0.05 and therefore statistically significant. Accordingly, the hypothesis was rejected and it was inferred that higher levels of work engagement dimension dedication predicted lower levels of job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion among university professional counsellors.

H<sub>02</sub> averred that there is no significant relationship between work engagement dimension vigour and job burnout dimension professional efficacy. The observed significant positive correlation coefficient of 0.251( $p=0.00<0.05$ ) which led to the decision to reject the null hypothesis. It was inferred higher levels of work engagement dimension dedication predicted and higher levels of job burnout dimension professional efficacy among university professional counsellors. Schaufeli and Bakker [80] defined dedication as the commitment to work that is characterized by a sense of significance. Dedication was also viewed as a useful and meaningful experience, inspiring and challenging and that it invokes feelings of pride and enthusiasm [81]. It therefore could be viewed as a means of strengthening professional efficacy among counsellors.

H<sub>03</sub> stated that there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension dedication and job burnout dimension depersonalisation. An observed negative correlation coefficient of -0.137( $p=0.07>0.05$ ) ensured that the null hypothesis was not rejected because the correlation was not significant. It was inferred that higher levels of work engagement dimension vigour could not be used predicted lower levels job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion among university professional counsellors.

Lastly, H<sub>04</sub> stated there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension vigour and overall job burnout. The statistical test yielded a weak non-significant positive correlation coefficient of 0.018( $p=0.82<0.05$ ) which led to the decision not to reject the null hypothesis. It was inferred that work engagement dimension vigour could not be used to predicted lower job burnout levels.

The third level of analyses for correlations between work engagement and job burnout dimensions were based on four hypotheses. H<sub>01</sub> stated that there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension absorption and job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion. A Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient was conducted to test this hypothesis. It was observed that the weak positive correlation coefficient of 0.145 with a 2-tailed significance of 0.05 which was equal to  $\alpha=0.05$  and therefore statistically significant. Accordingly, the hypothesis was rejected and it was inferred that higher levels of work engagement

dimension absorption predicted higher levels of job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion among university professional counsellors. According to Schaufeli and Bakker [82] absorption could be viewed as a pleasant state of total immersion in one's work, which is characterized by full concentration on and deep engrossment in one's work so that time passes quickly and one is unable to detach oneself from the job. In other words, when a counsellor exhibits absorption in their role, they attain a sense of flow and this could a cushion from emotional exhaustion.

H<sub>02</sub> averred that there is no significant relationship between work engagement dimension absorption and job burnout dimension professional efficacy. The observed significant positive correlation coefficient of 0.168( $p=0.02<0.05$ ) which led to the decision to reject the null hypothesis. It was inferred higher levels of work engagement dimension absorption predicted and higher levels of job burnout dimension professional efficacy among university professional counsellors.

H<sub>03</sub> stated that there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension dedication and job burnout dimension depersonalisation. An observed positive correlation coefficient of 0.137( $p=0.1>0.05$ ) ensured that the null hypothesis was not rejected because the correlation was not significant. It was inferred that higher levels of work engagement dimension absorption could not be used predicted higher levels job burnout dimension depersonalisation among university professional counsellors.

Lastly, H<sub>04</sub> stated there is no significant correlation between work engagement dimension absorption and overall job burnout. The statistical test yielded a weak non-significant positive correlation coefficient of 0.135( $p=0.07<0.05$ ) which led to the decision not to reject the null hypothesis. It was inferred that work engagement dimension absorption could not be used to predicted higher job burnout levels.

The fourth level of analyses for correlations between overall work engagement and job burnout dimensions were based on four hypotheses. H<sub>01</sub> stated that there is no significant correlation between overall work engagement and job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion. A Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient was conducted to test this hypothesis. It was observed that the weak negative correlation coefficient of -0.083 with a 2-tailed significance of 0.27 which was greater than 0.05 and therefore not statistically significant. Accordingly, the hypothesis was not rejected and it was inferred that higher levels of work engagement could not be used to predict lower levels of job burnout dimension emotional exhaustion among university professional counsellors.

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H<sub>02</sub> averred that there is no significant relationship between work engagement and job burnout dimension professional efficacy. The observed significant positive correlation coefficient of 0.327( $p=0.00<0.05$ ) which led to the decision to reject the null hypothesis. It was inferred higher levels of work engagement predicted and higher levels of job burnout dimension professional efficacy among university professional counsellors. H<sub>03</sub> stated that there is no significant correlation between work engagement and job burnout dimension depersonalisation. An observed negative correlation coefficient of -0.154( $p=0.04<0.05$ ) ensured that the null hypothesis was rejected because the correlation was significant. It was inferred that higher levels of work engagement predicted lower levels of job burnout dimension depersonalisation among university professional counsellors.

Lastly, H<sub>04</sub> stated there is no significant correlation between overall work engagement and overall job burnout. The statistical test yielded a weak non-significant positive correlation coefficient of 0.129( $p=0.09<0.05$ ) which led to the decision not to reject the null hypothesis. It was inferred that work engagement could not be used to predict higher job burnout levels.

Highly engaged employees work particularly hard and diligently because they enjoy their work, and not because of a strong, compelling inner motivation alone [83]. They might be expected to work harder and smarter because they have high levels of energy, are enthusiastic regarding their jobs, and often involve themselves deeply in their work [84]. When they experience fatigue, they perceive the feeling as quite pleasant because of its association with positive achievements rather than failures [85]. The outcome is that such workers develop positive attitudes towards their work and organization; they experience job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and a lack of desire to turnover [86]. Likewise, engagement leads to positive organizational behaviour, such as displaying personal initiative, a strong motivation to learn [87] and proactive conduct [88].

There are several factors that have been proposed in research as the reason why engaged employees perform better than unengaged ones [89]. Firstly, engaged employees were found to have positive sentiments towards their job which led to productivity. Secondly, engaged employees were seen to be more open work opportunities and more confident and optimistic. Thirdly, research suggests that engagement is to employee wellbeing, which leads to better performance [90-92]. Lastly, engaged employees work more productively because they have the ability to create their own resources [93]. Xanthopoulou, Bakker,

Demerouti & Schaufeli [94] found in their study of highly skilled Dutch technicians that personal resources (optimism, self-efficacy and organisational-based self-esteem) resulted in higher levels of engagement.

Research has revealed that engaged employees are highly energetic, self-efficacious individuals who exercise influence over events that affect their lives [95]. Because of their positive attitude and activity level, engaged employees create their own positive feedback, in terms of appreciation, recognition, and success. Although engaged employees do feel tired after a long day of hard work, they describe their tiredness as a rather pleasant state because it is associated with positive accomplishments. Finally, engaged employees enjoy other things outside work. Unlike workaholics, engaged employees do not work hard because of a strong and irresistible inner drive, but because for them working is fun [96].

Exhausted individuals feel emotionally and physically drained up, and unable to recover. Depersonalization or cynicism reflects negative responses to work and people at work with cold and distant attitude. The final dimension, self-evaluation component of burnout – reduced professional efficacy, is a state of ineffectiveness and loss of confidence in own abilities [97]. All three dimensions respectively correspond to the level of energy (e.g. feeling used up), attitude (e.g. being cynical), and self-evaluation (e.g. doubting personal abilities) [98]. Research has established that the core dimensions of burnout (exhaustion and depersonalisation) and engagement (vigour and dedication) are opposites of each other [99, 100].

## SUMMARY

Based on the objectives, the following were the major findings of the study: The overall work engagement level among Kenya universities professional counsellors based on UWES was high (mean = 4.23; sd = 1.48). Among individual respondents, 52% of the respondents were highly engaged, 43% were observed to be moderately engaged and 5% registered low work engagement. Overall burnout among Kenya universities professional counsellors derived from the mean index of responses on the MBI-SS was 2.2 (sd = 1.77) and therefore moderate. Among respondents, 76% registered moderate burnout levels.

Work engagement dimension vigour was correlated with job burnout dimensions emotional exhaustion -0.224( $p=0.00<0.05$ ) professional efficacy 0.473( $p=0.00<0.05$ ) depersonalisation -0.146( $p=0.05\leq 0.05$ ) and overall job burnout (0.197( $p=0.01<0.05$ )) among university professional counsellors. Work engagement dimension dedication was correlated with job burnout dimensions emotional

exhaustion -0.207( $p=0.01>0.05$ ) professional efficacy 0.251( $p=0.00<0.05$ ) depersonalisation -0.137( $p=0.07>0.05$ ) and overall job burnout (-0.018( $p=0.82>0.05$ )) among university professional counsellors. Work engagement dimension absorption was correlated with job burnout dimensions emotional exhaustion 0.145( $p=0.05<0.05$ ) professional efficacy 0.168( $p=0.03<0.05$ ) depersonalisation -0.125( $p=0.1<0.05$ ) and overall job burnout (0.135( $p=0.07>0.05$ )) among university professional counsellors. Overall work engagement was correlated with job burnout dimensions emotional exhaustion -0.083( $p=0.27>0.05$ ) professional efficacy 0.327( $p=0.00<0.05$ ) depersonalisation -0.154( $p=0.04<0.05$ ) and overall job burnout (0.129( $p=0.09>0.05$ )) among university professional counsellors

## CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings of the study, the researcher made several conclusions which are related to the four research objectives of the study. These conclusions were generalized to professional counsellors practising in Kenyan universities. They are as follows: The state of wellness among Kenya universities professional counsellors as operationalized by existential fulfilment, work engagement and job burnout: The overall work engagement level among Kenya universities professional counsellors is high half of individual counsellors are highly engaged in their jobs. Overall burnout among Kenya universities professional counsellors is moderate more than two thirds of individual counsellors moderately burnt out. Work engagement was negatively and significantly correlated to job burnout

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following are the recommendations: It was observed that burnout was moderate and tending towards high. Therefore, intervention programmes for counsellor burnout should be strengthened to combat indisposition among the psychological health providers. These include counsellor supervision programmes, refresher training workshops, peer supervision as well as case conferences. The study established that work engagement and job burnout were diametrically opposed and therefore higher work engagement predicted low job burnout. It was therefore recommended that the antecedents of work engagement among professional counsellors in higher learning should be cultivated to promote engagement and mitigate the burnout phenomena.

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