

## **Work Life Balance Practices Adopted In Horticultural Farms In Kenya**

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**Organisations in modern day competitive world can only perform at optimal levels if each employee is committed to the organisation's objectives and works as an effective team member. An inability to create a balance between work and personal life could affect employees' effectiveness and productivity in the workplace. As the nature of the workforce continues to diversify, it will become increasingly important for organizations to consider all the factors influencing their employees' ability to balance work and non-work commitments, and to find a way of incorporating them into their operating policies. The objective of this study was to investigate the extent to which work life balance practices are adopted by horticultural farms in Kenya. The study adopted a census research design. The results of the study indicate that horticultural farms in Kenya have adopted practices relating to time and to the job to a great extent while practices relating to the place and to the benefits have been adopted to a moderate extent only. The study recommends that greater attention should be paid to practices relating to the job as well as benefits as they are the ones with the lower ratings than practices relating to time and place. In particular, the farms should introduce employee assistance programs and study leave in order to empower the employees to make better use of the other practices they have been provided. Further, the farms should consider introducing flexible working hours and increased work autonomy so that the employee can schedule their work in a manner that allows them to attend to non work matters during off peak working hours/seasons.**

**Key word:** Work life balance, work, life, balance, practices

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## INTRODUCTION

Maintaining a stable workforce is a key element in effective talent management strategy and yet over the years this has been something of a challenge for many industries (Ghiselli *et al.* 2001). No organisation in today's competitive world can perform at peak levels unless each employee is committed to the organisation's objectives and works as an effective team member. It is no longer good enough to have employees who come to work faithfully every day and do their jobs independently. Employees now have to think like entrepreneurs while working in teams, and have to prove their worth. However, they also want to be part of a successful organisation which provides a good income and the opportunity for development and secure employment. In the past, organisations secured the loyalty of their employees by guaranteeing job security. However, many organisations have responded to competitive pressures by downsizing, restructuring and transformation and thus created a less secure organisational climate. A growing number of employees therefore feel that they are victims of broken promises.

One of the challenges facing modern organisations involves maintaining employee commitment in the current business environment. Organisations can achieve this by developing a new "work contract". In today's workplace, employees face more ambiguity in their daily activities and decreased job security (Bergmann *et al.*, 2000). With no assurance of continued employment, workers have now raised their

expectations in other areas. For instance, employees expect employers to demonstrate their commitment in terms of pleasant working conditions, access to training and development, provision of a safe working environment and a balance between work and employees' commitments outside the workplace. An inability to create a balance between work and personal life could affect employees' effectiveness and productivity in the workplace (Elloy & Smith, 2003). Some companies have taken proactive measures in providing programs and initiatives to help their employees cope with their conflicting life roles.

### Work Life Balance

The origins of research on work-life balance can be traced back to studies of women having multiple roles. Barnett and Baruch (1985) investigated the psychological distress connected to the balance of rewards and concerns generated by individual women's multiple roles as paid worker, wife and mother. They found that positive role quality – more rewards than concerns experienced in a given role – was related to low levels of role overload, role conflict and anxiety. Based on their research, Barnett and Baruch defined role balance as a "rewards minus concerns" difference score which could range from positive to negative values. Tiedje *et al.* (1990) approached the same research from the perspective of a typology of role perception. They argued that workers may perceive their work and family roles in multiple, qualitatively different ways, and thus they based their typology on both the role conflict and enhancement hypotheses. According to the

conflict hypothesis, multiple roles with infinite demands are likely to cause role strain and conflict for individuals because the resources they have to meet these demands are finite and scarce (Goode, 1960).

The negative side of the work-family interaction has been put under the spotlight. Recently, the emphasis has shifted towards the investigation of the positive interaction between work and family roles as well as roles outside work and family lives, and scholars have started to deliberate on the essence of work life balance (Jones et al., 2006). It is generally agreed that work life balance is important for an individual's psychological well being, and that high self esteem, satisfaction, and overall sense of harmony in life can be regarded as indicators of a successful balance between work and family roles (Clarke et al., 2004). However, there is a lack of consensus on how work life balance should be defined, measured, and researched, and thus, the theorizing of what constitutes work life balance, how it develops, and what factors enable or hinder it, is still in progress (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007; ). Greenhaus et al. (2003) have also questioned the self-evident assumption that work family balance always leads to favorable outcomes since according to them this is an empirical question which has not yet been firmly answered due to miscellaneous definitions of work family balance.

Theories also exist which seek to analyse the boundary between work and the rest of life. One such theory is the border theory (Singh,

2004). It argues that people are daily border-crossers as they move between home and work. This opens up a rich vein of analysis of the nature of borders, their permeability, the ease with which they can be managed or moved and so on. Questions arise about the existence of borders for those who work from home, either in the traditional sense of farmers and those with family hotels and restaurants or in the more contemporary sense of those who use new technology to work from home rather than the traditional office. For example, are borders desirable and if so under what circumstances? In terms of any analysis of work life balance, the analysis of borders can help to illuminate how far individuals are in control of issues determining balance (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). It also allows for analysis of physical and psychological controls. In related work, Fisher-McAuley, Stanton, Jolton and Gavin (2003) updated a scale to assess the three dimensions of work life balance namely: work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), and work/personal life enhancement (WPLE).

This scale was updated from the earlier scale that was made by Fisher (2001) in his article Work/Personal Life Balance: A construct development study. According to Fisher (2001), the content items for work interference with personal life (WIPL) reflected the extent to which work interferes with personal life. On the other hand, personal life interference with work (PLIW) reflected the extent to which one's personal life interferes with work. Lastly, work/personal life enhancement (WPLE)

refers to the extent where one's personal life enhances work. To get the overall work life balance measurement, lower levels of interference (WIPL and PLIW) were interpreted as higher levels of work life balance while higher levels of work/personal life enhancement (WPLE) were associated with higher levels of work life balance.

There are also models that attempt to conceptualize work life balance (Guest, 2001); these include the segmentation model, which states that work and life outside of work are mutually exclusive such that one sphere does not impact the other, the spillover model which states that work and life are interdependent and therefore influence each other. One domain of life can influence the other in either a positive or negative way, the compensation model which states that one sphere makes up for what is lacking in the other sphere, the instrumental model which states that one sphere emphasizes the other sphere therefore activities in one area facilitate success in the other; and the conflict model states that each sphere has numerous demands, hence individuals have to prioritize and make choices that may lead to conflict.

The work life balance concern is not limited to a specific group of employees as research in industrialized countries has shown that employees across different organizational levels and with different family structures are concerned with achieving a better balance between working life, family obligations, leisure and socializing (Papalexandris & Kramar, 1997). Work life conflict is also not gender-specific.

According to the Center for American Progress, 90 percent of working mothers and 95 percent of working fathers report work family conflict. More men are realizing that work is not their only primary source of fulfillment from life. A study on fatherhood (Tahmincioglu, 2010), shows that more men are looking for alternatives to their 40-hour work week in order to spend more time with their family. Though working less means a smaller paycheck and higher stress levels, men are looking for flexibility just as much as women. However, because of the social norms surrounding each gender role, and how the organization views its ideal worker, men and women handle the work life balance conflict differently (Zuo & Tang, 2000).

Work life balance policies can assist employees to achieve a balance between their work and personal commitments that is right for them. However, availability of policies is not necessarily enough for these policies 'to work'. The policies need to be supported by the workplace culture, which reflects the beliefs, values and norms of the whole organization from the CEO to staff members (Schoenfeld, 2005). Other important factors in the success of work life balance policies include proper communication of commitment to the policies to existing and future employees, raising awareness of the policies, education of managers about the importance of policies, and training of managers on 'how to' implement these policies. By implementing work life balance policies, employers can help to reduce stress in their employees. This can lead to a more

motivated and loyal workforce, increased productivity, reduced absenteeism and an enhanced public image.

### **Horticultural Sub Sector In Kenya**

The Horticultural sub sector is the fastest growing within the agricultural sector, recording an average growth of 15% to 20% per annum and outpacing Kenya's traditional hard currency earners - tea and tourism. It employs approximately 4.5 million people countrywide directly in production, processing, and marketing of fruits, vegetables and flowers, while another 3.5 million people benefit indirectly through trade and other related activities. Women in particular have benefited from these opportunities, and now comprise between 65-75 percent of workers employed in the industry (Mbugua, 2007). This study was done in the Farms based in Naivasha which is one of the key towns with horticultural firms in Kenya. The region has over 55 farms that employ over 50,000 workers. And is known internationally for its large horticulture sector, the largest in all of Kenya. Over 70% of the roses exported to the EU markets come from Naivasha. The horticultural sector of Naivasha employs over 30,000 people directly, thereby having a very positive impact on the livelihood of Kenyans. A big majority of the residents are from immigrants from poor backgrounds in their original home areas which explains their search for land and work in Naivasha. Other characteristics include relatively low levels of education and modern economy skills base. Majority of people around the lake are employed in the flower farms while those in outer zone are farmers, business

people and cattle herders. The Britons and the Dutch have dominated farm ownership although locals and investors from Israel and India have joined the sector.

The concept of work-life balance is based on the notion that paid work and personal life should be seen less as competing priorities than as complementary elements of a full life (Doherty, 2004). It is important for employers to support work life balance to comply with legal requirements that allow working parents the right to request to work flexibly, to promote equality of opportunities by ensuring that staff with caring responsibilities are not disadvantaged in the workplace, and to widen access to paid work and career opportunities. A Roffey Park Institute (2004) study found that 38% of a sample of employees would consider leaving their current employer to gain better work life balance elsewhere, even if it meant reduced pay. Mayberry (2006) also states that organizations that adopt work life balance practices whether formally or informally, report lower employee turnover.

Over the last few years horticultural farms in Kenya have been beset by allegations of poor labour practices and environmentally damaging production processes (Dwasi, 2006). In July 2010 more than 1,500 workers from Aquilla and Karuturi farms went on strike over poor working conditions and meager wages, the strike being the third in less than two weeks (Gitonga, 2010). Benefits such as paternity/maternity leave, dependent care provision and transport which enable workers to balance unpaid caring work with paid work are often not extended to temporary workers. Temporary

workers in the cut flower industry work long hours for low pay, and rarely have access to benefits such as sick pay, medical care and maternity leave (Dolan et al. 2003). In Naivasha, women in particular face difficult working conditions due to their predominance in the most labour intensive aspects of production where long hours and insecure employment are common (Dwasi, 2006).

In his study on health problems for Timau flower farm workers, Ayieko (2011) concluded that majority of the workers lacked basic training in what they were doing and have poor adherence to safety practices at work place. Women, in particular, face difficult working conditions due to their predominance in the most labour intensive aspects of production, where long working hours and insecure employment are common. Dolan, Opondo and Smith (2003) study on Gender, Rights & Participation in the Kenya Cut Flower Industry, concluded that there existed many challenges in employment conditions for workers in this industry. The study however did not outline the work life balance practices if any, adopted in this industry. Muindi (2009) did a study on the determinants of work life balance in the Public Sector: A Case Study of Ngong District Hospital. Otieno (2010) conducted a study on the influence of work life balance on job satisfaction and commitment of women employees of the commercial banks in Kisumu city, Kenya. Bukachi (2007) carried out a case study on Effects of employee sexual harassment on organizational performance: a case study of Sher Agencies Flower Farm in Naivasha. One of her findings was the prevalence of

poor employee relations and living conditions of the workers on the farm.

From the foregoing and in the light of the exponential increase in the labour intensive horticultural farming, there has been no study to investigate adoption of Work Life Balance practices in horticultural farms, and this is the gap which this survey seeks to address. Specifically the study seeks to investigate the extent to which Work Life Balance practices are adopted by the horticultural farms in Kenya.

The objective of this study was to investigate the extent to which work life balance practices are adopted by horticultural farms in Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Any type of formal or informal benefit or working condition that an organization engages to reduce job-personal/family conflicts which can arise in the organization is considered a work life balance practice (Thorne, 2011). WLB programs in an organizational setting include those covering flexible work arrangements, child and dependent care, and study and compassionate leave (Bardoel et al., 1998). They may also include the statutory entitlements that help employees achieve a balance between work and family life and any other aspirations that they may have. Work-life balance practices can broadly be categorized as those relating to time (flexi-time, compressed hours, annualized hours, part time working), those relating to the place (tele-working), those related to the job (job re-designing and job sharing) and those relating to the benefits (leave provision,

employee assistance programs, dependent care and wellness programs)

Given the usually negative impact of the absence of work life balance practices on employees and organizations, initiatives aimed at supporting employees with work life conflict have become more popular and commonplace in organizations (Cooke, Zeytinoglu & Mann, 2009). Work life balance practices improve the autonomy of workers in coordinating and integrating the work and non-work areas of their lives. Benefits of work life balance programs for employees include increased employee control over time and place of work (Thomas & Ganster, 1995) and reduced work-family conflict (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). These types of practices are seen as a basic requirement for any employee so they can reduce tensions that occur in the working environment. On the other hand, benefits of work life balance for organizations include reduced absenteeism (Dex & Scheibl, 1999), increased productivity (Sands & Harper, 2007) and improved employee retention (Allen, 2001). There is also evidence which suggests that employers who implement work life balance programs and offer flexible working arrangements are likely to have a competitive advantage in the labour market, and in particular in relation to the new generation of employees (Morgan, 2009).

There are time based practices featuring alternative work schedules such as compressed or flextime and reduced work schedules such as part time work. They can also take the form of alternative work

location such as tele-working. Other practices take the form of job modifications such as redesigning and job sharing. The bulk of the practices focus on various types of benefits like leave provisions, dependent care, career development and educational opportunities.

The most prevalent alternative work arrangement, flexi time or flexible work hours, typically consists of flexible workday start and finish times. Most organizations that offer flexi time require all employees to be on the job during a set of core hours, but allow employees more choice over their work schedules on either side of these core hours (Ridgley et al., 2005). The vast majority of flexi time users establishes their own daily or weekly routine, and consistently adheres to this idiosyncratic schedule because it meshes well with their routines and responsibilities outside work. In establishing their personal schedules they also take into regard deadlines, co-workers' schedules, and other workplace contingencies (Gottlieb et al., 1998). Where employees have not experienced flexi time before they may need more guidance on what they can and cannot do (Ridgley et al., 2005).

Employees might value flexi time if it enhances their work-family balance and thus reciprocate with enhanced commitment and loyalty to their organization (Gouldner, 1960). Proponents of flexitime argued that the program can be beneficial to both employers and employees, creating a win-win situation (McGuire & Liro, 1986). Since not everybody is most productive from eight

to five, flextime allows workers to adjust their working schedules to their bio-clock to work the hours they prefer and feel most productive (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). Studies also report that flextime can increase worker productivity through intermediate and indirect effects, such as increase in workers' job satisfaction and job autonomy (deCarufel & Schaan, 1990), and decrease in their absenteeism and work related stress.

With the increased implementation of information technology in the private and public sectors, the nature and the amount of white-collar work has changed. In the information age, work processes are becoming more complex and information-intensive and workers are becoming more focused in specific knowledge domains, sharing expert knowledge with peers in order to accomplish a task (Nolan and Croson, 1995). Another impact of information technology has been to enable virtual proximity to information and therefore remote information-intensive work. As a result, white-collar workers now have the option of telecommuting and working at a remote location in either fixed (e.g. home) or mobile (e.g. hotel) modes (Gordon and Kelly, 1988). The link between work flexibility and productivity can be traced back to agency theory, which focuses on determining the optimal contract that governs the relationship between a manager and an employee (Eisenhardt, 1988). According to the theory, a behavior-based contract is employed between a manager and an employee when the manager knows what the employee has done, but if the manager does not know what the employee has done,

as a result of flexible work structure, an outcomes-based contract is employed (Ndubisi and Kahraman, 2005). Consequently, there is likely to be a positive relationship between work flexibility and tele-working productivity.

In their study Ferris & Martinson (2003) examined whether and to what extent the different work venues of virtual offices, home offices or traditional offices impacted job performance; motivation; retention and career opportunity; and family life balance. Their findings suggested that virtual and home offices showed mostly positive effects on the job performance variables, while traditional office arrangements showed mostly negative effects. In contrast, arrangements that involve a reduced number of hours at work are associated with lower levels of work-family conflict. Thus individuals engaged in part-time work, job sharing, and to a lesser extent, compressed work weeks reported lower levels of work-family interference. Taken together, these observations suggest a limited effect of flexible work arrangements on work and family balance. By spending less time on running and maintaining their home and work, employees will have more fulfillment and satisfaction, such as our relationships with friends and family (Hinz, 2011).

In his study that investigates employees' attitudes towards telecommuting on Egypt information employees', Abdel-Wahab (2007) found that more respondents are in favor of telecommuting (50% of the sample size) than those who are not (about 24.1% of the sample size). Those employees who have

a positive attitude towards telecommuting may be encouraged by the pluses of telecommuting such as: saving commute cost and time; less travel related stress, especially for elder employees; better balance for the competing demands of work and family, especially for working women with young children. In a similar study conducted in America by Joseph J. Grippod (2002) among American government finance professionals, more than 69% of the sample size (149 subjects) was in favor of telecommuting. According to Abdel-Wahab (2007), the variance in attitude towards telecommuting between Egyptian and American information workers may be due to the information technology infrastructure gap between the two countries, the computer proficiency gap (hardware, software) between workers in the two countries, limited living space (due to Egypt's housing problem) makes it difficult for the telecommuters to set up boundaries for family members, the inability to own a personal computer at home and cultural constraints where in a male-dominated culture such as the Egyptian one, a man working at home is not be encouraged.

The work redesign perspective encompasses a number of theoretical traditions. Work simplification, job enrichment, job enlargement, and the socio technical approach offered limited possibilities for revising work processes to better bridge work and family needs (Bailing & Harrington, 2004). The introduction of alternative work schedules provided a redesign option that influenced employees' ability to do their work and simultaneously

meet their family responsibilities.

Formal work family support programs provide tangible support in the way of value addition services or financial benefits that ease the burden of dependent care. Such programs include on-site child care centers (Kossek & Nichol, 1992), dependent care resource and referral services, paid family leave policies, elder care programs, and financial assistance for dependent care (Grover & Crooker, 1995). The idea of employees as self-interested actors engaged in a "give and take" relationship with their organization has long been espoused. However, few theorists have attempted to explain work-family program use in such simple economic terms. Self-interest theory (Sears & Funk, 1991) depicts employee actions as derived from salient personal gains to maximize the utility of their actions. In this way, work-family support programs should be viewed favorably to the extent that they provide "short to medium-term impact on the material well-being of the individual's own personal life (or that of his or her immediate family)" (Sears & Funk, 1991: 16). The central tenet underlying this self-interest perspective as applied to program use is that when employees with dependents use work family support programs, it reduces their work family conflict and this, in turn, results in favorable organizational outcomes as a function of realized utility. Similar to the theory of work adjustment, high congruence between employees' immediate work-family needs and the reinforcement system of the organization also leads to more positive job attitudes and performance (Bales et al,

1999).

Similarly, Perry-Smith and Blum (2000) suggest that through the provision of work-family programs, employers send signals to employees regarding values of the organization. Because work family programs are discretionary, employees likely draw positive conclusions about the values of the organization. Further, regardless of personal benefit, work-family programs are likely perceived by all employees as symbols of corporate concern and support for family well being, thus resulting in favorable outcomes for the organization (Grover & Crocker, 1995). Research by Judies and Lyness (1999) among 11,815 managers in a financial services organization found that managers who took leaves of absence, both family and illness related, received fewer subsequent promotions and salary increases than those who did not take leave, even after controlling for performance ratings. Regardless of type of leave, length of absence, or when leave was taken, managers who took multiple leaves of absence received fewer rewards than managers who took only one leave of absence. It is therefore not surprising that work life balance practices tend to be under utilized by male employees, single employees, and career-oriented mothers (Whitehouse and Zetlin, 1999), and that apprehension of negative career consequences for using practices has been associated with increased levels of work life conflict (Anderson et al., 2002).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research design was a descriptive cross

sectional survey. A cross sectional approach enhances the credence of results by providing conclusions on data as at a given point in time. It involves collecting and comparing data from phenomena as at the time of study. This allowed patterns of convergence to develop and corroborate the overall interpretation of the relationships between the study variables. The descriptive cross-sectional design is considered to be robust for effects of relationship studies and suitable for studies that aim to analyze a phenomenon, situation, problem attitude or issue by considering a cross-section of the population at one point in time (Mugenda, 2003). The study was based on all horticultural farms in Naivasha which represents most horticultural farms in Kenya. According to Lake Naivasha's Growers Group (LNGG), there are 22 horticultural farms in Naivasha (The Lake Naivasha Growers' Group website). The study used primary data. The study relied on primary data that was collected using a semi structured questionnaire. The questionnaire elicited respondents views on various items developed to measure each variable. The work life balance practices was operationalised in terms of work life balance policies, work life balance relating to time, place, benefits, and job design. The questionnaire included open ended questions, nominal scale and five point likert scale items developed from various literature sources that have studied similar variables. The questionnaire had two sections; Section A comprised of questions relating to background information of the farm and the respondents, while section B comprised of questions relating to work life

balance practices. Data was collected from the Human Resources Managers from the 22 horticultural farms.. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, like the mean and the standard deviation.

## RESULTS

This section presents and analyses the findings of the study and provides an interpretation. The objective of the study was to investigate the extent to which work life balance practices are adopted by horticultural farms in Kenya. Questionnaires were distributed to 22 human resources managers in the farms that were listed in the horticultural council website as members of Lake Naivasha's Growers Group (LNGG). Out of these 20 questionnaires were duly filled and collected. This translates to a 91% response rate.

Respondents were asked questions relating to the extent of adoption of work life balance practices in their respective farms. Given a set of work life balance practices, the respondents were asked to indicate those which were not practiced at all (1), practiced to a moderate extent (2), if they were not sure (3), those practiced to a great extent (4), and those practiced to a very great extent (5). The data was summarized in a tally sheet that was used to compute the means and the standard deviations. The means were interpreted as follows: 0 – 1.4 practice is not adopted. 1.5 – 2.4 practice is adopted to a moderate extent. 2.5 – 3.4 respondent is not aware. 3.5 – 4.4 practice is adopted to a

large extent. 4.5–5.0 practice is adopted to a very large extent. A standard deviation that is greater than 1 indicates that the farms did not agree and therefore did not uniformly adopt that particular practice

The data on work life balance practices included work life balance policies, work life balance relating to time, place, benefits, and job design

### Work Life Balance Practices

The first question asked was whether a work life balance policy existed in the organisation.. This is relevant because it is only from such a document that the practices can be determined and implemented consistently regardless of the office holder. All the 20 respondents agreed that their farms had a document that outlined their farm's work life balance policy. This means that for all the farms the issue of work life balance is critical enough to warrant the establishment of an outlining document or formal policy.

### Work Life Balance Practices Relating to Time

The study sought to establish work life balance practices relating to time adopted by horticultural firms This would indicate the amount of freedom the employees had to establish their own daily or weekly routine, because it meshes well with their routines and responsibilities outside work. The results are as summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Practices relating to time**

TIME			
QUESTION NUMBER	SUBJECT	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
1	Flexible reporting time	1.00	0.00
2	flexible working days	4.65	0.93
3	flexible working hours	1.20	0.41
4	days off for overtime worked	4.95	0.22
5	restricted overtime hrs	5.00	0.00
6	time off for family emergencies/events	5.00	0.00
7	optional weekend work	4.45	1.23
8	Exchanging of shifts	3.70	0.92
	Overall	3.74	

An overall mean of 3.74 indicates that practices relating to time are adopted by the farms to a great extent. However, for optional weekend work, the standard deviation of 1.23, being greater than 1, indicates that the farms do not agree on the adoption of this practice. In summary, this data shows that none of the farms allow for flexible reporting time, and most do not allow for flexible working hours either. However, all the farms to a very large extent have a restricted number of overtime hours, and that employees are allowed time off to attend to family matters. Majority of the farms also allow employees to exchange their shifts and to take time off instead of pay for overtime worked. Although they were not all in agreement, many of the farms also allow the employees to choose whether or not to work over the weekends and they also allow for flexible working days.

#### **Work Life Balance Practices Relating to the place**

The study also sought to establish work life balance practices relating to place adopted by horticultural farms. This would assess the freedom granted to the employees to work at a place other than the farm's premises. The responses are summarized in table 2 below. One of the findings of the study by Ferris & Martinson (2003) was that arrangements that involve reduced number of hours at work are associated with lower levels of work-family conflict.

**Table 2: Practices relating to place**

PLACE			
QUESTION NUMBER	SUBJECT	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
9	Tele working	2.35	0.75
10	Provision of teleworking resources	2.15	0.55
11	Regular facility maintenance.	4.85	0.49
	Overall	3.12	

An overall mean of 3.12 indicates that practices relating to place are only moderately practised by the farms. In summary the horticultural farms do not encourage employees to work away from the farms, possibly because the bulk are engaged in actual crop husbandry and can therefore only accomplish their tasks at the farms where the crops are. In addition majority of the farms actively engage in regular facility inspection and maintenance to ensure they operate efficiently, and to reduce replacement costs.

#### 4.1. Work Life Balance Practices Relating to the Job design

The study also sought to establish work life balance practices relating to job design adopted by horticultural. According to Hackman & Oldham, (1980), the job design has an impact on the psychological state of the employees and their ability to do their work and simultaneously meet their family responsibilities. A positive impact is therefore more likely to lead to favorable work outcomes: high work productivity and low absenteeism and turnover.

**Table 3: Practices relating to the job**

JOB			
QUESTION NUMBER	SUBJECT	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
12	Orientation	5.00	0.00
13	job sharing	3.85	0.67
14	Autonomy of work	1.58	0.50
15	flexible pay day	1.00	0.00
16	Provision of protective clothing	4.90	0.31
17	Training on use of equipment	5.00	0.00
18	performance feed back	3.70	1.34
	Overall	3.58	

From the above analysis, all managers said that orientation and training of employees on the use of machinery are practiced to a very great extent. Most of the managers also agreed that provision of protective clothing and equipment, is also practiced to a very great extent. Job sharing with and provision of performance feedback to employees are practiced to a great extent. Work autonomy and flexible pay day seems to be not much practices. with a mean of 1.58 is practised to a moderate extent.. An overall mean of 3.58 means that practices relating to the job are adopted by the farms to a great extent. However, as shown by the standard deviation of 1.34 which is greater than 1, the managers did not agree on the practice of providing performance feedback to employees. In summary therefore, horticultural farms in Naivasha have fixed systems of paying employees which the employees are not allowed to vary. Further, all the farms give their employees job orientation and training on the use of machinery and equipment. In addition, majority of the farms provide their

employees with protective clothing and equipment. Most of the farms also allow employees to share their jobs if they feel it is too much for them to accomplish on their own. The farms also provide performance feedback to their employees possibly by setting of performance targets against which the employees' performance is measured.

### **Work Life Balance Practices Relating to Benefits**

The study also sought to establish work life balance practices relating to benefits adopted by horticultural. Through the provision of work-family programs and benefits, employers send signals to employees regarding values of the organization. Therefore regardless of personal benefit, work-family programs are likely to be perceived by all employees as symbols of corporate concern and support for their family's well being; resulting in favorable outcomes for the organization (Grover & Crocker, 1995).The responses are summarized on table 4 below.

**Table 4: Practices relating to benefits**

<b>BENEFITS</b>			
<b>QUESTION NUMBER</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>MEAN</b>	<b>STANDARD DEVIATION</b>
19	Paid maternity	5.00	0.00
20	Paid paternity	5.00	0.00
21	paid compassionate	5.00	0.00
22	unpaid compassionate	2.30	0.73
23	paid study	1.30	0.92
24	unpaid study	1.25	0.44
25	daycare centre	1.25	0.44
26	family fun day	1.25	0.55
27	health programs	4.15	0.37

28	low interest loans	1.25	0.44
29	no interest loans	1.15	0.37
30	paid staff tuition	1.30	0.92
31	paid tuition for children	2.10	1.33
32	work place shops	3.70	1.30
33	free company products	1.20	0.41
34	discounted company products	1.40	0.50
35	work place transport	2.30	0.73
36	Employee Assistance programs	1.55	0.94
37	pension programs	4.20	0.41
38	free/subsidized meals	1.30	0.47
	Overall	2.40	

Table 4 above shows that all the managers agreed that paid paternity, maternity and compassionate leaves are adopted to a very great extent. Provision of health programs, establishment of work place shops and provision of pension programs are also practiced. Provision of work place transport and payment of tuition for employees' children are practised moderately. An overall mean of 2.4 implies that work life balance practices relating to benefits were only not practices much in the farms. It is worth noting that the managers did not agree on provision of the shops as indicated by a standard deviation of 1.30. Further, a standard deviation of 1.33 for payment of tuition fees for employees' children again indicates that the farms did not agree on the adoption of this practice.

These results imply that with reference to practices relating to job benefits, all the farms comply with statutory requirements to grant paid paternity and maternity leaves. They all also find it prudent to grant fully paid compassionate leave to their employees. Those who paid tuition for employees' children specified further that this benefit related only to the chief executive officer. The farms either had small health centers or took out medical covers for their staff to ensure the employees health was taken care of. Along with this, all the farms had some sort of pension programs to help employees save for their retirement. The farms also found it important to have convenience shops within the farms to save on time spent looking for small convenience items like cigarettes and snacks. On average the farms do not

provide for study leave. Majority of the farms also expect employees to live within their means and do not therefore offer loans of any sort to them. In the event that the employees would be interested in purchasing farm products, they would have to do so at market rates. The farms also do not find it important to provide free or subsidized meals for employees. Most of the farms also find no value in establishing day care centers for employees' dependants while the employees are at work.

## **DISCUSSION**

All the respondents agreed that their farms had a document that outlined their farm's work life balance policy. This means that for all the farms the issue of work life balance is critical enough to warrant the establishment of an outlining document or formal policy. In summary, this data shows that none of the farms allow for flexible reporting time, and most do not allow for flexible working hours either. However, all the farms agree that they have a restricted number of overtime hours, and that employees are allowed time off to attend to family matters. Majority of the farms also allow employees to exchange their shifts and to take time off instead of pay for overtime worked. Although they were not all in agreement, many of the farms also allow the employees to choose whether or not to work over the weekends and they also allow for flexible working days. This is in line with Ridgley et al., (2005) who said that organizations that offer flexi time require all employees to be on the job during a set of core hours, but allow employees more choice over their work schedules on either side of these core

hours

The horticultural farms do not encourage employees to work away from the farms, possibly because the bulk are engaged in actual crop husbandry and can therefore only accomplish their tasks at the farms where the crops are unlike in other industries like white collar jobs. Information technology has been used to enable virtual proximity to information and therefore remote information-intensive work. As a result, white-collar workers now have the option of telecommuting and working at a remote location in either fixed (e.g. home) or mobile (e.g. hotel) modes (Gordon and Kelly, 1988).

Horticultural farms in Naivasha have fixed systems of paying employees which the employees are not allowed to vary. Further, all the farms give their employees job orientation and training on the use of machinery and equipment. In addition, majority of the farms provide their employees with protective clothing and equipment. Most of the farms also allow employees to share their jobs if they feel it is too much for them to accomplish on their own. These facilities are in line with an effective work characteristics model by Hackman & Oldham, (1980). According to this model job design has an impact on the psychological state of the employees and their ability to do their work and simultaneously meet their family responsibilities

Personal benefit, work-family programs are likely to be perceived by all employees as symbols of corporate

concern and support for their family's well being; resulting in favorable outcomes for the organization (Grover & Crocker, 1995). All the farms comply with statutory requirements to grant paid paternity and maternity leaves. They all also find it prudent to grant fully paid compassionate leave to their employees. Those who paid tuition for employees' children specified further that this benefit related only to the chief executive officer. The farms either had small health centers or took out medical covers for their staff to ensure the employees health was taken care of. Along with this, all the farms had some sort of pension programs to help employees save for their retirement. The farms also found it important to have convenience shops within the farms to save on time spent looking for small convenience items like cigarettes and snacks.

## CONCLUSION

From the findings, the study concludes that work life balance practices relating to the place and to the job benefits are only moderately adopted by horticultural farms in Naivasha, whereas those relating to time and to the job are adopted to a great extent. These findings, particularly the moderate rating of work life practices relating to benefits and place corroborate the negative press reports and various labour unrests that have affected horticultural farms in Kenya the recent past. Specifically, it has become clear that the horticultural farms will have to reconsider their organizational work life culture if they are to effectively respond to employees changing needs. As the nature of the workforce continues to diversify, it will

become increasingly important for organizations to consider all the factors influencing their employees' ability to balance work and non work commitments. This would be a sign of organizational concern for employees, which would promote employee interest in and obligation to the organization. Having employees who make use of available work life practices may also attract cost savings for organizations via improved efficiency and enhanced productivity.

The study recommends that greater attention should be paid to practices relating to place as well as benefits, as they are the ones with the lower ratings than practices relating to time and to the job. In particular, the farms should introduce employee assistance programs and study leave in order to empower the employees to make better use of the other practices they have been provided. Further, the farms should consider introducing flexible working hours and increased work autonomy so that the employee can schedule their work in a manner that allows them to attend to non work matters during off peak working hours/seasons.

This study focused on horticultural farms in Naivasha only. It would be beneficial if further research could be conducted across horticultural farms in the entire country. Further, this study was conducted on horticultural farms only. A similar study can be conducted on other sub sectors in the agricultural industry to enable a comparison between the sub sectors. A survey should also be conducted on the employees to further corroborate the findings of this study.

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