



AN EVALUATION OF QUALITY WORK LIFE INDICATORS BY MANAGERS OF TEA FIRMS IN NANDI COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

This study investigated the self-evaluation rating of selected QWL indicators by managers of tea firms in Nandi county Kenya. The QWL indicators selected for the evaluation rating included; Organizational culture, empowerment, working environment and Technology. A descriptive research method was employed for the findings. The target population was made up of 5 tea firms in Nandi County, Kenya. The study targeted 63 managers from the 5 tea firms in Nandi County using census. In terms of data collection, questionnaires were used. The findings indicated that the managers rated the QWL indicators highly. The most rated indicators were technology, working environment and empowerment. These indicators were rated as being very good. Organization culture was the least rated of the four and was rated as good. The researcher recommended an evaluation of the firms' benefits plan and a review of the number of long weekends offered to the managers. This evaluation and review would greatly aid in improvement of the organization culture.

Keywords: Empowerment, Organizational Culture, Working Environment and Technology. Quality Work Life

1. Background of the study

In Kenya QWL as a movement is on the rise. This has mainly been brought about as a result of the competitive nature of the global market Kenya is a part of. According to Chimoi (2012), the impact of QWL in Kenya's finance ministry, offers a competitive edge and enhances employee productivity. According to Kavalu (2009), the need to retain employees has led to the rise of QWL awareness by organizations. This is since an improvement in QWL leads to employee job satisfaction. In reference to Arunatilake (2000) Kenya has a higher productivity rate in the plantation sector than Sri Lanka. This he noted was a result of the child care facilities firms in the plantation sector have put in place. This child care facilities a facet of the organization culture aided in enhancement of Quality work life. This is since it reduces cases such as absenteeism and increases the goodness of the work environment. However in Kenya QWL faces challenges such as employers' meagerly paying employees, poor working environments, job stress, and inadequate trainee programs. These problems often lead to high employee turnover and poor firm productivity. The reason for these problems being highlighted is as a result of complains by the Kenya Human Rights

Commission and COTU. For example in Eastern Kenya, Kimeu (2013) notes that the KHRC raised an alarm on the level of which export firms in Kitui handled the working environment of their employees. Shift work an element of the work environment was poorly handled. Hence some employees were overworked yet still underpaid. This had detrimental effects on employee's performance. With COTU they raised an alarm about how Nakumatt (Kenya's leading supermarket) treated its employees. All their chains even the ones in Rift valley were accused of their treatment of employees who appeared overworked and paid meagerly. This revelation was brought upon by Orale (2008) reporting for the daily nation newspaper. The challenges mentioned above indicates that there gaps to be filled. Hence this study aims at investigating QWL impact on managerial productivity on the Tea industry in Nandi County. Past studies on this topic have been done by various authors. A good example is Letoanne (2013) whose study investigated factors affecting QWL in South African Universities. She noted that low Quality of Work life negatively impacted a university ability to attract and retain quality staff. Hence there was an increase in vacant positions, and also an increase in workload for the



staff. This was the gap she noted existed. As a result from her findings, she noted that employees felt that the institutions did not offer them a flexible work environment. Another problem found was that the staff felt that the working conditions need to be improved as they felt that those conditions were detrimental to their health. Another author on this related study is Kavalu (2009), who from his study investigated QWL perception in Moi University. He noted that the traditional managerial approach in running a university had led to a low perception of QWL. Hence in order to improve this perception employees should be allowed to be innovative. For this particular research, the Tea firms investigated here were, Nandi Tea estate limited, George Williamson, Kipchabo tea estate, Emrok tea estate, DL koisagat and Chebut tea factory These firms are not only the largest source of Tea manufacturing around, but also in Kenya.

2. Statement of the Problem

As the leading job employer in the Kenyan private sector, tea firms play a vital role in the Kenyan economy. As an entity, their primary goal is profit. They also have an obligation to ensure their employee basic needs are met. Batagos(2011) explains that employee needs such as remuneration, security and wellness are necessary for an organization to meet. This is because when this happens, employee productivity goes up hence increased likelihood of profit.

However, as Kavulu (2008), noted most firms have a nimble view of QWL. Hence their organizational strategy leans on the autocratic technique. This means narrow and simple employee skills are emphasized. As a result of this traditional approach brought upon by organizational culture, employees feel a compressed creative space. Hence some less empowered and less motivated. Also as in Ashwini (2016) QWL journal, he noted that most manufacturing firms need to make the working environment a top priority. As this greatly impacts productivity and hence managerial performance. Menon (2011) explains that in most manufacturing firms in Kenya managers experience a large spill over of Work to Home problems. Technology on its part has not aided but rather has abated for the rise of such problems. In the tea firms this is no different.

QWL is therefore vital in ensuring that employee well-being for examples from feeling creative to safe working conditions are met. Thus the goal of this study is

to evaluate QWL of managers of tea firms in Nandi County, Kenya.

3. Significance of the Study

Through this research the researcher noted that information obtained will be crucial for three main bodies. Namely: The researched organizations, Entrepreneurs', and Research Institutes. The researched organizations will greatly benefit from this study. This is since from the study their policies on Organization culture, Technology and their working environment can be improved. Letoanne (2013) explains that as much as organizational policies exist it is vital that the employees know how they apply. The onus is then on the Policy makers to clarify and train their employees on Organizational policies. The policy makers of these organizations and the related industry hence will also find the output of this study as vital.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Empowerment

In Explaining the Relationship between Empowerment and Work Life Quality, Sheikhepoorand Sheikhepoor (2015) did a Case Study on the Staff of Social Security Hospital of Zahedan city. The study's main research question was is there a significant relationship between employee's empowerment and quality of life? The method used to conduct this research was descriptive and correlated in manner. The instrument for data gathering was a questionnaire whose reliability was confirmed by cronbachs alpha. The research findings led them to conclude that there was a positive and significant relationship between QWL and empowerment components such as feeling of competence and sense of independence.

4.2 Organization Culture

In reference to Ravasi and Schultz (2006) organizational culture refers to a set of shared assumptions that guide what happens in organizations by defining appropriate behaviour for various situations. Benjamin (2015), work titled impact of organizational culture and leadership style on quality of work-life among employees in Nigeria, aids in explaining Organizational culture as a component of QWL. The research hypothesis was there will be a significant effect of organizational cultures as perceived by employee on quality of work life. The method employed for this study was descriptive and correlational. While for the instruments used for measures were the Leiden Quality



of Work life Scale, Organizational Culture Scale and Supervisory Behaviour Description Questionnaire respectively for QWL, organizational culture and Leadership. The research findings concluded that there was a significant and positive relationship between organizational culture and QWL.

4.3 Working Environment

According to Linguli (2013), work environment refers to everything that forms part of employees' involvement with the work itself, such as the relationship with co-workers and supervisors, organizational culture, and room for personal development. Kiraigoand Bwisa (2013) research titled Working Environment Factors that Affect Quality of Work Life among Attendants in Petrol Stations in Kitale Town in Kenya aid in explaining the relationship between QWL and working environment. The study's objective was to identify working environment aspects that affect Quality of Work Life among petrol station attendants. This research employed questionnaires as a means of data collection while in nature the method it used was that of descriptive and correlational approach. The conclusion from this research was that poor safety and health conditions, work pressure or stress, and provision of inadequate working tools are environmental aspects that lead to a low Quality work Life experience at petrol stations. The research recommendations were that the stations needed to develop a professionalized occupational safety and health policies which will ensure all employees work in a safer environment.

4.4 Technology

Theil (2014), states that any new and better way of doing things is technology. Axtel, Wall, Stride, Pepper, Clegg and Gardner (2002) in their research "Familiarity" breeds content: The Impact of Exposure to Change on employee openness and well-being note that Technology has an impact on QWL. The research relied on descriptive and correlational method. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. From the research findings they noted that technology facilitates complex jobs which as a result increase job satisfaction. Job satisfaction as previous studies have shown has a positive and significant relationship with Quality work life.

4.5 Quality Work Life

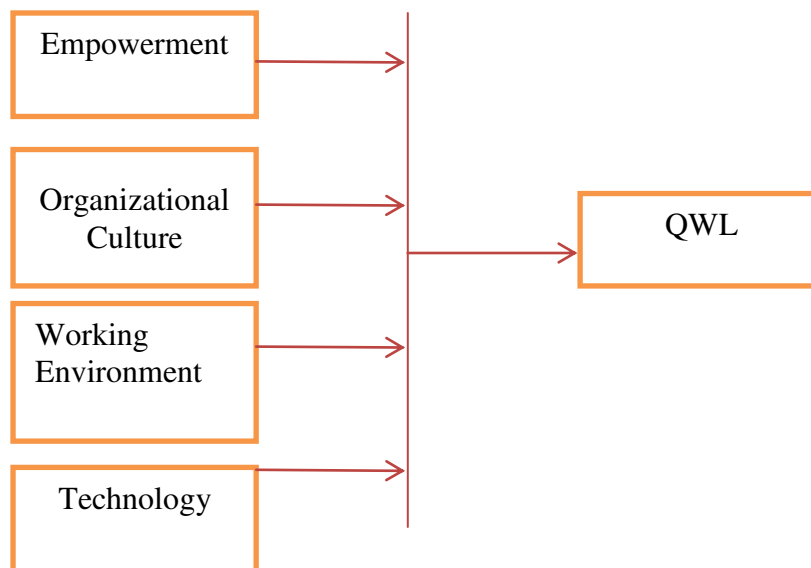
The term Quality work Life, was coined at the 1972 International Labour Organization conference. During this conference a consensus was reached in order to build up a theoretical corpus for QWL research. Hence in reference to Martel & Dupuis (2006), the international council for Quality of work life was created. According to Yaghi&Yaghi (2014), in 1975, Richard Walton, a university professor and a scholar, created a Quality Work Life theoretical framework. Walton grouped eight organizational components that he deemed critical for QWL. In reference to Heiskanen & Jokinen (2011) they were; adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space, and social relevance of working life.

5. Theoretical Framework

According to Rubel & Kee (2014) Richard Walton proposed the eight Variables as: Adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, opportunity to use and develop human capital, opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work place, constitutionalism in the work organization, work and total life space and social relevance of work life. Muftah (2011) further elaborates that Waltons aim was to properly come up with constructs that should be given high priority when implementing a QWL program. And through them an organization could properly ascertain the impact of the QWL program. Over the years this theory has developed and is what most authors in their study for QWL rely on. Borrowing from Waltons theory Elizur as cited in Martel and Dupuis (2006) identify the dimensions of QWL as being, better working conditions, equitable compensation autonomy, accomplishment, responsibility and participation in decision making. Later Razali (2004) recapitulates QWL and approaches different dimensions, growth and development, physical work environment participation in decision making, supervision, social relevance and workplace integration. In relation to the researchers study the above mentioned theoretical framework was heavily relied upon.



6. Conceptual Framework



7. Methodology

The research design used in this study was the descriptive research method. The significance of the descriptive research method is that it allowed the researcher an observational and case study approach. The total working population was 73. The target population for this study was seven tea firms licensed and registered by the ministry of trade in Nandi County (MTNC, 2016) for a period of five years from 2012 to 2016. As a result of the small number of tea firms in Nandi County (6), it was possible to collect data from the entire population hence a census inquiry was used. A census is suitable when the universe is small and can be presumed to yield the highest accuracy as no element of chance is left since all items are covered (Kothari, 2005).

The research instrument for this study was a questionnaire. A questionnaire was preferred in this study because it allowed for collection of standardized data which was easier to analyze, in addition enabling access to a bigger group of respondents cost effectively (Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin, 2013). The questionnaire on the QWL indicators was administered to managers of the selected tea firms. It consisted of a list of questions, category questions, ranking questions and a 4 likert scale questions. Scale questions were used to collect questions

on opinions and were noted for their ease of completion (Sekaran, 2009).

The data analysis for this research relied descriptive statistics with the help of SPSS. Hence data from this study was represented using frequency tables.

8. Results and Findings

8.1 Research Question

Under this section, the researcher found out answers for the research question thus; what is the evaluation rating of managers of the following quality of work life indicators?

- a. Empowerment
- b. Organization culture
- c. Working environment
- d. Technology

For the above QWL indicators the following scale is used in interpretation of the overall mean.

1.0 – 1.49 – Poor, 1.50 – 2.49 – Fair, 2.50 – 3.49 – Good, 3.50 – 4.0 – Very Good.

Below are the item responses for empowerment.



Table 1

8.2 Empowerment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The autonomy I have over tasks impacts my efficiency	63	2	4	3.48	.564
I'm allowed to be creative in solving problems within my purview	63	1	4	3.46	.643
The avenues of communication across departments is satisfactory	63	2	4	3.57	.530
The organization career prospect impacts my productivity	63	1	4	3.56	.616
Managerial trainee programs are useful	63	3	4	3.75	.439
Communication across the organization aids in reduction of red tapes and hence ease organizational processes	63	1	4	3.65	.600
My input in organizational decision affects my performance	63	1	4	3.48	.780
Empowerment	63	2.29	4.00	3.5624	.34316
Valid N (listwise)	63				

Source: Author (2017)

In ascertaining empowerment as a QWL indicator the researcher relied on seven items that the managers did input their responses on. The above table indicates that the managers viewed empowerment as a QWL indicator. This is validated by the mean and standard deviation of their responses. The overall mean of their responses was 3.5624 with a standard deviation of 0.34316 which indicates that their responses were homogenous. The item with the highest mean was “Managerial trainee programs are useful”. It had a mean of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 0.439, hence indicating that the managers agreed that managerial trainee programs were useful. The item with the second highest mean was “Communication across the organization aids in reduction of red tapes and hence eases organizational processes”. This item had a mean of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.600 hence indicating that the managers agreed with this statement. “The avenues of communication across departments are satisfactory” had the third highest mean of 3.57 and a standard deviation of 0.530. This means that the managers agreed that the avenues of communication across departments were satisfactory. The item with the fourth highest mean was “The organization career prospect impacts my productivity”. The mean was 3.56

with a standard deviation of 0.616, hence also meaning that the managers agreed with this statement. Two items had a similar mean of 3.48 and they are “My input in organizational decision affects my performance” and “The autonomy I have over tasks impacts my efficiency”. However the former statement had a more heterogeneous response compared the later as a result of their varying standard deviations. Both this statements indicated that the managers did tend to agree with. The item with least mean was “I’m allowed to be creative in solving problems within my purview”. This statement had a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 0.643. Hence indicating that on this statement the managers, tend to agree that they are allowed to solve problems within their purview.

From the findings, citing the item with the highest mean which was *managerial trainee programs are useful*, the researcher concluded that the firms need to continue with these programs as it does boost the empowerment of their managers and hence their QWL. In interpretation of the item with the least mean the researcher noted that the managers viewed their ability to be creative in solving problems within their purview as being somehow limited. The researcher hence recommended that in order to boost the managerial



empowerment, firms should allow for more creative room in solving problems.

Finally with the cumulative mean being 3.54, this showed that the managers rating for empowerment was very good. Meyerson and Dewettinck (2012), noted that empowerment significantly affects employee performance. In their study they found out that empowerment implementation by way of delegation and reward giving caused employee performance to improve. Focusing on

this current research, items such as “The organization career prospect impacts my productivity” and “managerial trainee programs are useful” had very good ratings. These two items represent the empowerment factors of delegation and reward giving which according to Meyerson and Dewettinck (2012) findings impact performance. Hence indicating that with this study the managerial performance was likely to be good.

Organization culture

Table 2

8.3 Organizational Culture

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Team work and cooperation within the organization is a priority	63	1	4	3.68	.563
Encouragement provided by teammates in the group is good	63	1	4	3.59	.638
The level of work and responsibility given to me is appropriate to my skills and capabilities	63	2	4	3.51	.592
My department allows for the possibility of performing multi tasks	63	2	4	3.62	.521
The job security is good	63	1	4	3.22	.924
The benefits plan for health is satisfactory	63	1	4	3.21	.786
The benefits plan for my retirement is satisfactory	63	1	4	3.16	.954
The benefits plan for my life insurance is satisfactory	63	1	4	3.11	.969
Organizational Culture	63	1.75	4.00	3.3869	.51083
Valid N (listwise)	63				

Source: Author (2017)

In terms of Organization culture as a quality of work life indicator, the managers on average tend to agree that it does influence their performance. This can be seen from the homogenous response of the respondents, which is confirmed by a 3.3869 mean and a standard deviation of .51083. In order to ascertain the managerial evaluation rating for this QWL indicator, eight items were considered. The mean for the responses ranged from the highest mean having 3.68 to the lowest having 3.11. “Team work and cooperation within the organization is a priority”, produced the highest mean of 3.68 with a standard deviation of 0.563, showing that the

managers agreed that their various organizations prioritized team work. “My department allows for the possibility of performing multi tasks”, had the second highest mean of 3.62 with a standard deviation of 0.521 hence indicating that the managers agreed that their respective organizations allowed for possibilities of multitasking. “Encouragement provided by teammates in the group is good” had the third highest mean of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 0.638. This also implies that the managers agreed with this statement. “The level of work and responsibility given to me is appropriate to my skills and capabilities”, had the fourth highest mean of 3.51



and a standard deviation of 0.641 which indicates that the managers agreed with this statement. “The job security is good” came in at fifth position with a mean of 3.22 and a standard deviation of 0.924. This implied that the managers tend to agree that their respective organizations job security was good. “The benefits plan for health is satisfactory”, had the sixth highest mean of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 0.786, which means that the employees also tend to agree with this statement. “The benefits plan for my retirement is satisfactory” had the second lowest mean of 3.16 and a standard deviation of 0.954 which means that the managers also tend to agree with this statement. “The benefits plan for my life insurance is satisfactory” produced the lowest mean at 3.11 and a standard deviation of 0.969. This means that the managers tend to agree that this statement had an influence on their managerial performance.

In interpretation of the item with the highest mean which showed that the organizations prioritized team work the researcher interprets that this culture practice as being impactful and hence recommends that the organizations continue in this path as results from past literature indicate it boosts the organizations culture and hence the QWL. In terms of the item with the least

mean the researcher interprets that the benefits plan for the employee life insurance should be improved. Hence in conclusion the researcher recommends that the firms need to review this plan in order to improve more the organization culture.

Finally with the cumulative mean being 3.3869, the researcher concludes that the managers’ evaluation rating for Organization culture as being good. According to Awadh and Saad (2013), organizations with strong organizational cultures based on their values and norms, have a competitive advantage. This is since from their findings they concluded that strong organization cultures greatly impact performance. Linking this conclusion with the researcher’s current study it is clear to see, that items that represent the respective firms’ values and norms were well rated. Hence this research expects that organization culture impacts positively managerial performance.

8.4 Working Environment

The following part highlights the evaluation rating of managers on working environment as a QWL indicator. The working environment is described in nine items as follows;

Table 3
Working environment

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I find the working hours provided by the firm as satisfactory	63	1	4	3.59	.638
I’m in agreement with the number of long weekends I receive annually	63	1	4	3.10	.995
Communication amongst departments is good	63	2	4	3.54	.618
The cooperation amongst departments is excellent	63	2	4	3.46	.534
Tools provided for my work enhance my productivity	63	2	4	3.65	.544
The organization prioritizes the health of its employees	63	2	4	3.54	.534
The environment I work in is safe	63	2	4	3.75	.474
In our company there is a balance between stated objectives and resources provided.	63	2	4	3.48	.669
Health and safety conditions are satisfactory	63	1	4	3.70	.586
Working Environment	63	2.11	4.00	3.5326	.38961
Valid N (listwise)	63				

Source: Author (2017)



From the above table the responses are found to have a cumulative mean of 3.5326 with a standard deviation of 0.38961. The item with the highest mean was “The environment I work in is safe”. This item had a mean of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 0.474 meaning that the managers agreed that the environment they worked in was safe. “Health and safety conditions are satisfactory” was the item with the second highest mean. This item had a mean of 3.70 and a standard deviation of 0.586. The item with the third highest mean was “Tools provided for my work enhance my productivity”. This item had a mean of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.544, hence indicating that the managers agreed with this statement. The following items were rated as follows. “I find the working hours provided by the firm as satisfactory” with a mean of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 0.638. “Communication amongst departments is good”, with a mean of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 0.618. “The organization prioritizes the health of its employees” with a mean of 3.54 and a standard deviation of 0.534. This means that the respondents agreed with the above three statements. The item with the sixth highest mean is, “In our company there is a balance between stated objectives and resources provided.” This item has a mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.669. the item that follows after this is “The cooperation amongst departments is excellent”, this item has a mean of 3.46 and a standard deviation of 0.534 which means that the respondents tend to agree that cooperation amongst departments is excellent. The item with the least mean is “I’m in agreement with the number of long weekends I receive annually” this item has a mean of 3.10 and a standard deviation of 0.995. This means that the

managers tend to agree with the number of long weekends they receive annually.

From the findings the researcher interprets that the organization overall environment is safe. From this conclusion the researcher recommends that the firms continue down this path. A review though, of the number of long weekends the firms offer their managers should be conducted. This in essence will improve the working environment.

Finally with the overall mean being 3.5326, the managers rating for working environment is revealed as being very good. Mathews and Khann (2016) in their research titled *Impact of Work Environment on Performance of Employees in Manufacturing Sector in India: Literature Review* note that when the working environment is good employee performance is enhanced. From their study they determine that the working environment factors that mainly impact productivity are those concerning organizational procedures and managerial requirements. In the case of the researchers study items that correspond to this conclusion include “Communication amongst departments is good” and “Health and safety conditions are satisfactory”. These two items had a mean of 3.54 and 3.70 respectively. This shows that the managers agree with the above statements. Thus indicating that with the working environment being good managerial performance is to be impacted positively.

8.6 Technology

In the following part, the researcher determines from the employee response their evaluation rating of technology as a QWL indicator. To gauge this indicator the following items are taken into consideration:

Table 10
Technology

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The communication systems improve communication across the organization	63	3	4	3.89	.317
The communication systems aid in my decision making	63	3	4	3.79	.408
The office automation systems enhance organizational processes	63	2	4	3.83	.423
Production systems at work aids worker productivity.	63	2	4	3.65	.513
Personal information systems allows me to work more efficiently	63	2	4	3.56	.562
Technology	63	3.00	4.00	3.7429	.28608
Valid N (listwise)	63				

Source: Author (2017)



From the above table the cumulative mean for this QWL indicator is 3.7429 with a standard deviation of 0.28608. The highest mean is 3.89 while the least mean is 3.56. The item with the highest mean is “The communication systems improve communication across the organization”. This item has a mean of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.317. This means that the respondents agree that the communication systems improve communication across the organization. The item with the second highest mean is “The office automation systems enhance organizational processes”. This item has a mean of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 0.423. This means that the managers agree that the office automation systems enhance organizational processes. The item with the third highest mean is “The communication systems aid in my decision making”. This item has a mean of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 0.408. This indicates that the managers agree that communication systems aid in their decision making. The item with the second lowest mean is “Production systems at work aids worker productivity.” This item has a mean of 3.65 and a standard deviation of 0.513, meaning that the respondents agree that productions systems at work aid worker productivity. The item with the least mean is “Personal information systems allows me to work more efficiently”. This item has a mean of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 0.562, this signifies that the respondents agree that personal information systems allow them to work efficiently.

With all the items weighed, their cumulative mean is 3.7429. This implies that the managers' evaluation rating for Technology in their respective firms as a QWL indicator is very good. According to Reddy, Srinivasu, Rikkula and Rao (2009), when Technology is good in an organization, the employee performance is enhanced. In Reddy et.al work titled “Management information system to help managers for providing decision making in an organization, “they cite how technology aids in provision of timely and relevant

information useful in decision making. This then aids an organization in its planning and control functions. In context with the researchers study, one of the items with one of the highest mean was “Communication systems aid in my decision making.” Thus, in linking this finding to Reddy *et.al* (2009) Literature, the researcher concludes that technology enhances effectiveness which is impactful on performance.

In an evaluation of quality of work life indicators by managers of tea firms in tea farm firms in Nandi County, Kenya, the researcher based on the above findings was able to conclude that:

The managers rated Technology, empowerment and working environment as being very good. When it came to Organization culture the managers rated it as being only good. For empowerment the managers cited the managerial trainee programs as being useful while for the working environment the managers cited communication amongst the department as being good. When it came to technology they cited that the communication systems were instrumental in facilitating for their efficiency. The study also revealed that the organizations need to re-evaluate their benefits plan and the number of long weekends offered to the managers. These items recorded the least means and if improved will impact greatly the organizations culture.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings and conclusions the researcher recommends that the tea firms should analyze and review their organizations benefits plan on life insurance and retirement. This, the researcher noted will improve the organizational culture and hence the QWL. Also when it comes to the annual long weekends the organizations give to the managers the researcher proposes a review of it in a way that most managers will agree with it. From the findings these three items recorded the lowest means but it should be noted that these means still ranged on tend to agree.

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