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The Strategic JOURNAL of Business & Change MANAGEMENT
ISSN: 2312-9492 www.strategicjournals.com
Vol. 11, Iss.3, pp 833 – 844, October 31, 2024. www.strategicjournals.com, © Strategic Journals

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN BUSIA COUNTY GOVERNMENT, KENYA

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Accepted: October 11, 2024

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.61426/sjbcm.v11i4.3121

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to examine the influence of human resource management practices on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya. The study aimed to examine the influence of training practices, recruitment practices, human resource information system and employee work-life balance on employee productivity. This study was anchored on goal setting theory, human capital theory, diffusion of innovation theory, compensation and organization theories. The study adopted descriptive design and targets 137 senior county employees from Busia County, Kenya. The study adopted a census approach as the sampling design and used a structured Likert scale questionnaire to gather data from the respondents. A pilot study was conducted before the main study to determine the reliability and validity of the research instrument. Data collected from the field was analyzed descriptively using statistical packages for social sciences software version 28. Inferential statistics were used to establish the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of the study. The research used multiple linear regressions model to establish the extent of relationship between the variables. Results showed that training practices, recruitment practices, human resource information systems and work life balance all were positively and significantly correlated to employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya. The regression results showed that training practices influenced employee productivity by 0.211, while recruitment practices influenced employee productivity by 0.410, while human resource information system influenced employee productivity by 0.204 and that work life balance influenced employee productivity by 0.356. The study therefore recommended for policy formulation and enactment of elaborate measures to enhance employee productivity at the county governments in Kenya. The study also made suggestions for further studies to be done on the influence of employee motivation on employee productivity in devolved governments in Kenya.

Key Words: *Flexible work schedules, Employee health, wellness, Employee assistance programs*

CITATION: Makhulo, I. O., & Mboya, M. (2024). Human resource management practices and employee productivity in Busia County Government, Kenya . *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management,* 11 (4), 833 – 844. http://dx.doi.Org/10.61426/Sjbcm.v11i4.3121

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and the need to improve organizational performance have drawn a lot of attention to human resource management by many organizations. In the race to boost their performance, organizations have strived to focus their attention on human resource management practices which seem to greatly influence their performance. Hence this presents a viewpoint that human resource (HR) plays a very critical role in the realization of these organizational goals. Additionally, being able to manage an organization's human resources efficiently is critical. Human resource management (HRM) practices influence a company's capacity to establish a long-term competitive advantage in terms of their performance achievement (Sailaja, Vaishnavi, & Sai Krishna, 2022).

Mathis and Jackson (2016) established a relationship between human capital and organizational performance and HRM strategies. Human capital allows organizations to achieve their goals, with training and development leading to higher labor productivity. Recruitment and selection ensure that the organization acquires the right skills, compensation ensures that employees are retained and motivated to achieve organizational goals, and training and development ensures that employees' skills and competencies are constantly updated, enhancing organizational effectiveness (Delery & Doty, 2016).

Employee productivity (EP) is one of the organization's top priorities in today's competitive operational and organizational environment because it offers both the organization and its employee's countless benefits (Akinyi, 2014). Increased employee productivity results in promising economic expansion, massive profitability, and positive social advancement of the organization (Auzina-Emsina, 2014; Soomroh, Saraih & Ahmad, 2022). Additionally, workers who are more productive receive better remuneration, benefits, and working conditions, as well as more prospective job options.

According to Robbins (2015), EP demonstrates how effectively a company uses its financial and human resources to guarantee the accomplishment of its main objectives. However, Bartel (2014), argue that unproductive employees can lead to a rise in employee turnover, a drop in employee engagement, a loss in organizational loyalty, and an increase in stress as well poor organizational performance. Building employee capabilities through training and enhancing employee productivity by coordinating employee goals with company objectives should be the main emphasis of effective employee productivity strategies. Building a team of employees is not a single event, but rather a collection of linked management techniques intended to maximize employee potential, boost production, and raise employee satisfaction (Shuriye & Wambua, 2020).

Many county governments in Kenya, according to Maina and Kwasira (2015) continue to endure low employee productivity though getting sizeable funding from the National Treasury and local revenue streams. This underperformance is attributed to counties'inability to manage their human resources effectively (Maina & Kwasira, 2015). Moreover, Shuriye and Wambua (2020) further contend that employee productivity is important to the success and resources utilization at the county governments level, since employees manage all other non-human resources for the sake of reaching the set of objectives. Discovering precise productivity characteristics that apply to the workers in the public sector may result in significant productivity improvement (Athman, 2019).

Globally, several nations are concerned about employee productivity and performance metrics. For instance, in China, Chung (2017) pointed that Sub-Saharan countries have the lowest employee productivity, when compared to the rest of the world, citing those external forces undermined employee motivation in addition to the level of education that employees possessed. Whereas, Armstrong and Taylor (2019), Baskerville and Duliporici (2018), and Bate and Robert (2018) in UK,

highlighted how human resource management practices have a significant impacted on the organization's capacity to achieve its objectives.

In Egypt, Saad, Gaber and Labib (2021) found that human resource management practices greatly influenced how employees engage in their responsibilities to the organization goals. The study observes that many Egyptian firms especially banks emphasized on the need to incorporate elaborate HRM practices such recruitment and selection, rewards, job design, and payment systems that would motivate their employees to remain committed in their work and deliver the desired results. Moreover, Sokrat (2020) noted that engaged employees tend to be more energetic and enthusiastic in work roles, which considerably lead to higher productivity.

Ashmond, Opoku-Danso and Asiedu Owusu (2022) argued that traditional HR practices like old classroom training was the best way to provide employees with the necessary knowledge to perform their jobs. Whereas, in South Africa, Hallet *et al.* (2018) concurred that among other human resource development practices, an organization that wants to stay competitive and relevant in the modern business world needs to address issues related to learning and development, reward and compensation, clear policies on staff recruitment, selection, and retention, and job design.

Locally, Kenya still faces considerable challenges with human resource (HR), just like other countries across African continent. For instance, Rajula (2018) contended that with the current competitive environment, organizations must desire to be successful in their performance as much as possible. While Mbui and Nzulwa (2018) observed a strong and favorable correlation between recruiting and deployment, talent development and retention, succession planning, and performance. Kering, Kilika and Njuguna (2020) also found that many organizations in the Sub Sahara Africa were not optimally managed, leading to low employee productivity.

Statement of the Problem

Shuriye and Wambua (2020) posits that employee productivity is important to the success and resources utilization at the county governments level, since employees manage all other non-human resources for the sake of reaching the set objectives. According to Maina and Kwasira (2015) many county governments in Kenya continue to endure low employee productivity though getting sizeable funding from the National Treasury and local revenue streams. This underperformance in the county governments is attributed to their inability to manage their human resources effectively.

Lawrence (2010), on a comparison of productivity improvement in governmental organizations with that in the private sector demonstrates that government organizations have not kept up with gains in staff productivity as the private sector has. Ngigi and Busolo (2019) assert that county governments in Kenya are ineffective owing to structural constraints and poor HR practices as witnessed by unending cases of delaying salaries and wages. Over 92% of County Governments in Kenya are performing poorly (Birisha, 2017).

Rajula (2018) contends that with the current competitive environment, organizations must desire to be successful in their performance as much as possible. Since employees in both public and private sector organization have become increasingly aware that motivation increases their productivity, it is essential for organizations' management to foster effective HR practices such as training, promotion, remuneration and other good working conditions that will motivate them to perform their tasks effectively.

According to Mualuko, Rintari and Moguche (2023) training increased employee productivity by 22.4%, as evidenced by R-square data. Kanyemba, Iwu and Allen-Ile (2015), better recruitment and selection procedures have an impact on productivity and should be embraced at all levels. Sadiq, Khan, Ikhlaq and Mujtaba (2022) carried research and found that HRIS is being used positively as a tool to improve

administrative efficiency through adding value in the HR department. According to Muchiti (2015), flexible schedule had the biggest influence and was positively correlated to employee output with a significance level of 5%. Owing to the above issues, the study would like to know the influence of HRM practices and employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine the influence of human resource management practices on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya.

Specific Objective

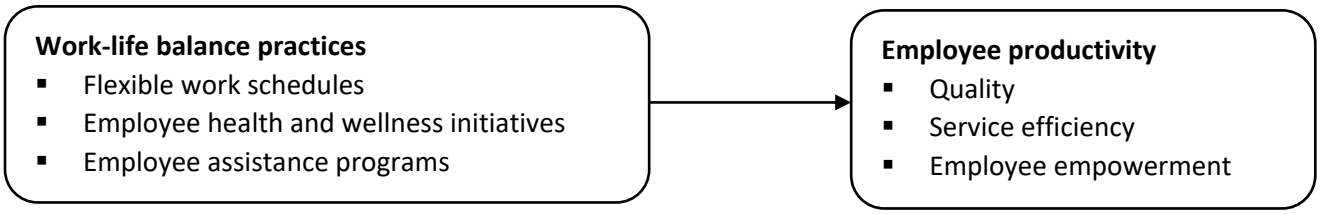
To establish the influence of work-life balance practices on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya.

Compensation Theory

According to the notion of compensation, we can improve our chances of having positive experiences in one area while decreasing our chances of having negative ones in another. Edwards and Rothbard (2005) provide a compensation theory scenario involving an unsatisfied employee who prioritizes family life above work-life balance and hence wastes human resources. Guest (2002) asserts that these deficiencies can be the satisfactions or demands that can be satisfied in another responsibility. For instance, a person may be very immersed in their job life as a result of numerous negative social encounters. The ability to work harder and take more breaks at work makes up for negative social experiences and gives one more energy to accomplish desirable tasks (Dixon, & Sagas, 2007).

According to compensation theory, there is a loose connection between life and work. This has the implication that employees look to other domains for satisfaction to fill in the gaps left by one field. For individuals in the workforce, research by Clark (2004) found a compensating link between life and job duties. According to Clark's (2004) research, women who had a negative family effect were more dedicated to their jobs, which is consistent with the compensation theory. This theory is used to underpin the relationship between work-life balance and employee productivity.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variable **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Work-life balance (WLB) is defined by Redmond et al. (2006) as cited in Lula (2018) as flexible working schedules that enable both parents and those who aren't parents to strike a balance between their personal and professional obligations. WLB is an important idea that affects various workers in the public and private sectors. It does not merely apply to one's job and personal life. It continues to have an impact on a person's psychological, social, economic, and mental health. According to Orugbu et al. (2015), all of these problems are manifested in a person's output and subsequently have an effect on employee performance. Davidson (2014) defines work-life balance as having a sense of control, being competitive and effective at work, and having a happy, healthy home life with enough free time. As a result, workers currently deal with an increased workload, more time constraints, and more challenges in balancing professional and personal obligations (Sabatini et al., 2008; Gerbert, 2010).

Alternately, work-life balance is considered as the art of balancing one's career, personal obligations, and obligations to one's family (Keelan, 2015; Kerdpitak and Jermsittiparsert, 2020). According to Haar et al. (2014), it deals with a worker's perception of a healthy balance between work and personal life. It depicts how people should carry out their personal and professional commitments in order to prevent a situation where they overlap. Employee's job, social, and family lives have been negatively impacted by the shifting work patterns and the pressing need for household responsibilities (Barling & Macewen, 1992). As a result, researchers recommended that human resource management in an organization adopt efficient policies, such as proper mentoring, assistance programmes, flexible working hours, reducing workload, feedback and commitment, that can lessen workers' work-life conflict (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2014) and have a positive impact on employees' job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2020).

A healthy work-life balance has been shown to have a positive effect on attitude, which in turn broadens perspective, increases interest, and energizes personnel at all levels, allowing for higher job performance and productivity. According to study by the Corporate Executive Board, (2023), which represents 80% of Fortune 500 businesses, employees who believe they have a good work-life balance work 21% harder than those who do not. Increased sentiments of involvement with their job and the company they work for are what lead to the extra effort. It's interesting to note that workers who intended to stick with their company cited a commitment to employee welfare as a major motivator. (*Work Life Balance and Productivity | Allianz Care*, n.d.).

Work-life balance policies, according to Porter and Lawler (2008), specify how the company plans to give employees more freedom in their schedules so they can manage their obligations and interests outside of work with their work. The policy lays forth criteria for specific arrangements that can be established, including working from home, reducing the number of workdays, flexible scheduling, parent-only leave, career pauses, and different types of child care. According to Muinde (2013) research, Kenyan companies are gradually implementing Work-Life Balance strategies for the betterment of their workforce. WLB policies are in existence at a number of organizations, and they are thought to address the disparities between the work and life components.

The workplace support systems differ from organization to organization and may be tailored to fit various work settings, are implemented by organizations to promote work-life balance (McMahon & Pocock, 2011). These consist of leave policies, career development opportunities, wellness programs, and flexible work schedules. According to the National Research Business Institute (2017), low output workers indicate a serious problem within an organization. As a result, businesses are forced to adopt creative strategies like work-life balance policies to increase employee productivity. Productivity is critical for the long-term competitiveness and profitability of organizations. Work-life balance is positively correlated with employees' performance and has been demonstrated to have favorable effects, including reduced turnover, increased performance, and increased job satisfaction (Leiva et al., 2012).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive design and targeted 137 county executive members from the county government of Busia. These comprised of county secretary, deputy county secretary, county executive committee members, chief officers, directors and their deputies, assistant directors and the office secretaries (Busia County public service board, 2023). Since the target population was small, the researcher sed a census method to consider all the respondents from the entire population to take part in the study. These were issued with questionnaires through a drop and pick method and later collected to facilitate data analysis. Data analysis involved both descriptive and

inferential analysis and thereafter presented in tables and graphs.

FINDINGS

Response rate

A total of 137 questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the county government executive members of Busia County. Out of this number, the researcher managed to collect 109 completed and fully filled questionnaires, representing 79.6% response rate. Therefore, a response of 79.6% was considered excellent to allow for analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

The last specific objective of this study sought to establish the influence of work life balance on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya. The aim of this objective was to examine how flexible work schedules, employee health and wellness initiatives and employee assistance programmes influenced their productivity. The summarized results were presented as under in Table 1;

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Work-Life Balance

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
We have flexible work arrangements that have been initiated by our management	109	2.3119	1.08608
The workload is fairly distributed and favorable for employee's welfare	109	3.2385	.98975
We have health and wellness programs, as well as team building initiatives that create creates favorable employee bonding	109	2.3394	0.96437
We have employee assistance initiatives where members welfare is taken care of	109	3.9450	.85888
My work does not prevent me from attending to my family	109	3.5688	1.01258
I find it challenging to handle my work family responsibilities	109	3.4128	.95463
Valid N (listwise)	109		

Findings shown above indicate that Busia County had no flexible work arrangements that were initiated by county management as suggested by a mean rating of 2.3119 and standard deviation of 1.08608. However, respondents agreed that their workload was fairly distributed and favourable for employee welfare (mean = 3.2385, standard deviation = 0.98975). According to the National Research Business Institute (2017), low output workers indicate a serious problem within an organization. As a result, businesses are forced to adopt creative strategies like work-life balance policies to increase employee productivity.

The study further found that there were no health and wellness programs, as well as team building initiatives that created favourable employee bonding as opposed to normal workplace interactions (mean = 2.3394, standard deviation = 0.96437). This contrast the views of Muriithi (2017) that work-life initiatives were important as a performance measurement model that enhanced employee productivity in the workplace

In addition, findings showed that respondents agreed that county put in place employee assistance initiatives where members' welfare was taken care of as shown by a mean score of 3.9450 and standard deviation of 0.85888, implying that the responses were clustered around the mean.

Additionally, the study found that respondents agreed that their work assignments was flexible and did not prevent them from attending to their families in case of needs as indicated by a mean of

3.5688 and a standard deviation of 1.01258. However, respondents agreed that it was challenging to handle their work with family responsibilities as indicated by a mean of 3.4128 with a standard deviation of 0.95463, implying a closeness to the mean.

In summary, the study observed that even though work life balance was critical in enhancing employee productivity, it was not fully embraced by the county government of Busia to allow employees appreciate a paradigm shift from rigid work arrangements to one that guarantees family welfare arrangement.

The study also observed that lack of health and wellness programs, as well as team building efforts that create favorable employee bonding environment were critical in derailing employee initiatives of improving their productivity in the workplace. As such, researchers recommended that human resource management in an organization should adopt efficient policies, such as proper mentoring, assistance programmes, flexible working hours, reducing workload, feedback and commitment, that can lessen workers' work-life conflict (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2014) and have a positive impact on employees' job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2020).

Employee Productivity

The main aim of this study was to examine the influence of human resource management practices on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya. To accomplish this objective, the study looked at employee productivity in respect to work quality, service delivery efficiency and employee empowerment to undertake their work roles. A summary of findings was presented in Table 2 below;

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Productivity

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Our employees feel a sense of satisfaction with their work.	109	3.3853	1.08788
We nurture teamwork to achieve our goals	109	2.6881	.87873
Our leadership are always committed to their responsibilities	109	2.4862	.81212
Our employees are committed to their performance targets	109	3.1193	1.00669
Our workplace condition is favourable to all employees	109	2.8807	1.33142
All employees are accountable for their performance	109	3.4312	1.01258
Valid N (listwise)	109		

Findings from the above Table 2 show that respondents agreed that county government employees feel a sense of satisfaction with their work as shown with a mean rating of 3.3853 and a standard deviation of 1.08788, implying a closeness of responses to the mean.

The study noted that Busia County government nurtured teamwork among the employees to achieve their goals as moderately agreed by the respondents (mean = 2.6881, standard deviation = 0.87873). This implied that the county management encouraged teamwork to task performance among their employees from various departments.

Moreover, the study found that county leadership was always not committed to their responsibilities as indicated by a mean of 2.4862 and a standard deviation of 0.81212. Similarly, the study observed that Busia County government employees were always committed to their performance targets as reflected by a mean rating of 3.1193 with a standard deviation of 1.00669.

Furthermore, findings showed that respondents moderately agreed that county government of Busia provided a favorable workplace condition to all employees as shown by a mean score of 2.8807 and a standard deviation of 1.33142, an indication that responses were closely clustered around the mean. And that all employees were accountable for their performance as shown by a mean value of 3.4312 with a standard deviation of 1.01258. The findings align with Arulrajah (2017) who asserted that productivity of the organization was not only determined by the development of new factories and machinery, but also by the contribution, cooperation, and devotion of employees and their management.

In conclusion, the study observed that though there was a significant indication of improved employee productivity, there were still concerns/challenges that county management needed to address to wrest the inequalities of county management leadership commitment and goodwill towards their responsibilities of delivering efficient and quality services to the public. Moderate provision of conducive workplace condition was also a significant area of concern that county management needs to improve in order to empower their employees to realize their productivity potentials. As noted by Kering, Kilika, and Njuguna (2020), many firms when not properly managed, will result in low staff productivity. The authors asserted that poor HR management techniques were to blame for negative impact on the organization's overall performance.

Inferential Statistics

The study used inferential analysis to establish the degree and the level of relationship between the independent variables (employee training practices, recruitment practices, HRIS and work-life balance) and the dependent variable (employee productivity) of the study. This aimed at establishing whether there was significant relationship between the variables under investigation. The study used Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and multiple regression model in this case.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The study used multiple regressions analysis to understand the strength and nature of the relationship that existed between the variables of this study. Regression analysis was used to demonstrate how and to what extent each variable influenced the dependent variable. It was used to estimate the weight of the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable in the study. This study sought to examine the influence of HRM practices on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya. Findings obtained from regression analysis were presented as below;

Model summary

The regression model was used in this study to establish the extent to which changes in training practices, recruitment practices, HRIS and work-life balance account for the variation in employee productivity in Busia County government in Kenya. The findings were presented in Table 3 below;

Table 3: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.791[a]	.626	.612	2.46394	1.698

a. Predictors: (Constant), WLB, HRIS, ETP, ERP
b. Dependent Variable: EP

Findings from Table 3 above show that the R-square value was 0.626, implying that 62.6% in the variation in employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya, could be explained by changes in training practices, recruitment practices, HRIS and work life balance. The remaining 37.4% implied that there are other factors not considered in this study that

also influence employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The ANOVA was used to test the significance of the model. For this study, the significance of the model was tested at a 95% confidence level, with a p-value of less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. The result of ANOVA was presented in Table 4 below;

Table 4: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1057.864	4	264.466	43.562	.000[b]
	Residual	631.384	104	6.071		
	Total	1689.248	108			

a. Dependent Variable: EP

b. Predictors: (Constant), WLB, HRIS, ETP, ERP

Findings showed that the regression model was significant (F = 43.562, p<0.05). This implied that the combined independent variables (training practices, recruitment practices, HRIS and work life balance) account for a significant amount of variation on employee productivity in Busia County in Kenya. The significant F-value shows that, the variation in employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya is not due to chance but rather influenced by the independent factors included in the study. The p-value of 0.000, which is less than the significance level of p<0.05, confirmed the statistical significance of the results.

Beta Coefficients

The beta coefficients were used to determine the size of the coefficient for each of the independent variables that gives the size of the effect that variable was having on the dependent variable. The sign on the coefficient (positive or negative) gives the direction of the effect. In regression with a single independent variable, the coefficient reveals how much the dependent variable is expected to increase (if the coefficient is positive) or decrease (if the coefficient is negative) when that independent variable increases by one. The summarized results were presented as under in Table 5;

Table 5: Regression Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.239	1.953		-.122	.903
	ETP	.211	.079	.220	2.677	.009
	ERP	.410	.093	.373	4.408	.000
	HRIS	.204	.073	.182	2.785	.006
	WLB	.356	.086	.276	4.134	.000

a. Dependent Variable: EP

From the findings in Table 5 above, the regression equation was fitted as follows;

$Y = 2.239 + 0.211X_1 + 0.410X_2 + 0.204X_3 + 0.356X_4$

Where Y= Employee Productivity; X_1 = Training Practices; X_2 = Recruitment Practices; X_3 = HRIS; X_4= Work Life Balance

From the equation, holding training practices, recruitment practices, HRIS and work life balance constant, the expected value of the dependent variable (employee productivity) is 2.239. The regression analysis shows that training practices, recruitment practices, HRIS and work life balance have a positive and significant relationship with employee productivity.

The results indicated that training practices had a positive and significant influence on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya (B=0.211, p =

0.009). This shows that every one-unit increase in training practices would significantly lead to 0.211 units increase in employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya, holding other variables constant.

Similarly, the results showed that recruitment practices had a positive and significant influence on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya (B=0.410, p = 0.000). This means that for every one-unit increase in recruitment practices, there will be a corresponding increase in employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya by 0.410 units.

Furthermore, the study found that HRIS had a positive and significant influence on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya (B = 0.204, P= 0.006). This implies that a unit increase in HRIS would influence employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya to improve by 0.204 units, holding other variables constant.

Finally, regression results showed that work-life balance had a positive and sign9ificant influence on employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya (B=0.356, p = 0.000). This implies that a unit increase in work life balance would significantly to 0.356 units increase in employee productivity in Busia County, Kenya.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study also observed that even though work life balance was critical in enhancing employee productivity, it was not fully embraced by the county government of Busia to allow employees appreciate a paradigm shift from rigid work arrangements to one that guarantees family welfare arrangement. Allowing employees to take time with their families was essential in building employee confidence towards the organization. Moreover, provision of critical WLB infrastructure was found to create a favorable employee bonding environment that otherwise could derail their productivity in the workplace.

Work-life balance has become a critical component of employee welfare in the modern organization's operational environment. Providing relevant WLB programs will bolster employee performance and overall organizational talent pool for improved productivity. The study therefore, recommends that county management should strive to develop WLB programmes that take into consideration employee welfare and work schedules so as to allow them flexible time to spent with their families.

Suggestions for further studies

The study suggests that further studies can be done to cover these variables to determine their influence on employee productivity. Similarly, the study proposes more studies to done on how employee motivation influence employee productivity in devolved governments in Kenya.

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