
Influence of Organizational Job Goal Setting on Work-Life Balance: Experience from Public Service Social Security Fund in Tanzania

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of job goal setting on employee work-life balance using experience from Public Service Social Security Fund. Specifically, the study intended to investigate how job planning, job monitoring and appraisal feedback influence employees' work-life balance in terms of working hours using a sample size of 109 employees. The study applied cross-sectional design and quantitative approach, where, data were collected and analysed quantitatively to establish the relationships between variables. Data were analysed using Multiple Liner Regression model. The results show that job planning through job specificity and task deadlines negatively influence work-life balance. Monitoring through supervisors' availability negatively influences work-life balance. Appraisal feedback in terms of its timeliness negatively influences work-life balance, while clarity of appraisal feedback positive influence work-life balance. Therefore, the study concludes that job planning, job monitoring and appraisal feedback influence employee work-life balance. The study recommends that supervisors should set specific job objectives and realistic deadlines. Also, supervisors should be available to their subordinates. Supervisors should also provide timely appraisal feedback, while refraining themselves from overemphasizing on clarification of appraisal feedback. On the other hand, employees should emphasise on specificity of job objectives and require tasks to have realistic deadlines. Further, the study recommends that, employees should focus on requiring timely feedback from their supervisors, but they should not focus much on seeking for clarification of appraisal feedback unless it is necessary.

Keywords: Job goal setting, work-life balance, working hours.

1.0 Introduction

Work intensity has been on the rise in recent years as a result of competition among organizations for the desire of being the best service/product providers (Askenazy

et al., 2013). In addition, employees accept big workloads and work for longer hours as an attempt of increasing their earnings and impress their employers due to the nature of current labour market, where, job security is increasingly becoming a concern (Mokomane, 2011). Regarding the length of working hours, countries such as Peru, South Korea, Thailand, Pakistan, United States of America and the United Kingdom are the leading. In developing countries, the leading sectors include agriculture, industry, banking, self-employment and healthcare (International Labour Organization -ILO Report 2006; Chin et al, 2011). In the context of Tanzania, studies show that big workloads and long working hours in most sectors are a result of ineffective team building practices, intimidating policies and regulations which make the boundary between voluntary and forced long working hours blurred (Justus 2016; Human Rights and Business Report, 2013; Chitenje, 2017).

Generally, the current work environment is one of the major challenges facing work-life balance. This is because employees find it difficult to split their time and energy between work-related matters and aspects of their personal life; as result, they use more time in undertaking work roles and less time on their personal roles (Decenzo et al., 2016). Striking a balance between work and life is vital because an average person needs both work and life (Robbins, 2000). Therefore, attaining work-life balance among employees is a concern to modern days managers because it reduces discomfort in general life. thus, work-life balance is an important determinant of employee satisfaction, absenteeism, productivity, stress, job engagement and labour turnover (Luthans, 2011).

Several measures have been taken by different countries to foster work-life balance. For example, Australia introduced paid paternity and maternity leave (Pabayoy et al, 2013). Moreover, China, took steps to prolong maternity leave to 98 days from 90 (China daily, 2011). On the other hand, European Union promotes flexibility in job design by embracing job sharing, working part-time, compressed workweek, flexi-time and telecommuting (Koopmans & Schiffrs, 2003). In this regard, several measures have been taken by different organizations in Tanzania in trying to improve work-life imbalance among employees. These measures include improving team work design and coordination, and establishing reward schemes that encourage workers to accomplish their tasks timely (ILO, 2010). Generally, these attempts focus on providing employees with time in a given period to deal with their personal issues and giving them room to accomplish their work activities in time. In this respect, previous studies associated the challenges of work-life balance with the size of workload, the length of working hours, the nature of team building practices, policies and regulations at workplaces, and the increasing tendency of having dual-career households (Mokomane, 2011; Justus 2016; Chitenje, 2017; Jaffu, 2018).

Previous studies on work-life balance put less emphasis on the influence of setting of job objectives. Setting of job objectives is not only a factor for employee motivation and satisfaction, but it is also fundamental for timely work accomplishment (Robbins, 2000). This is because apart from being a tool for time management, setting of job objectives also makes an employee exert more effort on the job. According to Dodd (1996), job goal setting through planning, monitoring and appraisal feedback helps employees to estimate the amount of efforts required to attain job targets against the available amount of time. Therefore, in a way to adequately address issues pertaining to assisting employees to have time for personal matters and manage to accomplish their work activities, this study intended to examine the influence of goal setting on employee work-life balance. Particularly, it intended to seek for answers to these questions, how job planning influence employee work-life balance, how job monitoring influence employee work-life balance and how appraisal feedback influence employee work-life balance.

This study is founded on two theories, namely, Resource Drain theory and Goal Setting theory. On the one hand, Resource Drain theory principally explains the nature of work-life balance. The theory states that resources required by people to fulfil roles in particular domains tend to be scarce. People therefore transfer resources from one domain to another in order to be able to effectively execute roles in that particular domain that they choose to prioritize at a given moment. These resources include money, time, attention and energy (Morris and Madsen, 2007). On the basis of this theory, if an employee is forced by the environment to spend more time on work related matters; he/she will have to cut the time they spend on personal matters and vice versa. Thus, according to this theory, if one aspect of life (personal or work) puts more demand on an employee in terms of usage of time, he/she will be in a dilemma of choices. However, he/she will eventually choose according to his/her values. Despite its contribution in describing the centrality of working hours (with respect to time, attention and energy) in determining work-life balance and its related work-life conflicts, the theory does not explain how goal setting can assist employees to manage their time attention and energy, hence, attain work-life balance.

On the other hand, Goal setting theory explains how setting of job goals is associated with employee time management. Generally, goal setting is featured with three interconnected processes, that is, planning, monitoring and feedback. Planning is the process of setting job targets to be attained. The theory suggests good job targets need to be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound (Gupta, 2001). Moreover, monitoring involves frequency of job plans adjustments, direct supervision time, amount of directives, supervisor's availability and usefulness of directives; while, feedback tells the job doer about

how well he/she is working towards the prior set job targets (Robbins, 2000). A good feedback needs to be timely and clear.

Principally, according to Locke and Latham (2002), job goal setting has two major mechanisms. Firstly, it has a directive mechanism; this mechanism guides the attention and effort of the job doer towards goal relevant activities and away from goal irrelevant activities. In this sense, goal setting acts as a means of assisting employees to effectively use their time at workplace in such a way that they will not need additional time for work related matters. Secondly, goal setting has energizing mechanism. It makes the doer to put more effort on the job as he/she knows exactly what is expected of him/her, how far she/has gone and what remains to be done. In this way, goal setting acts as a mechanism of offsetting the effect of big workloads and it allows employees to have control on time they spend on a job.

2.0 Methodology

This study employed cross sectional design in order to provide description and explanation of the phenomenon at one point in time. The study adopted quantitative approach with the aim of quantifying attributes and revealing patterns in statistical data. The approach was found appropriate because it is more objective and leaves less room for bias (Kothari, 2014). Moreover, it emphasizes on the particular scope of research subject matter and the data gathered are easily replicable. Furthermore, the approach increases reliability and whose findings are generalizable.

The study was conducted in Dodoma region in Tanzania. Particularly, it was conducted at the headquarters of Public Service Social Security Fund (PSSSF). PSSSF was selected because its employees face challenges related to increased working hours due to the recent restructuring caused by mergers. Hence, it is a good representation of workers' situation in relation to work-life balance and working hours in particular in Tanzania. The target population of this study was all 109 employees of PSSSF at headquarters, Dodoma. These employees are more directly experiencing expansion of operations, changes in rules and procedures of work and work team members which affect their work-life balance. The sample size of the study was 109, which was determined using censuses sampling technique, thus, the whole target population was involved in the study. The method is appropriate for obtaining data in great detail, especially when the population is small (Kish, 1979). Data were collected using questionnaire. Specifically, the questionnaire was employed to collect data on

personal particulars of the respondents, job planning, monitoring, appraisal feedback and work-life balance with reference to working hours.

Data in this study were analysed using Multiple Linear Regression model on SPSS. The model was appropriate in this study because firstly, all explanatory variables involve a number of predictors. Secondly, the dependent variable is a continuous variable measured in terms of number of working hours (Field, 2009). The following is Multiple Linear Regression equation that was applied in the study:

$$Y_i = B_0 + \beta_1 X_{1_i} + \beta_2 X_{2_i} + \beta_3 X_{3_i} + \beta_4 X_{4_i} + \epsilon_i$$

Where;

Y_i – Work-life balance i.e., number of working hours

B_0 – Constant of regression

β_1 – Slope coefficient for job planning

X_{1_i} – job planning

β_2 – Slope coefficient for monitoring

X_{2_i} – Job monitoring

β_3 – Slope coefficient for appraisal feedback

X_{3_i} – Appraisal feedback

ϵ_i – Error term

In testing for consistence of measurements in this study Cronbach's Alpha, where, all the constructs (job planning, job monitoring and appraisal feedback) were observed to be consistent. Specifically, the Cronbach index for job planning -to achieve validity, the content of questions of the questionnaire was carefully analysed to make sure that they are relevant in answering the research questions.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics of the respondents formed part of this study, where, data on sex, age, marital status, and length of service were descriptively analysed. The results show that 67.3percent of the respondents were males, while 32.7percent were

females. This is a reflection of the global proportion of males in the active labour market (International Labour Organization -ILO Report, 2018). In terms of age, the dominant age group was 20- 30 years (33.7%) followed by 31- 40 years (32.7%). These age groups form the most active segment of the population in many parts of the world (Kunze et al., 2011). Regarding marital status, the results indicate that majority of the respondents (45.2%) are married. Again, this is a reflection of the dominant age groups i.e. 20-30 years and 31-40 years. On the side of length of service, most of the respondents (37.5%) had experience of 3 years. This represents the number of years since when the case of this study (PSSSF) was established. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	70	67.3
Female	34	32.7
Total	104	100
Age (Years)		
20-30	35	33.7
31-40	34	32.7
41-50	17	16.3
51-60	18	17.3
Total	104	100
Marital Status		
Single	43	41.3
Married	47	45.2
Widowed	10	9.7
Separated	4	3.8
Total	104	100
Length of Service (Years)		
0-2	19	18.3
3-5	39	37.5
6-10	32	30.7
Above 10	14	13.5
Total	104	100

Source: Field data (2020).

3.2. The Influence of Job Planning on Employee Work-life Balance

In finding out the influence of job planning on employee work-life balance, five indicators of job planning namely, objective specificity, objective measurability, objective attainability, objective relevance and realistic deadlines were included in the model. The Adjusted R Square for all indicators was found to be 0.226; thus, all indicators were found to be collectively accountable for 22.6percent of the variation in the dependent variable that is, work-life balance in terms of working hours.

From the results as summarized in Table 2, objective specificity (beta = -0.651; $p= 0.001$) and realistic deadline (beta = -.386; $p= 0.002$) were found to have significant negative influence on the number of working hours among employees. This means, 1 unit increase in objective specificity improves work-life balance by reducing working hours by 65.1percent. Likewise, 1 unit increase in setting realistic deadlines improves work-life balance by reducing working hours by 38.6percent. Thus, employee work-life balance in terms of reduced working hours can be attained by improving objective specificity and setting of realistic deadlines.

Related studies associate objective specificity to decreased errors in carrying out tasks, increased levels of work engagement, raised levels of accountability, flexibility in choice of work methods and mobilization of adequate and relevant resources (Clarke and Hill, 2004). All these factors are responsible for assisting an employee in spending less time in accomplishing his/her job tasks, hence, having time for personal roles. With regard to setting realistic task deadlines, similar studies link it to communication of urgency, prioritization and challenge in performing a certain assignment (Naithani, 2010). Therefore, setting realistic deadlines assists employees to have focus on the tasks at hand and drop all other irrelevant commitments in the attempt to meet the set time frame (Locke and Latham, 2002). Thus, this results in assisting workers to suitably use their time at work so are to remain with time for non-work-related matters.

Table 2: Influence of Job Planning on Employee Work-life Balance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	Std. Error	Beta				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	49.029	1.592		30.801	.000	45.870	52.188
Objective Specificity	-1.824	.511	-.651	-3.571	.001	-2.837	-.810
Objective measurability	.179	.574	.059	.312	.755	-.960	1.319
Objective attainability	.842	.589	.255	1.429	.156	-.327	2.012
Objective relevance	1.170	.799	.246	1.464	.146	-.416	2.757
Realistic task deadlines	-1.179	.371	-.386	-3.173	.002	-1.916	-.442

Source: Field data (2020).

3.1.3 The Influence of Job Monitoring on Employee Work-life Balance

In examining the influence of job monitoring on employee work-life balance, five aspects of job monitoring, namely, direct supervision time, amount of directives, helpfulness of directives, supervisors' availability and frequency of job plans adjustments were analysed. The Adjusted R Square for all indicators was found to be 0.270. Therefore, all the aspects of job monitoring were found to be collectively accountable for 27percent of the variation in the dependent variable that is work-life balance in terms of working hours.

Basing on the results in Table 3, supervisors' availability (beta = -0.347; p=0.007) was found to significantly negatively influence the number of working hours among employees. In this case, 1 unit increase in supervisors' availability improves work-life balance through reducing working hours by 34.7percent. This implies that improvement in supervisors' availability leads to better work-life balance among employees by reducing their working hours. The existing literature relates availability of supervisors to timely provision of technical assistance and

behavioural support to employees (Luthans, 2011). Basically, technical assistance involves clarification of job objectives and timely mobilization of the required resources, while, behavioural support entails reinforcement and motivation. Therefore, both technical assistance and behaviour support are helpful in reducing working hours among employees; hence, improve their work-life balance by allowing them to have time for non-job-related matters.

Table 3: Influence of Job Monitoring on Employee Work-life Balance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	Std. Error	Beta				Upper Bound	Lower Bound
(Constant)	50.805	1.523		33.356	.000	47.783	53.828
Direct supervision time	.250	.288	.085	.867	.388	-.322	.822
Amount of directives	-.678	.344	-.188	-1.973	.051	-1.359	.004
Directives helpfulness	-.492	.393	-.169	-1.252	.214	-1.272	.288
Supervisor's availability	-.998	.361	-.347	-2.762	.007	-1.715	-.281
Frequency of job plans adjustments	.281	.269	.102	1.045	.299	-.253	.814

Source: Field data (2020).

3.4 The Influence of Appraisal Feedback on Employee Work-life Balance

In analysing the influence of appraisal feedback on employee work-life balance, two indicators of appraisal feedback namely, timeliness of appraisal feedback and clarity of appraisal feedback were examined. The Adjusted R Square for both indicators was 0.311. This means that both indicators were found to be collectively responsible for 31.1 percent of the variation in the dependent variable namely, work-life balance in terms of working hours.

From the results in Table 4, timeliness of appraisal feedback was found to significantly negatively influence the number of working hours among employees (beta = -0.740; $p= 0.000$). On the other hand, clarity of appraisal feedback was found to have significant positive influence on the number of working hours among employees (beta = 0.271; $p= 0.028$). This means, 1 unit increase in timeliness of appraisal feedback improves work-life balance by reducing working hours by 74 percent, while, 1 unit increase in the clarity of appraisal feedback worsens work-life balance by increasing working hours by 27.1 percent. Therefore, employee work-life balance in terms of working hours can be improved by providing timely appraisal feedback and reducing emphasis on clarity of appraisal feedback.

Similar studies associate timeliness of appraisal feedback to an increase in the pace of employees in executing their job tasks and learning how to interpret and deal with similar job situations in the future (Naithani, 2010). Thus, increasing in the pace of doing the current and future similar job assignments assist employees to use less time at work so as to have time for their personal issues. Concerning clarity of appraisal feedback, the existing literature links emphasis and over clarification of appraisal feedback to the consumption of time and competency doubts (Greenblatt, 2002). While consumption of time directly entails increase of working hours, competency doubts lead to dissatisfaction, which in turn decreases the amount of effort an employee puts on his/her job (Robbins, 2000). Thus, the attempt of emphasizing on providing and seeking for clarity of appraisal feedbacks leads to an increase of time in the execution of job tasks, hence, worsening work-life balance by reducing the time for personal roles among employees.

Table 4. Influence of Appraisal Feedback on Employee Work-life Balance

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	Std. Error	Beta				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	48.357	.808		59.813	.000	46.753	49.961
Timeliness of Feedback	-1.768	.290	-.740	-6.090	.000	-2.343	-1.192
Clarity of feedback	.703	.314	.271	2.235	.028	.079	1.326

Source: Field data, (2020).

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that job planning with respect to job specificity and setting of task deadlines, job monitoring through supervisors' availability and appraisal feedback with respect to timeliness and clarity of appraisal feedback influence work-life balance in terms of working hours. Specifically, it implies that, if improvement is made in setting specific job objectives, having realistic deadlines, availability of supervisors and in timeliness and clarity of appraisal feedback employees will use their time at work properly. Thus, they will get time for personal matters; hence, improve their work-life balance.

The study recommends to supervisors that, during job panning, they should put special attention on improving specificity of job objectives and setting of realistic deadlines. Specifically, superiors should design job objectives in such a way that they become specific to the possible extent. Also, they should set realistic deadlines. Furthermore, the study recommends to supervisors that they should be available to their subordinates so as to provide technical consultations and behavioural support. The study recommends further to supervisors that all the time they should be in a position to provide timely appraisal feedback to their subordinates. On appraisal feedback, the study recommends again that, supervisors should not over emphasize on clarification when they provide appraisal feedback to their subordinates.

On the other hand, the study recommends to employees that, when they are given job tasks they should emphasize on specificity of job objectives and require to be assigned to job tasks with specific and realistic deadlines. The study further recommends to employees that, they should focus on requiring timely appraisal feedback from their supervisors. However, they should not focus much on seeking for clarification on appraisal feedback unless it is necessary.

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