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JOB CONDITIONS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE BEHAVIOURS: THE CASE OF KENYA POWER

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ABSTRACT

Stress is, “physical reaction to prolonged internal and or environmental conditions in which individual’s adaptive capabilities are over extended. In most organizations, employees undergo stress due to factors within and without the work place, which affects their well-being and in turn affects their productivity and performance at the work place. It’s the work of Human resource in the organization to find ways and means of dealing with situation in the organization. The main objective of this study was to establish the effects of job conditions on employees’ performance behavior in Kenya Power. The study reviewed the theoretical foundation focusing on the Demand-control theory as well as the empirical review of the relevant literature which provides better understanding of the concept and its relationship. Descriptive design was used in the study because it ensured complete description of the situation, making sure that there was minimum bias in the collection of data. To ascertain validity, the researcher used content validity which was measured by expert opinions in this case the supervisor reviewed the questionnaires and gave comments on their validity. To ensure the reliability the instrument was pre-tested (piloted) in a small sample of ten to determined soundness, accuracy, clarity and suitability of the research instrument. However, the piloted was not used in the final study. Cronbach’s Coefficient Alpha was also used to test the reliability of the proposed constructs. The study targeted a population of 800 employees of Kenya Power with a sample size of one hundred and twenty respondents from the company. Questionnaires were used to collect data containing mainly closed ended questions to the sample respondents thus ensuring that each respondent received the same set of questions. The data collected was then checked for errors, coded and then analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Scientific Package for Social Studies.

Key Words: Job Conditions, Employee Performance, Kenya Power

INTRODUCTION

Williams and Huber (1986) defined stress as, “a psychological and physical reaction to prolonged internal and or environmental conditions in which individual’s adaptive capabilities are over extended. They argue that stress is an adaptive response to conscious or unconscious threat and can affect an individual emotional, physical, and social well-being as well as pose a threat to one’s health if not dealt with or managed well. In most organizations, employees undergo stress due to factors within and without the work place, which affects their well-being and in turn affects their productivity and performance at the work place.

Job stress is considered rising and has become challenge for the employer and because high level stress is results to low productivity, increased absenteeism and collection to other employee problems like alcoholism, drug abuse, hypertension and host of cardiovascular problems (Meneze, 2012). Personality factors have shown inclination towards stress, anxiety, and other occupational health outcomes in different areas of medicine, and these factors may contribute to feelings of job dissatisfaction and poor performance (Michie & Williams, 2013).

Job condition is the conditions in which an individual or staff works, including but not limited to such things as amenities, physical environment, stress and noise levels, degree of safety or danger, and the like.

Job performance can be viewed as an activity in which an individual is able to accomplish the task assigned to him/her successfully, subject to the normal constraints of reasonable utilization of the available resources. Performance is defined as the measurement of the results and resources to achieve the goals, achievement level of the defined

goal, efficiency and quality of an activity with a purpose. It also can be defined as a complicated interrelation between certain performance indicators such as effectiveness, efficiency, quality, quality of the working life, innovation and profitability (Erbaşı et al., 2012).

Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) a limited liability company which transmits, distributes and retails electricity to customers throughout Kenya. KPLC is a public company listed in the Nairobi Stock Exchange (NSE). The company is a national electric utility company, managing metering, licensing, billing, emergency electricity service and customer relations. KPLC headquarters are at Stima Plaza, Kolobot Road in Parklands, Nairobi; it operates many offices throughout Kenya. The Company is committed to providing high quality customer service by efficiently distributing high quality electricity that is safe, adequate and reliable at cost effective tariffs. The Board, Management and staff of Kenya Power are committed to effective implementation and continual improvement of the Quality Management System that complies with ISO 9001:2008 in order to consistently meet its customers and other stakeholder’s requirements and expectations. It is a government corporate entity that deals with distribution of power. It serves more about 2,000,000 customers. It had a turnover of about 100 billion shillings from various business units. The company is majorly divided into four business regions with a mix of 8 business functions. Kenya Power has a staff complement of 6,500 employees.

Statement of the Problem

Stress in the workplace has been noted to usually have adverse consequences on organizational performance and development in economy of the country; this cannot afford to continue as it will affect organization life thus affecting the growth of the country. Most organizations with the aim of

attaining higher productivity end up saddling employees with overload of work, in order to meet deadline and this might have psychological and physical effects on the employees which may result in something contrary to what organizations want to achieve in the long run. Although organizations now are paying more attention to the consequences, their employees go through when they place extra-ordinary demands on them, there is still more room for improvement. Stress can affect an individual emotionally, physically, socially as well as pose a threat to one's health if not dealt with or managed well. Most people seem to believe that stress is a very personal experience and that it is also personal how one decides to deal with his or her stress. However stress is no longer a personal issue especially if it affects employee, their productivity and performance at the work place. We live in a world changing fast, requiring constant adaptation. Technology is changing, so are social habits, values, social structures and people. Everybody has to cope with these changes, not only individuals, but the organizations and government as well. This study examines job conditions as a source of stress within an organization, and the corresponding effects on employee's performance behavior. Despite the diverse information on work related stress and performance behavior, there is disconnect of information addressing performance behavior as being influenced by job conditions. It is in this light that this study seeks to address extent of job conditions as a source of stress in relation with performance behavior of employee so has to fill the existing knowledge gap. Source of stress have been identified and well documented, But the extent to which they apply in Kenya Power has not been attempted.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to determine the relationship between job conditions and employee performance behavior in Kenya Power.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Demand–Control Support Theory

Karasek (2010) drew attention to the possibility that work characteristics may not be linearly associated with worker health, and that they may combine interactively in relation to health. He initially demonstrated this theory through secondary analyses of data from United States and Sweden, finding that employees in jobs perceived to have both low decision latitude and high job demands were particularly likely to report poor health and low satisfaction. Later studies appeared to confirm the theory. For example, a representative sample of Swedish working men was examined for depression, excessive fatigue, cardiovascular disease and mortality.

Those workers whose jobs were characterized by heavy workloads combined with little latitude for decision making were represented disproportionately on all these outcome variables. The lowest probabilities for illness and death were found among work groups with moderate workloads combined with high control over work conditions. The combined effect of these two work characteristics is often described as a true interaction, but despite the strong popular appeal of this suggestion there is only weak evidence in its support (Rose, 2013). Criticisms have been leveled against Karasek's model. For instance, it was claimed that the model was too simple and ignores the moderating effect of social support on the main variables. Those workers whose jobs were characterized by heavy workloads combined with little latitude for decision making were represented disproportionately on all these outcome variables.

The lowest probabilities for illness and death were found among work groups with moderate workloads combined with high control over work conditions (Michie & William, 2013). "Social

support” seems to play an essential role in the management of stress at work. It serves as a buffer against possible adverse health effects of excessive psychological demands distinguish between four types of low social support work situations and four of high social support. The expanded “Demand-Control-Support” model has also been criticized for its failure to consider individual differences in susceptibility and coping potential. The relationship between the dimensions of the model and the outcome measures may depend upon workers' individual characteristics. For instance, “disturbed relaxation ability” (also known as “inability to relax/work obsession”) was found to be a valid predictor of increased sympathetic activation and delayed recovery of cardiovascular parameters. It reflects experienced intensity of work and job-related exhaustion. “Disturbed relaxation ability” relates to excessive work involvement, characterized by an extreme degree of work effort and by work “carry-over” into domestic life (to the extent of affecting sleep, relaxation and leisure, and neglecting personal needs). While a certain degree of work involvement can be considered “healthy” and stimulating, in its extreme form involvement can become 'work obsession' and lead to the inability to relax after work, with the risk of negative health effects. “Disturbed relaxation ability” can moderate the health effects of the work- situations generated by the “Demand-Control-Support” model. High psychological demands and a high level of disturbed relaxation ability predispose workers to ill-health.

The *demand control support model* emphasizes the role of work content as the major source of workplace stress. Work content here is divided into two components: worker perceptions regarding the tasks that need to be completed in performing the job (job demands), and worker perceptions about the degree of control or discretion they have in performing the job tasks (job control). These two

constructs are thought to interact with one another in affecting the amount of strain experienced by employees. The strongest levels of strain, and hence, the greatest levels of occupational stress were expected to occur in situations where there were extremely high demands, and very low control. A revised version of the model includes social support as a third component. Social support is not thought to eradicate strain, but rather to buffer it to some degree. Research tends to be very supportive of the demand control support model; it has been effectively used to predict psychological strain and cardiovascular disease risk. The theory guided the study because Kenya Power always retained the prerogative of setting the job conditions and equitable allocation of work to various departments.

Empirical Review

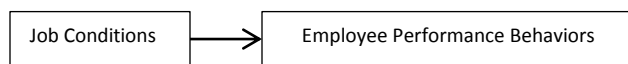
According to Cooper & Marshall (2012) stress could be due to factors intrinsic to the job, such as poor physical working conditions, work overload or time pressures. Often, one's role in the organization and the ambiguity associated with the job resulting from inadequate information concerning expectations, authority and responsibilities to perform one's role as well as the conflict that arises from the demands placed on the individual by superiors, peers and subordinates could also result in stress. Another factor is the impact of status incongruence, lack of job security and thwarted ambition on one's career progression (Rubina, 2008).

Rayner & Hoel (2007) theorized that relationships at work with bosses and colleagues, including bullying in the workplace could result in a lot of stress. At an organizational level, the structure and climate, including the degree of involvement in decision making and participation in office politics could result in a stressful climate. Stress could be due to factors intrinsic to the job, such as poor physical

working conditions, work overload or time pressures (Usman et al., 2014). Additional sources of stress in the job include the amount of satisfaction people derive from their work, the degree of control and autonomy people have in the work place, and the levels of commitment in the work place both from the employee to the organization and from the organization to the employee (Sheena, 2008).

Adverse working conditions, such as excessive noise, extreme temperatures, or overcrowding has also been established as a source of job-related stress (McGrath, 2008). Reitz, 2007 reports that workers on “swing shifts” experience more stress than other workers. Orth-Gomer (2006) concludes that when three shifts are used to provide around-the-clock production, major disturbances in people may be unavoidable hence affecting their job performance.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1 Conceptual frameworks of variables

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive design. The target population was eight hundred (800) which comprised the senior management, middle level managers and the employees of Kenya Power, head office (Kenya Power HR Head count report, 2015). This population was chosen because it had the biggest number of staff therefore there was diversity. Stratified random sampling technique was used in the study. A sample of 120 respondents obtained using 15% from the Kenya Power was used. Primary data was the key source of information used for the study. The study used

questionnaires to collect data containing mainly closed ended questions structured in a five point Likert Scale. To ensure the reliability the instrument was pre-tested (piloted) in a small sample of ten to determine soundness, accuracy, clarity and suitability of the research instrument. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, correlation and regression analysis that is, frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations. Data was then presented using frequency tables, charts and graphs.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Out of the 120 questionnaires issued to the staff and managers at Kenya power, 118 filled and returned the questionnaire making a 98.33%. Data on the gender of the managers indicated that 55.8% were female while 44.2% were male. The data indicates that majority of the participants were females than the male respondents. Data on the gender of the participants indicated that majority of them 58.1% were single, 41.9% of the managers indicated that they were married. The managers were also asked to indicate their level of education. Findings on the managers’ distribution by academic qualifications revealed that majority of the respondents had a bachelor’s degree as their highest education level was an appropriate graded them to understand and interpret and provide sufficient information on stress sources and employee performance behaviors. They were further asked to indicate their age group. From the analysis, majority of the respondents (19, 44.2%) indicated that they were aged between 49 and 58 years old. Closely after were respondents (17, 39.5%) who indicated that they were aged between 39-48 years. 11.6% of the respondents indicated that they were aged between 29-38 years old. Findings on the years worked at Kenya Power revealed that majority of the participants (14, 32.6%) had worked for a period of 12 years and above. 34.9% of the respondents indicated that

they had worked at Kenya power for a period of 6-8 years while another 14% indicated that they had worked at Kenya power for a period of 12 years and above. Majority of the respondents were thus seen to have worked in the organization long enough to provide sufficient data on stress sources and employee performance behaviors in a case of Kenya power. The study also sought to establish the positions the managers held in the organization. From the analysis, majority of the respondents (31, 72.1%) were in low level management. Closely after

their respondents who indicated that they were in middle level management (12, 27.9%) thus majority of the respondents were in low level management.

Descriptive Statistics: Job condition on the employee performance behavior

The table below sought to establish whether job conditions had a significant influence on the employee performance behavior at Kenya Power. The below table 1 indicates the findings from the respondents.

Table 1: Job conditions and employee performance

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I always complete my work in time	118	3.8814	.88838
Our supervisor are strict and fair	118	3.5254	.84441
Processes in my organization are clear and free of bureaucracies	118	3.6949	.95639
Our working hours are convenient I don't work under pressure	118	3.6949	.95639
Our offices environment is conducive	118	3.8136	.87656
Our organization has normal workload for employees	118	3.8051	.97190
Time pressure/deadlines affect quality of work	118	3.9322	.80308
Employees complain of waiting too long for decisions to be made	118	3.9322	.85464
Instances of long working hours in the company causes strain to employees thus affecting their job performance	118	3.7542	.77279
Demand for work performance by management lead to inconsistent performance in our organization	118	3.3983	.95309
Valid N (listwise)	118		

From the findings in the SPSS analysis, the statement, job conditions plays a significant role in improving efficiency and overall employee performance at Kenya Power. It was noted that a majority of the respondents agreed (M=3.98, S.D = 0.85) that instances of long working hours in the company causes strain to employees thus affecting their job performance. A significant number of the respondents also agreed (M=3.98, S.D = 0.80) to the statement; Time pressure/deadlines affect quality of work. The study also noted that a majority of the respondents agreed (M= 3.88, S.D= 0.89) they always completed their work in time. Generally it

was clear that job condition had a significant influence on employee performance behavior.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between job conditions and employees performance behaviors in Kenya Power. The study established that the all the age bracket were represented and therefore the views of all ages was taken into consideration on job conditions as source of stress and their influence on employee performance behaviors. The findings indicated that

the study had almost equal ratios of males and females and hence the study was not skewed towards any gender. The results indicated that the marital status of the employees differed and therefore the strategies put in place by the management of the company had to consider the status of the employees.

The study established that stress could be due to factors intrinsic to the job, such as poor physical working conditions, work overload or time pressures. The study also noted one's role in the organization and the ambiguity associated with the job resulting from inadequate information concerning expectations, authority and responsibilities to perform one's role as well as the conflict that arises from the demands placed on the individual by superiors, peers and subordinates could also result in stress.

From the findings in the SPSS analysis, the statement, job conditions plays a significant role in improving efficiency and overall employee performance at Kenya Power. It was noted that a majority of the respondents agreed ($M=3.98$, $S.D = 0.85$) that instances of long working hours in the company caused strain to employees thus affecting their job performance. A significant number of the respondents also agreed ($M=3.98$, $S.D = 0.80$) to the statement; Time pressure/deadlines affected quality of work.

Conclusion

With the changing competitive business environment the effective and efficient use of resources is very important for the survival of organization in market. Employees' performance and efficiency is among the factors that affect the success of these businesses. Since ultimately it is the human resources that determine the success and failure of the organization, the management of human resources plays a very crucial role in the overall management system of the organization.

Attracting and selecting the most competent employees to the organization is not enough. Getting the maximum benefit from its employees is the aim of organizations and managers. This, of course, requires a very good understanding of human behavior by the company in the organizational settings through management of the employees stress level which are likely to be at different levels for the different employees.

The study concluded that job conditions as a source of stress need to be taken into keen consideration to ensure improved employee performance behaviors.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

This study made recommendations for policy implementation and also suggest for further research. The study established that the company ensured that the employees have adequate space that ensures adequate air circulation and lighting hence they have a good job working condition. It is therefore recommended that the company should ensure they pursue strategies that will ensure that the employees work environment is conducive in order to deliver on their work.

Recommendations for further studies

Although the study confined itself to Kenya Power, this research could be replicated in other sectors to establish the strategies used for managing work related stress among employees. Further studies needs to be undertaken on other factors that causes stress in the organizations. Further research is also required on the effect of work related stress to enable a comparison to be made between the strategies and effects of work related stress to assist the company in making amendments in the policies and procedure manual where necessary in order to achieve the desired performance

The study on job conditions is a broad topic that may not be exhausted in one single study though

the purpose of this study was accomplished. There are other very rich and exciting areas on the same

topic that still need a deep dive.

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