



THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED EMPLOYEE WELFARE PROGRAMS ON EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION AT KENYA RAILWAYS CORPORATION

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of perceived employee welfare programs on employee job satisfaction at Kenya Railways Corporation. The study had a target population of 1,214, being all the employees of Kenya Railways, MGR Operations. A sample size of 123 employees was established by use of a multistage stratified random sampling method. The study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Primary data was obtained using a structured self-administered questionnaire. Analysis of data used regression analysis. The study determined a statistically significant connection between employee welfare programs and employee job satisfaction at Kenya Railways Corporation. Employee health programs exhibited the highest influence on employee job satisfaction trailed by flexible work programs. This study has contributed to the theory of job satisfaction and supplemented existing literature in employee welfare programs by establishing correlations between employee welfare programs tested in the study and employee job satisfaction.

Keywords: *Perceptions, Employee Welfare Programs, Job Satisfaction, Kenya Railways Corporation*

INTRODUCTION

Agarwal and Dewan (2016) define perception as the process by which employees construe sensory information for interaction with the environment. They argue that employees' behaviour is determined by their interpretation of reality and not on the reality per se. Perception may, therefore, differ among employees depending on their level of exposure, education, and traits.

According to Todd (1933), employee welfare comprises everything secured by an employer for the happiness and development of employees, in addition to the pay, that is not a binding requirement of the sector. The welfare of an employee implies a state of contentment, fulfilment, and advancement of employees (Venugopal, Bhaskar, & Usha, 2011). Statutory programs are those required by the law such as workman's compensation, maternity or paternity leave, and safety while non-statutory welfare programs are voluntary to an employer and may include working conditions, health services, housing loans, and recreation facilities (Venugopal et al., 2011). Non-statutory welfare programs differ among employers and industries.

Locke (1976) describes job satisfaction to be a gratifying condition ensuing out of the valuation of an employee's job experiences. Job satisfaction can, therefore, be said to be a feeling by an employee about his job and employer (Mosadeghrad, 2003). Several disciplines have investigated job satisfaction due to the importance of the subject in organizational success. To measure job satisfaction, one should focus on the job itself, salary, sense of achievement/promotion, co-workers, and supervision (Gazioglu & Tansel, 2006). The objective of the research study was to investigate the influence of perceived employee welfare programs on employee job satisfaction at Kenya Railways Corporation

Job satisfaction and employee welfare relationship are the most crucial fabric in an organization that has the most notable effect on the productivity of employees. In today's competitive business arena, a significant number of organizations are continuously searching for strategies to overcome the new world economic order and realise better performance (Farooq & Hussain, 2011). Researchers such as Tiwari (2014) and Chaubey and Rawat (2016) argue that employers use welfare programs as a strategy for enhancing productivity through inculcating altruistic behaviour and organizational commitment in employees. This is despite studies by Brayfield and Crockett (1955) concluding job satisfaction to have negligible or no effect on productivity. Upadhyay and Gupta (2012) found that employee welfare programs do not automatically result in job satisfaction since other factors like communication, personal traits, and environment are also critical in determining job satisfaction among employees. The study continued to warn organizations not to over-burden themselves to provide welfare programs in an attempt to gain a competitive edge and endear themselves to employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

The study was directed by Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), and Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) focuses on the perception employees form about their treatment compared to others. The theory contends that employees evaluate the suitability of their benefits received (outputs) with their work (inputs) by matching the ratio of their input and output with that of other employees (Armstrong, 2014). Therefore, employees feel equitably treated when their input and output ratio is construed as favourable, and vice versa. This theory is, however, anchored on the notion that employees are equally sensitive to equity even though research suggests that several demographic, psychological and environmental variables differently affect employees' reactions to apparent equity or inequity (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1987).

Two-factor theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) is a content theory which relates to employees' desires and goals, and attempt to pinpoint 'what' rewards are suitable (Kiruja & Mukuru, 2018) to attain job satisfaction and motivation in organizations (Ngari & Mukururi, 2014). Herzberg et al. (1959) portrayed job satisfaction with two sets of job-related aspects that affect employees' degree of joy at the workplace. Also called motivation-hygiene theory, the theory categorizes one set of elements, hygiene factors, as those that define the employees' interaction with their work settings and affect their level of dissatisfaction with the job. They include salary, amenities at works, job security, relationship with colleagues, policy and procedures (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). The other set of factors, motivators, are related to the employees' need to grow in their work, and they influence job satisfaction. They include recognition, need to achieve, interest in work itself, and opportunities for growth (Kiruja & Mukuru, 2018)

Herzberg's theory is grounded in real-life settings that link employee welfare programs with job satisfaction and presents essential lessons to managers that employees' dissatisfiers need to be addressed first before attempts are made to motivate them and create joy in their work. Therefore, management must first improve the working environment for employees for them to experience any form of job satisfaction (Bakotic & Babic, 2013).

Empirical Studies and Knowledge Gaps

A study on banks in India proposed that employee welfare schemes elevated the level of job satisfaction (Bajpai & Srivastava, 2004). Similar research by Kumudha and Abraham (2008) found that personal development programs, information on job vacancies, learning opportunities, and retirement programs immensely affect levels of job satisfaction. Souza

(2009) who studied pharmaceutical companies in India explained that employee welfare schemes such as training, recreations, health schemes, subsidized loans, staff canteen, staff houses, and safety have a substantial relationship with job gratification.

A study done in South Africa on primary healthcare nurses by Delobelle et al. (2011) identified employee welfare practices as key factors contributing to job satisfaction. Specific facets analysed by the study included pay, supervision and work environment. The study complimented earlier findings in a research by Kekana et al. (2007) in South Africa that nurses found satisfaction in co-workers and the work itself, among others. Similar results have been proposed by Asadullah and Fernandez (2008), who reasoned that work-life balance is a critical component affecting both inherent and external aspects of job fulfilment.

A study by Kemboi, Thomas and Keter (2013) on staff welfare in Kenya's civil service showed a significant relationship between flexible work scheduling, catering for the needs of human capital and job satisfaction. The same findings have been reported by Ngari and Mukururi (2014) in a study on Kenya's banks. The study findings established a favourable relationship between job flexibility, leave provisions, other welfare programs, and job satisfaction. Study findings by Sembe and Ayuo (2017) on university campuses in Kenya indicated that practices in health and safety had favourable effects on job satisfaction.

Gazioglu and Tansel (2006), in their research in Britain, concluded that employees who are exposed to job training and other forms of personal development programs were more satisfied with their jobs than others. Starmer, Frintner and Freed (2016), in their study in the US, established that several factors affected job satisfaction of early career paediatricians, and that employee health programs, work-life balance, and support from colleagues had the potential to ameliorate the effects.

Lee, Yang and Li (2017), in their study in China, determined that the impact of job satisfaction on turnover among employees in their early-career life was small and negative due to a greater focus on future personal growth and development rather than the current job. Choudhary (2017) demonstrated from a study in India, that employee welfare schemes were necessary for labour relations, and that they satisfied employees more than a good salary could.

Salisu's (2015), findings in a study in Nigeria concluded that the compensation packages awarded to employees by employers had a substantial positive impact on the way workers' felt about their jobs. Another study in Kenya by Muguongo et al., (2015) established that salary, allowances and work environment greatly affected teachers' job satisfaction and suggested formulation of welfare plans that would allow teachers to realise job gratification.

Previous studies on welfare programs and their effect on job satisfaction mostly narrowed on production settings neglecting the service sector, especially state agencies and

corporations. A number of studies have shown existence of a correlation between age, gender, job characteristics, salary, growth opportunities, style of supervision, co-workers, culture and satisfaction with one's job.

Contrary, some studies have found that work itself, pay, relationship with a co-worker and even opportunities for promotion do not have any noteworthy consequence on employee job satisfaction. Moreover, some studies have indicated that supervision does not have relevance in employees' attitudes towards their jobs. This study desired to ascertain whether job satisfaction of employees is affected by the perceived employee welfare programs present or absent at KRC. Since there are few studies conducted on employee welfare programs in the rail transport sector in Kenya, the research findings will provide an empirical study for further research. There are, therefore, limited empirical studies covering the influence of perceived welfare programs on employee job satisfaction in the rail transport sector. Hence, the current study targeted to answer this research question: What is the influence of perceived employee welfare programs on employee job satisfaction at Kenya Railways Corporation?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study made use of a descriptive cross-sectional survey design relying on observation to gather data from respondents in the selected sample population. This approach guaranteed that detailed data was gathered on the study subject and wide-ranging conclusions achieved. The target population for this study was all the 1,214 staffs of KRC, MGR Operations (KRC, 2019). A multistage stratified random sampling method was used to choose the sample statistic. The target population was stratified into two; management and non-management employees then divided further into strata based on regions of operations, i.e. Coastal, Eastern, Headquarters (HQ) and Western. A sample size of 10% of the target population is deemed a good representation for a descriptive survey (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Hence, a sample size of 123 (10%) of the population was determined as per the table below.

Table 1: Population and Sample Size

Region	Population				Sample Size		
	Management	Non-Management	Total	%	Management	Non-Management	Total
Coastal	76	170	246	0.1	8	17	25
Eastern	140	495	635	0.1	14	50	64
HQ	77	26	103	0.1	8	3	11
Western	62	168	230	0.1	6	17	23
Total	355	859	1214		36	87	123

The study gathered primary data using a structured self-administered questionnaire. Primary data was preferred because it is very close to the truth, and any error is controlled (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The questionnaire designed in this study comprised of three sections. Part 1 contained questions on the respondent's demographic data, part 2 included questions on employee welfare programs, and part 3 included questions on job satisfaction. Statements requiring responses on a five-level Likert scale were used to save time and ease data collection. The questionnaire was tested first to confirm the clarity of questions to the respondents and any emerging concerns addressed in the final questionnaire.

A multiple regression analysis was done to conclusively derive the causal-effect connection amongst the dependent and the independent variables, and establish which of the predictor variables best projected the dependent variable. The independent variables in the regression equation were allowances payment programs, employee assistance programs, employee health programs, retirement programs, and flexible work programs while the dependent variable was employee job satisfaction. The following regression model was used in the study:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \varepsilon$$

Where,

Y = employee job satisfaction

$\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ and β_5 = coefficients of regression

X1 = allowances payment programs

X2 = employee assistance programs

X3 = employee health programs

X4 = retirement programs

X5 = flexible work programs

ε = error

Data analysis, for descriptive statistics, and regression analysis, to examine the association amongst the study variables, were done using Microsoft Excel 2016 software.

FINDINGS

Descriptive statistics

Assessment of Employee Welfare Programs

Some employee welfare programs were identified to be the independent variables of the study. Responses were obtained from the respondents to establish the extent to which employee welfare programs had been implemented at KRC, on a 5-point Likert Scale. Points for the Likert Scale answers were allocated according to Table 2.

Table 2: Scale for Assessment of Employee Welfare Programs

Responses		Points
Very Great Extent	Excellent	5
Great Extent	Above Average	4
Undecided	Average	3
Very Little Extent	Below Average	2
Not at All	Very Poor	1

Table 3: Assessment of Employee Welfare Programs

Allowances payment programs	Mean	SD
I am paid subsistence allowance as per policy.	4.30	0.561
I am paid relocation allowance as per policy.	4.32	0.554
I am paid all the allowances as per the corporation's pay structure.	2.65	1.109
I am paid the correct allowances for my cadre as per policy.	2.62	1.074
Average score	3.47	0.825
Employees Assistance Programs	Mean	SD
I am entitled to support for professional development	1.50	0.761
I usually receive counselling services on work-life balance.	1.03	0.183
I am entitled to financial assistance from the corporation	1.87	0.361
I am entitled to negotiated bank loan facilities for my needs	1.03	0.159
Average score	1.36	0.366
Employee health programs	Mean	SD
I have a medical insurance cover secured for me and family.	1.95	0.318
The employer has an insurance cover for work injuries.	1.28	0.452
The corporation organizes wellness programs for all staff.	1.11	0.316
The company supports sports activities for personal fitness.	1.08	0.268
Average score	1.35	0.338
Retirement programs	Mean	SD
I am a member of the employer's pension scheme.	1.04	0.242
I am entitled to gratuity upon retirement or end of my contract.	1.08	0.439
I am entitled to financial programs that prepare me for retirement.	1.08	0.439
I am employed on terms that allow time for retirement planning.	1.07	0.286
Average score	1.07	0.351

Flexible work programs	Mean	SD	Table 3...
I can cover a week's job in fewer days and rest for the remaining days in the week.	1.03	0.183	
I can report to work early and leave early to attend to personal needs.	1.04	0.203	
I can work away from the office on an approved schedule.	1.05	0.258	
I am entitled to adequate leave to prepare and sit for examinations.	1.14	0.434	
Average score	1.03	0.183	

Allowances are used by employers to reward exceptional performance, circumstances and commitment to organizational values. Several statements on allowances payment programs were posed to the respondent for them to express their degree of agreement with their application in KRC. Analysis results were as exhibited in Table 3. The findings showed an average means score for allowances payment programs was 3.47 and SD of 0.825. This demonstrated that the respondents were in agreement, to a great extent that allowances payment programs were made available to them. While the respondents agreed to a very great extent that they were paid subsistence allowance and relocation allowances, realizing a mean of 4.30 and 4.32 separately, they were not sure whether they were receiving all the allowances as per pay structure and whether the allowances were being paid at the correct rate, thus scoring a mean of 2.65 and 2.62 respectively.

Employee assistance programs cover all measures taken by employers to help their employees to resolve pressing personal problems. The respondents were asked to indicate the degree that listed statements on employee assistance programs were applicable in KRC. Data analysis returned the findings in Table 3. The findings reveal an average means score for employee assistance programs of 1.36 and SD of 0.366 indicating that the respondents did not perceive employee assistance programs to be available at KRC. The respondents indicated that there was no support for professional development as reflected in a mean of 1.50. Also, the respondents expressed the absence of counselling services on work-life issues as revealed by a mean of 1.03. A similar verdict was returned for financial assistance from the corporation and negotiated bank loan facilities which returned a mean of 1.87 and 1.03, separately.

Employee health programs help to improve employees' wellbeing, reduce their healthcare expenses, and increase job satisfaction. A list of statements was drawn for respondents to specify the level of agreement with each regarding the provision of employee health programs by KRC. Data collected was scrutinized and the findings expressed in Table 3.

The research verdicts in Table 3 disclose an average means score for employee health programs of 1.35 and SD of 0.338. The respondents strongly indicated that they did not

perceive employee health programs to be available in KRC. The respondents indicated that there was no medical cover in place for them and their families by returning a mean of 1.95. The perceived absence of insurance cover for work injuries was indicated by the respondents in a mean of 1.28. The perceived absence of wellness programs and also sports activities were indicated by means of 1.11 and 1.08, accordingly.

Retirement programs, which may be fully or partly funded by the employer, serve to encourage long-term savings and investments among employees as a source of income after retirement. Statements were fronted to the respondent for them to choose the level of agreement with the availability of retirement programs in KRC.

The analysed data revealed an average means score for retirement programs of 1.07 and SD of 0.351, as shown in Table 3. The findings indicate that the employees did not perceive retirement programs to be available in KRC. The respondents indicated that they were not members of the employer's pension scheme, at a mean of 1.04. There was an indication from the respondents that there was no gratuity payment upon retirement or expiry of their employment contracts at a mean of 1.08. The respondents also expressed the absence of financial programs to prepare them for retirement at a mean of 1.08 while the view that their contracts did not allow time for retirement planning had a mean of 1.07.

Flexible work programs allow employees to adjust their work times or location around their life to attain job satisfaction through work-life balance. Several statements on flexible work programs were presented to the respondent for them to specify the level of agreement with their application in KRC. The findings were as shown in Table 3, portraying an average means score for flexible work programs of 1.03 and SD of 0.183. This is an indication that the respondents did not perceive flexible work programs to be present at KRC. The respondent's mean for the ability to compress their work into fewer days of the week and take rest in the remaining days was 1.03. The mean for the ability to report to work early and leave early was at 1.04. The ability to work away from office had a mean of 1.05 while that of adequate leave to prepare and sit for examination was 1.14.

Perceived Availability of Employee Welfare Programs

The study required the respondents to rate the availability of employee welfare programs at KRC and also list any other employee welfare programs were not listed for rating. The additional welfare programs listed were burial assistance upon the death of an employee, and reimbursement of medical bills for employees only. Analysis of responses on the availability of employee welfare programs was as per Table 4.

Table 4: Perceived Availability of Employee Welfare Programs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Average	1	0.9%
Below Average	39	33.3%
Very Poor	77	65.8%
Total	117	100.0%

It was evident from the findings that 65.8% (77) of the respondents perceived the availability of employee welfare programs to be very poor, 33.3% (39) perceived the programs to be below average and 0.9% (1) rated the availability of the programs as average. The findings conclusively depicted a state of very poor availability of employee welfare programs at KRC, as perceived by the respondents.

Assessment of Employee Job Satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction was the target variable to be measured in the study. Respondents were asked to express their degree of concurrence, on a 5-level Likert Scale, with listed statements regarding measures of job satisfaction and how they rated employee satisfaction at KRC. There were two sets of questions, one set meant to measure facets of job satisfaction on a scale that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree while the other set measured global job satisfaction on a scale that ranged from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. Points were allocated to the responses to enable the researcher to carry out an analysis. Where applicable, strongly agree or very satisfied was allocated 5 points; agree or satisfied had 4 points; undecided had 3 points; disagree or dissatisfied had 2 points; strongly disagree or very dissatisfied was allocated 1 point.

Various facets of each factor that affects job satisfaction were examined and the results offered in table 4.10 below. The aspect of supervision had an average means score of 3.55 and SD of 0.893 indicating that the respondents agreed with statements expressing satisfaction with supervision. Following in the hierarchy of satisfaction based on responses received was the working conditions which had an average means score of 2.09 and SD of 0.578 indicating that the respondents disagreed with statements of satisfaction with their working conditions. Measures of promotion ranked the least in the hierarchy, at an average means of 1.58 and SD of 0.680, followed by pay which had a means score of 1.66 and SD of .453.

Table 5: Employee Job Satisfaction

Measure of job satisfaction	Mean	SD
Pay		
I am satisfied with my pay structure.	1.90	0.443
I am always paid my salary in good time.	2.67	0.947
I always receive annual cost of living salary adjustment.	1.03	0.183
The pay I get reflects my knowledge, skills, and years of service.	1.06	0.238
Average score	1.66	0.453
Supervision		
My supervisor is friendly and approachable.	3.62	0.889
My supervisor is supportive of my work.	3.62	0.917
I openly discuss problems with my supervisor.	3.56	0.875
My supervisor shares relevant information from top management.	3.41	0.892
Average score	3.55	0.893
Promotion		
There are chances for promotion within the corporation.	1.57	0.661
There is equity and openness in promotions.	1.54	0.595
Employees are given priority in filling vacant positions.	1.58	0.710
There is a clear organizational structure and career paths for all.	1.62	0.753
Average score	1.58	0.680
Working conditions		
The management tries to understand and address my needs.	1.97	0.636
I am provided with the right tools and equipment for my duties.	2.15	0.466
My work area is easily accessible and has emergency exits.	2.14	0.600
I am provided with clean drinking water and office tea.	2.10	0.607
Average score	2.09	0.578

Rating of Employee Job Satisfaction

Invitation was made to respondents to rate the level of employee satisfaction at KRC. Analysis of responses was as per table 5.

The outcomes showed that 64.1% (75) of the respondents were very dissatisfied, 31.6% (37) were dissatisfied, 2.6% (3) were undecided, and 1.7% (2) were satisfied. Overall, a greater part of the respondents was very dissatisfied

Table 6: Rating of Employee Job Satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfied	2	1.7%
Undecided	3	2.6%
Dissatisfied	37	31.6%
Very dissatisfied	75	64.1%
Total	117	100.0%

Inferential statistics

Regression Analysis

The study purposed to derive the relationship between the dependent variable, employee job satisfaction, and the predictor variables, allowances payment programs, employee assistance programs, employee health programs, retirement programs, and flexible work programs, using multiple linear regression analysis, at 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$). The study used Microsoft Excel 2016 for the regression analysis and the outcomes showed that the independent variables in the study could collectively predict 35.7% of the variability in employee job satisfaction, as indicated by the adjusted R square in Table 7 while the balance of 64.3% could be predicted by variables that were not considered in the model; random error term. The outcomes were found to be acceptable for studies in humanities.

Table 7: Regression Summary

Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error
0.6204	0.3849	0.3572	0.2799

As per Table 8, which discloses ANOVA results, the significance level of p-value was 0.000 which was far below a p-value of 0.05 required for 95% confidence level testing. This indicates that the predictor variables in the model were statistically significant in predicting the dependent variable. The model, therefore, met the threshold since p-value was less than 0.05.

Table 8: Analysis of Variance

	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Significance F
Regression	5	5.4411	1.0882	13.8906	0.0000
Residual	111	8.6959	0.0783		
Total	116	14.1370			

Regression coefficients were produced by the regression analysis, as shown in Table 9, and used in the line of the regression equation to explain the influence of employee welfare programs on employee job satisfaction.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	0.156	0.292	0.535	0.594	-0.423	0.736
Allowances payment programs	0.160	0.044	3.611	0.000	0.072	0.247
Employee assistance programs	0.118	0.181	0.652	0.516	-0.241	0.478
Employee health programs	0.540	0.170	3.183	0.002	0.204	0.877
Retirement programs	0.242	0.094	2.574	0.011	0.056	0.427
Flexible work programs	0.337	0.162	2.087	0.039	0.017	0.658

The regression equation was derived as follows:

$$Y = 0.156 + 0.160X_1 + 0.118X_2 + 0.540X_3 + 0.242X_4 + 0.337X_5$$

Where:

Y = Employee job satisfaction

X₁ = Allowances payment programs

X₂ = Employee assistance programs

X₃ = Employee health programs

X₄ = Retirement programs

X₅ = Flexible work programs

From the regression equation, Y-intercept (β_0) is 0.156 denoting a constant, that is, the level of job satisfaction that can be achieved without all the welfare programs in the study. A β_1 of 0.160 meant that for every unit change in payment of allowances, employee job satisfaction is expected to change by 0.160 on average, holding other variables constant. Likewise, a β_2 of 0.118 meant that every unit change in employee assistance programs leads to a change in employee job satisfaction of 0.118 on average, holding other variables constant. A unit change in employee health programs, holding other variables constant, would, therefore, cause employee job satisfaction to change by 0.540 as denoted by β_3 . A β_4 of 0.242 meant that every unit change in retirement programs is expected to cause employee job satisfaction to change by 0.242 on average, other variables remaining constant. Finally, a unit change in flexible work programs, all other variables constant, is expected to cause employee job satisfaction to change by 0.337 as shown by β_5 .

An empirical assessment of the predictor variables revealed that employee health programs had the greatest influence on employee job satisfaction at KRC trailed by flexible work programs, retirement programs, advance payment programs and the least was employee assistance programs. The most effective predictors of employee job satisfaction were advance payments programs followed by employee health programs, and retirement programs. Employee assistance programs and flexible work programs emerged the least significant predictors of employee job satisfaction at KRC, with the least t-statistic of 0.652 and 2.087 respectively, but highest probability of their coefficients occurring due to random chance.

The study findings confirm that employee welfare programs greatly influence employee job satisfaction.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The researchers analysed data collected using Microsoft Excel 2016 and presented the outcomes as tables and, where possible, charts. A regression analysis was performed to establish the correlation between employee welfare programs and job satisfaction. The study findings pointed to serious concerns about the lack of employee welfare programs for MGR Operations employees at KRC. There was evidence from the study findings that employees were not getting support for professional development despite Falola, Osibanjo and Ojo (2014) proposing that training and capacity development increases worker's job satisfaction. There was also, no evidence of the availability of health insurance cover for employees and their families or even insurance cover for work injuries though they were essential requirements for improved job satisfaction and productivity in an organization (Choudhary, 2017). The respondents also indicated they were not members of a pension scheme contrary to recommendations by Chen, Yang, Shiau, and Wang (2006), and were also not due for gratuity at the end of their employment contracts which were not long enough for retirement planning. However, the respondents indicated they were satisfied to a great extent, with allowances payment programs. Accordingly, 65.8% of respondents rated the availability of employee welfare programs as very poor while 64.1% of the respondents indicated they were very dissatisfied.

The study supports empirical studies done by Neog and Barua (2014) on the factors influencing levels of job satisfaction. The study findings confirm that employee welfare programs greatly influence employee job satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS

The study examined the correlation between perceived employee welfare programs and employee job satisfaction at Kenya Railways Corporation. The positive correlation between employee welfare programs and employee job satisfaction established in the study supports the conclusion that employee welfare programs greatly influence one's job satisfaction. The study outcomes determined that employee welfare programs were largely unavailable to KRC, MGR Operations employees. Whereas allowances payment programs were greatly available to employees, the responses revealed that employee assistance programs, employee health programs, retirement programs, and flexible work programs, were not available to them at all.

The study also concluded that worker's health programs had the greatest positive influence on job satisfaction. Medical insurance cover, work injuries cover, wellness, and fitness programs are all necessary components of employee health programs. Flexible work programs had the second-highest positive impact on job satisfaction trailed by retirement programs. Employee assistance programs returned the least positive influence on job satisfaction followed by allowances payment program.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study had several limitations, one of them being the use of a cross-sectional research design leading to collection of data from the respondents in a snapshot and not at several points in time which could have been more accurate in measuring outcomes and exposures. Time constraint was another limitation of the study which led to the use of closed-ended questions in the questionnaire for ease of data analysis instead of open-ended questions or an interview guide for an in-depth collection of qualitative data.

Another constraint in the study was not obtaining the age groups of the respondents. The researcher had not foreseen the need to associate some variables to age group such as flexible work programs and retirement programs which are likely to be affected by age. Also, the study relied on self-reported data that could not be independently verified and therefore prone to exaggeration, telescoping, and selective memory. The researcher had no option in this case but to take the responses at face value.

The shortage of existing research studies on the subject was another limitation of the study as a great number of available studies were occupied with the connection between welfare programs and performance. The researcher, therefore, had limited empirical studies within the scope of the study to build on and therefore encourages researchers to carry out surveys on railways operations in Kenya and help KRC improve service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that employers should roll out as many employee welfare programs as possible because they greatly influence job satisfaction among employees. All allowances payable should be communicated and applied in a fair, transparent, and equitable manner for employees to derive satisfaction. The study also recommends that organizations should embrace employee assistance programs to support employees in coping with individual difficulties and achieve job satisfaction. Support for professional development through training and development, coaching and mentorship equip the workers with the right skills and talents essential for their work, thus increasing their competences, productivity, and job gratification.

The study recommends employers to provide health programs to their employees, and where possible their families. These programs may include medical insurance cover for employees and their families, work injuries benefits, wellness, and fitness activities. These programs help to keep employees healthy, reduce financial strain, and absenteeism, therefore increasing employee's fulfilment and output. The study also recommends organizations to adopt flexible work programs, where possible, especially in this era of internet technology to help employees pursue personal interests like attending evening classes. This helps employees to attain work and life balance and satisfaction.

The study further recommends the implementation of retirement programs by organizations to assist employees to prepare for a decent life after retirement. Where employees are engaged on contract, the study recommends long-term contracts, minimum of 5 years, and payment of service gratuity at the expiry of the contract where the employees are not members of a pension scheme.

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