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EFFECT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT: EVIDENCE FROM FIRMS MANAGED BY KENYA TEA DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of work-life balance practices on employee commitment. Specifically, the study investigated employee perceptions on: organizational support for employees with personal and family problems, organizational interference with private life and organizational consideration for life outside of work. The study used descriptive survey design and was conducted in five KTDA factories within Bomet County namely, Rorok, Kobel, Kapkoros, Tirgaga and Mogogosiek by considering all 216 employees. A two-stage stratified sampling procedure was used to pick respondents. Data for this study was collected using a duly validated and reliable questionnaire and analysis was done using frequencies and percentages. Tables were used to present results. The study established that work-life balance has a major effect on employee level of commitment with majority of respondents specifically perceiving the organizations they worked for as not supportive with personal and family problems. They also believed that demands of their work seriously interfered with their private life. The study findings also indicated that many did not find the people they work with or report to as considerate of their life outside work. The study recommends that organizations develop programs that show support to employees' personal and family issues. It also recommends that organizations should have flexible work programs and schedules that help reduce work related pressure and interference with private lives of the employees. The study further recommends that the management should be considerate of their employees' life outside the workplace as it affects their commitment. Based on the research findings it can be concluded that work life balance practices had a positive impact on employee commitment to the organization. Future researchers may concentrate on the development of a common tool of measurement for work-life balance taking individual personality factors also into consideration.

Key Words: Work-life balance, Employee Commitment, work demands

1.0 Introduction

This study explored the impact of work life balance on organizational commitment among employees of firms managed by Kenya Tea Development Agency. Work-life balance is defined here as an individual's ability to meet their work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities. Work demands work hours, work intensity and proportion of working hours spent in work. Additional work hours subtract from home time, while high work intensity or work pressure may result in fatigue, anxiety or other adverse physiological consequences that affect the quality of home and family life (White, Hill, McGrovern, Collins and Smeaton, 2003). Family demands include such subjects as the roles of the individuals (e.g. Father, mother, etc.,) family responsibilities (e.g childcare, house chores, etc) looking after the old members, children. Besides this, there are some other demands in work life balance than family and work like relaxation, vacation, sports and personal development programmes. Work life balance definition includes three important themes. These include the need for employees to achieve an acceptable balance between work and family lives, a need for employer to facilitate their employees by providing programs and provide flexibility to the employees (H.De cieri). In work life balance state, an individual manage conflict between different demands on his or her time and energy in a way that satisfy his or her need for well being. Organization encouraging work life balance is a way to attract and retain employees who support the well being of the organization. Work life imbalance has negative results for effective functioning of organization (Raj.R, 2013). Organizational commitment is comprised of three dimension affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment determines employee's intention to leave or stay in the organization. Research results found that some factor such as gender, attainment, job satisfaction and work ethics affect the employee organizational commitment (R. Alaba Adenguga, 2013).

In recent time, there has been an increase in the consideration of the pressures that work has on family as well as life of employees. This has triggered research bordering on wok-life (WLB). In an environment where there is high level of competitive pressures stemming largely from efforts to deliver quality service, the weight of this on employees are enormous (Karatape, 2010). This is because the issue of conflict or interface between people's private lives and occupational stress is critical to understanding how organizational can leverage on their performance and productivity levels as well as motivating staff for employees' commitment (Aluko, 2009). Until recently, the issue of WLB was conceived primarily as a Western idea; but this has radically changed as Africans have taken up paid employment in the contemporary era in order to be part of provision of family needs. Nevertheless, this has also come with a huge price as families, organizations and social lives are impacted in the process. Employee Commitment is one of the key determinants in fostering high employee's performance, as shown in a number of empirical studies (Macey and Schneider 2009). On the other hand, family and work are the most important domains of life for most adults (Carlier, Llrente and Grau 2012). Globally, the modern economy and the related social changes like technological advancement and increasing number of dual-earner families, has presented pressure on harmonizing personal, family and work life (Origo, and Pagani, 2009). This has resulted to work-family conflicts in that individuals participating in multiple roles experience conflict and stress hindering their quality of life and productivity (Bond, 2004). Several researchers have found out that work-family conflict presents unfavorable consequences such as stress (Allen, 2001), job dissatisfaction and low performance (Kossek and Ozeki, 1999). Therefore, creation of family-friendly work cultures is one of the most pressing concerns for both academics and practitioners globally (Poelmans, Chinchilla & Cardona, 2003).

HR practitioners and scholars have identified a positive link between work-life balance and employee engagement, which affects organizational performance (Carlier, Llrente and Grau 2012). In addition, researchers have established that a highly engaged workforce is 50% more productive than a disengaged workforce (Jawaharrani, 2010).

Companies that have implemented the work life balances programs recognize that employee welfare affects the bottom line of the business. In today's competitive world, organizations are spending lot of time and money on employee satisfaction in an effort to improve productivity, and also to help the organization needs. Concerns have always been raised regarding policy and debates on WLB from the perspective of the quality of working life when weighed against the broader family life matters. However, the main themes of these debates or discussions are the need for organizations and their employees to adopt good WLB practices and policies to tackle conflicts that ensure from the interface of family or social pressures and work stress. The existing literature demonstrates number of studies that have addressed the importance of work life balance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment for the organization as well as for the individuals. There was therefore need to examine the impact of work life balance on job satisfaction and organizational commitment

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The lives of all employees can be divided into two: Life within the work-place and Life outside the work place. Employers are concerned with life of employees within the work-place. They view it as a major determinant of employee commitment to the organization. However, little or no consideration is given to employee social life outside the work-place resulting in employees with low commitment to the organizations as they see their organizations as insensitive to their private lives. To bolster employee commitment, there is need to balance employee work life and social life as the two complement each other and has reciprocal effect. Emphasis on work life has a reciprocal effect on social life and vice versa and cumulatively on performance of employees.

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of work-life balance (as indicated by organizational support for employees with personal and family problems, organizational interference with private life and organizational consideration for life outside of work) on employee commitment to the organization.
The results of this study will be beneficial to the organizations in scheduling employee work, designing work life balance practices such as telecommuting, compressed work weeks, partime work and Job sharing

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.2.1 General Objective

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of work-life balance on employee commitment.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study investigated employee perceptions on:

i. Organizational support for employees with personal and family problems
ii. Organizational interference with private life
iii. Organizational consideration for life outside of work

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Life Balance

Work life balance practices are organizational changes designed to reduce work family conflict. These work life balance practices enable employees to be effective in both work and personal roles. The more control an employee has on their lives the more able they are to balance work and family. Iqan lazar, (2010) Conclude that, a successful balance between work and non work roles are beneficial for both employee and employer. And this balance in work and life domains enhances quality of personal relationship and organizational outcomes. According to (Susi.S, 2010) Work life balance is drive for satisfaction of employees. Many organizations feel the need of work life balance which include retention of valuable work force, reduce work family conflict, and reduce employee stress, job satisfaction and better life balance. Work life balance practices need to be supported and encouraged at workplace culture. Strong and supportive organizational culture increase employee intent to remain in the organization. (Felicity Asiedu-Appiah, 2013) concludes that work life balance is important in enhancing employee performance at work and home. Gender difference exists in work life balance needs because work and non-work responsibilities are different for male and females. Some research results show that female demonstrated more need for work life balance as compared to male. An individual derive satisfaction in life from work and family domains. Researches find that work balance practices affect overall organization and individual performance. R.lockwood, (2003) Define Work life balance as managing work and personal responsibilities. Work-life programs require support from senior management. For work-life benefits in work environment, it is helpful to have a corporate culture that encourages employees to look at business in an entirely different way and supports and accepts employees as individuals with priorities beyond the workplace. Work life balance programs increase employee motivation and productivity.

Determinants of Work-Life Balance

Many things in life are the determinants of work life balance. The subjects in the literature that are related the most with work life balance are grouped here.

Individual -An individual is the most important determinant of work –life balance. Two American cardiologists Rosenman and Friedman determined two different types of personality depending on heart disorders and individual behaviours: type A and type B. Type A expresses someone who is more active, more work oriented, more passionate and competitive, while Type B is calm, patient, balanced and right minded. It can be argued that since type A is more work oriented, there will be a negative reflection of it to work –life balance. Yet work holism, which is considered as an obsessive behavior, is another thing that destroys work-life balance. When work holism connotes over addiction to work, being at work for a very long time, overworking and busy with work at times out of work. Since life is not only about work, workaholics suffer from

alienation, family problems and some health problems. Porter and Ayman (2010) states that alcoholics, workaholics neglect their families, friends, relations and other social responsibilities.

Family -The demands that one experience in family life and that have effects on life balance can be given as the demand of workload and time, role expectations in family and support to be given to the spouse. It is also included in the literature that such variances as marriage, child rising, caring of the elderly at home have effect on work-life balance since they demand more family responsibilities. Those who have to look after a child or the elderly might sometimes have to risk their career by shortening their working hours, which becomes a source of stress for them. On the other hand, those without children or any elderly to look after at home experience less work-life imbalance.

Work and Organisation - Work environment is more effective in work-life imbalance than the family environment. The job and the institution one works in both demands on his time, efforts and mental capacity. Among the efforts to increase organizational efficiency, one of the subjects managers focus on is to raise the organizational loyalty of the staff.

Social Environment -Another determinant of work-life balance is social environment. Especially in countries that stand out with their culturally collectivist characteristics, an individual also has responsibilities towards certain social groups he belongs.

Consequences of Work-Life Imbalance

The stress – based conflict occurs when one of the roles of the individual at work or in the family causes stress on the individual and this stress affects the other roles of the individual. The behavior stress occurs when the behavior at work and out of work are dissonant and conflicting.

Personal Implications -According to Lowe (2005), work life imbalance affects the overall well-being of the individual causing such problems as dissatisfaction from life, prolonged sadness, using drugs or alcohol.

Family Implications -Organization expects from individual to allocate more time for their work while at the same time the family want him to perform his responsibilities too. Those who can't sustain work-life balance are bound to experience many problems in their families such as lower family satisfaction, decreased involvement in family roles etc.

Organizational Implications-Those whose demands of the family and one's social interest are not met duly naturally prefer sacrificing his working hours, and carry out their personal needs.

Organizational Perspective

In order to decrease the negative consequences of work- family conflict on working individuals, family friendly organizational culture and human resources applications have recently been in agenda of executive. The components of the organizational strategy are flexible working hours ,

child care and elderly care scheme, home working ,job sharing. Supportive programmes for the family life of employees in an organization contribute to providing work –life balance. Thanks to these programmes, the employees will be encouraged, their attendance will be supported and their efficiency will increase. Flexible working hours is one of the methods used to maintain work-life balance. For example employees with flexi-time will have to fulfill certain amount of time weekly. Other thing which can be done is to allow employees to work at home away from traditional work environment.

Organizational Commitment

(Maria batool, 2013) concludes that job stress and organizational commitment are negatively related, but no significant negative relationship between sub variables (effective, continuance, and normative commitment).When stress is reduced, organizational and individual performance will improve and employees are more committed with the organization as a result higher productivity. When stress level is reduced, employees are more excited and motivated towards their work. According to (Sajid Bashir, 2008) Work life policies and career opportunities are correlated with organizational commitment. But job characteristics don't determine organizational commitment. Research result show that role of employee are effected due to work role conflict. Organization can use different work life policies to reduce work life conflict and induce organizational commitment.

Relationship between Work-life-balance and organizational commitment

Work life balance and organizational commitment both are important because, they are playing important role in the organizations performance and family well being (D.Sakthivel) Finds that there is positive relationship between work life balance and organizational commitment. Today competitive environment demands balanced personal and work life. Organization actively seeks to improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment as well as to reduce stress through work life balance policies. (Noor, 2011) Work life balance is positively related with job satisfaction and organizational commitment and negatively related with intention to leave. Noor finds that Employees are happy to work in an organization that helps them to balance between the needs of personal and the needs of work life. Difficulty in balancing work and personal life effect job satisfaction, organizational commitment and more this leads to turnover.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study examined employee perceptions on three selected areas; organizational support with personal and family problems, interference with private life, and consideration for life outside of work. The study used descriptive survey design and was conducted in five KTDA factories within the Bomet County namely, Rorok, Kobel, Kapkoros, Tirgaga and Mogogosiek by considering all 216 employees. According to Mugenda (2008) descriptive survey design is used when collecting information about peoples' attitudes, opinions, and habits.

Data for this study was collected using a duly validated and reliable questionnaire. To enhance validity study supervisors were consulted. The suggestions and the advices offered were used as a basis to modify the research instruments and make them more adaptable to the study. A pilot study was used to conduct a pre-test of the instrument and split half technique was be used. Data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 was used in analysis. The ethical issues considered included; informed consent, privacy and confidentiality.

1. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study targeted all the staff of KTDA factories within the Bomet County. Data from the respondents was obtained using questionnaires. Two hundred and sixteen respondents filled and returned the questionnaires.

Table 0.1: Name of the Organization

	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Rorok	37	17.1	17.1
Kobel	45	20.8	38.0
Kapkoros	44	20.4	58.3
Tirgaga	52	24.1	82.4
Mogogosiek	38	17.6	100.0
Total	**216**	**100.0**	

From Table 4.2.1, 37 (17.1%) were from Rorok, 45 (20.8%) were from Kobel, 44 (20.4%) were from Kapkoros, 52 (24.1%) were from Tirgaga and 38 (17.6%) were from Mogogosiek. This indicate that a majority of the respondents were from Tirgaga. This was because the Factory had the largest population.

Age of the Respondents

*Table 0.2**Ages of the respondents***

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percent %
20 – 30 Years	51	23.6	23.6
31 – 40 Years	95	44.0	67.6
41 – 50 Years	70	32.4	100.0
Total	**216**	**100.0**	

Age influences peoples' ability to make decisions, experience and their performance. It is also a factor in job security, pay levels based on fair comparisons, pay increase that can maintain living standards and career opportunities. According to the study, the following was the age distribution of the respondents. Out of 216 respondents involved in the study, the finding in Table 4.2 show that 51 (23.6%) of the respondents were in the age bracket of 20 to 30 years, 95 (44%) were between 31 to 40 years and 70 (32.4%) were between 41 to 50 years. This shows that majority of the respondents were aged between 31 to 40 years.

Length of Service

Table 0.3 Length of Service

	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
1-4 years	32	14.8	14.8
5-9 years	142	65.7	80.6
10-14 years	40	18.5	99.1
15-19 years	2	.9	100.0
Total	**216**	**100.0**	

The number of years one has worked in an institution influences his experience and mastery of the process and practices in an organization. It also helps in the formation and evaluation of psychological contract. According to the study findings, 32 (14.8%) of the employees had served in the organization between 1-4years, 142 (65.7%) had served between 5-9 years, 40 (18.5%) had served between 10-14 years, and only 2 (0.9%) had served between 15-19 years.

Objective 1: The perception of employees on organizational support with personal and family problems

The respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the organization offered them support with personal and family issues. The responses were as shown in Table 4.1

Table 0.4: ***Organization offers support with personal and family problems***.

	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Strongly disagree	28	13.0	13.0
Disagree	113	52.3	65.3
Neutral	67	31.0	96.3
Agree	8	3.7	100.0
Total	**216**	**100.0**	

Table 4.5.1 the findings of the study showed that 141 (65.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that organization offers them support with personal and family problems, 67 (31%) were indecisive while only 8 (3.7%) agreed with the statement**.**

This means that a majority of the respondents perceived the organizations they worked for as not supportive with the personal and family problems. This means that the employees will reserve some effort to help themselves out in times of personal and family problems.

This agrees with Origo, &Pagani who view the modern economy and the related social changes to present pressure on harmonizing personal, family and work life (Origo, &Pagani, 2009).

Objective 2: The perception of employees on how work demands interfere with private life

The respondents were asked to what extent they agreed that the demands of their work seriously interfered with their private life. The responses were as shown in Table 4.2

Table 0.5: Demands of work seriously interfere with private life**.**

	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Strongly Agree	29	13.4	13.4
Agree	176	81.5	94.9
Neutral	11	5.1	100.0
Total	**216**	**100.0**	

In Table 4.2 the study revealed that 205 (94.9%)agreed that demands of their work seriously interfered with their private life, while only 11 (5.1%) were neutral.

This clearly shows that a majority of the respondent believe that demands of their work seriously interfere with their private life**.**This to a great extent interferes with their commitment to work as they feel if they commit so much to the work demands it ends up interfering with their life.

This refutes with the findings by Jawaharrani who reports that that a highly engaged workforce is 50% more productive than a disengaged workforce (Jawaharrani, 2010).

Objective 3: The perception of employees on organizational consideration for their life outside of work

Respondents were asked if the person or people they report to are considerate of their life outside of work. Their responses were as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 0.6: ***Person or people I report to are Considerate of my life outside of work.***

	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Strongly disagree	21	9.7	9.7
Disagree	132	61.1	70.8
Neutral	40	18.5	89.4
Agree	23	10.6	100.0
Total	**216**	**100.0**	

The findings of the study showed that 153 (70.8%) disagreed with the statement, 40 (18.5%) were neutral while only 23 (10.6%) agreed to the statement. This is a clear indication that a majority of people did not find the people they work with or report to as considerate of their life outside work.This is likely to make them reserve some effort and keep their commitment low levels as it leaves them with a lot of pressure as they try to balance their work and life.

This goes against the expectation of Carlier,Llrente&Grau who testify that family and work are the most important domains of life for most adults thus requires a balance (Carlier, Llrente&Grau 2012).

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study established that work-life balance has a major effect on employee level of commitment. Majority of respondents specifically perceived the organizations they worked for as not supportive with the personal and family problems. They also believed that demands of their work seriously interfere with their private life. The study findings also indicated that many did not find the people they work with or report to as considerate of their life outside work.

5.2 Conclusions

It was concluded that organizations are not supportive to the employees with regard to personal and family problems. There is also a great interference of the employees' private lives by the work demands. Additionally, most organizations' staff and management are not considerate of the employees' life outside work.

5.3 Recommendations

This study recommends that organizations should develop programs that show support to employees' personal and family issues. It also recommends that organizations should ensure they have flexible work programs and schedules that help reduce work related pressure and interference with private lives of the employees. The study further recommends that the management should be considerate of their employees' life outside the workplace as it affects their commitment.

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