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Work-Life Integration Practices and Employee Performance at A Non-State Organization in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The concept of work-life balance is critical in the attainment of sustainable organization performance. Work-life balance describes the balance employees need to have between time allocated for work and other aspects of life. This study aimed at establishing the effects of leave entitlement, flexi working arrangements and teleworking, as aspects of work-life integration practices, on employee performance at a non-state organization in Nairobi County. Data was collected from 64 randomly selected employees through the use of structured questionnaire and was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that work-life integrated practices namely leave entitlements uptake (annual, sick and maternity/paternity leaves), employee flexible working arrangements (compressed hours and part time hours working arrangements and teleworking arrangements were all found to positively influence employee performance at the non-state organization. In particular, teleworking and compressed hours working arrangements were found to have the strongest positive influence on employee performance. The research results offer significant insights to human resource management practices in organizations and future researcher on the concept of work-life balance.

Key words; Flexi Time, Teleworking, Leave Policy, Employee Performance

1. Introduction

Work-life integration entails reconciliation of work, family and individual self-demands and time. According to Joshi *et al.* (2002), work-life integration is based on the belief that while work is important to all of us and society, achievement and enjoyment in everyday life is essential to human and societal well-being. This belief is central to the discussion on meaningfulness of work and work-life integration which have gained prominence in extant literature over the past decade (Chalofsky, 2003; Fleetwood, 2007; McCarthy, 2004). Historically, the fields of work and family have been researched separately in sociology and industrial-organizational psychology where men assumed the role of breadwinner and women the role of homemaker and were therefore seen as independent systems (Clark, 2000). In the early part of the 20th century, it was considered unfortunate that a woman had to work but now one is surprised if she does not (Hochschild, 1997). This increased participation of women in the labour force has changed the traditional roles of men and women within the family setting resulting in the phenomenon of the dual-career couples all over the world.



Work life integration policies and practices come in handy in managing employees' work and family lives. It has the ability to enhance behaviors and attitudes and employee performance. In this context, work is considered as the paid employment. Life on the other hand refers to the non-work, and more-free time spent on leisure or with family (Lowry, 2008). The difference on the two concepts is complicated due to fact that they are intertwined with time as the constant. Life interferes with work, and so does work interfere with life. The constant strife makes it difficult for most employees' in determining what should take precedent (Emslie & Hunt, 2009)

In Kenya, a number of companies have instituted work life integration policies to mitigate work- family related conflict that can have a negative impact on employee performance. For instance, the Safaricom company in its report on the business case of employer supported childcare indicates that various policies have been instituted to cushion mothers from family job related stress. Some of the policies include the bring your child to work policy, additional paid maternity leave (beyond statutory provisions), mothers shift (reducing working week at a fulltime pay), shift preference system and on-site doctor. This impacts on the business and hence employee performance. Some of the impact to the business as a result of Safaricom instituting these work-life integration practices include improved punctuality, reduced absenteeism and stress, productivity and motivation gains for women and men, recruitment and retention benefits, progress for numbers of women in leadership and technology functions, demonstratable commitment to best practice and being a sustainable and responsible business. Overall, this helps the company deliver on its strategic priorities (IFC, 2017).

1.1 Objectives of the Study

Within the setting of the non-state organization, the objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine the effect of leave policy on employee performance.
2. Establish the effect of flexible working arrangement on employee performance.
3. Examine the effect of teleworking arrangement on employee performance.

2. Review of Extant Literature

2.1 Employee Leave Entitlements and Employee Performance

The Employment Act (2007) Laws of Kenya provides for the entitlement of a minimum of 21 working days to every employee working at organizations in Kenya. This provision is to enable employees time to rejuvenate and attend to other aspects of their lives so as to create a healthy and productive work life intergration. Employees may use the leave days for recreational activities or just to rest from the stressful working environment. Carlson *et al.* (2009), argue that recreation leave enhances employee performance as it enables employees to relax, unwind and resolve personal issues that would otherwise affect their performance while at work. Renda *et al.* (2009) contends that most Australians do not take advantage recreational leave entitlements due to higher work-life interference particularly for women and parents. Brough *et al.* (2009) equally notes that work-life interference cripples employee's ability to focus and enhance their performance at work. Brough *et al.* (2009) argues that employers who



encourage utilization of leave policy, have a higher employee work performance output compared to employers who do not. The Employment Act (2007) provides for three leave entitlements for employees, namely, annual leave, maternity/paternity leave and sick leave.

2.2 Flexi-Working Arrangements and Employee Performance

According to Possenried and Plantenga (2011), flexi- working arrangements refers to variation in time and place of the job that allows employees to accomplish their duties without strict adherence to traditional working hours. Flexi arrangements establishes mechanisms for flexibility in work hour scheduling, either in part-time or term-time working. According to Chung (2009), flexible work arrangement involves flexibility in scheduling, flexibility in location, and part-time flexibility in length of the work an employee has at his/her disposal. Chung (2009) further argues that flexi working arrangements offers employees convenience in planning their work hence increasing their performance. Flexi working arrangements can therefore be summarized as the ability for employees to control their working time duration as well as location of work for maximum work life integration and ultimate performance.

2.3 Teleworking Arrangements and Employee performance

Gajendran and Harrison (2007) define teleworking as the arrangements between employees and employers that allow employees to work from home or different locations apart from the office. Knafllic *et al.* (2010) defines teleworking as the ability of employees to execute their work mandate with utmost flexibility and work life intergration away from the office environment. A study by Golden and Gajendran's (2018) found that job complexity is associated with teleworking job performance. Those with complex jobs had higher job performance with more telecommuting. The researchers therefore suggest that for those with complex jobs, telecommuting may provide for fewer interruptions and more time for focus which helps in successfully completing the tasks. They also noted that less complex jobs did not suffer from telecommuting. Frequent teleworkers had similar performance ratings to infrequent teleworkers and full-time office workers. Similarly, those workers with low interdependence had higher job performance with more telecommuting as they were not as dependent on others to complete their tasks.

3. Methodology

This was an exploratory case study. The study units were employees of the non-state organization employees, 64 of who were randomly selected as respondents. Data was collected using a semi structured Likert Scale questionnaire. When the reliability of variables measures was computed, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all the measures exceed the 0.7 threshold hence indicating the reliability of the research instrument.



4. Results and Discussions

4.1 The Relationship between Leave Entitlement Uptake and Employee Performance

When the data on the employees' uptake of the annual, sick and maternity/paternity leaves was correlated with employees work performance indicators, the findings were as highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Correlation Between Leave Uptakes and Employee Performance

Variable Measures		Employee Performance	Annual Sick Leave	Sick Leave	Maternity/Paternity Leave
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	64			
Annual Leave	Pearson Correlation	.206	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.102			
	N	64	64		
Sick Leave	Pearson Correlation	.333**	.294*	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.019		
	N	64	64	64	
Maternity/Paternity Leave	Pearson Correlation	.257*	.228	.602**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.070	.000	
	N	64	64	64	64

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

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

The findings in Table 1 indicates that sick leave had the highest statistically significant positive relationship with employee performance ($r = 0.333$; $p = 0.007$) followed by maternity /paternity leave ($r = 0.257$; $r = 0.040$) and finally annual leave which though it was found to positively influences performance, was not statistically significant ($r = 0.206$; $p = 0.102$).

4.2 Effect of Flexi Working Arrangements on Employee Performance

The data on the two dimensions of flexi-working arrangement namely, compressed hours and part-time hours was subjected to correlation analysis. The results are as indicated in Table 2.

The study results in Table 2 show that compressed hours working arrangements had a statistically significant strongly positive relationship with employee performance ($r = 0.782$; p -value = 0.003) followed by working part-time hours arrangement which had a statistically significant moderate positive effect on employee performance ($r = 0.310$; p -value = 0.000).



Table 2: Flexi Working Arrangements and Employee Performance

Variable Measures		Employee Performance	Compressed Work arrangements	Part time arrangements
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	64		
Compressed Hours	Pearson Correlation	.782*	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		
	N	64	64	
Part time Hours	Pearson Correlation	.310*	.030*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.038	
	N	64	64	64

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

4.3 The influence of Teleworking Arrangement on Employee Performance

When the data on employees teleworking, arrangement was subjected to correlation analysis to establish its relationship with employee performance, the results were as highlighted in Table 3.

Table 3: Teleworking arrangement and Employee Performance

Variable Measures		Employee Performance	Flexi Time
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	64	
Teleworking arrangement	Pearson Correlation	.899*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	
	N	64	64

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

The results in Table 3 reveal that a statistically significant and strongly positive relationship between teleworking arrangement and employee performance ($r = 0.899$; p -value= 0.016).

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that work-life integrated practices namely leave entitlements uptake (annual, sick and maternity/paternity leaves), employee flexible working arrangements (compressed hours and part time hours working arrangements and teleworking arrangements were all found to positively influence employee performance at the non-state organization.

The study recommends to the organization the need to ensure and even enhance the granting to employees their leave entitlements, flexi working and teleworking arrangements as this ultimately influence employee performance and thereby



organizational performance. Employees are also urged to fully utilize their leave days and not accumulate them as this will surely improve their work-life balance and work performance. To enjoy the benefits of work life integration, organizations should institute mechanisms to ensure that no employee accumulates leave days entitlement. Further studies may be conducted in different settings in order to enhance generalizability of the research findings on the relationship between work-life integration practices and organization performance.

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