

The Influence of Flexible Work Arrangements on Employee Job Satisfaction in NYAHUWASCO Kenya

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Abstract: In order to attract and keep satisfied and productive employees, the management of water companies has adopted various HR management strategies that are aimed at promoting quality of life for their workforce. The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) practices on job satisfaction in water companies. The study was conducted at Nyahururu Water and Sanitation Company (NWSC), Laikipia County in the month of March and April 2023. It was guided by Job Characteristics Model and the Herzburg's Two-Factor Theory. A descriptive research design was adopted. The study targeted all the 156 employees of the company. Proportionate stratified simple random sampling was used in selecting a sample size of 61 respondents. Both close ended and open-ended questionnaires were used in collecting qualitative and quantitative data. Multiple linear regression analysis model was used to determine the correlation between the study variables. Quantitative data was presented using statistical techniques in terms of means and frequencies. The qualitative data was used to supplement interpretation of the quantitative data. The study concludes that that job satisfaction in the company has underlying issues related to flexible work arrangements that affect the workers in the company and which needs to be investigated more. The study concludes that regular assessment and addressing challenges associated with flexible work arrangements as a way to promote employee job satisfaction is important. This includes implementing policies and practices that allow for scheduling adjustments to accommodate individual needs and promoting a sense of empathy, compassion, and care for oneself and others. Employees need to be assigned tasks that align with their expertise and qualifications. The study recommends that management should take steps to improve the work environment, communication, and employee motivation. It should provide opportunities for employees to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Keywords: Flexible Work Arrangements. HR management strategies, work environment, job satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

For many years, researchers in public management have revealed that job satisfaction is an elusive construct (Langer, Feeney, & Lee, 2019). Globally, changes in demographic distribution of the labor force, technologically-led globalization and the 24/7 new job arrangements/requirements have been placed on the working environment by modern society (Wambui, Cherotich, Emily, & Dave, 2017). Among the relentless demands, is the need for a continuous improvement in quality and a timely service as well as sustaining a motivated and satisfied people resources. The latter is crucial for obtaining the former, an issue that is placing a heavy burden on the workers due to demands for performance. There are

substantial instances of work-life conflict, which could then strain and negatively influence the interactions between employees and the Quality of Work Life (QWL) (Opatha & Arulrajah, 2014).

Lloyd Suttle (2020) views QWL as the degree to which members of a particular organization are able to satisfy important personal needs through their experiences in the organization. Benefits of QWL opportunities in an organization include among others, improved overall performance due to improved job performance, less absenteeism, and improved employee satisfaction. Satisfied employees are more likely to work harder and provide better services to the organization. Furthermore, businesses that provide enhanced QWL mechanisms, including flexible scheduling options, are likely to have a competitive edge in the labour market (Rajesh & Nishant, 2014). QWL strategies serve as a clear indicator of the increasing recognition of the fundamental significance of the concept of job satisfaction.

Global Context of Employees' Job Performance

Globally, employees have various overriding hindrances to harmony in QWL which ultimately affects their satisfaction with their employment. Key among them include, lack of employment flexibility, lengthy workdays, and accessibility to work stress support and care and issues associated with work demand, employee engagement and involvement in decision making (Rafnsdóttir, 2011).

Experiences in the western world suggest that a critical element in deciding both local and global company performance is the ability of employees in the expanding number of multinational corporations to be responsive to their demands at work and at home. This is due to the fact that work-life requirements have not received serious consideration in the establishment of policies in the context of multinational corporations and also in the entire global workforce (Russel, Philip & Frances, 2009). Work-related stress is thought to cost the American economy more than \$300 billion annually in lost productivity, absenteeism, and employee medical, legal, and insurance expenditures (Alexandra, Beauregard & Henry, 2009). United States Psychological Association shows that as of 2009 work significantly contributed to 69% of employee stress with 41% employees reported feeling stressed during work days. Furthermore, conflict between work and family roles lowers the perceived quality of both work and individual life, which in turn, negatively influences both employee and organizational performance. In Canada, the cost of employee absenteeism due to conflicts related to QWL has been estimated to be up to \$10 billion annually (ILO, 2011). In addition, 90% of working mothers and 95% of working fathers in South America report having conflicts at work (International Labour Organization, 2011). Based on statistics, 70% of inactive employees, mostly women in Chile, would like to work but are unable to do so due to childcare obligations. In the USA, where about 87% of the population is served domestic water by publicly owned water bodies which are established at the municipal level, the management of these bodies is conventional in outlook, orientation, and governance. This means their model is often structured like for-profit companies and concerned with observable job performance and clear financial goals (Hanna, 2018).

The private sector and multinationals play a significant role especially in the adaption to QWL ideas like work flexibility. This has recently attracted a lot of interest in the African setting. Unfortunately, most workplaces, particularly those in government institutions, do not seem to be prepared for this transformation, and the majority are having trouble adjusting to flexible work practices and employee involvement that are being embraced by today's workers (TARGUS, 2018,

Kenyan Situation

In Kenya, practices include flexible schedules are likely to highly enhance quality of work life (Kamau, Muleke, Mukaya, & Wagoki, 2013). The employment laws such as the Employment Act 2007, and Occupational Health and Safety, Act provide mechanisms aimed at promoting quality work life. Key among them is the provision for statutory leaves, which include 21 days of paid annual leave, 3 months of paid maternity leave, and 2 weeks of paid paternity leave. These laws however, do not provide guidelines on matters of work-place flexibility, meaning the employer retains a lot of freedom over QWL arrangements. Given the significance of leave arrangements, Kenyan employers have implemented other regulatory organizational policies and initiatives in addition to leave arrangements, a decision that is majorly guided by scholarly works in the field of personnel management. These include flexible working arrangements such as compressed working days and/or working part time, employee assistance facilities and/or programs such as workplace fitness centres, counselling services; and job-sharing programs (Muasya, 2016)

Research Problem

Employee turnover as a result of job discontent ranks as one of the problems that needs to be addressed in the modern workplace, according to studies performed in Kenya (Muasya, 2016; Wambui et al., 2017). ILO ranks Kenya as having a bad quality of work life in its study on the subject, citing the country's lengthy workweek as a key contributing factor. The

relationships between quality of work life and job satisfaction are still not fully investigated in Kenya, despite the fact that numerous research (Aloys & Henry, 2013; Chimoi, 2012; Ng'anga, 2017; Mbui, 2017) have been done to address the quality of work life phenomena. An area of particular interest in flexible work arrangements. Most surveys have omitted the need for in-depth research into specific businesses, particularly in the water service providing industry, which is similarly afflicted by issues with employee unhappiness and turnover. (Njenga, 2021). At NYAHUWASCO despite the value such study would bring to the organization's HR operations, none have been conducted.

Research Objective

The research aimed to determine the influence of flexible work arrangements on employee job satisfaction in NYAHUWASCO in Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was guided by the Job Characteristics Model and the Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. The Job Characteristics Model was updated in 1980 based on the 1976's design by Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model. The approach is predicated on the premise that employee motivation is mostly dependent on the task at hand. Particularly, a demanding job boosts motivation, but a boring and monotonous job stifles motivation to perform effectively. Engaged workers are motivated, enthusiastic, and invested in the success of the business. Also, they are prepared to go above and beyond the call of duty. (Alamdar & Khan, 2011). On the other hand, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Hygiene Theory). served as the study's foundation (Hygiene Theory). Frederick Herzberg is the main proponent of this theory, which was presented in an article titled "The Desire to Work" (September 1959 edition). It asserts that unhappiness with one's job and job satisfaction are not mutually exclusive. It analyses elements at work that contribute to job satisfaction as well as factors at work that cause dissatisfaction (The Business Professor, LLC, 2021). According to its suppositions, reducing unhappiness won't always lead to satisfaction, and the opposite is also true. According to the theory, sometimes referred to as Herzberg's motivation-hygiene hypothesis, some workplace factors, such as Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), do promote job satisfaction while others promote job discontent. Herzberg created the theory to better understand a worker's motivation for the job and attitude.

It has been demonstrated that FWAs are advantageous for both companies and employees in terms of increased commitment, less attrition, lowered work-family conflict, and increased job satisfaction (Davidescu, Apostu, & Paul, 2020; Kangogo & Wanambiro, 2019; Onyango et al., 2019; Opeyemi et al., 2019). The empirical literature consistently shows that FWAs have a favourable effect on employee job satisfaction. A study titled Flexible work arrangements, job satisfaction, and performance within Eskom Shared Services was conducted in South Africa by Lucille, (2017). The study looked at how FWAs can improve job happiness and performance while reducing time management issues among employees. FWAs were shown to be preferred by the majority of employees in a quantitative study that comprised 92 employees who were surveyed online. FWAs were also found to significantly positively correlate with job satisfaction. The study also revealed that FWAs improve work-life balance, which raises performance and job satisfaction.

Research carried out in Kenya have also revealed a favourable relationship between FWAs and employee job satisfaction. In their descriptive survey study on the effect of flexible work hours on employees' organizational commitment in Nakuru's department of health services, Kenya, Kangogo & Wanambiro, (2019), determined that flexible working hours had a significant impact on staff members' organizational commitment in public hospitals in Nakuru town. The study also argued that employee-driven flexible work arrangements, as opposed to employer-driven ones, have a greater impact on an organization's success. The findings of Jane, Simon, and Amos (2015), who examined how flexible work arrangement initiatives affected nurses' job satisfaction in public hospitals in Kenya's Nakuru County, are similar to those of Kangogo and Wanambiro (2019), who found a statistically substantial positive correlation between work arrangement flexibility and nurses' job satisfaction in Nakuru County.

The impact of flexible work arrangements approach on job satisfaction among state enterprises in Kenya was also assessed by Onyango *et al.* in 2019. The research examined the use of FWAs by state corporations and its impact on job satisfaction using a cross-sectional descriptive design with a sample size of 381 employees in 127 state corporations. The employees of the state corporations were purposefully chosen and interviewed using semi-structured questionnaires, whereas the state corporations were chosen using stratified sampling. A flexible work schedule is a key tactic in boosting worker satisfaction among state firms in Kenya, according to the study. The study further supported the claim made by Jane *et al.* (2015) that FWAs that are employee-driven rather than employer-driven significantly contribute to an organization's performance.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive research design. A descriptive survey design helps portray study subjects' characteristics as they are, were, or will be in order to learn new information (Cauvery et al., 2003). The 156 NYAHUWASCO personnel made up the study's target population (NWSC HR Policy Report, 2019) who were sourced from Administration, Technical, Commercial and Finance departments. To choose study participants from the study population, a proportionate stratified and simple random selection approach was used. The Yamane (1967) equation formula was used to determine the ideal sample size; the study's sample size determined was 61. Data collection made use of questionnaires that were broken into sections. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered through the questionnaire. The quantitative items used a Likert scale to gather initial information from responders, which was then entered into a computer program for statistical analysis. The validity of the data was strengthened through insights from the supervisor and in a pilot study that administered questionnaires to same ten employees at Nanyuki Water and Sewerage Company personnel chosen at random, within a span of two weeks (using test-retest method). The reliability of the research items was evaluated using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. The findings from the pilot study were never used during the main study. Inferential statistics was used to make conclusions about the study population using the data obtained, whereas descriptive statistics were used to calculate frequencies and percentages. The relationship between the study variables was established using inferential statistical methods including chi-square test, regression analysis and the Pearson correlation coefficient. The statistical activities for this study were carried out utilizing the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), and the frequency distribution of the variable.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

While there is a portion of respondents who are satisfied with flexible work arrangements, there was also a substantial number of individuals who expressed dissatisfaction. There was a lack of consensus among the respondents regarding the importance of considering the broader scheme of things. In regards to possibility of working in shifts when situation demands so, a significant number of respondents believe that there is flexibility in working in shifts when their personal or situational needs require it. On off duty leave that helps when needed, a significant number of respondents perceive that there is flexibility in taking leave when they need it, indicating that the NWSC offers supportive policies or practices regarding leave arrangements. On meaningfulness of welfare and that of other people, the data suggests no clear consensus among the respondents regarding the meaningfulness of welfare for oneself and others. On effectiveness of job performance on other people in the company, such as managers and co-workers, there is lack of consensus among the respondents regarding the perceived effectiveness of their job performance on others. On Information/feedback about job performance from manager/supervisor and co-workers, the data suggests a considerable number of respondents perceive a lack of feedback and communication regarding their job performance from their managers/supervisors and co-workers. On activities included in additional tasks other than employees' area of specialization/qualification there was lack of consensus among the respondents. In regards to simple and non-complicated tasks there is no clear consensus among the respondents regarding the complexity of tasks assigned to them.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that regular assessment and addressing challenges associated with flexible work arrangements to promote employee job satisfaction is important. This include implementing policies and practices that allow for scheduling adjustments to accommodate individual needs and promoting a sense of empathy, compassion, and care for oneself and others. Employees need to be assigned tasks that align with their expertise and qualifications. Statistical tests showed that flexible work arrangements were found to have a positive influence on job satisfaction. Holding all other factors constant, one unit increase in flexible work arrangements causes an increase in their job satisfaction by 0.224 units. The study results revealed a highly positive and statistically insignificant ($r=0.751$; $p<0.05$) relationship between FWA and Employee Job Satisfaction. The analysis implied that flexible work arrangements positively influence employee job satisfaction according to this study. The findings imply improving FWA would result to better employee job satisfaction.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The management should take steps to improve the work environment, communication, and employee motivation. It should provide opportunities for employees to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

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