

Effects of Workplace Recreation on Employee Performance The Case of Kenya Utalii College

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Abstract

The study sought to determine the effect of workplace recreation on employee performance at Kenya Utalii College. The study covered aspects of job satisfaction, service quality, customer satisfaction, and employee productivity. The study was descriptive covering a stratified sample of 81 respondents drawn from 162 employees. Data collected through self-administered questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The reasons for engaging in recreation at workplace were relax mind and feel great (82.3%), reduce stress and improve concentration (62.9%), build confidence and self-esteem (59.7%), and improve health 53.2%. Workplace recreation has a positive influence on employee performance variables; job satisfaction (92%), quality of service and customer satisfaction (72%) and enhanced productivity (77.5%). Participation in recreational activities was found to be useful in the management of work-life balance with a correlation of 0.61. Job satisfaction correlated highly with performance at 0.55. Employees view recreation as a form of intrinsic reward; providing a means of pleasure and enjoyment. Staff parties provide suitable opportunity for feedback on performance (0.44) and for recognizing employee achievements (0.40); thus meeting employee's social needs. However, recreation as a way of influencing employees' identity with the organization had very little to do with job satisfaction as explained by a low correlation of 0.25. Fellowship was the least preferred activity while team building activities were the most preferred. For all respondents, the top three favourite activities were team building, staff parties and aerobics as forms of recreation. The study concluded that recreation is a significant factor in employee performance; increases the level of commitment, enhances bonding and improves employee wellbeing with a consequent positive effect on job satisfaction, service provision, customer satisfaction and productivity. Therefore, the College and indeed other organizations should offer recreation facilities and activities that are of interest to employees bearing in mind their different tastes, gender and age among other considerations in order to enhance employee performance.

Key Words: Workplace recreation, job satisfaction, service quality, customer satisfaction, employee productivity, employee performance.

Background

A key objective of human resource management is to contribute towards the achievement of high level of employee and organization performance (Armstrong, 2005). Hutchinson, Kinnie, [Purcell](#) and Boxall (2003) contend that intangible assets such as culture, skill, competence, motivation and social interaction between people and teams are increasingly being seen as a source of strength in enhancing performance. This is evident in those firms which can combine people and processes together. Organizations therefore need to put in place actions which are aimed at ensuring employees maximize their potential at the work place. As stated by Boxall *et al* (2003), individual performance is a function of ability, motivation and opportunity (AMO); what they refer to as the fundamentals of employee's productivity.

As part of human resource development, organizations and individuals are slowly appreciating the concept of planning and managing employee recreation. American Council on Exercise (2000), contends that creating some leisure time in the course of the day allows employees to recharge themselves psychologically and emotionally and this can lead to improved job performance. There is increased involvement in leisure activities and wellness programmes by companies in a bid to promote employees' physical and mental health.

According to Taylor (2008), the demand for man made additional resources for recreation is greater now than before. Though there are many mushrooming of entertainment and sports clubs, many organizations have invested large sums of money to provide such facilities within the workplace. Kenya Utalii College is one such organization in Kenya that has invested heavily and provides recreation for its employees. Besides being inherently beneficial to employees, such initiatives can make a significant contribution to reducing absenteeism and raising productivity (Cohen, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

The hospitality industry is characterized by long working hours; often late at night and very early morning reporting. Much of the work requires employees to be constantly on their feet and customer interactions can be stressful, as employees may be verbally abused for service problems that are none of their doing and completely out of their control. In addition, many of them have problems maintaining a work-life balance. These factors individually or in combination lead to ill-health, low morale, conflicts and high levels of stress. In an effort to help employees cope with such issues, organizations have invested in workplace recreation.

There is evidence that that workplace recreation has a positive effect on employee performance (WHO, 2003). Workplace physical activity programmes in USA have helped reduce short-term sick leave (by 32%), health care costs (by 20-55%) and increased productivity (by 52%). However, scanty empirical data is available of the situation in developing world (WHO, 2003). Reduction of such kinds of avoidable costs is potentially important, especially in the developing countries such as Kenya as it would lead to higher employee performance. Kenya Utalii College has established workplace recreation in a bid to provide leisure and meet employee welfare requirements. However, no studies had been conducted to establish is such investments had any changes in employee and overall organizational performance.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of workplace recreation on employees' performance at Kenya Utalii College.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research design covering a population of 162 employees of Kenya Utalii College. Data was collected from a stratified random sample of 81 (50%) respondents through a semi-structured questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis tools; mean and Spearman's rank correlation to determine the relationship between variables under study while analysis of qualitative data involved organization into themes, guided by the study objectives. The analysis helped make a prediction about the dependent variable (employee performance) based on its covariance with the independent variables (organizational recreation) as supported by Kothari (2004). SPSS computer programme was used in data analysis.

Results and Analysis

Preliminaries

The study achieved a response rate of 77%; of which 60% were male and 40% female. 82.3% of the respondents over 30 years of age. Majority of the respondents (93.5 %) engaged in recreational activities; 35.5% once a week, 32.3% three to four times a week and 25.8% engaged daily. Regarding preference for various recreational activities fellowship was least preferred at 21.0% while team building activities were the most preferred at 64.0%. The top three favourite activities were team building, staff parties and aerobics. The reasons for engaging in recreation were varied; relaxation and feeling great (82.3%), lose weight (33.9%), build confidence and self esteem (59.7%), improve health (53.2%), relief stress and improve concentration (62.9%) and passing time (17.7%).

Recreation and Job Satisfaction

Most respondents (92%) rated very highly the contention that recreation has a positive effect on job satisfaction (Figure 1). This implied that if recreation is well planned and managed it would significantly contribute towards higher levels of job satisfaction and employee commitment to the organization. Workplace recreation was seen as a useful strategy in the management of work-life balance with a mean of 4.2 on a scale of 5.

Recreation was perceived as a form of intrinsic reward that provides a means of pleasure and enjoyment. Recreation as a way influencing employee identity with the organization had a mean of 3.0. Another aspect of recreation was provision of an opportunity for recognizing employee achievements and meeting their social needs with a mean of 4.0.

Recreation and work-life balance as an aspect of job satisfaction had a positive correlation coefficient of 0.61. Recreation as a means of enjoyment and pleasure had 0.55. Recreational activities like staff parties had a correlation value of 0.44. However, recreation as a way of influencing employee identify with the organization had very little to do with employee job satisfaction as explained by a low correlation of 0.25. This implies that recreational activities play a key role on employee job satisfaction (Table 1). The findings confirm those of IIES (2006), which indicated that health and wellness promotion programmes improved workers' job satisfaction.

Table 1: Recreation and Aspects of Job Satisfaction

Aspects of Job Satisfaction	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Correlation
	%	%	%	%	%		
Recreational activities are a form of intrinsic rewards, providing a means of pleasure and enjoyment.	30.0	64.5	5.5	-	-	4.2	0.55
Participation in recreational activities is useful in the management of work life balance.	53.0	41.7	3.0	0.7	1.6	4.4	0.61
Recreational activities like staff parties provide a suitable opportunity for feedback on individual and organizational performance	16.0	42.2	22.7	16.2	2.9	3.5	0.44
Recreational activities provide a good opportunity for recognizing employee achievements thus meeting some of employee's social needs	17.4	66.9	15.7	-	-	4.0	0.40
Recreation in a way influences employees' aspiration to be identified with the organization.	9.0	33.8	20.6	20.7	15.9	3.0	0.25
Engagement in organizational recreational activities provides a good forum for self development.	10.2	52.5	19.0	4.5	13.8	3.4	0.33

Source: Survey Data, 2011

Quality of Service and Customer Satisfaction

Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that recreation contributes positively to quality of service and customer satisfaction with a mean of 4.2 on a scale of 5, as it provided opportunity for socialization and strengthening ties among employees and customers. Moreover, these activities provide forum for informal set ups thus easing communication among employees as well as opportunity for skills development such as leadership, interaction and communication with a mean of 4.0 and 3.7 respectively.

Recreation as a means of providing an opportunity for socialization and strengthening ties among employees and customers had a significant correlation value of 0.69. The provision of a forum for informal setups to enhance communication among employees as well as opportunity for skills development such as leadership, interaction and communication had correlation values of 0.63 and 0.54 respectively. The findings concur with the contention by Torkildsen (1992) that the free and uninhibited interaction that happens in recreation centers leads to better cohesion and hence higher quality of service.

Table 2: Role of Recreation in provision of Quality of Service and Customer Satisfaction

Aspects of Quality Service and Customer Satisfaction	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Correlation
	%	%	%	%	%		
Recreational activities provide an opportunity for socialization and strengthening ties among employees and customers.	32	52.6	15.4	0	0	4.2	0.69
Recreational activities provide an opportunity for skills development such as leadership, interaction and communication.	24.3	43.8	19.4	2.9	9.6	3.7	0.54
Recreation activities such as team building activities provide a good forum for educating employees on goals, objectives, mission and vision of an organization.	11.3	56.7	2.6	29.4	0	3.5	0.35
Recreational activities provide an opportunity for creativity and innovativeness in my job.	22	32.7	16.6	6.7	22	3.3	0.28
Recreational activities provide forum for informal set ups thus easing communication among employees.	17.5	60	22.5	0	0	4.0	0.63

Source: Survey Data, 2011

Recreation and Employee Productivity

Majority of the respondents (77.5%) were of the opinion that recreation affects employee productivity as shown in Figure 1.

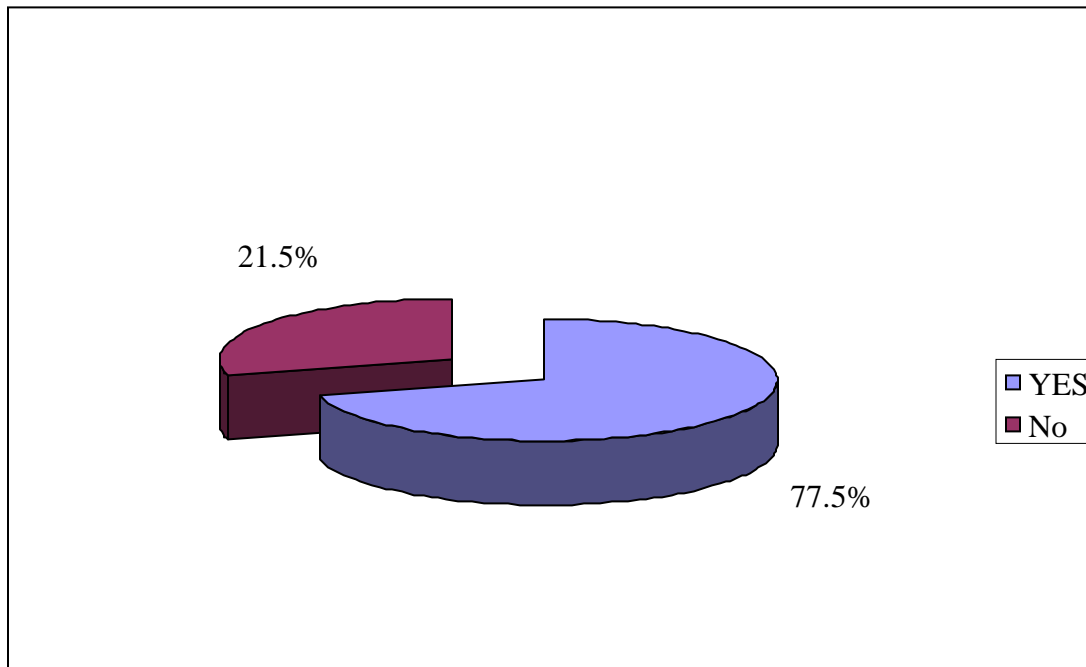


Figure 1: Recreational Activities and Employees' Productivity

Source: Survey Data, 2011

The relationship between recreation and employee productivity was measured using a number of aspects of productivity (Table 3). Majority of the respondents (71.0%) viewed recreational activities at the workplace as being part of the rewards and benefits scheme with a correlation coefficient of 0.65, which reduced visits to the doctor with a mean of 4.0 out of a scale of 5. Recreation and employees' physical and psychological well being had a correlation of 0.40 and 25% strongly supported the view that they were able to spend more time on the job as a result workplace recreation with a correlation of 0.55.

Therefore, workplace recreation significantly contributes to employee productivity when viewed as part of rewards and benefits scheme. This is achieved through motivation, body fitness and reduction in absenteeism. The results are consistent with those of a research by Department of Health Development, IIES (2006) which revealed negative correlations between productivity and subjective symptoms such stiff neck, low back pain and fatigue. The study concluded that the health and wellness programmes improved workers' productivity through acquirement of appropriate ways of coping with stress. Karimi (2006) also argues that physical exercises like yoga are some of the ways through employees can build their concentration which in turn leads to higher productivity.

Table 3: Recreation and Aspects of Employee Productivity

Aspects of Employees productivity	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Correlation
	%	%	%	%	%		
Provision of recreational activities helps promote my health.	25.8	38.7	19.4	12.5	3.6	3.7	0.59
I view recreational activities at the workplace as being part of the rewards and benefits scheme for employees.	51.6	19.4	12.9	11.5	4.6	4.0	0.65
My concentration levels are high because of the recreation activities at the work place.	22.5	26.5	19.4	25.8	5.8	3.3	0.16
I am able to spend more time on the job because of engagement in recreation and leisure activities at the work place.	25.8	25.8	23.8	18	6.6	3.5	0.26
Recreational activities contribute significantly towards my physical and psychological well being.	27.3	47.3	8.4	12	5	3.8	0.40
Engagement in recreational activities helps reduce visits to the doctor.	38.7	45.4	5.7	1.6	8.6	4.0	0.55
Engagement in recreational activities helps reduce absenteeism	23.9	48.8	6.7	11	9.6	3.7	0.40

Source: Survey Data, 2011

Conclusions

From the findings, the study concludes that workplace recreation has a positive influence on employee performance. When recreation is well planned and managed, it can significantly contribute towards higher levels of employees' commitment to the organization. It plays a key role in bonding among employees and with customers. Recreational activities provide an opportunity for socialization and strengthening ties among employees and customers as well as for skills development such as leadership, interaction and communication which are essential in the provision of effective service delivery. By offering recreation facilities to employees, organizations can help to boost the productivity of employees by meeting their physical and psychological needs which in turn reduces the rate of absenteeism, sick leaves and medical costs. This translates to more working hours by the healthy employees due to improved concentration; leading to improved organizational efficiency and profitability.

Recommendations

Kenya Utalii College and indeed other organizations should create workplace recreational facilities where all cadres of staff meet and interact in an informal setting. To enhance job satisfaction among employees, organizations should offer recreation facilities and activities that are of interest to employees bearing in mind their different tastes, gender, age and among others. This will encourage the employees to engage in recreation activities that they enjoy most. Organisations should also plan and engage in recreational activities that contribute to the development of employees' ability to offer effective customer service. Workplace recreation activities should be designed in a way that they help the physical and physiological wellbeing of the employees. This is because healthy employees are more productive and beneficial to the organisation.

The Government of Kenya should develop a policy framework to help establish and institutionalize workplace recreation as part of employee benefits and welfare programme.

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