

Original Research Article

An Appraisal of Career Counseling Techniques Employed at the National Oil Refinery Company (SONARA) in Limbe

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Abstract

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This study appraised career counseling techniques employed at the national oil refinery company (SONARA) in Limbe. Municipality of the South West Region of Cameroon. The study was anchored on the Social Cognitive Theory by Lent and Hackette (2002). A case study research design was adopted for this study. A sample of 64 workers, 5 social workers and a general manager constituted a total number of 70 respondents that limited the sample. Simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques were used. Data was presented in the form of frequencies and percentages as well as tables and the interview guide were analyzed thematically. The Findings indicated that; social workers in SONARA employ directive, non-directive and cooperative or eclectic counseling techniques, and that the non-directive and eclectic counseling techniques are used often. Findings also indicated that counseling is a reality in SONARA but not done frequently. It was therefore concluded that career counseling is not done often in SONARA but when it is done, it helps to boost workers' performances and consequently improve the productivity of the company. Based on the findings, the study recommends that SONARA should constantly provide adequate career advisory services to its employees as well as have sufficient career counseling plan for its employees to improve on overall productivity. Therefore, career counseling should be done frequently. It is also recommended that the management of SONARA should consider instituting career counseling programs which will assist employees in exploiting their strengths and potential and avoid mismatches between individual aspirations, capabilities and organizational opportunities. Once this is done, it is believed that career counseling will improve the organization's effectiveness and assist employees in achieving their individual needs.

Keywords: Career, Counseling techniques

INTRODUCTION

Career counseling is the act of assisting a client to have a positive perception about things. It aims to assist employees to possibly perceive things from a different point of view from how they initially perceived them and to enable the employees' function effectively (Gunnar, 2004, p.4). When an organization pays less attention to

the welfare of her employees, the organization is bound to suffer reduced productivity. This is because many employees are often affected by personal problems, which result in decreased job performance. Career counseling is one of the instruments that can help improve work performance in any human organization.

The success or failure of an organization is largely dependent on the performance of her employees. Effective work performance is the production of valid Findings in a work organization. It is when employees produce the expected Findings that may lead to productivity in the work organization (Clark, 2000, p.39). According to Kaila (2005, p.12), career counseling helps employees to cope with problems and thus, there is an assumption that it should improve both organizational performance and the employee performance since the employee becomes more cooperative, worries less about personal problems or improves in other ways.

Employee counseling is a psychological health care intervention for employees at the workplace. According to Gerstmann (2014, p.31), the aim of the employee counseling is to assist both the employer and employee by intervening with an active problem-solving approach in tackling the problems at hand. Improving employee productivity has been one of the most important objectives for several organizations.

Concept Conceptualizing Career Counseling

Career counseling is a personalised process that helps a person understand themselves, explore career options, and clarify and obtain desired career goals. Career counseling can therefore be viewed as a sequence of activities aimed at assisting an individual to make informed decisions about work or about work related problems Nthangi (2007, p. 71). Workplace counselors engage with employees in occupational settings who seek support when they experience challenges to coping or perceive themselves as unable to cope with workplace-related stress.

Counseling interventions seek to provide a supportive relationship which is intended to foster behavioural, emotional, and social change. It is to help build resilience and assist clients to develop strategies to enable them to cope with and manage stress (Smither, 2011). When employees overcome these challenges, they are able to improve their productivity. McLeod's (2010, p.60) opines that workplace counseling is effective in reducing the symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression, distress, dysfunction, and underperformance of employees, thereby improving productivity.

Makinde (1983, p.72) states that, workplace counseling is an integrative process between an employee who is vulnerable and requires assistance from a counselor who is trained and educated to give such assistance. Employee counseling entails the provision of help and support to employees in a way that helps them to face and sail through the difficult times in life. In life or career, people come across problems either at work or in their personal lives. However, these problems influence and affect their performance in their undertakings especially at work. Therefore, Roberts (2001. p.72) says

that, counseling guides, consoles, advises, shares and helps in resolving employee problems whenever the need arises.

Career counseling aims at helping a client cope with issues associated with the vocational aspects of his or her life. An ideal scenario for tackling career issues may be that an expert counseling professional, such as a career counselor or a counseling psychologist, would provide a client with an accurate diagnosis and/or prognosis (Williamson, 1965).

McLeod (2001) argues that counseling in the workplace helps to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. He adds that it improves mental health, lowers levels of sickness and increases job satisfaction and commitment. Counseling provides an effective method for understanding behavioural discipline and offers a supportive remedy. Moreover, counseling requires managers to identify employees who are not performing as effectively as they previously did and look for possible ways to help them improve on the productivity.

Highley (1996, p.102), sought to establish the link between counseling employees and personnel performance criteria at the workplace and found an association between human resource practices and job performance outcomes. Career counseling was found to be helpful to top management in the development of human resource practices as it ensures high achievements of academic staffs' performance. Career counselors have a duty to develop and intensify the desire of every member of the organization to work effectively and efficiently.

Hellya (2018, p.56) postulates that career counseling is the vehicle of career development, change and life enhancement in individuals' life. Therefore, in a counseling session a skillful counselor can help clients who want to develop themselves and make changes in their lives. For an effective counseling process, a skillful counselor should have some professional skills such as relationship, helping or counseling case conceptualization, diagnosis and intervention (Cormier and Heckney, 2012). These techniques are described as competencies ranging from the basic and simple level to the more advanced and complex (Whiston and Coker, 2000).

In his search, Kubus (2016) says that career counseling entails much more than merely choosing a job and hoping to stay there for the rest of one's life but it is seen as trying to find a way to integrate into the society and also making a social contribution. Thus, career counselor endeavor to help people deal with their pain and empower them to use this pain to help others. This further implies that career counseling is important because it creates a road map of motivation for clients to work hard and to realize their goals. It gives advice and guides on the choice of school, field of study and job to pursue. Career counseling provides and guides workers

to overcome crossroad challenges for better achievements in their field of work.

Robertson (2018), on his part is of the opinion that career counseling is the provision of emotional support to the client that will enable them eliminate negative challenges and assist them to manage stress. According to Robertson (2018), career counseling is very important as it empowers workers to be proactive and believe in their ability to make things happen, it promotes a sense of agency (like learned helplessness, locus of control and mastery), it encourages clients to be optimistic, set constructive external goals and focus on the future rather than ruminate on the past or present problems.

Egan (2017) defines career counseling as a practical benefit resulting from goals and achievements. That aside from this, the process of setting and pursuing goals is likely to be of intrinsic benefits. Optimism is a key characteristic of mentally healthy and the adoption of goals implies a willingness to entertain the possibility of positive outcomes. In this same vein, Lent and Brown (2008) integrate positive and vocational psychology, they provide a social-cognitive model that identifies goals gain from career counseling as a key factor influencing both job satisfaction (well-being in the work domain) and life satisfaction (global well-being).

Hartung and Taber (2008) says a constructive approach to career counseling promotes subjective well-being through supporting adjustment to developmental challenges and the implementation of a healthy social identity. According to them, career counseling encourages clients to redefine their vocational identity in a way that strengthens their self-esteem. Tehran (1997), found out that workplace counseling assists employees to reduce work-related stress as well as socioeconomic stresses or pressures. Employee-management relationships also improved within the organization and thus makes an impact on the productivity level (Tehran, 1997, p.74).

Wendy (2008) sees career counseling as a type of advice or support provided by a career counselor to an employee or to management, to help him or her manage their journey through life, learning and work changes. This includes career exploration, making career choices, managing career changes, lifelong career development and dealing with other career related issues. Brammer and Shostrom (1977) over that workplace counseling is a way of relating and responding to an employee or colleague so that he or she explores his or her thoughts, feelings, and behaviour to reach a clear self-understanding. Hence, Cole (2003) purports that co-workers, supervisors and managers counsel their own staff at the workplace. However, other special staff members such as the human resources managers and the training managers are obliged to provide counseling to any staff member because of the uniqueness of their positions. This explains why Summerfield and Van Oudtshoorn (1995, p.73) views personnel and human

resource managers as the ones who have workplace counseling skills integrated into their existing roles. This gives them the credibility to offer such services. However, there is also room for professional employee counselors to set up and maintain therapeutic working alliances with the workers in an organization (Carroll and Walton, 1999).

Carroll and Walton (1999, p.73), posits that stress, anxiety and pressure influence staff behaviour, thus, Findings in illnesses, depression and a decrease in job satisfaction. Offering formal counseling sessions to stressed employees helps them feel valued, and enables them to identify the causes of their problems. Counseling also helps to increase staff morale, boost confidence and self-esteem and improvements in productivity and efficiency. In addition, social betterment, personnel counseling, occupational mental health and help of management reduces ill behaviourism. This helps employees to increase productivity, thereby improving industrial relations within the organization.

According to Bishnoi (3013, p.13). He furthers says, counseling is the help provided by the supervisor to the subordinates in analysing their performance and other behaviours on the job, in order to improve their performance. Counseling is also used in the sense of coaching and reviewing one's performance or as a method of understanding and helping individuals who have technical, personal and emotional adjustment problems interfering with their work performance.

There are two major types of career counseling that a counselor can employ namely; individual counseling, group counseling. Individual Counseling is referred to as one-to-one counseling process which occurs between the professionally trained Counselor (Therapist) and his client (Counselee). The goal of this is to help the client to understand himself, clarify and direct his thought in order to make a worthwhile decision. Through this, clients' problems are alleviated. Krumboltz and Thoreson (1967) as cited in Ojo (2005, p. 21) remarked that it is mainly to bring about change in the client either by altering maladaptive behaviour, learning the decision making process or preventing problems.

Group Counseling is a counseling session that takes place between the professionally trained counselor and a group of people. Members of this group should not be more than seven, or at most ten in order to have a cohesive group and an effective well controlled counseling session. Members of the groups are clients/counselees whose tasks or problems that are meant for resolution are similar. During group counseling, a free atmosphere is allowed and freedom of speech is encouraged. The counselees are free to express themselves individually as counseling progresses so that problems be resolved and proposed solutions open for all to consider and benefit from.

Importance of Career Counseling and Development

Slavenski and Buckner (1988) list the following as the importance of career development:

1. The need to identify and forecast human resource needs
2. Social and demographic trends
3. The changing nature of work
4. Changing types of jobs
5. Multicultural work force
6. Worker productivity
7. Technological changes and decreasing advancement opportunities
8. Organizational philosophies and practices

Employers are motivated to establish career development programs because such programs are seen as an effective response to various HR problems, because top managers prefer to promote existing employees and to ensure a good fit between the work and the worker, and because employees have expressed interest in career development as a benefit.

Career Counseling Techniques

Counseling techniques are in-depth knowledge or abilities used by professional counselors to treat one or more unique populations (Douglas 2014, p.12). These counseling techniques may vary depending on which group of people a counselor serves (counseling skills appropriate to workers in an enterprise may not work for grief counselors). To Douglas, every professional counselor should possess the following five skills: communication skills, listening and attending skills, focusing and paraphrasing skills, validating and challenging skills and multicultural competencies.

Norhayati (2018, p.1195) defined counseling techniques as a capacity required in performing some counseling sessions which are crucial to be owned by a counselor for the success of resolving a client's problems. These counseling skills include; exploration (attending, initiating a question, emotional reflection), knowledge (challenges, interpretation, self-reveals), and action skills (information and immediate action). These skills are essential to the counselor to help a client solve his/her problems as they open up the client's reasoning faculty to find out and develop potentials and make changes in their lives.

Effective career counseling at the work environment may assist employees to discover themselves and take bright options. Career counseling is a two-way process in which the counselor and the counselee both contribute to make career counseling efficient and effective. Counseling hence develops a rationale to interrelate internal and external factors. New employees may also exhibit certain problems that could impede their performance at the workplace needing counseling.

Lufthans (2011, p.72) reveals that specific techniques of socializing new employees would include the use of mentors, role models, training programs, reward systems and career planning. Management at SONARA could therefore be encouraged to embrace counseling as an essential program which can enhance productivity at the workplace.

Career counseling is counseling or mentoring/coaching on issues related to an individual's career. With more and more diverse career options and professional opportunities emerging, career counseling helps individuals make the right choice about their career paths, career development and career change. Career counseling techniques refer to a one-to-one/ one to much interaction between practitioner and client(s), usually ongoing, involving the application of psychological theory and a recognised set of communication skills. According to Parul, Ankit and Neetu (2014, p. 42), there are three major counseling techniques namely; directive counseling, non-directive counseling and cooperative counseling.

Directive Counseling Technique

Directive Counseling centre around the counselor. The counselor, after hearing the problems of an employee, decides what should be done and give advice and suggestions to him to resolve the problem. It is a counseling process in which the professional plays an active role in a client's decision making by offering advice, guidance and or recommendations. Here, the counselor issues certain instructions to the counselee or he is directed to do certain things e.g. he is asked to behave in a particular manner, asked to abstain from alcohol or drug, asked to respect his colleagues (Vincy and Mantak, 2012, p.17).

In this counseling technique, the counselor plays an active role as it is regarded as a means of helping people learn to solve their own problems. This type of counseling is otherwise known as counselor-centred counseling. Because in this counseling, the counselor does everything himself that is; analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, prescription and follow-up.

The counselor plays the vital role in this counseling process. The counselor is the pivot of the process and the leader of the situation. The counselor does most of the talking problems and the individual is not the focus. The counselee in fact, works under the counselor and not with him. The counselor tries to direct the thinking of the counselee or client by informing, explaining, interpreting and sometimes advising also (Selleck, 2017, p.18).

The counselor collects all possible information about the pupils or counselors and analyses them for an adequate understanding. He summarizes and organises the data so as to understand the abilities and limitations, adjustment and mal-adjustment of the client. The

counselor formulates conclusions about the nature and causes of his problems. He predicts the future development of his problems. The counselor prescribes what the pupil should do to solve his problems and follows the consequences or effects of his prescription. Directive counseling is also called prescriptive counseling because the counselor prescribes the solutions or the course of action for the client (employee).

Non-Directive Counseling Technique

It is a process whereby the counselor listens, supports and advises the counselor without directing a course of actions to take because it is client centered. Under this counseling type, the counselor does not issue directions but observes the behaviour and attitude of the counselee towards his work and his colleague's superiors and subordinates e.tc. Non-directive counseling has been referred to in the literature as 'supportive listening' or 'listening-visits' (Gamble et al 2002). It is associated with the descriptor's 'client-centred', 'empathy', and 'non-judgmental, 'unstructured' and 'participant-led' (Gamble et al, 2002).

According Vincy and Mantak (2012, p.17), nondirective Counseling is the process of skilfully listening to the emotional problems of an employee, understand him and determine the course of action to be adopted to resolve his problem. It focuses on the counselee hence it is called 'client centred' counseling. The unique advantage of this type of counseling is its ability to cause the employee's reorientation. The main stress is to change the person instead of dealing with his immediate problem only. To Rautalinko (2014, p.2), in a nondirective counseling, the counselor listens, supports, and advises, without directing a client's course of action. It has been influenced by humanistic theories in the tradition of Carl Rogers, but techniques used in nondirective counseling are common in many forms of psychological counseling and treatment today.

The counselee here provides all information about his problems, the counselor assists him to analyze and synthesize, diagnose his difficulties, predict the future development of his problems, take a decision about the solution of his problems; and analyse the strengths and consequences of his solutions before taking a final decision. Since the counselee is given full freedom to talk about his problems and work out a solution, this technique is also called "permissive" counseling.

Cooperative Counseling

Cooperative Counseling is a process in which both the counselor and counselee mutually cooperate to solve problems of the client. This is a kind of counseling that can be done through extending full cooperation to the

counselee and makes him realize his mistakes relating to his behaviour and attitudes so that he will be back on the track and improve. It is winning the heart of the counselee through cooperation. His confidence will be won by the counselee and he in turn will extend his cooperation and become self-disciplined. It is neither client-centered nor counselor-centered but a mutually equal cooperation among both of them.

Cooperative Counseling is the process in which both the counselor and client mutually cooperate to solve the problems of the client. It is defined as mutual discussion of an employee's emotional problem to set up conditions and plans of actions that will remedy it. The primary focus is on helping the client make career-related decisions and deal with career-related issues (Kidd, 2006, p.57).

Another major counseling techniques according to Selleck (2017, p.17), is eclectic counseling which is a combination of directive and non-directive technique depending upon the situational factors. This approach in counseling is best characterised by its freedom to the counselor to use whatever procedures or techniques seem to be the most appropriate to any particular time for any particular client. This counseling is one where one who is willing to utilize any procedures which hold promise even though their theoretical bases differed markedly.

This counseling recognizes that each theory may contain some truth and that so long as a final decision between theories cannot be made practical necessity justifiably takes precedence over orthodoxy. The counselor in this counseling technique may start with directive technique but switches over to non-directive counseling if the situation requires. He may also start with the non-directive technique and switches over to directive techniques if the situation demands (Selleck, 2017, p.19). So, the counselor in this counseling makes use of directive and non-directive counseling and also of any other type which may be considered useful for the purpose of modifying the ideas and attitudes of the counselor. It is then possible for the counselor to alternate between directive and non-directive techniques depending upon the requirements of the situation.

Eclectic counseling assumes high level competence and should never be used as a rationalization by the counselor for indiscriminate use or neglect of particular procedures advocated in other philosophies. The competent eclectic counselor is well acquainted with all other major theories of philosophies in counseling and uses this knowledge in choosing techniques and in the establishment of a positive working relationship with the client. A rejection of any philosophical framework is justified by the counselor if he had a better way to achieve the task in hand (Selleck, 2017, p.21).

The counselor must be aware of the fact that problems differ from one individual to another. The counselee must be accepted as he is and attempts made to understand him. Each problem must be treated as unique. All pre-

conceived notions of dealing with all the counselor's personal problems in the same way should be discarded. The task of the counselor is very difficult; he has to shift and interpret all the matter that is available about the individual. The counselor should take care in working with the employee to be warm, co-ordinal, friendly, responsive and understanding but at the same time will be impersonal and objective. To be impersonal and objective, however he needs not to be cold, indifferent or not interested.

Empirical Review

In line with the types of Career Counseling Techniques (CCT), Vetisha (2010) conducted a study on career counseling and career courses, processes, impacts and outcomes. The study seeks to build on to the existing literature on career interventions by empirically examining possible outcomes of two of the most widely utilized career interventions, career counseling and career courses. This investigation used Critical Ingredients to assess the components of career counseling and career courses and the relationship between number of critical ingredients and student outcomes. Critical Ingredients were also used in a separate pilot study where career counselors and students were asked to report the number of critical ingredients present in a career counseling session.

Student course participants (N = 139) and counseling participants (N= 130), enrolled at a large Midwestern university were assessed at three time points during the Fall 2008 semester: the first 4 weeks, midterm and finals. Each participant was either enrolled in a career course or received career counseling during that semester. Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) was used to analyze the relationships between outcome variables, demographics and critical ingredients. Analyses found no significant group differences between counseling and course participants on outcome variables, but there were group differences in the number of critical ingredients experienced. An HLM model was established where Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy (CDMSE; Betz & Taylor, 1994) scores (intercept) were predicted by race, year in school, time and number of critical ingredients experienced. The degree of change (slope) was predicted by individual error variance and number of critical ingredients experienced. This study provides interesting information about the dynamics of the change process as people experience career interventions. Limitations and implications for research and practice were also discussed.

Syombua and Elegwa (2016) conducted a study on the role of counseling in employee performance in public universities (A Case Study of Kenyatta University). Their study investigated the role that counseling plays in employee performance in public universities. The study

population consisted of management staff, counselors, teaching and non-teaching members of staff. In order for the objectives of the study to be achieved, a questionnaire was used and data was collected and analysed using SPSS. The research employed descriptive statistics. Findings reveal that there is a positive link between counseling and employee performance in public universities in Kenya. The results further indicate that one way of taking care of the employees is through workplace counseling by listening and helping them overcome barriers.

Mark and Nzulwa (2018), worked on the effect of career counseling on employee performance in Kenya with the National Hospital Insurance Fund as their case study. A case study design was used. The study targeted a population of 402 employees of National Hospital Insurance Fund headquarters Nairobi from which a sample of 120 respondents were drawn using 30% of the target population. The sample was selected using stratified sampling technique. The researcher collected primary data using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was pilot tested to ascertain the reliability of the research instrument using Cronbach Alpha. The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics to present and analyse the data. A correlation analysis revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between career development programmes and employee performance. The study findings revealed that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between employee's training, career counseling, employee's mentoring and career advancement on employee performance. The study therefore concluded that career counseling influences employee performance. It is in this same line that the present study seeks to examine the role of career counseling techniques and their impact on SONARA works.

Theoretical Anchor of the Study

Social Cognitive Career Theory by Lent, Brown and Hackett (2002)

This theory is anchored in Bandura's self- efficacy theory, which postulated a mutually influencing relationship between people and the environment. The social cognitive career theory represents a position that attempts to trace some of the complex connections between persons and their career related contexts, between cognitive and interpersonal factors, and between self-directed and externally imposed influences on career behaviour (Brown and Lent, 1996). This perspective goes on to build conceptual linkages with other theorists' development. SCCT (2020) was designed to address the relationship among values, needs, aptitudes, and interests as well as help construct useful conceptual bridges and identify major variables that may

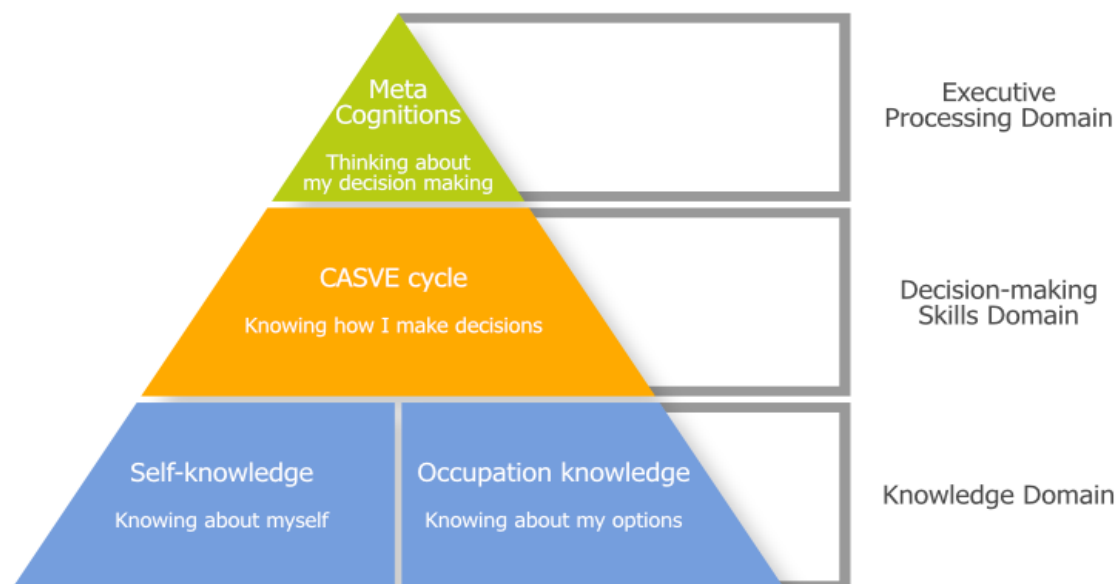


Figure 1. Pyramid of Information Processing Domains
Source: Brown and Lent (1996)

compose a more comprehensive explanatory system (Brown and Lent, 1996).

SCCT highlights certain experimental and learning or cognitive processes linking these variables together. The theory asserts that people form enduring interest in an activity when they see themselves as competent at the task and when they anticipate that their involvement will result in something beneficial (Brown & Lent, 1996). As people develop an attraction for an activity at which they feel successful and expect positive outcomes, they form goals for sustaining or increasing their involvement in that activity. SCCT also acknowledges that abilities and values are important parts of the process that gives rise to vocational interests, but in their scheme, their effects on interests are primarily funneled through self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Brown & Lent, 1996). Hence, interests become a joint function of self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. Having positive experiences in career-related activities and the aptitude to do well in specific careers makes it more likely that people will develop robust efficacy expectations and positive outcomes for these career pursuits. The choice model of the SCCT asserts that interests relate to the choices that people make and to the actions that they take to implement their choices.

The model also states that choices directly relate to contextual influences and other person variables (Brown & Lent, 1996). People will be more likely to compromise their interests in making career choices if they perceive significant barriers to entering and prospering in careers that most interest them. To solve the problem, individuals must acquire information and learn cognitive strategies that enable them to remove the gap between their existing and desired situations (Cochran, 1994). The

problem-solving process attempts to close the gap between where a person is and where he or she wants to be as illustrated in the pyramid of information processing below. (Figure 1)

The Pyramid of Information Processing Domains illustrates the content of career problem-solving and decision-making (Cochran, 1994). For example, it provides a demonstration of what individuals need to know as they attempt to solve problems and make decisions. Specific domains of information processing in the pyramid include knowledge of self (e.g., values, interests, and skills) and options (e.g., occupations, programs of study, and jobs); decision making skills, and metacognitions. The CASVE cycle explains the approach to the problem solving and decision making process. During the Communication (C) phase, individuals become aware that there is a gap between existing and desired states of affairs as a result of external or internal cues. During the Analysis (A) phase, individuals create a mental model of their problem and establish relationships among the elements for them to better understand the attributes of a preferred occupation programme of study, or job. During the Synthesis (S) phase, individuals broaden and narrow the options that they are considering.

During the Valuing (V) phase, individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of each of their opinions to themselves, significant others, their cultural group, and their community or society in general. Through this process, the individual begins to make tentative first choices. During the Execution (E) phase, individuals initiate the process by creating and then committing to a plan for implementing their tentative choice (Cochran, 1994). Therefore, the CIP theory, Pyramid of Information

Processing Domains, and the CASVE Cycle can be used to help clients monitor and evaluate their progress in career problem-solving and decision-making processes.

SCCT's performance model is concerned with predicting and explaining two primary aspects of performance: the level of success that people attain in educational and occupational pursuits and the degree to which they persist in the face of obstacles. SCCT focuses on the influences of ability, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and performance goals on success and persistence. Ability (as reflected by past achievement and aptitudes) is assumed to affect performance via two primary pathways: first, ability influences performance and persistence directly. For example, workers with higher aptitude in a particular task tend to do better and persist longer in that subject than do workers with lesser aptitude. (Ability or aptitude may be thought of as a composite of innate potential and acquired knowledge.), second, ability is hypothesized to influence performance and persistence indirectly through the intervening paths of self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

Performance involves both ability and motivation, and as such SCCT emphasizes the motivational roles of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and performance goals. Specifically, SCCT suggests that self-efficacy and outcome expectations work in concert with ability, in part by influencing the types of performance goals that people set for themselves. Controlling for level of ability, workers with higher self-efficacy and more positive outcome expectations will be more likely to establish higher performance goals for themselves (i.e., aim for more challenging attainments), to organize their skills more effectively, and to persist longer in the face of setbacks. As a result, they may achieve higher levels of success than those with lower self-efficacy and less positive outcome expectations. Thus, favorable self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals help people to make the best possible use of their ability.

Self-efficacy is seen as complementing, not substituting for, ability. SCCT does not assume that self-efficacy will compensate for inadequate task ability. It does, however, predict that the performance of individuals at the same ability level will be facilitated by stronger versus weaker self-efficacy beliefs. For example, academically able adolescents who underestimate their academic talents, compared to their equally able peers with more optimistic self-efficacy beliefs, are likely to set lower goals for themselves, experience undue performance anxiety, give up more quickly in the face of obstacles, challenge themselves less academically, and consequently experience less academic success.

Social cognitive theory notes that large overestimates of self-efficacy can also be self-defeating. For example, job trainees whose self-efficacy drastically overshoots their current skills are likely to set unrealistically high performance goals and to take on job tasks that are beyond their current grasp, which may cause failure and

discouragement. According to Bandura, self-efficacy beliefs that modestly exceed current capabilities are probably optimum because they are likely to lead people to set challenging (but attainable) performance goals and to engage in activities that stretch their skills and that further strengthen their self-efficacy and positive outcome expectations.

Social Cognitive Career Theory is relevant to this study in that it suggests a number of targets at which career counseling programmes can be directed. These include efforts to expand interests and nurture career interest, facilitate career goal setting and promote successful work adjustment (for example satisfaction, performance) in workers. The theory incorporates a variety of concepts (for example interests, abilities, values, environmental factors) that appear in earlier career theories and have been found to affect career development. Social cognitive career theory is used in this study to explain the self-efficacy expectations which are shaped by four primary information sources or learning experiences, which are personal performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological and affective states. The theory distinguishes between choice content goals, choice of activities to pursue and performance goals one aims to attain.

Statement of the Problem

Employees productivity is the performance of employees measured based on the output for a given period. The assessment of the annual performance of employees productivity in SONARA has not been improving as reflected in the company's output in the past years. This employee's low productivity might be because of lack of job satisfaction, work stress and other related factors. For the calendar year of 2018, the output of SONARA witnessed a decrease as compared to the previous year.

Despite all the measures in place by the management of SONARA (which run through all the investment measures, reward them for good performance or reprimand for failing to meet set standards) to ensure that the output for 2019 still did not witness the expected improvement. In addition to these efforts, there is still much to deal with given that there is still an exhibit of low employee productivity. When workers are satisfied with their pay and working conditions, they are most likely to work harder resulting in high productivity which is what the management of SONARA has been making sure it works best for the employees. In ensuring that increasing employees' productivity is guaranteed in SONARA, it is hoped that focusing attention on career counseling would help improve on the productivity of employees and the company as a whole, given that other measures have not resulted in desired outcomes. The researcher therefore seeks to examine the impact of career counseling tech-

Table 1. Target Population of the Study

S/N	Department	Workers	Social Workers	General Manager
1	Internal audit	15	5	1
2	Technical control	35		
3	Quality, sanitary, safety, environment and inspection	25		
4	General affairs	105		
5	Operations	130		
6	Administration and human resources	336		
7	Finance and accounting	134		
8	Public relations, communication and translation	22		
9	Commercial	139		
10	Maintenance	54		
	Total	995	5	1

niques on worker's productivity in the National oil Refinery Company.

Research Objective

To identify the types of career counseling techniques employed at the National Oil Refinery Company (SONARA) in Limbe.

METHODS

The sequential explanatory design was adopted for this study. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), explain the sequential explanatory design as the process in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed during the same phase of the research process, analysed separately and then merged into an overall interpretation. The essence for adopting a case study by the researcher was to develop an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study. The sequential explanatory design helped the researcher to collect data over the period of time in two consecutive phases. Thus, the researcher first collected and analyzed the quantitative data and the qualitative data was also collected in the second phase of the study and are related to the outcomes from the first quantitative phase. The aim of the sequential explanatory design was to obtain different but complementary data on the phenomenon under study in order to better understand the research problem.

Population of the Study

The population of this study was limited to employees and management in the National Oil Refining Company (SONARA) in Limbe. The population comprised all the workers in SONARA. The target population was made up

of all employees in all the 10 departments which are Internal audit, Technical control, Quality, sanitary, safety, environment and inspection, General affairs, Operations, Administration and human resources, Finance and accounting, Public relations, communication and translation, Commercial, and Maintenance with a total of 1000 employees in SONARA and management Limbe. Table 1

Accessible Population

The accessible population was made up of workers who were presently on duty for the period the researcher collected data in all departments, social workers and the general manager of SONARA Lime. Table 2

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 70 SONARA personnel constituted the sample, 64 of them were employees to whom questionnaires were admitted and who returned. 5 of them were SONSRA social workers and one was SONARA's general manager. To this second group, the researcher administered interviewed guide. This partly explains the 64 to whom questionnaires were administered. Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented with respect to sex, and longevity of the workers at SONARA. This information is captured in table 4 below.

The respondents consisted of 27(38.6%) females and 43(61.4%) males. Equally, majority 38(54.3%) of the respondents had been working in the National Oil Refinery for 6-10 years, some 21(30%) had been working

Table 2. Assessable Population of the Study

S/N	Department	Workers	Social Workers	General Manager
1	Internal audit	12	5	1
2	Technical control	21		
3	Quality, sanitary, safety, environment and inspection	14		
4	General affairs	16		
5	Operations	17		
6	Administration and human resources	12		
7	Finance and accounting	15		
8	Public relations, communication and translation	13		
9	Commercial	23		
10	Maintenance	18		
	Total	161	5	1

Table 3. Sample of the Study

	Department	Workers	Social Workers	General Manager
1	Internal audit	7	5	1
2	Technical control	7		
3	Quality, sanitary, safety, environment and inspection	7		
4	General affairs	6		
5	Operations	7		
6	Administration and human resources	6		
7	Finance and accounting	6		
8	Public relations, communication and translation	5		
9	Commercial	6		
10	Maintenance	7		
	Total	64	5	1

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents According to Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics		N	%
Sex	Female	27	38.6
	Male	43	61.4
	Total	70	100.0
Longevity	1-5	11	15.7
	6-10	38	54.3
	11 years and above	21	30.0
	Total	70	100.0

for 11 years and above while 11(15.7%) of the respondents have been working for at least 1-5 years.

Sampling Technique

The researcher first administered a questionnaire to the sample participants, she then did an interview with the same participants who answered the questionnaire. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design starts with

a quantitative study phase then follows up with a qualitative study phase. In an explanatory sequential design, we always choose participants for the qual component from those who initially participated in the quant phase. Since quantitative and qualitative samples include the same participants, this sampling technique in MMR is called identical sampling (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

The stratified sampling was used to divide the various departments in order to get the various participants in

each of the departments. The researcher thereafter purposely selected the participants from the available employees to make up the sample.

Instrumentation for Data Collection

This study used two methods for collecting data which are interviews and questionnaires. To ensure the collection of detailed information from the workers, a questionnaire and interview guide were deemed appropriate and to gather data from social workers and the general manager, an interview guide was used. The researcher used oral questions to gain responses from the three groups of respondents. It allows respondents to speak out their opinions, feelings, beliefs, insights, and experiences about the phenomenon under investigation through the use of probing questions. It was important to include both closed ended and open-ended questions to get short responses and detailed explanation respectively. Through semi-structured interviews, social workers and the general manager had a wide chance of expressing themselves and giving a lot of information about the effects of career counseling on employees' productivity.

The questionnaire was made up of two sections, the first section carried personal information of the respondents and the rest of the sections contained research items formulated from research questions that guided the study. This questionnaire was made up of closed ended questions designed in a four-point Likert scale. Close-ended questions were made of questions that required respondents to give responses with respect to Likert scale four-point option that is; Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree.

FINDINGS

Types of Counseling Techniques Employed by Social Workers in SONARA

The findings here provide information on the different types of career counseling techniques employed by social workers in the National Oil Refinery in order to boost workers' productivity as presented below. The main research instrument that guided our research here was the questionnaire. Data collected reveal that social workers in SONARA employ different types of counseling techniques in their procedure, aimed at boosting workers productivity. The counseling techniques identified are; Directive, non-directive, cooperative or eclectic counseling techniques. These findings are intuitively revealed by the responses obtained from respondents as seen on table 5 below.

For each item or entry, the number of respondents and the corresponding percentage correctly reveal a

technique used. According to table 5, the majority 51(72.9%) of the respondents agreed that during counseling, attention is on a problem and possibilities for its solution while 19(27.1%) of them disagreed. Still, the majority 57(81.4%) of the respondents agreed that social workers play a more active role than the clients during counseling while 13(18.6%) of them disagreed. Also, the majority 42(60%) of the respondents indicated that social workers try to direct their thinking by informing, explaining, interpreting and advising them while few 28(40%) disagreed. More so, 32(45.7%) of the respondents indicated that social workers do most of the talking on problems and the individual is not the focus while the majority 38(54.3%) of them disagreed.

Likewise, 32(47.1%) of the respondents agreed that during counseling, they work under the social worker and not with the social worker while the majority 38(52.9%) of the respondents disagreed. Equally, the majority 57(81.4%) of the respondents agreed that social workers prescribe what should be done to solve their problems while 18(13.6%) of them disagreed. Correspondingly, 57(81.4%) social workers establish rapport with the workers based on mutual trust while 13(18.6%) of them disagreed. Similarly, 54(77.1%) of the respondents agreed that social workers are friendly, interested and encourages free expression of feelings regarding the problem of the workers while 16(22.9%) of them disagreed.

In the same way, the majority 56(80%) of the respondents agreed that freedom of choice and expression is open to all while 14(20%) of them disagreed. A majority 60(85.7%) of the respondents agreed social workers assist them to analyse, synthesize and diagnose their difficulties while 10(14.3%) of them disagreed. Additionally, 49(70%) of the respondents agreed that social workers play a more active role than the client during counseling while 21(30%) of them disagreed. The multiple responses indicate that the majority 602(71.7%) of the respondents agreed that social workers employed counseling techniques that boost workers' productivity at the National Oil Refinery of Cameroon while 232(28.3%) of them disagreed. This shows that social workers in the National Oil Refinery employ a variety of counseling techniques which boost workers' productivity.

After looking at the results obtained through the questionnaire the researcher confronted them with results from another instrument the instrument concerned here is the instrument guide. Based on findings on career counseling techniques employed by social workers in the SONARA in order to boost workers' productivity, 12 out of 20 interviewees indicated that they have no idea about the counseling techniques used by social workers. One could hear sentences such as *"I have never been counselled"*, *"I do not know of any technique that social workers use"*, *"I have never attended any counseling session"*, *"I don't have an idea"* and *"workers are always*

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents to Counseling Techniques Employed to Boost Productivity of Workers

Items	Agreed		Disagreed	
	n	%	n	%
During counseling, attention is on a problem and possibilities for its solution.	51	72.9	19	27.1
The social worker plays a more active role than the client during counseling	57	81.4	13	18.6
I make the decision, but the counselor does all that he can to get me to make a decision in keeping with his diagnosis.	42	60.0	28	40.0
The social worker tries to direct my thinking by informing, explaining, interpreting and advising me	60	85.7	10	14.3
The social worker does most of the talking, problems and individual is not the focus	32	45.7	38	54.3
During counseling, I work under the social worker and not with him.	33	47.1	37	52.9
The social worker prescribes what should be done to solve my problems	51	72.9	19	27.1
The social worker establishes a link with workers based on mutual trust.	57	81.4	13	18.6
The social worker is friendly, interested and encourages free expression of feeling regarding the problems of the workers	54	77.1	16	22.9
Freedom of choice and expression is open to all	56	80.0	14	20.0
The social worker assists me to analyze, synthesize and diagnose my difficulties	60	85.7	10	14.3
The social worker plays a more active role than the client during counseling	49	70.0	21	30.0
MRS	602	71.7	238	28.3

Table 6. Thematic Analysis for the Different Types of Counseling Techniques Employed in SONARA to Boost Workers' Productivity

Questions	Code	Code description	Quotation
Q1) What are the various counseling techniques you use when counseling workers in SONARA?	Use behaviour modification techniques, Ask questions to understand the worker's needs. Talk on social issues	The behaviour modification techniques enable the workers to change their attitudes towards work	"We use behaviour modification techniques to assist the workers to understand themselves and improve on their output." "...the needs of the workers are taken into consideration such that they can work with ease." "...Discuss freely with workers and encourage them on skill development and raising awareness, guidance." "...Equally, help the workers on how to adapt to family pressures and stress and regulate their alcohol consumption to improve on productivity."
Q2) Which counseling techniques do you use often when counseling and why?	Client centered therapy, career counseling and group counseling	The common technique used by social workers to counsel workers	"...I use client centered therapy, career counseling and group counseling because they work best for the workers, the techniques help clients, assist and change them."

busy'. Also, 8 workers said that they had been counselled and social workers techniques include; *Group discussion, individual counseling, social grounds discussion, Private discussion, and One on one discussion*. Workers also indicated that social workers use private discussions more than group discussions.

In order to check the findings obtained through the questionnaire the study also made use of interviews reveal that directive, non-directive, cooperative or eclectic counseling techniques were used. Findings from interviews on social workers indicated that social workers use behaviour modification techniques, ask questions to understand the workers needs and talk on social issues affecting the workers which can influence their productivity as indicated above. Table 6

Findings from interviews indicated that social workers

use behaviour modification techniques, ask questions to understand the workers needs and talk on social issues affecting workers. This was evident as counselors pointed out that "...we use *behaviour modification techniques to assist the workers to understand themselves and improve on their output.*" Again, they stated that counseling involves taking the needs of workers into consideration. This was clear as a counselor reiterated that "...the needs of the workers are taken into consideration such that they can work with ease." A counselor stated that discussion techniques are used to counsel workers; one even emphasized that "...I *discuss freely with workers and encourage them on skill development and raising awareness guidance.*"

Social workers further stated that they employ techniques which help the workers to overcome family

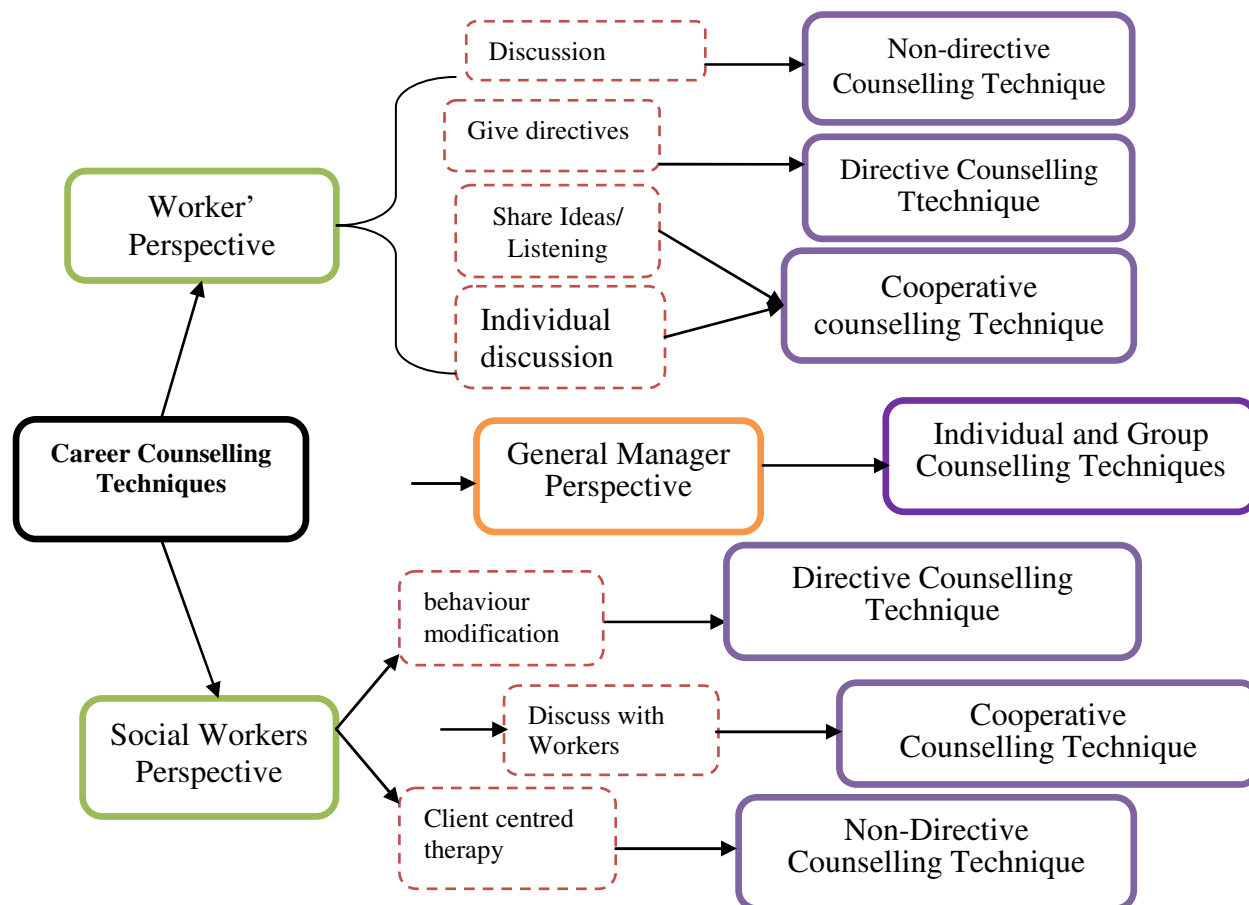


Figure 2. Types of Counseling Techniques Employed in SONARA

challenges. Sentences like “...*equally, help the workers on how to adapt to family pressures and stress and regulate their alcohol consumption to improve on productivity*” could be heard. Findings from interviews have also revealed that social workers in the National Oil Refinery Company use different counseling techniques which enable the workers to adapt and improve on their productivity. This finding confirms those obtained through the questionnaires thereby indicating first of all that career counseling is a reality in SONARA.

When the social workers indicate that they often use client centered therapy, it by implication they use directive counseling technique, career counseling or group counseling techniques to counsel their workers. This was clear as a social worker emphasized that “.../ *use client centered therapy, career counseling and group counseling often because they work best for the workers, the techniques help clients, assist and change them*”. This equally corroborates findings from questionnaires which showed that social workers use counseling techniques to improve on workers productivity.

Information on the types of counseling techniques even more glaring as the management of SONARA states that social workers employed individual and group

counseling techniques in SONARA in their counseling sessions in order to boost workers’ productivity. Thus, since social workers, employees and management though different media (questionnaire and interview) mentioned the same counseling techniques, one can emphatically state that Social workers employ directive, non-directive and eclectic or cooperative counseling techniques in SONARA. They make use of non-directive and cooperative counseling techniques to boost workers’ productivity in SONARA attesting to the fact that career counseling is a reality in SONARA.

This finding based on responses gotten from the respondents through the different instruments could better be captured or summarized as in the case with figure 2 above.

DISCUSSIONS

Findings indicated the fact that during counseling, attention is on a problem and possibilities for its solution, and that social workers play a more active role than the clients during counseling. Also, the majority of the respondents indicated that social workers try to direct

their thinking by informing, explaining, interpreting and advising them. Social workers also allow the employees to do most of the talking on problems and the individual is the focus.

Findings in support of the above revelation is that of Syombua and Elegwa (2016) which states that one way of taking care of the employees is through workplace counseling by listening and helping them overcome barriers. When the workers are listened to, they have time to air out their minds and in doing so, they feel loved.

This is understood as employees indicated that during counseling, they work with the social worker and that the social workers prescribe what should be done to solve their problems. Correspondingly, social workers establish friendly ties with the workers based on mutual trust, and employees also confirm that social workers in SONARA are friendly, interested and encourage free expression of feelings regarding the problem of the workers. This points out to the fact that in SONARA, social workers give preference to non-directive counseling techniques.

In the same way, the majority of the respondents agreed that freedom of choice and expression is open to all and that social workers assist them to analyse, synthesize and diagnose their difficulties. Hence, directive counseling. Additionally, Findings indicated that social workers play a more active role than the client during counseling and that social workers employ counseling techniques that boost workers' productivity at the National Oil Refinery of Cameroon. This shows that social workers in the National Oil Refinery employ a variety of counseling techniques which boost workers' productivity. Hence, eclectic counseling techniques are employed.

Furthermore, Findings from the opinions of social workers indicated women use behaviour modification techniques, ask questions to understand the workers needs and talk on social issues affecting the workers which can influence their productivity. This corroborates with findings from workers which showed that social workers use counseling techniques to improve workers productivity.

These findings are in accordance with that of Mark and Nzulwa (2018), who pointed out that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between employee's training; career counseling, employee's mentoring and career advancement on employee performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that SONARA and other organisations should provide frequent and adequate career advisory services to its

employees. They should endeavour to provide proper career counseling plan for its employees to improve on their overall productivity. In addition to this, they should improve the performance of employees in SONARA, career counseling should be done frequently to help employees overcome problems.

Also, SONARA should incorporate career counseling as a compulsory element or course in their career training schedule for social workers to increase employee productivity.

SONARA should set up suitable workplace programmes that are cost-effective and acceptable to all employees, formulate policies that enhance employee performance and in-service training for social workers and managers in counseling skills that enable them to identify employees who need help.

CONCLUSION

The findings based on the research objective one indicates that social workers in the National Oil Refinery employ a variety of counseling techniques which boost workers' productivity, and that social workers employ behaviour modification techniques that boost productivity at the National Oil Refinery. It was therefore concluded that social workers in SONARA employ behaviour modification techniques, ask questions to understand the workers needs and talk on social issues affecting the workers which can influence their productivity.

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