

Evaluating the Influence of Flexible Work Arrangement Strategy on Job Satisfaction

Simpson Osiemo Onyango; Prof. Ronald Chepkilot; Dr. Stella Muhanji
Kabarak University, Kenya

Main author email address: simpson0544@gmail.com

Abstract

The objective of this study was to evaluate the influence of flexible work arrangements strategy on job satisfaction among state corporations in Kenya. The greatest challenge facing organisations is whether their staffs are motivated to perform their duties and whether employees find their work interesting and meaningful. The ways jobs are designed has an important bearing on an employee's job satisfaction. Understanding job design techniques and their influence on job satisfaction will lead organisations to keep the best employee pool for themselves and fend off competition. This study was based on several theories, namely: Job Characteristics model, Herzberg's two-factor Hygiene theory, Clayton Alderfer's ERG theory, equity theory, family-boarder theory, and boundary theory. The research design for this study was a cross-sectional descriptive design. This research sought to interrogate the extent to which the state corporations employ flexible work arrangements and its influence on job satisfaction and suggest possible areas of improvement. The target population was 187 state corporations. The unit of analysis was employees of the state corporations in Kenya. The research studied a sample size of 381 employees in 127 state corporations. The state corporations in Kenya were selected using stratified sampling, while employees were purposively selected. To obtain the data, semi-structured questionnaires were used in this research. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the SPSS package. The findings of this study show that a flexible work arrangement is a significant strategy in enhancing job satisfaction among state corporations in Kenya.

Key Terms: job design, job satisfaction, motivation, flexible work arrangements, State Corporation.

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Introduction

Most people assume that pay is the most important motivator. Studies were done to determine the major influence of employee motivation, point towards job design. Factors such as job satisfaction, absenteeism, commitment to the organisation, employee motivation and turnover are impacted by how a job is designed. Since the beginning of the 20th Century, managers and researchers have put much attention on designing job strategies so that employees are more satisfied.

Job Design, herein referred to as JD, is applied through various strategies such as job enlargement, job enrichment, job rotation or job simplification. Rush (1971) defines JD as 'the specification of contents, methods and relationships of jobs in order to satisfy technological and organisational requirements as well as the social and personal requirements of the job holder'.

Two categories of job design techniques developed are aimed to engage the motivational force of workers' needs through the establishment of job characteristics. The first group, whose aim is to increase the intrinsic motivation by increasing the variety of tasks, evolved with job rotation and job enlargement (Gallagher, & Einhorn, 1976). The second group developed job enrichment to foster intrinsic motivation as granting increased responsibility in the work situation, which is also called vertical job enrichment.

There has been a paradigm shift over time from a traditional approach to job design to a more human-friendly approach brought about by changing business environments where competition is more international, rapid technological changes resulting in changing demand patterns (Bengtsson, & Olhager, 2002). Due to progress in technology, employees' profile change; thus, they become more skilful. Therefore, Cochran and Lin (1992) opine that, in order for organisations to keep the best employees, they

have to pay more attention to their employees' job satisfaction. This is a question of job design, hence enriching a job is difficult and an expensive proposition because it has to satisfy a number of individual and organisational constraints before it elicits motivational forces (Patterson, West, & Wall, 2004).

State corporations play a very important role in the economic growth and development of their countries. In today's tech-based economy, state corporations have to position themselves to bring positive change in society. In East Africa, Kenya ranks number one among the five East Africa Community member states in terms of industrial development. This though, does not mean that it ranks as high as Europe in paying most attention to the well-being of its employees. Most of the organisations, if not all, do put the interests of their employees in line with their various organisational policies.

Strategy implementation is one of the critical tasks (and most important stage) of the strategic management process. By definition, strategic management is the set of actions and decisions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a company's objectives. Without strategy implementation, the whole process of strategic planning will be in futility (Pearce, & Robinson, 2009; Njoroge et al., 2015).

A strategy of an organisation forms a comprehensive master plan that states how the corporation will achieve its mission and objectives. Pearce and Robinson (2009) point out that a strategy is an organisation's game plan. The goal and fruits of strategic planning can only be realised through effective implementation of all or a majority of the strategies outlined in the strategic plan of an organisation. Hence it remains extremely expensive to fail to implement the well laid down strategies in a strategic plan.

State corporations in Kenya, for instance, - whose major roles upon their formation include acting as tools of promoting economic growth and development within the country; facilitation of capacity building within the country; the provision of essential services to the public which are best delivered by state-owned corporations; and creation of employment opportunities due to the fact that parastatals are usually large and require a large number of employees for their operations (GOK, 2013) apply the more traditional job design strategies which include job rotation, job enlargement and job enrichment in order to achieve their mandate.

However, with the introduction of flexible working arrangement strategies like flexi-time, part-time working, job sharing, teleworking among others in some of the private sector organisations in Kenya, there is no literature available to ascertain the level of engagement of such strategies among state corporations in Kenya. It is behind this backdrop that this research seeks to evaluate the various job design strategies and how they influence job satisfaction among state corporations in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several theories have been advanced by different proponents in various fields of social sciences. Those that are applicable in achieving the objective of this research and several published works that have contributed to the theories of job satisfaction and job motivation are considered.

Employee attitudes toward their jobs are important enough for companies to periodically measure them by means of attitude surveys (Hunsacker, & Cook, 2001). Job satisfaction surveys ask employees to rate their attitude toward their work. The value of surveys and related forms of data, as is carried out at the state corporations' headquarters and key divisions in Kenya, depend largely on

how skilfully and effectively managers use these results to improve identified problem areas.

The underlying concept behind motivation is a particular driving force within people by which they try to achieve some objective in order to fulfil some expectation or need. People's behaviour is determined by their motivation. Their performance is just a product of both ability level and motivation. Templer (2005) commented,

'If your staff do [sic] something good, tell them. And tell them again, and again. Keep it up. Put it in writing; send them a memo- something they can keep. Put in the company newsletter. Add a note to their file. Whatever, but make it widely known they did well. This is a quick and cheap method of prising and motivating your team, and it lets everyone know you are monitoring, praising, motivating...

These characteristics measure the intrinsic rewards derived by workers via increased knowledge and performance review. Such rewards have led to greater motivation, performance, and satisfaction while decreasing employee absenteeism and turnover rates. According to the job characteristics model, managers should combine tasks to increase skill and task identification; create natural work units to encourage worker-task identification; establish client relationships to increase variety, obtain valuable feedback, and increase worker autonomy; expand jobs vertically via job enrichment; and open feedback channels via employee performance reviews (Robbins, & Coulter, 1996).

Flexible Work Arrangements and Job Satisfaction

Flexible work arrangements are practices which spur performance through alternative forms of work schedules and are useful for achieving organisational efficiency through its human resource personnel. This is so as it provides opportunities to allocating employees time

depending on the nature of work being done' (Berkery et al., 2017). Recent literature on large scale surveys such as the European Working Conditions Surveys (Eurofound, 2017), the Workplace Employment Relations Series and the Work-Life Balance Study (De Menezes, & Keltcher, 2011) confirm the rising popularity of flexibility practices in both developed and underdeveloped economies in Europe.

Berkery et al. (2017) espoused the possibility of employees increasing their output if flexible work arrangements, non-financial performance indicators such as absenteeism, turn over, and retention will suffice. Employees will try to manage their work-family life balance by reducing the amount of work and/or calling in sick even when they are not (Battisti, & Vallanti, 2013). It was confirmed by a meta-analysis conducted by De Menezes and Keltcher (2011) that 61% of studies are reporting that flexible work arrangements are associated with lower levels of absenteeism and turn over.

Klindzic and Maric (2017) in their study on flexible work arrangements and organisational performance argue that employee-driven flexible work arrangements provide a significant contribution to an organisation's success than those which are employer-driven. Jane, Simon and Amos (2015) in their study on the effect of flexibility in work arrangement programs on job satisfaction of nurses in public hospitals in Nakuru County, Kenya established that there exists a statistically positive relationship between flexibility in work arrangements and job satisfaction of nurses in public hospitals in Nakuru County. Kiprono (2018), in his study, flexible work arrangements on employee performance in Kericho County Referral Hospital, Kenya, concluded that flexible work arrangements contributed highly to employee performance. He further argued that flexibility is a very important aspect of employee job satisfaction.

On flexibility in the workplace and their perceived influence on job satisfaction, researchers have concentrated on the private sector and provided findings yet very few have been conducted in the public sector. This study seeks to investigate the influence of flexibility among public sector employees on overall job satisfaction and further make recommendations on their applications.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional design to evaluate the job design strategies and its influence on job satisfaction among state corporations in Kenya. The study concentrated on state corporations' headquarters within Nairobi County. The target population for this study comprised of 187 state corporations in Kenya. The sample of the state corporations was determined using the Yamane (1969) formula. The study allowed an error sampling of 0.05. The sample size was 127 state corporations. The research study targeted three employees in each of the 127 sampled state corporations. Total respondents were 381 employees. The stratified sampling design was adopted. Respondents were purposively selected. To obtain data questionnaires that had both structured and semi-structured questions were used. To ascertain the validity of the research instruments, the researcher piloted the instruments by distributing 20 questionnaires to two branches of state corporations which were not part of the sample. The results of the pilot questionnaires enabled the researcher to determine the consistency of responses to be made by respondents and adjust the items accordingly by revising the document. The data collection instruments' reliability was determined by the pilot study. Cronbach's alpha was applied to test the reliability of research instruments and obtained a result of 0.695. Qualitative data analysis was done through content analysis and backed up with quantitative data. Before conducting multiple regression analysis and hypothesis testing, factor analysis and test of normality were conducted to test the validity of the variables.

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive Analysis of job design strategies and job satisfaction

Job design is the intentionally planned structuring of work effort performed by an individual. Flexible work arrangements are a high-performance job design tool introduced to respond to the needs and expectations of employees. Flexibility helps employees to combine work and non-work life and to schedule and organise their life according to their own preferences. The general aim of flexibility is to strike a balance between employment and domestic commitments that is equitable and beneficial to both employer and employee (Galea, Houkes & De Rijk, 2013). There are three major forms of flexible work arrangements: flexibility in the scheduling of hours; flexibility in the place of work; and flexibility in the number of work hours. Participants were then requested to indicate their honest views regarding each perception

statement on a five-point scale, that is, Likert scale. The views expressed by participants were cross-tabulated against job satisfaction, which was operationalised in terms of categories. The results are presented below.

Flexible Work Arrangements and Job Satisfaction

In this section, the analysis of the qualitative information generated by open-ended perception questions, respondents were asked to give their opinions based on what they know about their organisations. The first opinion question was “Does your department/organisation have flexible work arrangements?” Of the valid responses, 67 (36.4%) respondents affirmed that their departments/organisations have flexible work arrangements; 108 (58.7%) respondents said their organisations/departments do not have flexible work arrangements while 9 (4.9%) respondents did not know what flexible work arrangements are.

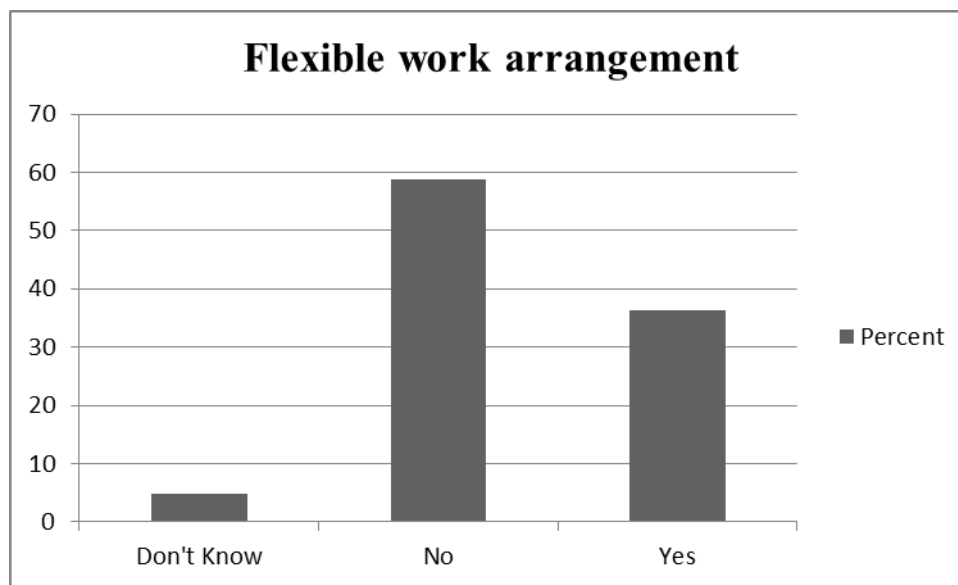


Figure 2: Does your department/organisation have flexible work arrangements?

Respondents were further asked if they had access or applied for a flexible work arrangement. Of the 112 valid responses, 12 (10.7%) respondents acknowledged having had access or applied for flexible work arrangements, while 100 (89.3%) respondents did not have access or apply for flexible work arrangement. Of the 12 respondents who had applied or had access to a flexible work arrangement, 8 (66.7%) respondents were granted flexible arrangement, while 4 (33.3%) respondents were denied the application.

Employees were further asked about the reasons for the application of flexible work arrangements. The reasons were varied, ranging from studies, home emergencies, among others. It also emerged that the majority of those who sought flexibility were young parents. These findings are consistent with Masuda et al. (2011) examples that socio-demographic changes as an increased number of

women and employees with relatively young families in the workplace and an ageing workforce. Data presented also showed that for those who were not granted flexible arrangement, the reasons behind it were also varied.

One respondent claimed, “My superior regrettably told me there is no ready replacement to stand in for me when I am away for studies”. Another respondent stated that the main reason behind his disqualification of a flexible work arrangement was that it is only granted to high-level employees.

To fully understand if the employees had knowledge of the various flexible work arrangements, they were asked to list the types of arrangements available to them. The results were aggregated and presented in a bar graph, as shown.

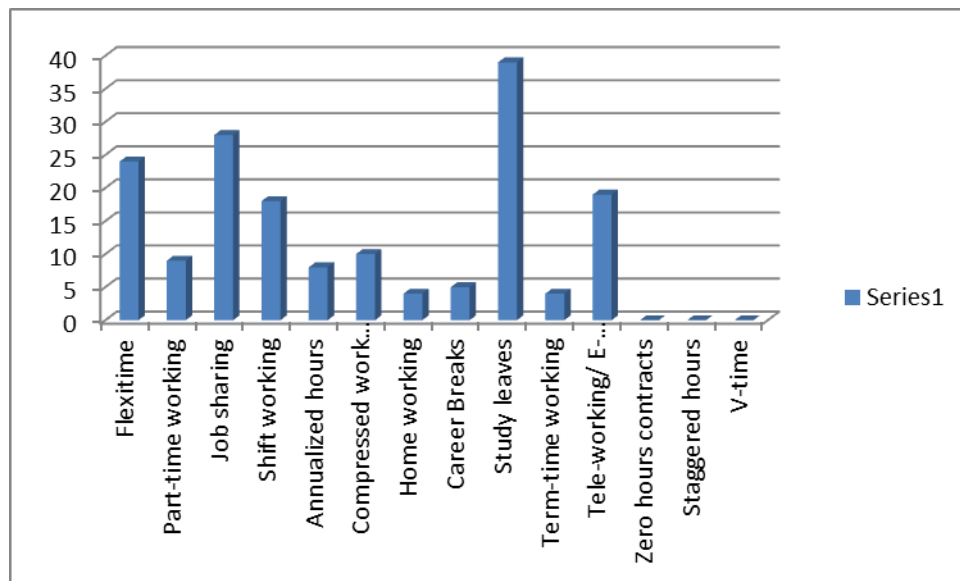


Figure 3: Types of flexible work arrangements

The last question sought the perception of the respondents on how flexible work arrangements contribute to overall job satisfaction. Varied opinions were

given, and the most consistent feature was that it pointed towards self-management of time, productivity and motivation. Further, an aspect of work-family life balance

was evident as a respondent opined that “it gives me ample time to balance work-related duties with family”. This finding is in agreement with Klindzic and Maric (2017) who opined that employee-driven flexibility has greater rewards

than employer-driven flexibility; thus, may help to manage these issues by transferring personal resources to meet the demands of different domains.

Importance of Job Aspects on Job Satisfaction

Table 1: Importance of job aspects on job satisfaction

Importance of job aspects	NI	LI	N	I	VI	χ^2	$P > \chi^2$
Salary			2.17	32.61	65.22	109.7	<0.01
Benefits (holidays, pensions, health care etc.)			2.17	33.7	64.13	106	<0.01
Autonomy in operation	2.72	2.72	15.22	38.59	40.76	128.5	<0.01
Recognition for good work			5.43	48.91	45.65	64.7	<0.01
Desired job			13.04	41.3	45.65	34.6	<0.01
Opportunity for compensatory time			21.2	38.59	40.22	12.3	0.02
Training and Development				33.15	66.85	20.9	<0.01
Open communication				27.72	72.28	36.5	<0.01
Job status	2.72	3.26	24.46	32.61	36.96	96.2	<0.01
Participatory decision making			2.72	29.89	67.39	116.4	<0.01
Work environment				38.04	61.96	10.5	0.01
Relation with colleagues		5.43	2.72	40.22	51.63	134	<0.01
Job variety			23.91	35.87	40.22	7.9	0.02
Working hours		5.43	8.15	43.48	42.93	97.9	<0.01
Flexible work arrangements			13.59	27.17	59.24	60.7	<0.01

In order to answer the resultant question on the perception of employees on existing rewards, respondents were asked to give the relative importance attached to the various job aspects. Results in Table 1 show that of the 15 job aspects, the most important aspects are salary, benefits, work environment, recognition for good work, flexible work arrangements, participatory decision making, open communication, and training and development. Autonomy in operations, the opportunity for compensatory time and job status ranked the lowest,

meaning that these aspects have a relatively low contribution to overall employee satisfaction compared to the others.

Factor Analysis

Before carrying out regression and correlation analysis, factor analysis was carried out to extract factors. In this study, the analysis outcome of the process supported distinct constructs of job satisfaction.

Test of Normality

Decision making that is based on statistical tests is usually prone to making errors. In hypothesis testing, we can make two kinds of errors: Type I error and Type II error. To ensure that findings make sense in decision making, various assumptions are made about variables during statistical tests. The process of testing for assumptions is important since it takes care of any assumptions in the analysis and also helps avoid any errors (Osborne et al., 2001). This study, therefore, performed one test of normality.

Shapiro- Wilk test of Normality

This study adopted the Shapiro - Wilk method. Table 2 presents results of the Shapiro - Wilk test of normality.

Table 2: Shapiro- Wilk test of normality

Shapiro- Wilk			
Variable		P-Value	Z- Value
Flexible Work Arrangement		0.91652	5.612
Job Satisfaction		0.94613	4.609

The data presented in Table 2 reveal that the Shapiro- Wilk statistics for all the study variables were greater than 0.5; hence, the distribution is normal. According to Field (2009), in large samples, Shapiro- Wilk statistics can be significant even when the scores are only slightly different from a normal distribution. This confirmation is positive for further multiple regression analysis.

Multivariate Analysis of Job design strategies and their influence on Job Satisfaction

The study zeroed in on determining the influence of job design strategies on job satisfaction among state corporations in Kenya. In this regard, the flexible work arrangement was designated as an independent variable. Besides participants profile attributes, including age,

gender, marital status, level of education, terms and length of service (whether tested or not), were designated as intervening variables; while the dependent variable was job satisfaction.

Correlation Analysis

The results in Table 3 show the relationship between flexible work arrangements and job satisfaction. It is notable that the relationship between job satisfaction and the independent variable is both positive and negative, implying that as job design practices improve, employee job satisfaction in the public sector improves. Flexible work arrangements have a strong positive correlation with job satisfaction.

Table 31: Correlations: Flexible work environment and Job Satisfaction

	Flexible
Flexible	
Job Satisfaction	-0.2531* (0.0005)

Regression analysis

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the combined effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The test of hypothesis using t-values was carried out at 95 per cent significant level $p < 0.05$, $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.1$.

Table 4: Influence of job design techniques on job satisfaction

Variables	Model 1 (All variables)	Model 2 (All variables)	Model 3 (Drop Flexible)
Constant	0.851 (2.86)	0.1650 (2.54)	0.8359 (2.84)
Flexible work arrangement	-0.0893 (-0.40)	-2.4668 (-4.52) ^{***}	-
R ²	0.3300	0.3738	0.3296
Adjusted R ²	0.3150	0.3597	0.3184
Root MSE	0.29656	0.7376	0.29505
F	21.92 [0.000]	26.57 [0.000]	29.50 [0.000]
No. of observations	183	184	184

The values in parenthesis are the t-values. The asterisks *, **, and *** represent significance at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively

On flexible work arrangements, the results show that it caused a big negative influence on job satisfaction. This suggests that flexibility in the scheduling of work, time and productivity among employees in state corporations is very rigid, and thus, this rigidity would contribute highly to job dissatisfaction. This resonates well with the argument of Robert and Carl (1978) that programs of flexibility have a reputation for broad and substantial effects in organisations. They concluded that despite real limitations in available studies, both behavioural and attitudinal data encourage flexible work applications from the organisational perspective imply handsome dividends on several organisational critical measures. In addition, the results in the model 2 suggest up to 99% chance that the influence would be significant. Based on this, the null hypothesis (H_0), which postulates that *flexible work arrangements do not have a significant influence on job satisfaction* is rejected for being inconsistent with the results.

The regression equation is

$$\text{JOBSATISFACTION} = 0.1650 + 0.1060 \text{JOBROTATION} + 0.15626 \text{JOBENLARGEMENT} + 0.5052 \text{JOBENRICHMENT} - 2.4668 \text{FLEXIBLE}$$

Model's goodness of fit and significance

The goodness of fit of a regression model is the strength with which it explains a dependent variable from an independent or a set of independent and intervening variables. In multiple linear regression analysis, the strength of a model is interpreted from the adjusted R², also known as the coefficient of determination. In this study, the results presented in Table 4 show that the model 2 obtained an adjusted R² of 0.3597, which suggests that the job design aspects involved in the study accounted for 36% of job satisfaction.

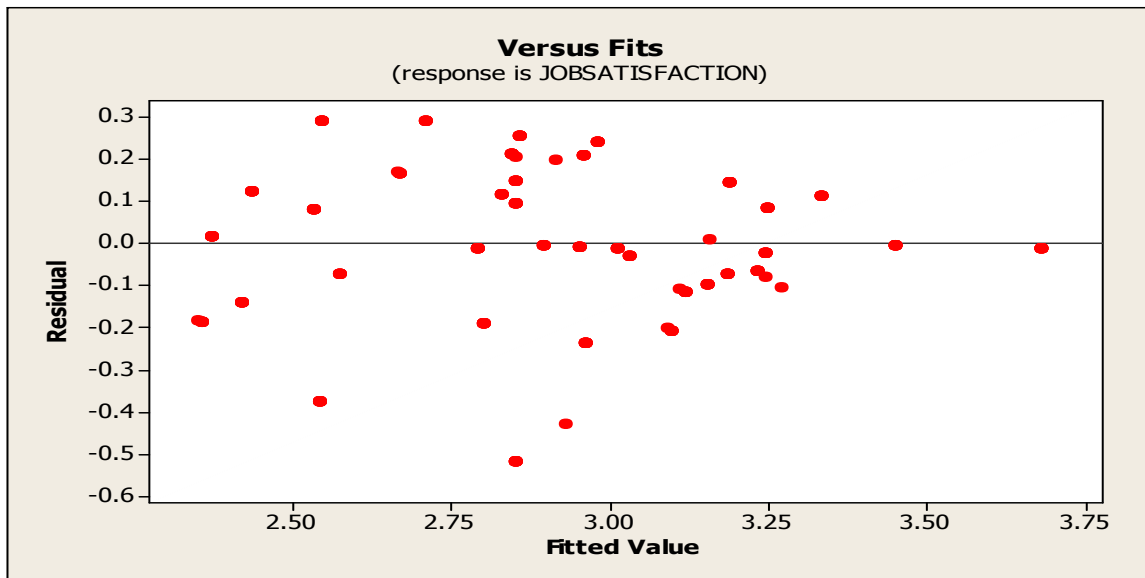


Figure 4: Model's goodness of fit

The results further suggest that the model is fairly strong in estimating the influence of job design techniques on job satisfaction among state corporations in Kenya. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results further show the model's strength was statistically significant at 95% confidence level, which means that the combined influence of job design techniques on job satisfaction was significant.

CONCLUSION

The study established that flexible work arrangements had a negative and statistically significant influence on job satisfaction. The study established that state corporations' approach to flexibility is very rigid. Based on this finding, the study concludes that flexibility is a key ingredient to improved job satisfaction. This confirms Robert and Carl's (1978) argument that programs of flexibility have a reputation for broad and substantial effects in organisations and imply handsome dividends on

organisations critical measures. This led to the conclusion that a flexible work arrangement strategy is not given much weight by the public service.

RECOMMENDATION

Employees expect returns on their contribution; therefore, a balance should be ensured when designing jobs so that each party attains the majority of their expectations. The level of job satisfaction will, to a great extent determine the position of the organisation in terms of service delivery. A revered strategy is one that is looked at holistically to achieve the best-case scenario for all. Therefore, to improve autonomy, state corporations' management can authorise staff to schedule their own work, decide on their preferred type of flexible work arrangement to work with and monitor the quality. Performance reports could be used in this case.

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