

Work-Life Balance Practices on Employee Job Performance at Eco Bank Kenya

Joyce Mumbi Kamau, School of Human Resource Development, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Kenya. P.o Box 1897-20100 Nakuru Kenya. joycemailtime@gmail.com

Viona Muleke, School of Business Studies, Chuka University Kenya. P.o Box 109-60400 Chuka Kenya. vimuleke@gmail.com

Dr. Samuel Obino Mukaya School of Human Resource Development, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Kenya.

Mr. Juma Wagoki School of Human Resource Development, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Kenya.

ABSTRACT

Inadequate work life balance is a problem that poses a big risk to workers well being, their performance as well as the organizational performance. Many employees often have difficulties in attempting to balance employment responsibilities with their social life. This is why the main objective of this study focuses on how flexible working options, leave policies and employee assistance programs affect employee job performance. Therefore the study recommends that the management of ECO bank Kenya should consider sharing its best practices on work life balance and the government should look to implement work life balance procedures in the public service.

Key words: Employee Assistance Programs, Employee's Job Performance, Work-life balance

Introduction to the study

Inadequate work life balance is a problem that poses a big risk to workers well being, their performance as well as the organizational performance. Many employees often have difficulties in attempting to balance employment responsibilities with their social life. Job stress is estimated to cost U.S. industry more than \$300 billion a year in absenteeism, turnover, diminished productivity and medical, legal and insurance costs (Alexandra, 2009). According to American psychological organization 2009, Sixty-nine percent of employees report that work is a significant source of stress and 41% say they typically feel tense or stressed out during the workday. Conflict between work and family roles was found to lower the perceived quality of both work and family life which, in turn, influences organizational outcomes such as productivity, absenteeism and turnover (Higgins *et al*, 1992).

Given the benefits of work-life balance practices and the potential to help improve employee job performance in terms of increased organizational commitment, job satisfaction, reduction on the turnover rate, ECO Bank has introduced programs to assist the employees in achieving a balanced work life which include; flexible working hours, employee assistance programs and leave programs. However there is no study which has been carried out to determine the success of the work-life balance programs at the bank. It is against this background that the study sought to determine the effects of organizational work-life balance programs on employee job performance at ECO Bank Kenya.

Research methods

The study was carried out among the employees of ECO Bank. The population of interest was 55 ECO Bank employees; this is because they are the direct beneficiary of the work life balance practices put in place by the bank. ECO Bank has 19 branches all over Kenya, majority located in Nairobi. However due to time and financial resources the study covered three branches in Nairobi CBD. The research was a census covering the whole population. The main tools of data collection were questionnaires self administered to selected employees. Variables were measured based on the objectives and data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists version 19.0. Tools of analysis included the use of frequency counts, percentages, and mean as well as person correlation. Analyzed data was then presented inform of tables..

Findings and Discussion

Flexible Working Hours

Flexible working hours is a crucial factor encouraging employee performance, therefore the study sought to know whether flexible working hours influenced employees' to perform better in the organization.

Table 1.0: Flexible Working Hours

	5	4	3	2	1	Mean Rating
Flexible working hours allows me to balance my life commitments	70.2%	25.5%	4.3 %	0.0%	0.0%	4.66
Flexible working hours has allowed me to focus more on the job when am at work	27.7%	68.1%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.23
My attendance and punctuality has improved as a result of utilizing flexible working hours	46.8%	46.8%	6.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.40
Flexible working hours have motivates me to exceed expectations at work	40.4%	46.8%	12.8%	0.0%	0.0%	4.28
Flexible hours gives me a sense of satisfaction and well being	44.7%	51.1%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.40

Scale: 5 – strongly agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Somehow Agree, 2 – Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree.

The findings show that, majority 70.2% of the staff strongly agree, and the remaining 25.5% that flexible working hours in the company have allowed them to balance their life commitments. Flexibility in working hours has also enabled, the staff to focus more on their job while at work without divided attention, 68.1% agreed while 27.7% strongly agreed to this. Staff has also been able to utilize the flexibility in working hours in ensuring punctual attendance; this is evident from 46.8% of staff who strongly agreed and an equal number who agreed. The flexibility in working hours also acts as a motivating factor to employees, 40.4% strongly agreed, while 46.8% agreed. This in turn enabled employees to deliver beyond the company expectations. Flexibility in working hours give employees a sense of satisfaction, 44.7% strongly agreed, while 51.1% agreed.

Employee Assistance Programmes

Further, the study sought to establish respondent’s opinion on employee assistance programmes at work. These findings are as shown on table 2.0 below

Table 2.0: Role played by Employee Assistance Programmes

	5	4	3	2	1	Mean effects
Health programmes kept employees contributing at work	61.7%	31.9%	6.4 %	0.0%	0.0%	4.55
Support in family situation increased loyalty to the company	23.4%	66.0%	8.5%	2.1%	0.0%	4.11
Staff were able to relate well with each other as a result of the health programs	25.5%	63.8%	10.7%	0.0%	0.0%	4.15
Counseling has enabled staff to carry out assignments with expected degree of independency and efficiency	36.2%	57.4%	6.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.30
Attendance rate has generally improved after utilizing health programmes	46.8%	48.9%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.43
Financial support makes staff to be more committed	48.9%	42.6%	8.5%	0.0%	0.0%	4.40

Scale: 5 – strongly agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Somehow Agree, 2 – Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree.

The presence of employee assistance programmes at ECO Bank has had its own impacts on individual employees which translated to employee performance. First, the health programmes keep the work force healthy therefore are able to contribute always to the organization, 61.7% agreed while 31.9% strongly agreed. Utilization of health programmes in place has also helped staff in relating well with each other, 63.8% agreed, and 36.2% strongly agreed. Assistance programmes have also improved attendance rates by employees, 46.8%

strongly agreed while 48.9% agreed. Finally the presence of financial support services has made employees to be more committed to their work, 48.9% strongly agreed, while 42.6% agreed.

The findings of Table 2.0, generally implies that the presence of employee assistance programmes in place enable employees to handle personal problems without necessarily affecting their productivity in the organization. The greatest effect was felt in maximizing employees contribution, at a mean of 4.55, improving attendance rated at a mean of 4.43, and enhancing employee commitment to the organization 4.40.

Leave and Employee Performance

Employee performance after going for leave was also investigated and the findings on table 3.0, 72.3% strongly agreed, while 23.4% employees felt motivated after going for leave. On whether employee leave improved on the attendance of to work, 66.0% agreed while 25.5% strongly agreed. Majority 57.4% of the employees agreed and another 29.8% strongly agreed that leave from work had good effects on employee emotional health. Leave from work also enabled employees to perform better in their duties, 53.2% of the staff agreed, while 40.4% strongly agreed. Leave from work also enabled employees to reduce work related stress.

Table 3.0: Role played by leave policy on employee performance

	5	4	3	2	1
Employees feel motivated after leave	72.3%	23.4%	4.3 %	0.0%	0.0%
Leave improve employee attendance rate	25.5%	66.0%	6.4%	2.1%	0.0%
Leave has good effect on employee emotional health	29.8%	57.4%	12.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Leave has good effects on employees ability to perform their job	40.4%	53.2%	6.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Leave help employees to reduce work related stress	40.4%	53.2%	6.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Scale: 5 – strongly agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Somehow Agree, 2 – Disagree, 1- Strongly Disagree.

General Employee Performance Rating

The employee job performance level was determined using self rating questionnaire on a scale of 1-5 as shown on the findings on table 4.0. Generally, employees of Eco Bank rated themselves highly on all performance parameters. Majority 61.7% strongly agreed and 34.0% agreed that they arrived to work on time, and in meeting deadlines, 66.0% agreed that they were able to meet deadlines as expected. 63% agreed that they were keen in ensuring priorities in their works. Employees also rated themselves high on attendance, as seen from 70.2% who agreed that their attendance was satisfactory, 53.2% agreed that they used their time efficiently while 46.8% strongly agreed on the same. Independence in the performance of their functions was also good since 51.1% agreed and 48.9% strongly agreed that they performed duties independently, 59.6% agreed that they always achieved targets, 55.3% agreed that they had not received warnings. In general, 53.2% agreed and 44.7% strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their job, 66.0% also agreed and the remaining 34.0% strongly agreed that their supervisors were satisfied with their performance.

Table 4.0: General Employee Performance Rating

Performance measures	5	4	3	2	1	Mean Performance rating
Arriving to work on time	61.7%	34.0%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.57
Meeting deadlines at work	29.8%	66.0%	4.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.26
Ensuring priorities at work	29.8%	63.8%	6.45	0.0%	0.0%	4.23
Overall attendance	27.7%	70.2%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	4.21
Using time effectively	46.8%	53.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.47
Working independently	48.9%	51.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.49
Achievement of targets always	38.3%	59.6%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	4.36
Not receive warnings	44.7%	55.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.45
I am generally satisfied about my job	44.7%	53.2%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%	4.43
My supervisor is generally satisfied with my job performance	34.0%	66.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.34

1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Somehow agree, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly agree

The mean performance rating on table 4.0 shows that staff performance was good although this was established through self rating. Staff rated themselves highly on punctuality in attendance rated at a mean of 4.57, followed by independence in the execution of their duties at 4.49, and efficiency utilization of time at a mean of 4.47. On the other side the least rated aspect of performance was on overall attendance to work at a mean of 4.21.

Correlation between Variables

Pearson correlation between variables on table 5.0 revealed that, there is a significant correlation between performance and that rating on organization work life balance practices. This implies that, flexibility in working hours influenced employee job performance at ECO Bank ($r = 0.358$, $p < 0.05$). Employee assistance programmes also influenced employee job performance in ECO Bank ($r = 0.169$, $p < 0.05$), similarly, leave from work also influence employee job performance ($r = 0.511$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 5: Correlation between Variables

Correlations

		Flexible hours	Assistance programs	Leave	Performance
Flexible hours	Pearson Correlation	1	.267	.454**	.358*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.073	.002	.046
	N	46	46	46	46
Assistance programs	Pearson Correlation	.267	1	.387**	.169*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.073		.007	.035
	N	46	47	47	47
Leave	Pearson Correlation	.454**	.387**	1	.511**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.007		.000
	N	46	47	47	47
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.358*	.169*	.511**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.035	.000	
	N	46	47	47	47

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.015level (2-tailed)

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Discussion of Findings

The study was conducted among staff of ECO Bank with three objectives: to determine the influence of flexible working options on employee performance, to establish how employee assistance programs affects employee performance, and to determine the influence of leave programs on employee performance at ECO Bank Kenya. The major findings are as follows:

Influence of Flexible Working Options on Employee Performance

First the study found a significant correlation between employee job performance and the flexibility in working hours in the organization, a clear indicator that having a flexible working system could influence the way employees executed their jobs. Flexibility in working hours allowed employees to balance between work and their personal life commitments such as family and personal development. As a result, flexibility in working hours also enabled the staff to focus more on their job while at work without divided attention with little worries on their personal commitments. In attendance, flexibility in hours enabled the staff to utilize the flexibility in ensuring that they were punctual in attendance to work. The flexibility in working hours itself is a motivator to employees, it assures the employee of the management's interests at heart and gives them satisfaction in their jobs. This in turn influences employees to deliver beyond the company expectations.

Effects of Employee Assistance Programs on Employee Performance

Analysis of the results revealed that there was a significant correlation between the employee assistance programmes in place and employee performance at ECO Bank. This means that, presence of employee assistance programmes at ECO Bank had its own impacts on employee performance. Employee health programmes keep the work force healthy therefore making them to be able to contribute always to the organization. Utilization of health programmes improves the psychosocial welfare of staff enabling them to relate well with each other. This translates into improved attendance rates by employees. It is also clear from the findings that, incorporating financial support services in the employee support programmes eliminates the worries associated with financial insecurity making employees to be more committed to their work. Employee

assistance programmes enable employees to be able to handle personal problems without necessarily affecting their productivity in the organization.

Influence of Leave Programs on Employee Performance

Employees are entitled to an annual leave of one month within the calendar year. In addition, organizations introduce other forms of leaves that are convenient for their staff. The study observed a very strong and significant correlation between annual leaves and employees job performance. Employees who have gone for leave reported significantly better performance immediately after. Employees felt motivated after going for leave, their attendance was improved, and when asked, the indicated that leave from work had good effects on employee emotional health, this enabled staff to reduce work related stress and performed better in their duties.

Conclusions

The study therefore concludes that:

Having flexible working hours in an organization significantly influenced employee job performance by enabling a balance between personal commitments and responsibilities and organizational roles and duties of an employee. Flexibility in working hours enhanced employee motivation and commitment to the organization.

Employee assistance programmes in the organization created a good avenue for an organization extending a helping hand to individuals in the organization. This contributed highly in creating a healthy, motivated workforce; enhance cooperation and individual productivity in the organization.

Finally it can be concluded that Leave from work created a change of environment and a break from the daily working environment. This has a lot of impact on employees psychosocial well being, eliminating fatigue, and work related stress which translated to better employee performance after the leave.

Recommendations

The study on the basis on the findings and conclusions made recommends that:

- ECO Bank could share the best practices on employee work life balance with other commercial banks in the country which have been struggling with the same.
- In ensuring the psychosocial well being of staff, the ministry of labour could consider revising the existing labor laws to have mandatory staff welfare programs run by the employer rather than the union.
- Organizations in the banking industry due to the nature of the job and precision required in undertaking the jobs should exploiting leaves as a way of rejuvenating their employees by coming up with more innovative methods of implementing them rather than the traditional annual leave systems.

Suggestions for Further Research

Areas arising for further investigation include:

First, this methodology and tools should be employed in conducting similar studies in other banking institutions to establish the reliability of the study findings.

Secondly, a study could be carried out to determine the optimum duration of leave from work and frequency that would ensure maximum productivity in an employee.

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