



Joseph Macharia

Kenya

Psychologist/MindSkillZ coach at LVCT Health

As a dedicated psychologist in Kenya, Joseph's journey into mental health advocacy is a testament to the struggles and resilience of the health workforce.

Growing up in a challenging environment, Joseph faced significant emotional turmoil especially after the loss of his sister. This devastating experience triggered his first encounter with suicidal ideation during his teenage years. However it is his work in the health workforce that has truly highlighted the importance of mental health care for those who care for others.

"I used to feel like I was carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders," Joseph shares. "As health workers, we're often seen as the pillars of strength, but we forget that we also need support."

During a particularly challenging period, Joseph was counselling a young patient who was struggling with a similar loss to his own. As he listened to her story, he was unexpectedly flooded with his own emotions. "It hit me hard. I had been so focused on helping others that I neglected my own healing." This moment was a wake-up call, prompting him to seek professional counselling

for himself. "I learned that prioritising my own mental health was not selfish; it was essential for me to be effective in my role."

Joseph paints a stark picture of the healthcare system in Kenya, particularly within government facilities. In many facilities that have psychologists they are expected to perform duties across multiple locations with limited resources. For instance, in his sub county, the facility has one psychologist who is available one day a week. This is in great contrast to the demand, as patients line up and often have to go home unattended. This overwhelming burden, Joseph explains, is taking a toll not just on the physical health of most health workers but also their mental wellbeing.

"You find yourself facing so many patients at once, knowing you're expected to show up at another facility the next day. It's impossible to keep up, and yet the expectations don't change."

He highlights the severe lack of support for health workers in the country who, despite being the backbone of the healthcare system, are often left to struggle on their own. Joseph emphasises that most health workers are uninsured, meaning

that even if they start to deteriorate mentally or physically, they cannot seek help.

“Imagine being the person responsible for providing care to others, but when it’s your turn, there’s no one there for you.”

This gap in support means that those at the frontlines of providing essential services are often left as the last priority when it comes to receiving care themselves.

The situation is further exacerbated by the plight of medical interns in Kenya, who are often expected to work long, gruelling hours without compensation.

These unsustainable conditions are driving many to leave the profession altogether. Joseph emphasises that if the system continues to treat

health workers as expendable, there will be serious long-term consequences for both the healthcare system and the mental health of the population.

Joseph would like to see more investment, better support structures and a system that understands that health professionals need to be valued and protected.

“Imagine being the person responsible for providing care to others, but when it’s your turn, there’s no one there for you. We are also human beings who need mental health support just as much as the patients we serve.”