MENTAL HEALTH AND PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE:

EXPLORING ROOT CAUSES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIVE DYSFUNCTION BEYOND CONVENTIONAL THINKING

A CASE STUDY OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR,LESOTHO.

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BACKGROUND AND COUNTRY CONTEXT

Demographic and Geographic Context

Lesotho is a landlocked country with approximately 2.36 million people, located entirely within South Africa.

Public Service Challenges

The largest employer, the public sector, struggles with poor service delivery and maladministration.

Legal Framework Limitations

Existing laws regulate employee conduct, but their unwelcome behaviour persists.

# OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Impact of Mental Health Issues

Explores how stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout affect employee behaviour/conduct and productivity in the public sector.
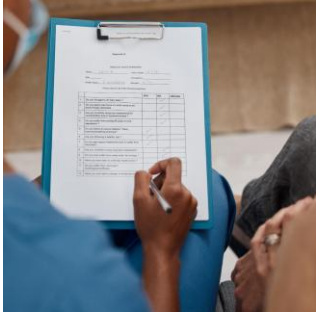
Integration Strategies

Proposes strategies to integrate mental health and wellness into public administration policies effectively.

Employee Well-being Paradigm

Focuses on shifting the view of employees from service tools to individuals whose mental health drives organizational success.
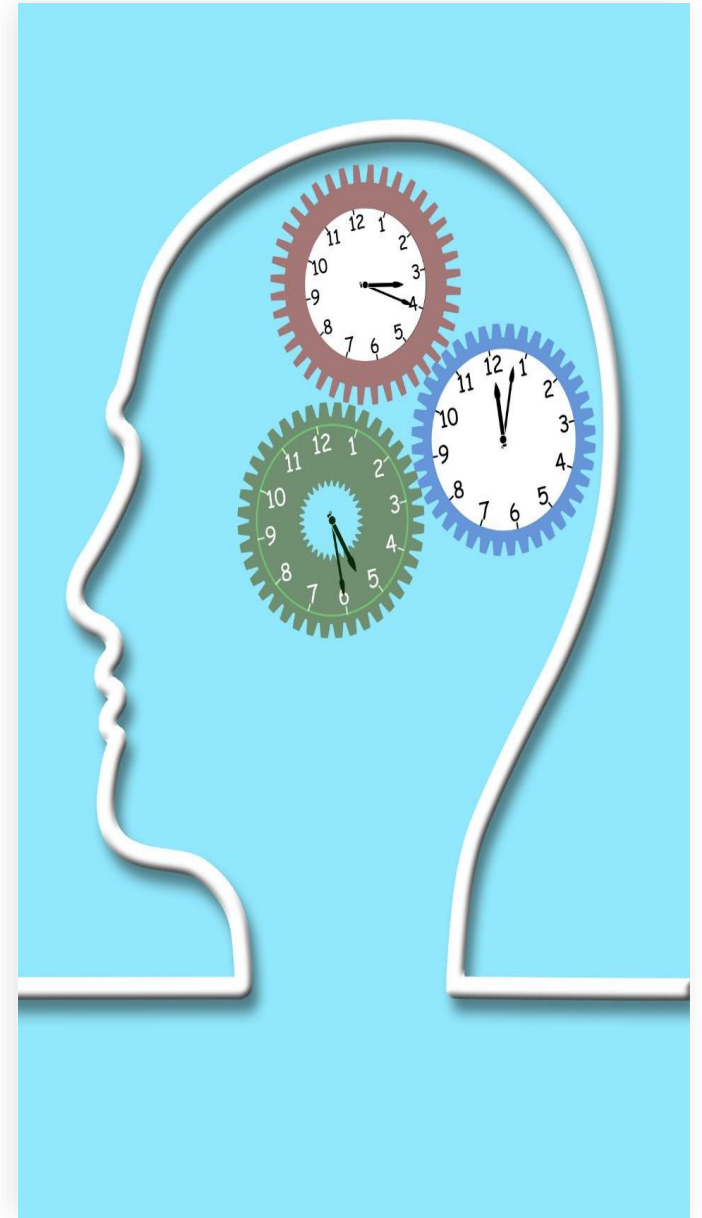
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Mental Health and Wellness Policy

The study emphasizes integrating mental health and wellness policy into the public sector to improve administrative performance and behaviour.

Reducing Stigma

Encouraging a supportive work environment helps reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues in public service.

Enhancing Service Delivery

Addressing mental health issues leads to agile administration and better public service delivery outcomes.

CONVENTIONAL ROOT CAUSES

Political Interference & Nepotism

Political interference and nepotism reduce meritocracy and accountability, causing inefficiency in public administration.

Corruption and Bribery

Corruption leads to misappropriation of funds and weakens institutional integrity, obstructing effective governance.

Technological and Knowledge Gaps

Outdated technology and knowledge gaps slow service delivery and hinder modernization efforts.

Financial Constraints

Financial mismanagement and rigid budgets limit resources, impacting essential public services.

MENTAL HEALTH AS AN UNDERLYING CAUSE

Common Mental Health Conditions

Anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, schizophrenia, and PTSD.

Affects the way a person thinks and behaves.

Common Employee Behaviour

Absenteeism, presenteeism, poor and/or inconsistent decision-making, interpersonal conflicts in the workplace, sense of entitlement, intoxication, rebelliousness, etc.

Need for Awareness and Support

Addressing mental health challenges is vital for creating agile, innovative, and human-centric public administration systems.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

1. Administration of questionnaires (mixed method)

2. Three (3) different categories (grades) were interviewed.

3. Top management, Middle management, and lower-grade positions.

4. Each category represented by five (5) respondents.

5. Sampling of six (6) ministries

KEY FINDINGS

Domination/presence of Mental Health Issues

High rates of anxiety, depression, and stress affect public sector employees, impacting their work performance and behaviour at the workplace.

Workplace Impact

Presenteeism leads to disengagement, errors, and reduced productivity, while stress causes absenteeism and conflicts.

Severe Mental Conditions

Conditions like schizophrenia and PTSD contribute to social isolation, mistrust, and workplace challenges.

Need for Targeted Interventions

Current national mental health programs do not address workplace needs, highlighting the urgency for tailored support.
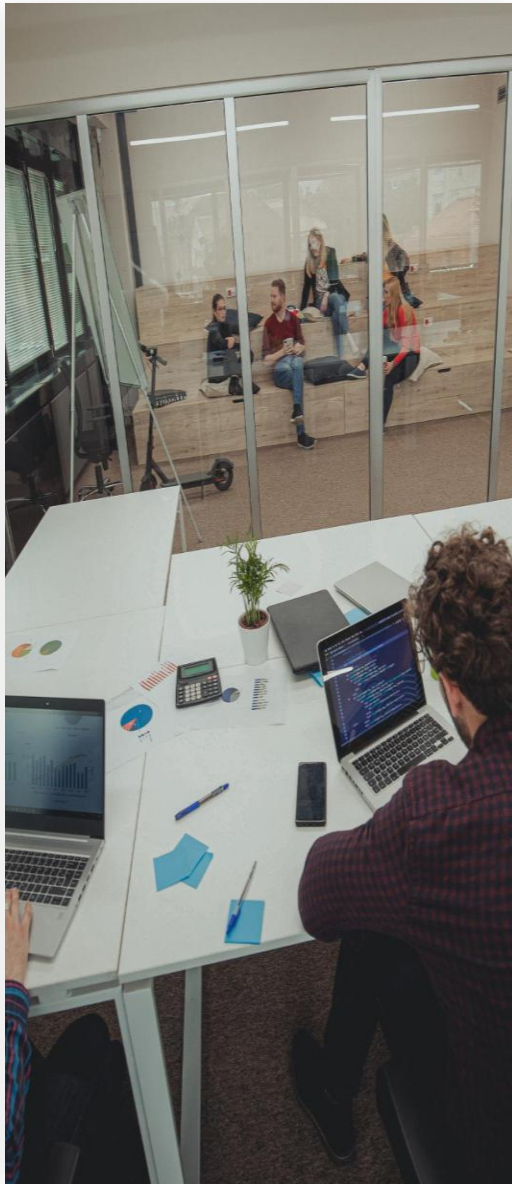
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Mental Health Issues' Impact on Organizations

Mental health issues affect public sector performance through absenteeism, mood swings, and disrupted teamwork.

Consequences on Governance

Emotional instability undermines agile governance by eroding psychological safety and causing inconsistent decisions.

Supportive Strategies Needed

Shifting from punitive to supportive approaches prioritizes employee well-being and enhances governance effectiveness.

Mental Health Wellness as a Right

Recognizing mental health as a human right aligns with sustainable development and global health trends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Comprehensive Mental Health and Wellness Policy

Introduction of a mental health and wellness policy in the Public Sector, aligned with WHO guidelines for uniform implementation.

Training and Awareness

Training of Human Resources personnel and line managers on mental health and wellness programmes for prevention, monitoring, and identifying mental health-related behaviour for referral to the specialists.

Community and Digital Solutions

Implement community-based interventions and digital health solutions to improve accessibility in rural areas. E.g, HIV-AIDS   community volunteers.

Workforce Development

Provide scholarships/sponsorships and career programs to incentivize mental health specialization and expand the workforce.

CONCLUSION

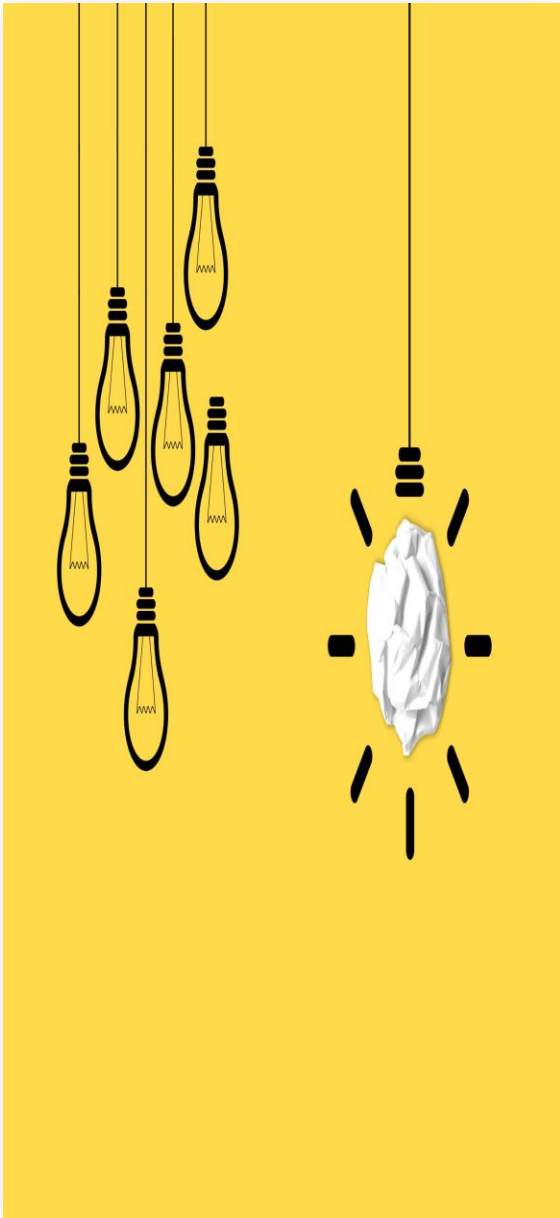### Mental Health and Wellness Priority

Mental health and wellness a crucial factor influencing public sector performance and must be prioritized in the same way as physical health.

Policy and Systemic Reforms

Urgent reforms and systemic changes are needed to integrate mental health and wellness in public service frameworks.

Innovation and Development

Recognizing mental health and wellness as a human right can transform public sector services into innovative and citizen-focused systems.

THANK YOU