EFFECT OF SUPERVISOR AND CO-WORKER RELATIONSHIPS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES IN KENYA

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Abstract: This study seeks to evaluate the effect of supervisor and co-worker relationships on employee performance in Telecommunication Companies in Kenya. This study used descriptive research design. The target population was 255 employees in the three levels of management, top level, middle level and low level management from 4 Telecommunication Companies in Kenya that include, Safaricom, Airtel, Liquid Telecom and Telekom. Random sampling method was used to sample respondents. Out of 68 employees that were targeted in various categories, 51 responses were received as valid. This constituted 75% response rate. Survey data was collected by use of a structured questionnaire. The data obtained was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative analysis. From the findings above it was established that Supervisor and co-worker have significant effect on employee performance in Telecommunication Companies in Kenya (t-value=6.623, sig value=0.000≤0.05). Thus we reject the hypothesis that Supervisor and co-worker relationships have no significant effect on employee performance in Telecommunication Companies in Kenya.

Keywords: Work life Balance Practices, Employee Performance, Telecommunication Companies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Work-life balance is defined as the ability to develop a balance between an individual's personal and work life. It is a satisfactory level of involvement or 'fit' between the multiple roles in a person's life (Meyer, & Parfyonova, 2010; Chong &Ma, 2010).The term gained importance at the beginning of the 21st century in Europe and the United States of America with the argument that workers were having a problem balancing between what they wanted to do; that is caring for their families and their careers at work place especially young mothers. In the Late 1960's the aspect of work life balance was increased due to concerns about the effects of work on the general well-being of employees, up until the mid-1970's, where employers concern was on work design and working conditions improvement (Cummings & Worley, 2005).

In the recent years, the term "work-life balance" has replaced what used to be known as "work-family balance" (Hudson Resourcing, 2005). This semantic shift arises from a recognition that childcare is by no means the only important non-work responsibility and the issue can be applied to any non-paid activities or commitments and to a diverse range of employees such as women, men, parents and non-parents, singles and couples. Other life activities that need to be balanced with employment may include study, travel, sport, voluntary work, personal development, leisure or eldercare.

In the current work place, employees face greater workload, increasing time pressure and growing obstacles in satisfying both job and personal demands (Sabatini, Fraone, Hartmann & McNally, 2008). At work the demand for efficiency leads to more tasks, which have to be fulfilled in a shorter period of time Satisfying the often conflicting demands of work and family life. It is one of the biggest challenges for modern employees (Lingard, Francis & Turner, 2012). Research by Salt, (2008) reveals that there are a growing percentage of employees who are overstrained from

reconciling the work domain with the family domain, resulting in an increasing number of sick days which are due to psychological diseases.Iqan lazar (2010) Conclude that, a successful balance between work and non-work roles are beneficial for both employee and employer. And this balance in work and life domains enhances quality of personal relationship and organizational outcomes.

Most employers are committed to helping their staff achieve some level of work-life balance as they believe that it will assist with staff morale and engagement (Convergence International, 2008). Several studies reveal that to enhance work-life balance, organizations have turned to policies such as flextime, on-site childcare (Simard, 2011); flexibility in working conditions, family-friendly policies, support for gender equality and expanded labour rights (Convergence International, 2008). There is evidence that work-life balance is related to higher levels of organizational performance (Baral & Bhargava, 2010).

Jusoh, Ahmed and Omar (2012) indicated that there is evidence that work-life balance is related to higher levels of organizational commitment. Siu et al, (2010) argue that a state of role which features both high performance and positive effect should be the best factor in predicting work-family enrichment therefore people who are highly engaged are also highly involved, deeply engrossed and enthusiastic about their work. This contributes to a happy experience, identified by Seligman, Rashid and Parks (2006) as positive effect. The study examines the effects of supervisor support and co-worker relationships on employee performance in Telecommunication companies in Kenya. The focus is on the positive dimension of supervisor/co-worker support and how they relate to employee performance.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kenya's Telecommunications sector has grown significantly over the last few years, since then, the subscription has been growing steadily helping the Government to generate more revenues and create job opportunities (http://www.cck.go.ke/resc/research.html). As William (2011) notes, it is a vital sector of the Kenyan economy. However, there is cut throat competition in this sector; hence employer is faced with the challenge of attracting, retaining and motivating highly competent and innovative employees to attain competitive edge in the market place coupled with the increasing concerns from organizational customers towards low quality services in the telecommunications sector (Debrah & Ofori 2006, 440). As Capone (2010) observes work life balancing organizations are better equipped to tackle the challenges derived from multicultural and global market place.

A number of studies have been done on areas of work life balance practices and employee performance. Work life imbalance has negative results for effective functioning of organization (Raj.R, 2013). Mukururi and Ngari (2014) carried out a study on influence of work-life balance policies on employee job satisfaction in Kenya's Banking Sector taking a Case of Commercial Banks in Nairobi Central Business District and concluded that there was a positive relationship between the two variables.Muchiti (2015) analyzed the influence of work life balance on employee productivity in Kenya focusing on Milimani law courts and established that flexible working conditions were the most important factor in influencing employee productivity at the law courts.

Nevertheless, empirical studies available on work life balance and employees performance are also concentrated on the developed countries. To the researcher's knowledge, these studies conducted do not establish the effect of supervisor and co-worker relationships on employee performance in the Kenyan context. In order to fill the gap in knowledge, this study seeks to establish the effect of supervisor and co-worker relationships on employee performance in Telecommunication Companies in Kenya.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Strong support from co-workers and supervisors improves work environments by relieving employee stress (Sloan, 2012; Rush, 2011), which enhances job satisfaction and performance (Edwards & Rothbard, 2013) and subsequently reduces absenteeism and enhancing work life balance in organizations (Pritchard & Karasick, 2011). Supervisors are in positions that can address employee complaints and help employees obtain necessary resources required for enhanced work life balance (Otsuka, Takahashi, Nakata, Haratani, Kaida, Fukasawa, & Hanada, 2014). Co-workers can successfully finish work tasks and reduce stress (Boz, Martínez-Corts & Munduate, 2012). In agreement with the buffering model of social support, Gouldner (2013) reported that employees that had good relationships with supervisors and co-workers are usually successful and productive at work. Although co-worker support and supervisor support are both important in enhancing work life balance (Cummins, 2014), most studies have investigated these two support mechanisms separately (Mayo,

Sanchez, Pastor, & Rodriguez, 2012). In addition, the relationship between co-worker and supervisor support has rarely been studied.

Gilson and Harter (2014) state that employee relationship with co-workers and supervisors will increase the psychological meaningfulness and employee engagement in the workplace and thus support work life balance. The relationship will increase the friendship and sense of belonging that enhances psychological meaningfulness. Appreciation from co-workers and supervisors will create caring and improve the safety of employees in the workplace. Psychological conditions can affect the individual engagement to roles or duties. Psychological conditions can include psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Psychological meaningfulness is the work values associated with standard or individual idealism. Individual who feel personally meaningful will be motivated to give himself fully to the work and organization. Psychological safety showed individual beliefs to work without any negative consequences or without fear. Psychological safety will engage individuals to the job and the organization. The availability of resources physical, emotional, and cognitive would encourage individuals to be engage by the role it plays. Based on previous research, the psychological state will affect the engagement of individuals in the workplace (Kahn, 2010).

Psychological conditions which include psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability are influenced by relationships with colleagues and with the direct leadership or supervisors (May et al., 2014; Kahn, 2010). Leaders are usually perceived as an agent of an organization that is able and appropriate because the leadership is the personification of organization for its employees. Supervisor relations allow psychological relationship with employee of the organization, where the organization may be home to the relationship (Katz & Kahn, 2013). Supervisor relations also hold the key to the allocation of the project, the distribution of awards, and employee training (Chen, Tsui, &Farh, 2012).

Supervisor relations could also have an impact on the individual's perception of feeling safe in the workplace. Support, not control, and good relations with the leader will encourage the perception and feeling psychologically safe (Edmondson, 2011) and can enhance work life balance (Deci et al., 2010). Supervisor who encourage a supportive work environment, especially the attention to the needs and feelings of employees will provide positive feedback and encouraging the development of skills and able to solve problems in the workplace. Supervisory support will encourage self-determination or employee attitude and employee engagement in their work. The relationship between employees and supervisors as well as good relationships with co- workers will lead to good psychological condition and encourage employee engagement to a job and organization.

Furthermore, individuals who are appreciated by colleagues connected with them were psychological meaningfulness in the workplace a key ingredient of work life balance. When individuals are treated with dignity, respected, and valued contribution not only as executor of his role, they will feel a meaningful of interaction. Individuals also look on the role of social identity that they get from the membership of an organization. Interaction with colleagues will develop a sense of belonging, strengthening the social identity, and bring a feeling of meaningful which are key in enhancing work life balance. Loss of social identity would cause a loss of feeling of meaningful and hence act to the detriment of work life balance.

Interpersonal relationship among employees that support and can be trusted will encourage psychological safety (Kahn, 2010). Interpersonal trust can be either cognitive or affective (McAllister, 2015). Cognitive beliefs associated with consistency and loyalty to others. Affective trust is rooted in emotional relationships between individuals. Co-workers and supervisors who can support each other and mutual respect will lead to confidence and improve the psychological condition of a secure and strong engagement to work. Relationships in the workplace occurs among individuals in the workplace and it is important for organizational life. Employee engagement is a psychological condition that supports individuals at work (Macey& Schneider, 2013).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive research design. The target population was 255 employees in the three levels of management, top level, middle level and low level management from 4 Telecommunication Companies in Kenya that include, Safaricom, Airtel, Liquid Telecom and Telekom. Random sampling method was used to sample respondents. Survey data was collected by use of a structured questionnaire. The data obtained was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

5. FINDINGS

The study sought to investigate the relationship between supervisor/co-worker support on employee performance in telecommunication companies in Kenya. To achieve this objective respondent were asked if their supervisors were sensitized about work life balance in their organizations. From the Table 1, majority 96.1% indicated that their supervisors were sensitized on work life balance, 2% strongly disagreed while 2% did not know as to whether supervisors were sensitized on work life balance.

Further, respondents were also asked to indicate whether their supervisors discuss non-work issues with their employees when they encounter challenges at workplace.98% agreed that supervisors discuss non-work issues with their employees. This was followed by 2% who disagreed with that opinion. In addition an opinion was sought on whether supervisors communicate work life balance issues with their employees 96.1% agreed while 3.9% did not agree

The findings in Table 1 below shows majority of the workers agree that there is supervisor/co-worker support in telecommunication companies in Kenya given that the mean of responses is 3.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis for Supervisor/Co-worker support

	I don't know	No	Yes	Summary			
	Row N %	Row N %	Row N %	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Are your supervisors sensitized on work life balance	2.0%	2.0%	96.1%	3	3	3	0
Do your supervisors discuss non-work issues with the employees when they encounter challenges outside work?	0.0%	2.0%	98.0%	3	3	3	0
Do your supervisors communicate work life balance issues with their employees?	0.0%	3.9%	96.1%	3	3	3	0

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to gauge the relationship between supervisor/coworker supports and employee performance. The result shows that supervisor/co-worker support has a significant positive relationship with employee performance (r=0.769, p=0.000).

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	t-value	Sig value	Accept/reject
H$_0$: Supervisor and co-worker relationships have no significant effect on employee performance in Telecommunication Companies in Kenya	6.623	0.000	Reject

From the findings above it was established that Supervisor and co-worker have significant effect on employee performance in Telecommunication Companies in Kenya (t-value=6.623, sig value=0.000≤0.05). Thus we reject the hypothesis that Supervisor and co-worker relationships have no significant effect on employee performance in Telecommunication Companies in Kenya.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that (1) supervisors' sensitization on work life balance is practiced. (2) Supervisors discuss non-work issues with their employees when they encounter challenges at workplace. (3)Supervisors communicate work life balance issues with their employees. The study also concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between supervisor/co-worker support and employee performance which supports studies by (Otsuka, Takahashi, Nakata, Haratani, Kaida, Fukasawa, & Hanada, 2014) that Supervisors are in positions that can address employee complaints and help employees obtain necessary resources required for enhanced work life balance. Also argument by Gouldner (2013) that employees that had good relationships with supervisors and co-workers are usually successful and productive at work.

7. RECOMMENDATION.

Based on the findings, the study puts forth the following recommendations. The relationship between Supervisor/Co-worker Support and Employee Performance, the study recommend that there is need to encourage team working as it reduces tension within the organization and family's hence reducing stress and increases psychological meaningfulness of an employee in the work place leading to improved employee performance. This confirms the studies by (May et al., 2014; Kahn, 2010) which argues that Psychological conditions which include psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability are influenced by relationships with colleagues and with the direct leadership or supervisors. The study also recommend that policies that support good co-workers and supervisors support should be developed which confirms the argument that Strong support from co-workers and supervisors improves work environments by relieving employee stress (Sloan, 2012; Rush, 2011), which enhances job satisfaction and performance (Edwards & Rothbard, 2013).

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