



Influence of Work-Life Initiatives on Employees' Performance in Commercial Banks in Nairobi County

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ABSTRACT

The workplace today has become tasking compared to decades ago. Advancement in technology has blurred the boundary between work and leisure. Previous research has shown that for an employee to be effective in the workplace, they must strike a good balance between their job and their life-related roles. This research aimed at investigating the effects of work-life initiatives on employee performance in commercial banks in Nairobi County. Employees in commercial banks are likely to have work-life imbalance because their job is quite demanding and requires long working hours. The specific objectives of this study sought to investigate the effect of leaves, paid time off, flexi-time, and recreational facilities on employee performance. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. The target population was 121 employees of the 41 commercial banks in Nairobi County. This study used stratified random sampling to determine the employees who participated in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. The reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach alpha where a score of 0.688 was obtained. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics focused on the means and standard deviations while Pearson's correlation was used to test the relationship between the study variables. The results indicated that leaves, paid time off, flexi-time, and recreational facilities had a positive correlation with the performance of between 0.2 and 0.4. The study concluded that to improve the existing leave policies, the leave allowance should be paid on time. Proper tracking of paid time off is important to ensure that the cost arising from this initiative is minimized. The paid time off not taken should be treated as overtime and employees compensated for the same. The study recommended the introduction of flexi-time in an organization where it does not exist and the involvement of employees in the formulation of a flexi-time program to make it relevant. The study further recommended the introduction of recreational facilities which employees felt are important to them and would act as a form of intrinsic reward.

Keywords: Work-life Initiatives, Employees Leaves, Flexi-time, Recreational Facilities, Employees' Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

The workplace today has become tasking and demanding compared to decades ago. Human resources are currently considered the most important asset that an organization has. As such, organizations have to come up with ways that ensure that they attract and retain the best crop of employees (Meister & Willyerd, 2021). A lot of changes that have occurred over time have made it necessary for an organization to come up with work-life initiatives to deal with these changes. The transformations include changes in demographic where more women are working, changes in the traditional roles between men and women, and rearrangement of working time (Bloom, Kretchmer & Reenen, 2009). According to Lockwood (2003), a work-life balance is a comfortable state of equilibrium between a person's job and their social life. Psychologist says that a person's job should not be too overwhelming such that they are unable to enjoy their life outside work (May & Gilson, 2014). Advances in information technology have made it possible to people to work 24-7 and have blurred the boundaries between work and other aspects of life. It is currently possible for the employees to even work at home. This overlap of work and life is a major challenge as it might cause strain in a specific aspect of a person's life. The organization should be in a position to accommodate various flexi-styles depending on the preferences of the various employees (Kossek & Lauth, 2008).

Globally, the financial sector has the most involving job with workers experiencing long hours and working under the pressure of handling the diverse needs of the customers. Work-life initiatives include all the programs that an organization can come up with to make work more flexible and give an employee more time to attend to personal issues. Such initiative includes flexible working hours which is done through different programs such as flexi-time, compressed week hours, telework, family leave program, and job sharing among others (Kamau, 2015). Work-life initiatives have



their benefits such as increased employee performance, reduced employee turnovers, and increased job satisfaction. Studies that have been carried out in this sector indicate that there is a positive correlation between work-life balance and employee performance. Nevertheless, managers are faced with the challenge of coming up with a work-life initiative mix that is desired by the employees. This research sought to examine the current work-life initiatives influencing the performance of core employees in commercial banks in Nairobi County

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-life initiatives are programs aimed at mitigating the conflict between work and family (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer 2010). The term work-life initiatives also covers programs that make it possible for employees to enhance their skills, stay healthy, and know that their efforts at work are recognized. As such, besides the traditional work/life benefits such as flexi-time, wellness program, etc. Work-life initiatives also include reward and recognition programs, training programs, and career planning and development. Implementation of work-life initiatives ensures that employees experience work-life balance. Work-life balance is about the creation and maintenance of a healthy and supportive work environment that enables workers to have a balance between their work responsibility and home and their other parts of their social life (Lockwood, 2003). Work-life balance does not only involve having meaningful working hours. For one to have a fulfilling well-rounded life there should be some level of achievement and fulfillment in each of the four spheres of life. This includes work, self, family, and friends. If there are conflicts in one area then a person's life is said to be imbalanced (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003). Successfully managing work and other crucial activities such as leisure, spending time with family, exercise, volunteer work, and additional studies entail work-life balance (Berhanu, 2019).

Organizations should consider work-life initiatives since they have several benefits to the organization such as attracting and retaining staff, boosting employee morale, reducing illness and absenteeism, promoting good working relationships between peers, and decreasing stress and burn-outs (Wynen, 2021). This research focused on four main work-life initiatives which include leaves, paid time off, flexi-time, and recreational facilities. Leaves encompass study leave, compassionate leave and family leave (paternity and maternity), and other salaried and unpaid family leave policies. Paid time off is a policy by some organizations where employees are allowed to accumulate vacation days, sick days, and personal days to use when the need arises. The organization determines how many hours/days will be offered every year upon employment. The number of paid time-off days/hours normally depends on the number of years of service with employees who have stayed long in the organization getting more hours. The unused hours vanish at the end of the year. Employees are paid for the unused paid time off (Milkman, 2013). However, paid time off does not include disability leaves, sabbatical leaves, and family leaves.

Numerous studies have been conducted worldwide on the variables of the study and all point out a problem of work-life balance. Bataineh (2021) in a study on the impact of work-life balance and happiness at work on employee performance in pharmaceutical industries in Jordan disclosed that work-life balance and happiness positively and significantly affected employee performance. The study further indicated that job satisfaction did not affect employee performance. Sheppard (2016) found a positive relationship between work-life balance and employee performance. The study also indicated that work-life balance programs could help improve organizational culture and employee overall performance. Silaban and Margaretha (2021) studied the impact of work-life balance on job satisfaction and employee retention amongst millennial employees in Bandung City, Indonesia. The results of the study disclosed a significant effect of work-life balance on job satisfaction and employee retention. The study recommended that organizations should provide a good working environment and facilities to increase the motivation of the employees.

Kamau, Muleke, Mukaya, and Wagoki (2013) studied the existing work-life balance policies in ECO bank, Kenya. The study looked into how leave policies, flexible working options, and employee assistance programs affect employee job performance. The study observed that absences of work-life balance are a risk to the individual employee's well-being and also affect employees' performance. The study concluded that flexible working hours in an organization greatly affect an employee's job performance and make it possible for them to balance personal responsibilities and commitments and organizational duties and roles. Research carried out by Muli, Muathe, and Muchiri (2014) indicated that there was a positive relationship between HR work-life support services and the performance of the employees. According to the study, the leadership style adopted affected work-life initiatives. Effective leadership had a positive relationship with good work-life initiatives which led to increased employee performance.



2.1 Research Hypothesis

From the above-reviewed literature, the following research hypotheses were proposed:

H₀₁: Leaves do not affect the performance of employees in commercial banks in Nairobi County.

H₀₂: Paid time off does not affect employees' performance in commercial Banks in Nairobi County.

H₀₃: Flexi-time does not affect employees' performance in commercial Banks in Nairobi County.

H₀₄: Recreational facilities do not affect employees' performance in commercial Banks in Nairobi County.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The sample of the study consisted of 121 staff drawn from 41 banks operating in Nairobi County, Kenya. The questionnaire method was used to collect data. The study used stratified random sampling to determine the employees who participated in the study. Three strata: the finance, marketing, and human resource department were chosen as the department to be targeted. This is because they adequately represented the employees working at the bank. In the second stage, one employee from each of the aforementioned departments was then randomly selected for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. The reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach alpha where a score of 0.688 was obtained. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics focused on the mean and standard deviation while Pearson's correlation was used to test the relationship between the study variables.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of Work-life initiatives

This section presents the results of descriptive statistics of responses to work-life initiatives which were categorized to consist of leaves, paid time off, flexi-time, and recreational facilities. Questionnaire items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 5= Strongly Agree. The responses were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviations.

Table 1: Results of Descriptive Statistics on the Responses to Work-life Initiatives

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev
I am paid when I'm on leave	3.60	0.869
My leave is important to me	4.16	0.886
I am satisfied with the existing leave programs	3.90	1.2875
I am currently satisfied with paid time off	2.22	0.2365
Paid time off is important to me personally	4.27	0.4322
Flexi-time is important to me personally	4.05	0.4681
I am satisfied with the existing flexi-time program	2.13	0.6344
Recreational facilities offered by my employer are important to me	3.89	0.3412
I am satisfied with the recreational facilities offered by my employer	1.92	0.3485

From the findings the respondents agreed that they were paid when they were on leave, their leave was important to them, they were satisfied with existing leave programs, paid time off was personally important to them, flexi-time was important to them personally and recreational facilities offered by their employers were important to them. The respondents also indicated that they were not currently satisfied with paid time off, they were not satisfied with the existing flexi-time program and they were not satisfied with the recreational facilities offered by my employer. The results indicate that the banks have work-life initiative policies in place but the employees were not satisfied with some of the work-life initiative programs in place.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Employee Performance

The dependent variable of the study was staff retention which had five (5) items. Table 2 presents the results of the analysis.

**Table 2: Results of Descriptive Statistics on the Responses to Employee Performance**

	Mean	SD
I am effective are you my job	3.63	0.960
I am a team player	3.70	1.188
I promptly respond to requests from customers	4.08	0.906
I adjust properly to changing priorities	3.85	0.995
I meet the targets set by my employer	4.17	0.793

From the findings the respondents agreed that they were effective in their job, they were team players, responded promptly to requests from customers, adjusted properly to changing priorities, and met the targets set by their employers.

4.3 Results of Pearson Correlations

This section presents results for hypotheses testing using Pearson Correlations

H₀₁: Leaves do not affect the performance of employees in commercial banks in Nairobi County. This hypothesis was analysed using Pearson Correlation analysis and the results are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Results of Correlation between Leaves and Employee Performance

	Pearson Correlation	Covariance
Leaves	0.206	0.187

Correlation between leaves and employee performance was conducted as shown in table 3. Pearson correlation was found to be 0.206 at a covariance of 0.187. A correlation of + 0.206 is an indication of a positive linear relationship. This shows that there is a weak relationship between leaves and employee performance.

H₀₂: Paid time off does not affect employees' performance in commercial Banks in Nairobi County. This hypothesis was analysed using Pearson Correlation analysis and the results are presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Results of Correlation between Paid Time off and Performance

	Pearson Correlation	Covariance
Paid time off	0.028	0.023

Pearson correlation between paid time off and performance was found to be 0.028 with a covariance of 0.023 according to table 4. This is an indication that there is a very weak positive relationship between the two variables.

H₀₃: Flexi-time does not affect employees' performance in commercial Banks in Nairobi County. This hypothesis was analysed using Pearson Correlation analysis and the results are presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Results of Correlation between Flexi-Time and Performance

	Pearson Correlation	Covariance
Flexi-time	0.103	0.396

According to table 5, the Pearson correlation between flexi-time and employee performance is 0.103 which shows that there is a positive linear relationship between flexi-time and employee performance. The covariance is also low indicating a low deviation from the mean.

H₀₄: Recreational facilities do not affect employees' performance in commercial Banks in Nairobi County. This hypothesis was analyzed using Pearson Correlation analysis and the results are presented in Table 6 below:

**Table 6: Results of Correlation between Recreational Facilities and Performance**

	Pearson Correlation	Covariance
Recreational facilities	0.334	0.231

From the findings, it was observed that the correlation between recreational facilities and performance is 0.334 with a covariance of 0.234. The correlation value obtained shows that there is a weak positive linear relationship between the two variables.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis of the study was to test the relationship between leaves and employee performance. Studies have found that employee leave is important in determining performance (Gatimu, 2017; Schuster, 2009). The results showed that there was a positive relationship between leaves and employee performance. This finding is consistent with the study by Chungo and Anyieni (2019) which found that annual leave significantly influenced firm performance. The study reported that maternity/paternity leave and bereavement leave policy significantly influenced firm performance. The study further revealed that sick leave significantly influenced firm performance. The study recommended that the period for sick leave ought to be open depending on the nature of sickness and that sick leaves ought to enable employees to recover and resume duty.

The second hypothesis of the study was to test the relationship between paid time off and employee performance. Studies have found that paid time off is important in determining employee performance (Garg & Tripathi 2020; Mangale, 2017). The results showed that paid time off was a significant positive predictor of employee performance. This finding is consistent with the study by Ernst & Young (2006) which found a significant relationship between paid time off and employee performance. The study found that employees who took paid time off showed higher levels of productivity, increased morale, and improved job satisfaction.

The third hypothesis of the study was to test the relationship between flexi-time and employee performance. Studies have found that flexi-time is important in determining employee performance (Kipkoech, 2018; Joyce, 2010). The results showed that flexi-time was a significant positive predictor of employee performance. This finding is consistent with the study by Kattenbach (2010) who found a positive and significant relationship between flexi-time and employee performance. When employees have control over when to clock in and out of work makes them attend to work at the time most convenient to them hence reduce on absenteeism and tardiness. Through flexible work arrangements, employees can manage their workload better and complete their tasks on time hence improving productivity.

The fourth hypothesis of the study was to test the relationship between recreational facilities and performance. Studies have found that recreational facilities were important in determining employee performance (Nzinga & Mbaabu, 2013; Bagha, 2020; Aniq, 2018). The results showed that recreational facilities were a significant positive predictor of employee performance. This finding is consistent with the study by Dhamija and Gupta (2019) who found that recreation is a significant factor in employee performance; increases the level of commitment, enhances bonding, and improves employee wellbeing with a consequent positive effect on job satisfaction, service provision, customer satisfaction, and productivity.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The research concluded that leaves have a bearing on the performance of employees at the bank. It is one of the crucial WLI that employees need to have a work-life balance. This is because it allows them to attend to personal demands that they cannot survive without. Leaves give the employees a break from work and they can come back revitalized and with energy hence the positive impact on performance. On the other hand, leaves can harm performance if the employee spends more time out on leaves than the time they spend at work. If not properly managed, leaves of absence can hurt the productivity of an organization. Paid time off is seen to impact performance to a certain extent. This is because it acts as an incentive to employees who work hard to earn their time off and hence increase productivity. With the paid time off policy, both the employer and employees gain. This is because the employer gets service from a qualified workforce while the employees on the other hand can achieve a greater work-life balance. The study concluded that flexi-time has an effect on employee performance and should be introduced in organizations where it does not exist.



Moreover, the employees should be involved in devising a flexi-time program that best fits their demands. The study concluded that since the largest number of employees at the banks are the youths, recreational facilities both offered directly by the organization and indirectly can have a positive impact on the performance of the employees. Having indoor games within the offices can create a good atmosphere for promoting teamwork and relaxation during breaks. Engaging in such activities relaxes the mind, reduces stress and burnout, builds confidence and self-esteem, improves health, and increases concentration.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that the organizations improve on the existing leave programs by paying the employees on time so that they can enjoy their time off work properly. It further recommends that organizations should set up a proper time off management system to capitalize on the paid time off policy. This would ensure that the costs arising from such a policy are minimized and the organization can tap good performance from the employees. Another recommendation is that the management at the banks should increase the workforce to reduce the workload on the employees. This would ensure that they have a greater level of work-life balance and hence reduce the rates of absenteeism and employee turnover. The study recommends the introduction of a flexi-time program where it does not exist. It also recommends the involvement of the employees in devising the program so that it can be relevant to the employees. The study further recommends the introduction of recreational facilities in commercial banks as the employees view it as an important initiative to them. This is because it reduces stress and burnout which is a common feature for employees working at the bank and would thus make their job comfortable.

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