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Effect of Flexible Working Hours on Employee Performance of Isiolo County Government, Kenya

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How to cite this article: Gufu, H., Rintari, N., & Kanyaru, R. (2024). Effect of Flexible Working Hours on Employee Performance of Isiolo County Government, Kenya. *Journal of Human Resource & Leadership*, 4(2), 1-10.

Abstract

The study sought to evaluate the effect of flexible working hours on employee performance of Isiolo County Government, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design whereby quantitative data was collected using close-ended questionnaires. Therefore, the target population included 1,662 employees of Isiolo County government in various departments. These employees were further sampled using a simple random method to obtain 43 directors, 48 managers, and 309 operational staff as the sample size. Further, the study undertook a pretest study in Samburu County government whose feedback was assessed using Cronbach Alpha coefficient to test the reliability of the questionnaires. SPSS software version 25 was used during the analysis process to provide descriptive and inferential analysis. The findings of the questionnaire indicated that 86(25%) respondents, strongly agreed and 117(35%) agreed on a mean of 4.21, that there is a local arrangement between the staff and their supervisors on how to deliver the assigned tasks on remote working option However, 76(22%) respondents, strongly disagreed and 107(32%) disagreed on a mean of 2.43, Tasks are sub-divided using a job-sharing technique to allow employees attend to other areas of their lives and still manage to attain the departmental objectives. The correlation coefficient for flexible working hours r=0.741 at α < 0.02 and 99% significance level. Flexible working hours had a positive effect on the performance of employees. It was established that there was a hybrid working method that included in-office and remote operations. That notwithstanding, the choice of hybrid options was based on an informal agreement between first-line supervisor and an employee. This brought about unprofessional favors and an unbalanced allocation of tasks to the staff. Consequently, the long-term effect was poor completion of tasks, late submission of assignments, and lack of adequate supervision leading to unsatisfactory work. The recommendations on flexible working hours are that there should be a formal policy structure formulation by the management that allows equality and fairness in allocation of tasks and the choice of either working in an office or remotely. Additionally, there should be empowerment of organization laws and regulations to support disciplinary actions by the management, to discourage late submission of assignments. There should be an encouragement of work contract signing an agreement between the workers and the supervisors that supports in job training to reduce work-related errors/ unsatisfactory work.

Keywords: Flexible working hours, employee performance, Isiolo County Government, Kenya.

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1.0 Introduction

Flexible working hours include job-related schedules that ensure that the concerned staff can have a work-life balance (Deloitte, 2023). This comes in handy when the staff is allocated time off and annual leaves for their mental and physical health purposes. According to (Davidescu et al., 2020), staff values considerate working timelines such that they allow various breaks to attend to other matters like meals, resting, and social interactions. Therefore, it is a paramount aspect when staff can work in an institution that is cognizant of the fact that there is more to life than just working (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020). Therefore, having the ability to perform the required tasks the staff should operate in a less rigid structure that allows job sharing, remote working, part-time plans, work shifts, and compressed tasks (Deloitte, 2023). All these avenues have a sole purpose of improving the employee's performance.

Employee performance is defined as the completion rate of assigned duties in a satisfactory manner and in the correct timelines by staff (Al Mamun & Hasan, 2021). A great job performance upgrades the standing of a worker thus improving them in fostering their careers (Davidescu et al., 2020). Poor performance of one staff can have a harmful, far-reaching influence across your whole business. This can bring about a boundless loss of inspiration, efficiency, and a diminishing in consumer loyalty. Globally, organizations in nations like America have registered high employee turnover due to concerns related to their performance. In a state such as Florida, staff has undergone a general loss of interest in the organization due to staying in one position for a long without promotional opportunities (Work Institute, 2020). In European nations like Sweden, poor communication skills between the management and junior expectations were considered the most suitable reason as to why most staff were not performing (Duggan et al., 2020).

In Asia, organizations in China have complained about low employee performance on the one hand but on the other end, the staff complains of poor payment structure in comparison to unrealistic job targets (Khatri et al., 2021). Regionally, employees in South African nations have registered dwindled performance due to unclear job responsibilities and objectives (UNDP, 2022). This is whereby the roles of different staff clash which makes it hard to distinguish between what one does in comparison to the other. As a result, job laxity sets a precedent leading to underachievement in the overall tasks. In West African countries like Nigeria, employees have failed to deliver due to poor mentorship programs from the management to junior staff (Ogbu et al., 2020).

In East African nations such as Uganda, organizations lack adequate working tools and technology which enable the staff to deliver on their mandate recording poor performance (Nakibuuka & Kibukamusoke, 2023). Locally in Kenya corruption issues in organizations, are the leading cause of low employee performance (Mulu, 2023). This is whereby processing and procedures cannot move without the administration of a bribe hence disadvantaging those who do not have it. Therefore, a staff that can only work when bribed, their performance will tend to dwindle since their main motivation is not service delivery but their selfish interests (Dida, 2021). Further on, employees' performance has also been noted by Kungu et al. (2023) to decline due to a lack of recognition.

1.1 Problem Statement

In an organization staff are significant resources for any organization since they assume a functioning part towards its growth that can't be undervalued (Nwafor, 2022). The labor force is the driving force of the firm and no firm can accomplish its objectives without a viable labor force. Therefore, the progress of a firm subsequently is reliant upon the singular efficiency and

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performance of every staff (Aboramadan and Dahleez, 2020).). Their acknowledgment fosters a culture of greatness that spurs workers to deliver their best work and put their abilities to best utilization (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2021).

Nevertheless, there has been high employee turnover particularly when there are leadership changes that have been instigated by political timelines (Dida, 2021). This has greatly demotivated the staff since they work knowing that after the election period ends, the stability of the contracts is not guaranteed. As a result, it has prompted various protests, allegations, and approved instances of Kenyan public staff portraying incompetence with regard to low quality of administration, delay in anticipated yield expectations, and unfortunate expense viability among others (Gachui, 2022). Isiolo County Government has been struggling with poor performance among the workers due to low motivation causing employee absenteeism and complaints of corruption and tribalism (Dida, 2021).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

To evaluate the effect of flexible working hours on employee performance of Isiolo County Government, Kenya.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H₀1: There was no significant effect of flexible working hours on employee performance in Isiolo County Government, Kenya

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Expectancy Theory (ET) was developed by Vroom (1964) and it states that a person acted or behaved in a way since they perceived that their selected behavior or action led to certain desirable and expected outcomes. More elaborately, when an employee expects that being submissive would lead to a salary increment, they would be motivated and hence tend to behave in a period till their expectation was realized. Therefore, in an organization set-up, employees tended to behave in a more motivated manner when there were gains from a venture rather than pain/discomfort (Abubakar et al., 2020). Expectancy theory explains the flexibility of working hours, the staff often felt more motivated when they noticed that their employer was more concerned with their general well-being. Therefore, being allocated job-related schedules that ensured that the concerned staff was able to have work-life balance, was a key motivating factor towards boosting their performance (Amalia et al., 2023). This is because, in as much as an individual was a staff, they tended to have other areas in their lives that needed to be addressed. They included resting time, socializing time, family time, self-development time, body exercising time, and others. Notably, working on a schedule that allowed them to attend to other areas mainly motivated the staff to feel wanted in an organization (Ayanbode et al., 2023).

2.2 Empirical Review

Ismail & Michael (2023) explored in Malaysia how performance of employees was impacted by flexible working hours. The study used a systematic method to review databases and other information from the internet. Notably, thirty-ssix materials were obtained online and reviewed based on publishing patterns, the type of flexible work arrangement utilized in the previous 5 years, the year of publication, and the country where the research was conducted. An analysis of research from around the world revealed that the effects of flexible work schedules on performance of workers differ based on the situation and can be both beneficial and detrimental. Organizations should carefully examine the requirements of their workers when introducing flexible work arrangements, and they should also keep an eye on how these

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arrangements affect their productivity as time progresses. Ismail & Michael (2023), however, did not address how job-sharing increased worker productivity instead, they primarily addressed remote working as a means of improving employee performance.

Further, Chiekezie et al. (2024) investigated flexibility in work schedules and dedication of employees in Nigerian brewing firms. In this study, a correlational research approach was used. Notably, Chiekezie et al. (2024) found out that work flexibility helps workers successfully manage their professional obligations, which enhances overall well-being increases job satisfaction, and enhances performance of employees. Nevertheless, the study failed to inquire at various employee levels in the brewing companies about how flexible work schedules would have affected workers' productivity.

Notably, Mwiti (2023) conducted a review on the performance of staff in public universities of Mount Kenya were affected by the existence of work flexible plans. The various flexible plans considered were job sharing, remote tasks, and compressed working plans. Three hundred and fifty-three staff were included using the descriptive research design. Notably, Mwiti (2023) found out that the three variables (job sharing, remote tasks, and compressed working plans) considered had a positive influence on performance. However, Mwiti (2023) did not use secondary data to substantiate the performance of the staff. Therefore, since the study was considering public institutions that were guided by PPublic Service Act, there were established standard performance measuring metrics used.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design whereby quantitative data was collected using close-ended questionnaires. Therefore, the target population included 1,662 employees of Isiolo County government in various departments. These employees were the directors, managers, and operational staff who were further sampled using a simple random method to obtain 43 directors, 48 managers, and 309 operational staff as the sample size. Further, the study undertook a pre-test study in Samburu County government whose feedback was assessed using Cronbach Alpha coefficient to test the reliability of the questionnaires. SPSS software version 25 was used during the analysis process to provide descriptive and inferential analysis. On descriptive analysis, the study ensured that various statistics like frequencies, percentages, and means were measured. The various inferential statistics that were determined included Pearson Correlation.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

The study sampled 43 directors, 48 managers and 318 operations staff. They were issued with questionnaires and the results are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Respondents	Sampled	Response	Percentage
Directors	43	27	63%
Managers	48	32	67%
Operational staff	318	280	54%
Total	409	339	83%

As per Table 1, 27(63%) directors, 32(67%) managers and 280(54%) operational staff, responded to the study. This was an average of 339 (83%) response rate. Therefore, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of above 70% indicates a very good outcome of a study. Therefore, this implied that a large population was attracted to the study since it

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directly concerned how their performance was directly affected by the intrinsic rewards offered by the county government.

4.2 Reliability Results

The study conducted a pilot study in the neighboring Samburu County. Table 2 provides results.

Table 2: Reliability Results

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	
Flexible working hours	0.794	5	
Capacity building	0.834	5	
Staff recognition	0.885	5	
Interpersonal relations	0.921	5	
Employee performance	0.863	5	
Average	0.859	5	

According to Table 2, the average Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.859 which was more than 0.7. According to Nikmard et al. (2023), a coefficient from 0.7 to 1 indicates that the instruments are highly reliable, and when the range is below 0.7, not reliable. Therefore, based on this, the questionnaires used in the study were reliable because they had a coefficient of 0.859.

4.3 Descriptive Results of Employee Performance

Employee performance was the dependent variable and had indicators such as quality of work by the employee, accuracy of tasks assigned, employee turnover, employee engagement, and task satisfaction. The tables had an ordinal Likert scale whereby 1 represented strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3-neutral; 4-agree and 5 strongly agree. Table 3 provides the results.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Performance

Statements N=339	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Quality of work done to assess strengths and weakness	46 (14%)	53 (16%)	5 (1%)	147 (43%)	88 (26%)	4.14
Accuracy when doing tasks	50 (15%)	58 (17%)	83 (24%)	98 (29%)	50 (15%)	3.16
Motivation to work	70 (21%)	161 (47%)	7 (2%)	47 (14%)	54 (16%)	2.18
Employee engagement process	26 (8%)	80 (24%)	89 (26%)	97 (29%)	47 (14%)	3.17
Task satisfaction Metrix	114 (35%)	35 (10%)	62 (18%)	80 (23%)	48 (14%)	3.06

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As per Table 3, the majority of the respondents 88(26%), strongly agreed and 147(43%) agreed on a mean of 4.14, that the quality of work done by the employee enabled the management to assess their strengths and weaknesses for purposes of rewarding them. However, 70(21%) respondents, strongly disagreed and 161(47%) disagreed on a mean of 2.18, that employees were motivated to work in the county government hence reducing employee turnover.

The results implied that the county government management had made cognizable efforts toward improving the performance of employees. This effort included an assessment of the staff to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Through this method, the employees were able to be intrinsically rewarded based on their output. Nevertheless, the performance of employees was minimally affected since the source of motivation contradicted the action plan by the management on their assessment. Comparatively, Mutiria et al. (2022) assessed how government-affiliated institutions' performance was affected by the system of reward. In their findings, they noted that most focus of the staff was hardly on intrinsic rewards. Therefore, majority of managers' efforts were futile towards shaping employee performance.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Flexible Working Hours

Flexible working hours were the first independent variable and had indicators such as job sharing, remote working, Part-time plans, Work shifts, and Compressed tasks. Table 4 provides the results.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Flexible Working Hours

Statements N=339	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Job sharing technique	76 (22%)	107 (32%)	63 (19%)	51 (15%)	42 (12%)	2.43
Local arrangements for remote working	56 (17%)	60 (18%)	20 (5%)	117 (35%)	86 (25%)	4.21
County policy on work shifts	50 (15%)	67 (19%)	40 (12%)	109 (32%)	73 (22%)	4.04
Working shifts	25 (7%)	70 (21%)	95 (28%)	90 (27%)	59 (17%)	3.52
Compressed task performance	36 (11%)	55 (16%)	96 (28%)	81 (24%)	71 (21%)	3.08

Table 4 indicates that majority of the respondents 86(25%) strongly agreed and 117(35%) agreed on a mean of 4.21, that there was a local arrangement between the staff and their supervisors on how to deliver the assigned tasks on remote working option However, 76(22%) respondents, strongly disagreed and 107(32%) disagreed on a mean of 2.43, Tasks were subdivided using a job-sharing technique to allow employees attend to other areas of their lives and still manage to attain the departmental objectives.

The results imply that the county government had incorporated a method of allowing their staff to work remotely and in-office. However, there was a problem with how tasks were sub-dived among the staff, this brought about a division of work, complaints, and unnecessary

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competition. According to Mwiti (2023), failure to have a reliable work sub-division structure encouraged laziness, reduced morale, and increased burnouts to the overworked staff.

4.5 Pearson Correlation of Accounting Information System

The study had a research hypothesis that states that there was no significant effect of flexible working hours on employee performance. Table 5 provides the results of correlation analysis.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation of Accounting Information System

			Employee performance	Flexible working hours
Employee		Pearson Correlation	1	.741
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
Perrorran	N		339	339
Flexible working hours	working	Pearson Correlation	.741	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		
		N	339	339

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

As per Table 5, the correlation coefficient for flexible working hours r=0.741 at α < 0.02 and 99% significance level. Therefore, since the correlation coefficient was less than 1 and p-value was less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis. Therefore, this means that flexible working hours have a significant effect on employee performance. Comparatively, Idowu (2020) found there was also a positive correlation while assessing how Nigeria's manufacturing industries retained their workers based on performance as a result of flexible hours of working.

4.6 Summary

The findings of the questionnaire indicated that 86(25%) respondents, strongly agreed and 117(35%) agreed on a mean of 4.21, that there is a local arrangement between the staff and their supervisors on how to deliver the assigned tasks on remote working option However, 76(22%) respondents, strongly disagreed and 107(32%) disagreed on a mean of 2.43, Tasks are sub-divided using a job-sharing technique to allow employees attend to other areas of their lives and still manage to attain the departmental objectives. The correlation coefficient for flexible working hours r=0.741 at α < 0.02 and 99% significance level.

5.0 Conclusion

Flexible working hours had a positive effect on the performance of employees. It was established that there was a hybrid working method that included in-office and remote operations. That notwithstanding, the choice of hybrid options was based on an informal agreement between first-line supervisor and an employee. This brought about unprofessional favors and an unbalanced allocation of tasks to the staff. Consequently, the long-term effect was poor completion of tasks, late submission of assignments, and lack of adequate supervision leading to unsatisfactory work.

6.0 Recommendations

The recommendations on flexible working hours are that there should be a formal policy structure formulation by the management that allows equality and fairness in allocation of tasks and the choice of either working in an office or remotely. Additionally, there should be empowerment of organization laws and regulations to support disciplinary actions by the management, to discourage late submission of assignments. There should be an encouragement

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of work contract signing an agreement between the workers and the supervisors that support job training to reduce work-related errors/ unsatisfactory work.

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