



INFLUENCE OF WORKLIFE BALANCE PROGRAMS ON PERFORMANCE OF MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGERS IN COMMISSIONS IN KENYA

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Gateru, C. W.,* Simiyu, A. N.,² & Omondi, M.³

^{*1}Ph.D Candidate, Jomo Kenya University of Agriculture & Technology [JKUAT], Nairobi, Kenya

^{2,3} Ph.D, Lecturer, Jomo Kenya University of Agriculture & Technology [JKUAT], Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at establishing the influence of work-life balance programs on performance of middle level managers in Commissions in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A population of 5,679 was targeted in the 13 Constitutional Commissions in Kenya. Purposive sampling technique was used to obtain the respondents. A sample size 200 middle level managers was selected from the constitutional commissions in Kenya. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire and structured personal interviews. Drop and pick method was used to administer copies of the questionnaire. Secondary data was obtained through document analysis. Descriptive statistical tools including frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically along the objectives of the study. Inferential statistical tools such as chi-square, correlation analysis and regression analysis were used. ANOVA test was done to determine the statistical significance of each variable. The findings were presented in tables. The findings revealed that there was a weak but positive relationship between performance and worklife balance programs. The findings also revealed that work life programs for example child care centres, lactation stations, phased return from maternity leave were missing yet they were particularly important and their absence greatly affected performance of the middle level managers. The study therefore concluded that commissions in Kenya lack various worklife balance programs that could enhance worklife balance of middle level managers. The study recommended that commissions adopt worklife balance programs like flexible working options (parttime working, teleworking), phased return from maternity leave, child care centres, lactation centre, lactation breaks and subscription to health clubs.

Key words: *Worklife balance, Worklife balance programs, performance, middle level managers*

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INTRODUCTION

As a result of globalization, technological innovations, diverse role expectations and cut throat competition the work environment has become more stressful. Such changes have created several complications on both the domestic and professional fronts of the employees. The pressure of work has been intensifying thus challenging work life balance of employees (Atheya & Arora,2014). Work-life balance programs have therefore been found necessary in helping employees achieve worklife balance. Beauregard and Henry (2009) argue that worklife balance programs assist employees in balancing their work and family demands, which can in turn lead to enhanced employee productivity and significant business improvements.

Middle managers, since the start of the 21st century, have seen their jobs enlarged, their responsibilities widened, the pace and intensity of their work increased, their working hours lengthened and their performance monitored more closely, (Buchanan, Denyer, Jaina, Kelliher, Moore, Parry & Pilbeam, 2013). This has resulted in increased worklife conflict and the need to introduce worklife balance programs. The State Service Commission of New Zealand recommended for the integration of work-life balance programs with human resource and people management policies and practices, (State Service Commission of new Zealand,2015). Work-life balance programs assist employees in balancing their work and family demands, which can in turn lead to enhanced employee productivity and significant business improvements. By enabling employees to schedule their time in order to better balance competing demands from work and from home, and by helping employees to procure third-party assistance with caregiving responsibilities, such practices are intended to reduce or eliminate levels of work-life conflict, and thereby augment employee

performance and organizational effectiveness, (Beauregard, Alexandra & Lesley ,2009).

Statement of the problem

In the recent past, middle level management has been characterized by challenging workloads. A study of middle and front-line management workers by (Buchanan, Denyer, Jaina, Kelliher, Moore, Parry & Pilbeam, 2013) found out that middle level management work is characterized by unsustainable workloads, inadequate resources and poor work-life balance. As a result 50% of the surveyed middle level managers noted that they worry about problems, have difficulty unwinding, and feel used up and exhausted after work.

Kalaiselvi, Muruganandam and Suganya, (2010), explained that the pressures of work or personal life can lead to stress, heart ailments, cardiovascular problems, sleep disorders, depression, irritability, jumpiness, insecurity, poor concentration and even nervous breakdown. Omollo (2014) explains that the creation of these commissions has been posited to be an endeavour to restructure the government in order to catalyse better service provision and better systems of accountability. Worklife conflict in commissions impedes service delivery and commissions fail to live up to their envisioned goal. Though commissions have made several milestones in ensuring transparency and accountability in public offices, no research has been conducted to find out the role of worklife balance in performance of commissions. Muchiti and Gachunga (2015) conducted a study on influence of work life balance on employee productivity in Kenya and noted that there has been little research to explore work-life balance on employee productivity in government institutions, they called for further studies on work – life balance to be undertaken in Kenya. It is against this background that this research was undertaken in order to address the research gap and better provide a better understanding of the relationship between

worklife balance programs and performance of middle level managers in Commissions in Kenya.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the paper was to establish the influence of worklife balance programs on performance of middle level managers in commissions in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Worklife balance programs

According to Vuksan, Williams and Crooks, (2012) organizations that offer work life balance programs are likely to increase their competitive advantage by reducing employees' compensation costs associated with withdrawal behaviors, and medical claims, while sustaining a high level of job performance and productivity. Beauregard and Henry (2009) agree with Vuksan et al and note that work-life balance practices assist employees in balancing their work and family demands, which can in turn lead to enhanced employee productivity and significant business improvements. By enabling employees to schedule their time in order to better balance competing demands from work and from home, and by helping employees to procure third-party assistance with caregiving responsibilities, such programs are intended to reduce or eliminate levels of work-life conflict, and thereby augment employee performance and organizational effectiveness. Armstrong (2010) further notes that work-life balance employment practices are concerned with providing scope for employees to balance what they do at work with the responsibilities and interests they have outside work and so reconcile the competing claims of work and home by meeting their own needs as well as those of their employers. Dependent care programs encompasses dependent care assistance (for example. on-site daycare, subsidized daycare, eldercare, and referral to child care), Leave

arrangements (for example. maternity leave, paternity leave, and leave to care for a sick dependent). Work-Life balance (WLB) initiatives give employees flexibility and helps ensure that dependents are cared for whilst employees are at work. Both work-to-family conflict and family to-work conflict can be reduced when employees use WLB initiatives (Allen, 2001; Anderson et al, 2002). Riordan and Wambach (2010) further expound on the dependant care programs by highlighting female friendly work-life policies. They explain that such policies may include writing corporate policies to support breastfeeding women; teaching employees about breastfeeding; providing designated private space to support breastfeeding in the workplace, providing

private space for breastfeeding or expressing milk, allowing flexible scheduling to support milk expression during work, giving mothers options for returning to work, such as teleworking, part-time work, and extended maternity leave, providing on-site or near-site child care.

Flexible working arrangements (FWA) describes any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when employees work (Acas, 2015) FWA also allow employees to work during times more suited to their personal needs and biological clock and may decrease the amount of work and commuting related stress experienced by the employees, thereby optimizing their efforts (Possenriede & Plantenga , 2011) FWA are also seen as central to the business case for (gender) diversity (Glover & Kirton, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A population of 5,679 was targeted in the 13 Constitutional Commissions in Kenya. Purposive sampling was used to obtain a sample of constitutional commissions. Kothari (2004) notes that purposive sampling is considered desirable when the

universe happens to be small and a known characteristic of it is to be studied intensively. The list of middle level managers was obtained from the HR departments in the respective Commission. 200 respondents formed the unit of analysis in this study. This were the middle level managers representing various professions as various professions are affected by work life balance differently. Karasek (1979) explained that jobs with different characteristics have different demand and control requirements and hence have different psychological effects. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire and structured personal interviews. Fifteen middle level managers from different professions in each of the thirteen commissions were sampled making a total of 195. According to Kinman and McDowall (2009) work-life balance issues differ by occupational context and thus worklife balance issues should be addressed by examining the work-life interface in different occupational contexts. Data was collected, coded and analyzed using SPSS. The findings were presented in form of tables and discussions and interpretation of the same given.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 195 questionnaires were administered to the middle level managers in Commissions in Kenya. 156 were adequately filled making an 80% response rate which is adequate for analysis. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) argue that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

The first objective of the study was to investigate the influence of worklife balance programs on performance of middle level managers in commission in Kenya. The findings were indicated in Table 1. A majority 53.2% of the respondents reported that they cannot be allowed to work from home. The data further showed that a majority 54.5% of the respondents reported that the duration provided for

maternity leave is adequate. Table 1 further showed that a majority 69.2 % of the respondents reported that employees forfeited their annual leave entitlement due to demands of work. A majority 57.7 % of the respondents reported lactating mothers were not given breast feeding breaks during work to enable them breast feed. In addition, the data revealed that a majority 96.8% of the respondents reported that commissions did not have child care centres at work or nearby the workplace. The data further revealed that majority 91.7% of respondents reported that employees were not allowed to choose working hours (flexi-time). Table 1 further showed that 93.6 % of the respondents reported that employees could choose which days to works even if choosing which days to work would be capped at working for a minimum of 40 hours a week. The findings in Table 1 further showed that 53.8 % of respondents reported that female employees were not allowed to work partime when returning from maternity leave.

The Table also showed that majority 65.4 % of respondents reported that they were given study leave to enable them undertake their studies. The data further showed that majority 54.5 % of respondents reported that commissions did not invite financial specialists to give financial advice to staff. Table 1 further showed that majority 92.3 % of respondents reported that commissions had not provided lactating mothers with private lactation stations equipped with an electrical outlet and hand washing facilities. Table 1 further showed that an equal number of respondents responded in the affirmative (50%) and in the negative (50%) when asked if commissions provide employees with professional counselling services. Table 1 further showed that majority 59.6% of respondents reported that commissions had provided reserved parking for employees with special worklife balance need for example the physically challenged or employees who report to work late due to different worklife balance

needs. Table 1 also showed that majority 69.2% of respondents reported that employees were expected to check and respond to official emails/SMS sent past working hours. Table 1 further showed that majority 78.8% of respondents reported that commissions do not provide parental leave. The data in Table 1

further showed that a majority 53.8% reported that Commissions provided health programs to employees (for example quit smoking programs, vaccinations on site, alcohol and drug abuse and dietary advise programs).

Table 1 : Responses work life balance programs

Question	No (%)	Yes (%)
Can employees be allowed to work from home(teleworking)	83(53.2)	73(46.8)
Is the duration provided for maternity leave adequate	71(45.5)	85(54.5)
Do employees forfeit their annual leave entitlement because of demands of works	48(30.8)	108(69.2)
Are Lactating mothers given breaks during work to enable them breastfeed	90(57.7)	66(42.3)
Has the organization provided a child care center at work or nearby the work place	151(96.8)	5(3.2)
Are employees allowed to choose working hours(flexi-time)	143(91.7)	13(8.3)
Can employees choose which days to work as long as they work for a minimum of 40 hours a week	146(93.6)	10(6.4)
Does the organization allowed females employees to work partime when returning from maternity leave	84(53.8)	72(46.2)
Are employees given study leave to help them undertake their studies?	54(34.6)	102(65.4)
Does the organization invite financial specialists to give financial advice to staff	85(54.5)	71(45.5)
Has the organization provided breastfeeding mothers with private lactation rooms equipped with electrical outlets and hand washing facilities	144(92.3)	12(7.7)
Does the organization provide employees with professional counseling services	78(50.0)	78(50.0)
Has the organization provided reserved parking for employees with special work life balance needs?	63(40.4)	93(59.6)
Are employees expected to check and reply to official emails/sms past working hours	48(30.8)	108(69.2)
Apart from maternity and paternity leave, does your organization have parental leave	123(78.8)	33(21.2)
Does the organization provide Health programs to employee (Quit Smoking programs, vaccinations on site, alcohol and drug abuse & Dietary Advice programs)	72(46.2)	84(53.8)

Valid N=156

Respondents were asked whether they lived with an immediate family member requiring dependent care; 64.7% of the respondents reported that they did not live with an immediate family member requiring dependent care; 35.3 % reported that they did. Respondents were further asked to identify one response that would best describe how they would handle the situation if they were urgently called upon

to assist. Table 2 shows that a majority 50.9% (n=26) reported that they were able to rearrange work and make up for the work later; 37.3 (n=19) reported that they were able to take paid time off work and 5.9% (n=3) reported that they had to take unpaid time off work. When further asked which other methods they would employ to assist 5.9% (n=3) reported that they would apply for leave.

Table 2: Describe how you would handle the situation if you were urgently called upon to assist

Option	Frequency	Percent
Able to rearrange work and make up for the work later	26	50.9%
Able to take paid time off work.	19	37.3%
Take unpaid time off work.	3	5.9%
Other methods – Take leave	3	5.9%
Total	51	100%

Respondents were asked to identify which worklife balance arrangement they wanted implemented in the organization. The findings were indicated in Table 3 a majority 50.9% (n=53) reported that they wanted commissions to introduce flexi-time arrangements; 14.4% (n=15) stated they would like parental leave introduced; 12.6% (n=13) stated they would like tele-

working introduced; 11.6% (n=12) reported that they would like crèche and lactation centres; 3.8% (n=4) stated that they would like a longer maternity leave; 2.9% (n=3) reported that they would like Commissions to pay for membership to health clubs and another 3.8% (n=3) reported that they want commissions to introduce study leave.

Table 3: Worklife balance arrangement you would want implemented in the Organization

Option	Frequency	Percent
Flexi-time arrangements	53	50.9%
Parental leave	15	14.4%
Tele-working.	13	12.6%
Crèche and lactation centres	12	11.6%
Longer maternity leave	4	3.8%
Sponsored membership to health clubs	3	2.9%
Study leave	4	3.8%
Total	104	100%

Respondents were asked to indicate how long it took to travel to work. A majority 65.4% reported it took between 1-2 hours to get to the place of work; 30.1% took less than one hour and 4.5% took more than 3 hours. Respondents were further asked to indicate

whether they felt that they spent a lot of time commuting, a majority 74.4% felt that they spent a lot of time commuting to the workplace; 25.6 % reported that they did not feel that they spent a lot of time commuting. Respondents were further asked to

indicate what caused the long commuting times. The findings were indicated in Table 4 a majority 87.8% reported that traffic congestion caused them to spend a lot of time commuting to the workplace;

10.3% reported that there were limited public service vehicle plying their route; while 1.9% reported that their home was far from the workplace.

Table 4: Causes of long commuting time

	Frequency	Percent
Traffic Congestion.	137	87.8
Limited Public service vehicle plying my route.	16	10.3
My home is far from workplace.	3	1.9
Total	156	100.0

Respondents were further asked to identify remedies that would best help solve commuting challenges. The findings were indicated in Table 5; a majority 47.4 % reported that encouraging employees to work from home would solve commuting challenges; 42.9 %

reported that investing in high speed railways would address commuting challenges; 17.9% reported that investing in more public service vehicles would remedy the situation. 1.9 % reported other measures for example flexi time.

Table 5: Remedies that would best help solve commuting challenges

	Frequency	Percent
Encourage employees to work from home	74	47.4%
Invest in high speed railways	67	42.9%
Invest in more Public service vehicles	12	7.7%
Others(flexi-time)	3	1.9%
Total	156	100.0

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion in regard to sensitization and accessibility of worklife balance program. The findings are indicated in Table 6; respondents disagreed that employees were constantly sensitized on work balance programs as indicated by a mean of 2.37 and standard deviation

1.114. Respondents were neutral about the statement that availability and accessibility of the work life balance programs improved job performance as shown by a mean of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 1.298.

Table 6: Responses Sensitization and accessibility of worklife balance programs

	1(%)	2(%)	3(%)	4(%)	5(%)	Mean	Std. Deviation

Employees are constantly sensitized on work balance programs	42(26.9)	45(28.8)	43(27.6)	21(13.5)	5(3.2)	2.37	1.114
Availability and accessibility of the work life balance programs improves job performance	17(10.9)	18(11.5)	35(22.4)	44(28.2)	42(26.9)	3.49	1.298
Valid N =156)							

Chi-Test of various demographic variables and various worklife programs

Cross tabulation of various demographic variables and various worklife programs showed several associations. The findings were indicated in Table 7. The chi square test revealed an association between age and lactation breaks (χ^2) = 0.011 <0.05 it may be inferred that female employees in the child bearing age group may need lactation breaks. Chi-Square test revealed an association between position and health programs (χ^2) = 0.011 <0.05 it can also be deduced that may be different health programs are accessible

to officers in different positions in commissions. Chi square test revealed a relationship between experience and checking emails past working hours (χ^2) = 0.005 <0.05 it may be presumed that with certain years of experience checking emails past working hours may or may not be expected. The chi square test revealed an association between marital status and lactations rooms (χ^2) = 0.005 < 0.05 it may be argued that despite the marital status, employees with breast feeding child/ children need lactation rooms. There was an association between worklife balance and parental leave (χ^2) = 0.021 < 0.05 it may be deduced that officers who reported to have worklife balance have some form of parental leave.

Table 7: Chi square test between different demographics and worklife balance Programs

	Chi-Square (χ^2) (P-value)
Age and lactation breaks	0.011
Position and health programs	0.011
Years of experience and checking emails past working hours	0.005
Marital status and lactation rooms	0.005
Worklife balance and Parental leave	0.021

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

Regression Analysis

Table 8 provided the information needed to predict performance of middle level managers from worklife balance programs. Worklife balance programs contributes significantly to the model. For every unit increase in worklife balance programs there was a

corresponding increase in performance of middle level managers by 35.1%.

The regression equation was presented as follows;

Liner equation

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

$$Y = 2.624 + 0.351 X_1 + 0.56256$$

Where Y = Performance and X₁ = Worklife balance programs.

Table 8: Coefficients Model of worklife balance programs

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.624	.141		18.643	.000
1	Worklife balance programs	.212	.046	.351	4.649	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

ANOVA of worklife balance programs against performance of middle level managers

From the findings in table 9; At 0.05 level of significance the ANOVA test indicated that in this model the independent variable namely; worklife balance programs is statistically significant in predicting performance of middle level managers as indicated by significance value=0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance ($p=0.000 < 0.05$).

This was further supported by the F –Test. The F-calculated was $F(1,154) = 21.610$ while the F-tabulated at 0.05 significance level was $F(1,154) = 3.9025$. Comparing the two, F-calculated is greater than F-tabulated ($21.610 > 3.9025$) which means that the alternate hypothesis that states that worklife balance programs have a positive significant influence on performance of middle level managers in commissions in Kenya is true and is therefore accepted.

Table 9: ANOVA for worklife balance programs

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.839	1	6.839	21.610	.000 ^b
	Residual	48.737	154	.316		
	Total	55.576	155			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Worklife balance programs

CONCLUSIONS

The study determined that worklife balance programs influenced performance of middle level managers in commissions in Kenya. It was therefore concluded that commissions in Kenya lack various worklife balance programs that could enhance worklife balance of middle level managers. Programs like flexi-time, teleworking, partime working, child care centres, phased return from maternity leave, Employee Assistance programs for example financial guidance and counselling will improve performance of middle level managers yet are missing. It was also determined that sensitisation of employees on

available worklife balance programs improves worklife balance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that Commissions adopt worklife balance programs discussed in this study, ie. Flexible working options (partime working, teleworking), phased return from maternity leave, child care centres, lactation centre and lactation breaks. Sensitization and creation of awareness on the same should be done as utilisation of programs will largely be affected by the level of awareness that

is created. In the creation of worklife balance programs, middle level managers should be involved as they are best placed to advise which programs would best address the worklife balance needs of employees. Participation of middle level managers will help avoid design of programs that no one cares about. It is also recommended that commissions pool resources and establish common facilities for example child care centre and health clubs. Most commissions are located in the city centre or nearby regions, pooling resources is a cost saving measure and will ensure sustainability of programs. It is also recommended that commissions should determine measures to assess utilization of worklife programs

and determine impact of individual programs on performance over time. Utilisation patterns will advise commissions on which programs to strengthen, which one to upgrade or redesign. Provision of counselling services can be included in the terms of reference for the insurance providing medical cover, the medical insurance provider will then be tasked with the responsibility of providing the commission with a list of qualified and licensed counselling experts available in Kenya. It also recommended that commissions establish guidelines to avoid abuse of programs. Heads of sections, team leaders should monitor and deal with cases of abuse.

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