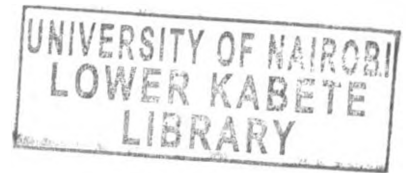


**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE ADOPTION OF EMPLOYEE  
WELLNESS PROGRAMS AT THE STANDARD GROUP LIMITED**

**RONO CHEPKEMOI WINNIE**




**A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirement for the Award of the Degree of Master of Business  
Administration (MBA), School of Business, University of Nairobi**

**September, 2011**

## DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this project is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any institution of higher learning.

Sign: 

Date: 6.11.11

**RONO, Chepkemoi Winnie**

**D61/72845/2009**

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

Sign: 

Date: 4.11.11

**Mr. George Omondi**

**Lecturer**

**School of Business**

**University of Nairobi**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my parents, brother and sisters for their support, encouragement and patience during the entire period of my study and continued prayers towards successful completion of this course.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks to God for giving me the gift of life, good health and the strength to complete this program.

I wish to thank the management and staff of University of Nairobi, School of Business for the support during the entire study period. My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor Mr. George Omondi for his dedication, guidance throughout the period of carrying out this research. His comments on the various drafts shaped my focus on the study which led to this final output.

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God bless you all.

## ABSTRACT

Employee wellness programs have become increasingly popular and are being adopted by many companies because of the employer and employee benefits. Employee wellness programs are a set of organized activities and systematic interventions whose primary purposes are to provide health education, identify modifiable health risks, influence health behavior changes and facilitate a happy life at workplace and beyond. While the benefits of employee wellness programs are apparent, there are many factors that influence its adoption and therefore the success will depend on how well these factors are managed.

The study sought to establish the factors that influence the adoption of employee wellness programs at the Standard Group Limited. The study adopted a case study design and it targeted the head of human resource function in the Standard Group Limited. Primary data was collected using an interview guide and content analysis was used to analyze the data.

The study established that top level management support, availability of resources, employee attitude and initiative, staff turnover, legal factors and trade unions were the major factors that influenced the adoption of employee wellness programs in the Standard Group Limited.

The findings led to the conclusion that employee wellness programs have both employer and employee benefits if effectively implemented and that the head of human resource function is overwhelmed due to the fact that he is the only person responsible for the

success of these programs and there is need of more support from top management and other members of staff.

The study recommends that the company need to work on improving its culture and employee attitude which greatly influenced the adoption. Top level managers should also participate and support these programs for its success. It also recommends the need of a wellness committee to assist in designing, developing and implementing the employee wellness programs in the company. Finally, the study suggests the need to study the types of employee wellness programs in the informal sector and how company culture influences the success of employee wellness programs.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

In today's dynamic business environment, organizations are concerned with gaining competitive advantage and increasing positive organizational outcomes. In achieving these objectives, organizational employees play a central role and their health and work life balance should be of concern to any organization that desires to achieve its objectives in an efficient and effective manner (Krames and Shain, 2004). Nzuve (2002) observes that one of the most important factors that affect employee performance and productivity is their health and organizations should be concerned with it for both economic and humanitarian reasons. Having developed an effective work force (Nzuve, 2002) points out that it is necessary that they are available and ready to work by maintaining reasonable daily attendance and reduction of excessive absenteeism. According to Holman (2002) maintenance of employees' health and work life balance requires that organizations design and maintain functional employee wellness program that will encourage individuals to take measures to facilitate happy life at work and beyond.

According to Krames and Shain (2004) adoption of employee wellness programs is an investment in a corporation's most important asset. Workers are more likely to come to work and perform well when they are in optimal physical and psychological health. Employees are also more likely to be attracted to, remain with, and value a business that appreciates them. Dorr (2006) points out that while the benefits of worksite wellness programs are apparent; there are many factors that can contribute to the success or failure

of these initiatives. Attitude and support from the top management is a major factor. If the support is too low, success is difficult to attain regardless of how beneficial it was to those who were participating. Other factors are availability of funds, availability of programs, availability of resources, legal factors among others.

### **1.1.1 Employee Wellness Programs**

Employee wellness is the constant and deliberate effort to stay healthy and achieve the highest potential for total wellbeing (Hoeger, 1990). According to Donnell (1989) employee wellness programs are a set of organized activities and systematic interventions whose primary purposes are to provide health education, identify modifiable health risks, and influence health behavior changes. According to Hoeger (1990) wellness programs incorporates physical fitness, nutrition, stress management, spirituality, cardiovascular risk reduction, safety, health education, substance-abuse control, sexuality, cancer protection, smoking cessation and work life programs which help employees manage the interface between work and other important life activities.

According to Long (2007) implementing an employee wellness program has benefits to both the employer and employee. Employers benefit with reduced tangible cost in the area of healthcare, disability, absenteeism, worker's compensation and productivity while employees benefit by learning how to lead a healthy lifestyle, be safe at work and maintaining a balanced life. Parker and Wolfe (1994) argue that it is the initiative of both the employer and employee that determines the success of employee wellness programs. Employers should provide a conducive environment and resources that will aid in

adoption of the programs whereas employees should be willing to commit and participate with the employer.

### **1.1.2 The Standard Group Limited**

The Standard Group Limited, one of the leading multi-media houses in Kenya was founded in 1902 by A. M. Jeevanjee. It is the oldest mass circulating Newspaper Company in the country with a mission of informing, entertaining and educating customers by reporting, publishing and broadcasting relevant and timely content through talented and professional staff ([www.standardmedia.co.ke](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke)). This is a service industry that provides six main services which include the Standard Newspaper, Kenya Television Network (K.T.N), Radio Maisha, Standard Online, Publishing and Distribution Service (P.D.S) and Prime Outdoor Advertisement. Standard Media Group delivers news to the nation and several programs that touches on various aspects of life mainly entertainment and education in English and Kiswahili.

The company has nine hundred and fifty six (956) employees each in the various departments namely Editorial, Commercial, Legal and Human Resources, Creative Services and Accounts. The Standard Media Group like other media houses main challenge is high staff turnover due to the industry's highly competitive nature and hence the quest for staff retention and satisfaction becomes the most significant factor for its success. The company has formulated stress management policy, HIV/AIDS policy, alcohol and substance abuse policy among others which aid in retaining and enhancing the employee's wellbeing.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Human resource practices today have become a source of competitive advantage (Coff, 1997). Companies are designing human resource systems which provides employees with development opportunities, participation in decision making and high rewards for performance and in return for these investments, employers expect to attract and build a high quality workforce that is committed, healthy and motivated (Legge, 1998). According to Osterman (1995), employee wellness programs that boost individual health and encourage work life balance will help companies protect and leverage their general investments in human assets. According to Archer (2001) the goal of a wellness program is to assist people in adopting positive behaviors to lead healthier lifestyles and integrate social, mental, emotional, spiritual and physical wellness.

The Standard Group Limited plays a key role in the country's socio economic development. The growth in the company has come about from among others the dedication and hard work of its employees. Being in a highly competitive industry, the employees are expected to surpass their targets and this has forced them to work for long hours neglecting their social lives, heavy workload, job pressure from supervisors which leads to high stress levels and negatively impacting on their productivity and morale. This therefore makes it imperative that the Standard Group Limited adopts effective wellness programs for these employees in order to receive maximum results from the staff. The purpose of wellness programs in an organizational context is to upgrade the competency of manpower by improving their health (Brewer et al, 2010).

A number of studies have been done on employee wellness. Kariuki (2006) undertook a survey on the perception of staff welfare programs in large manufacturing firms in Nairobi. She found out that the large manufacturing firms in Nairobi had in place several wellness programs but the same has not been changing with the demands of the changing business environment. Chelule (2010) carried a research on quality of work life programme and employee satisfactions in UNICEF. She found out that institution that had put in place adequate work life programmes had its employees satisfied than those with limited programs, Mberia (2001) did a study on occupational health and safety programs adopted by the banking industry in Kenya. She found out that most banks adopted similar occupation health and safety programs as recommended by the Ministry of Labor and only a few banks went out of the way to establish addition occupational health programs. On the basis of the above studies, it is evident that there has been no study on the factors that influence the adoption of employee wellness. This therefore leads to the following research question; what are the factors that influence the adoption of employee wellness programs in the Standard Group Limited?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

To establish the factors that influence the adoption of employee wellness programs in the Standard Group Limited.

### **1.4 Importance of the study**

The study will be important to the standard media group management and other companies. It will help them implement, maintain and improve employee wellness programs. It would help them know that factors that influence the adoption of wellness programs.

The results of the study will be of importance to the government. It will enlighten the Human Resource body of the government institutions on the importance of employee wellness programs and indicate its benefit. The study will therefore assist in the development of policies in the government on how employees should be given the opportunity to health programs.

The study will be a source of reference material for future researchers on other related topics; it will also help other academicians who undertake the same topic in their studies. It will also highlight other important relationships that require further research that will not have been addressed by this study and hence provide more effective solutions to handle the issues of employee wellness programs.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Employee Wellness Programs

Interest in employee wellness(EW) is rising and this occurrence is driven by a shift in the developed world from a manufacturing economy to one which is more service-based that brings with it a change in the types of threat to health that employees encounter (Cox and Jackson, 2010). Employee wellness is intrinsically different to job satisfaction or employee engagement. According to Robertson and Cooper (2009), employee engagement describes positive employee behaviour that is of direct interest to the organization owing to the benefits it is likely to deliver operationally. In contrast, EWB encompasses a much broader concept that is likely to be more important to the workers themselves.

According to Archer (2001) the goal of a wellness program is to assist people in adopting positive behaviors to lead healthier lifestyles and integrate social, mental, emotional, spiritual and physical wellness. Such programs include physical and lifestyle assessments, health education, activities that enhance behavioral change and methods to chart individual progress. Brewer at al., (2010), point out that many of today's major health problems are related to lifestyle and these ailments are preventable or minimized by developing positive health habits. Health education reaches people about lifestyle choices that positively impact wellbeing. These choices relate to physical activity, nutrition, weight management, stress management, smoking cessation and screenings as well as chronic disease management for those living with conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.



## **2.2 Types of Employee Wellness Programs**

Organizations vary greatly in wellness programs offered and program cost they pay. These programs have been proven to increase employee's loyalty to organizations and decrease absenteeism and high turnover (Carrel, 1995). They have been found to encourage and assist individuals to take measures to prevent the onset or worsening of disease or illness.

### **2.2.1 Education Programs on Health**

Education is the cornerstone of preventive care and should be given high priority by any employer. According to Mejia et al (2010) health education programs are designed to assist people or groups learn to behave in manner conducive to the promotion, maintenance and restoration of health. Companies that are committed to corporate wellness make significant investments in educating their employees about the meaning of healthy living (Brewer et al., 2010). Primary methods of delivering educational content include printed materials, prepackaged audiovisual materials, and external speakers hosting on-site seminars and web-based training.

The key to effective wellness education is to broadly define the body of knowledge to include any adverse influences on an employee's physical or mental well-being and suggestions on how to counteract them. According to Brewer et al (2010), the topics to be covered during the educational sessions include exercise, nutrition, stress management, illness prevention, injury prevention and ergonomics, personal financial planning and medical self-care. Furthermore, all employees should have ready access to

advice and information about infection transmission and other aspects of employee health. (Doebbeling and Diekema 1995).

### **2.2.2 Physical Fitness Programs**

More and more companies are planning or have developed physical fitness programs for their employees (Falkenberg, 1987). As more individuals recognize the benefits of exercise the ability to do so during the work day will become more important; thus, employee fitness centers will reflect the concern an organization has for its employees. Corporations are becoming more concerned with stress since it has been perceived that high stress levels result in poorer work performance, lower productivity, higher turnover, absenteeism, and accidents (Galt, 1985).

Mayrell (2010) further mentions that increasing walking paths and use of stairs is another activity that prompts the employees to walk more. Some companies are placing parking lots farther away from office buildings to encourage more walking and some are sprucing up stairways to make them more appealing alternative to elevators. Walking increases physical fitness and reduce the risk of disease. Increasing physical activity by just a little can have a big impact on health. Everyone knows regular exercise greatly improves health, but getting started is not easy. The Wellness Walking Program is a program that motivates people to make that most important change to get started with physical activity.

### **2.2.3 Smoking Cessation Programs**

Cigarette smoking is a fore-most preventable cause of death and disability and it is the greatest public health problem. Smoking has been estimated to be responsible for cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases (Danahar 1980). To a considerable extent, public

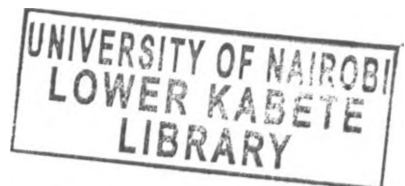
health campaigns have successfully alerted the general public about these risks, and most smokers have stated that they would like to quit. According to Danaher (1980) a survey by the Center for Disease Control in 1976 found that sixty percent of adult smokers had made at least one serious attempt to quit smoking. These surveys, however, also showed that almost 53 million Americans still smoked.

The growing recognition in the business community of the overwhelming evidence of dangerous health consequences from smoking and a clearer perception of its more immediate economic impact have led an increasing number of companies to offer special programs or incentive plans to encourage employees to stop smoking (Kramer and Shain, 2004). Self control has been introduced where an individual tries to control their smoking habits. Aversive approaches to smoking control which emphasize on one side of the solution by helping the person to avoid smoking have also been employed including creating no smoking zones. More promising are broad-spectrum behavioral programs that combine aversive smoking and self-control components. In these programs, the smoker is helped to stop smoking through aversive smoking experiences and then is encouraged to remain an ex-smoker by practicing a set of self-control strategies for overcoming lingering urges to smoke. Interventions by personal physicians have been suggested for a variety of health behavior problems. The rationale is usually that health-risk information and a few carefully chosen suggestions from a physician can be very effective.

#### 2.2.4 Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programs

Substance abuse by employees remains a big issue for organizations. The financial costs to organizations were purported to be over 200 billion dollars annually in the mid 1990s (Hersch et al, 2000). Health officials in government and private agencies, consultants, and other stake holders have encouraged managers to adopt techniques related to substance abuse in the workplace. The major ways organizations have responded is by detecting the presence of illegal drugs through drug testing and putting rules in place.

Employee assistance programs which assist employees with personal problems affecting their work-related behaviors have also been put in place: they reflect a rehabilitation approach which considers substance abuse a treatable medical condition (Blum and Terry, 2005). Drug testing focuses on detecting users of illegal substances. Management may prevent entry into an organization by enforcing drug screens, refer employees to rehabilitation or terminate them depending on the policy of the firm. Even though positive strategies exist, workers may still unwind in an unhealthy ways due to emotional and social risks such as feeling life is unmanageable and exposure to coworker drinking. Despite these policies, illicit drug use and alcohol misuse remains relatively unchanged since the advent of drug-testing (Bennett, Reynolds, & Lehman, 2003). By building strengths rather than working exclusively to reduce weakness, psychopathologies such as substance abuse may be more effectively prevented (Seligman, 2002).



### **2.2.5 Employee Assistance Programs**

According to Walsh (1982) employee assistance programs are a set of company policies and procedures for identifying and responding to personal or emotional problems of employees which interfere directly or indirectly with job performance. According to Benavides and Haillee (2010) it is a reactive program designed to mitigate existing negative circumstances by addressing core problems including personal, medical, and emotional as they affect an employee's productivity. As a result, some employees see an assistance program as a means to only address performance deficiencies and are reluctant to take advantage of the services for fear of being labeled unproductive.

Employee assistance program provides information and referrals to appropriate counseling, treatment, and support services, for which the company may pay in whole or in part. Armstrong (2006) says that there are a number of external agencies which provide employee assistance services. They offer on a contractual basis, a 24 hour phone service giving employees and their family's access to counseling on a range of problems including stress, alcohol, drug abuse, financial problems, and marital breakdown among others. Most services identify a problem and arrange for relevant specialist to phone back although face to face counseling may also be offered either at local offices or company premises. In addition, employers may refer employees direct to the services. Where long term treatment relating to alcohol and drug addiction problem is needed, employees are referred to state services. Additional services include workplace seminars on problems identified as prevalent, training of managers personnel staff to assist employees and related literatures (Walsh, 1982).

## **2.2.6 Disease Prevention Programs**

According to Quelch (1980) preventive health care programs aims to decrease mortality or the incidence, duration, or severity of disease. In recent years, interest has been increasing in the development and implementation of preventive programs principally for two reasons. First, research into the natural history of diseases, especially in the pre-symptomatic stages, has highlighted numerous associative and causative connections between the lifestyles of patients and the incidence of disease. The more precise identification of risk factors associated with specific diseases has made the objective of effective prevention more realistic. Second, the rising cost of health care has prompted an increasing interest in preventive programs. Their appeal is based upon the prospect of substantial savings in the costs of diagnosis and therapy, and upon the lower capital investment that they require relative to therapeutic programs (Walker, 1977).

According to Conrad (2011) screening and intervention for risk factors are the most common preventive vehicles for enhancing employee health. Medical screening includes tests for potential physiological problems; interventions are preventive or treatment measures for the putative problem. Medical screening at the work site, including chest X-rays, sophisticated serological blood testing, blood pressure and health risk appraisals can identify latent health problems at a pre-symptomatic stage. According to falkenberg (1987) maintaining physical fitness, proper nutrition and weight control are preventive measures that should also be observed by every individual.

### **2.2.7 Quality of Work Life Programs**

Work life programs are initiatives adopted by organizations to help employees manage the interface between their paid work and other important life activities, including family (Lobel, 1999). Conflicts between work and family life may lead to employee turnover and withdrawal and therefore initiatives that reduce this conflict can help companies retain valuable workers they have recruited and trained. Work life initiatives encompass a variety of practices that aid workers in balancing the demands of work and personal life (Lobel and Kossek, 1996) aimed in particular at helping workers to deal with family obligations. Some programs provide specific services such as on site day care for children or emergency daycare, where other programs provide flexibility in work hours, parental leaves and vacation. According to (Parasuraman, 1999) work life programs generate performance benefits for firms by enhancing recruitment and reducing absenteeism and turn over, reducing work-family conflict and also improve attitudes by providing flexibility.

### **2.3 Benefits of Employee Wellness Programs**

Armstrong (2004) argues that employee wellness programs help to improve the image of the firm as a good employer and thus assist in the recruitment: this will increase commitment and help in the retention of employees. Williams (1997) says the fitness programs increase morale and productivity and have reduced healthcare cost. According to Gottlieb (1968), health promotion programs reduce overall healthcare cost, increase productivity, reduces absenteeism improve employee morale and results to better community relations. Robert (1968) contends that mental health programs reduce

absenteeism improve work performance; reduce aggressive behavior alcoholism accidents and deterioration of the individual self.

Improved corporate performance is a major benefit of these programs. The decision to implement the program is consistent with arguments that improved competitiveness requires increased investment in human capital (Parler and Wolfe, 1994). Spurred by promising research results, wellness programs are becoming an important element of human resource management strategies designed to attract, retain, and motivate high quality employees thus, may be a strategic advantage firms can exploit.

A wellness program reduces healthcare cost by maintaining a healthy staff. Health care costs have increased dramatically over the last few decades and are now thought to be excessively high. That has caused the current reevaluation of our health care system, including its funding and performance. According to a study by Sherry and Henson (2005) it is well found that in Africa, health care is a basic service essential in any effort to combat poverty, and is often subsidized with public funds to help achieve that aim. Insurers say medical costs have been rising by at least of 20 per cent annually over the past year, fuelled by rising prices in drugs and hospital equipment. This has pushed up insurance premiums, locking out a sizeable number of households from basic healthcare, forcing insurers to develop more affordable products. Kenya spent 5.1% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on healthcare in 2002. This was well below the high-income OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries' average of 9.8% for the same period.



Wellness programs improve morale and productivity. Employee productivity and morale is a particularly important issue to managers and supervisors as the primary purpose of their job is to get the most out of the people they that are responsible for (Pencak, 1991). With a healthy and happy staff, productivity will be high and in the long run it will lead to improved staff morale and hence meeting clients' demands. Conrad (2011) the effects of work-site health promotion on morale and productivity are more difficult to measure than health effects. Participating in wellness activities, especially exercise classes, has several potentially morale enhancing by-products. Exercise classes has the fun element of this programs and a sense of people working together to improve their health. Programs that are open to all employees may create a leveling effect; often employees from varying company levels participate in the same classes and corporate hierarchical distinctions make little difference.

Work-site health promotion presents a positive orientation toward health by empowering individuals. Its orientation is promotive and preventative rather than restorative and rehabilitative and provides a general strategy aimed at all potential beneficiaries, not only those with problems. This makes participation in wellness easy for employees; participants may be seen as self-actualizing and exemplary. The ideology of health promotion suggests that people are responsible for their health that they are or ought to be able to do something about it. This may convey a sense of urgency to people's relation with health, by seeing it as something over which individuals can have some personal control. Positive experience with these kinds of activities can be empowering and fill employees with a sense that they are able to effect changes in their lives (Conrad, 2011)

## **2.4 Factors Influencing Adoption of Wellness Programs**

Even though wellness programs are set up to help individuals set, work toward and maintain healthful lifestyle options, they sometimes fail. Several factors have been identified to influence adoption of the wellness programs.

### **2.4.1 Attitude of the Top Management**

Success of the program is greatly influenced by top management attitudes and by corporate practices. Senior management in support of a wellness program communicates organizational endorsement and commitment for the program; management participation provides employees with involved role models. According to Nzuve (2002) management must give more than just lip service in ensuring the success of the program. Managers should encourage employees to participate in these activities by constantly reminding them of the benefits to both the employee and employer.

Certain corporate practices help create norms and a work environment conducive to healthful lifestyles, and thus, can contribute to participation (Parker and Wolfe, 1994). Examples of such practices include implementing nonsmoking policies, having nutritious foods available in cafeterias and vending machines, sponsoring company-wide events such as health fairs and lunchtime seminars, providing employee and/or supervisor rewards for participation, and allowing flexible work hours.

## 2.4.2 Legal Factors

According to Klein (2009) employee wellness programs may raise a variety of legal issues and should be carefully structured to comply with applicable laws. Several Acts that may potentially impact wellness programs requires special attention and employers should be aware that a program that complies with one statute may be prohibited under another statute. Klein (2009) states that employee wellness programs can run afoul of state laws in terms of reasonable accommodation, privacy, confidentiality of personal health information, and protection of off-duty conduct. Employers should have their legal counsel review a wellness program before it's presented to employees.

There are several laws that impact the design of wellness program for example, the Occupational Safety and Health Act (2007) states that it is the duty of every employer to prepare and as often as may be appropriate, revise a written statement of the general policy with respect to the safety and health at work of his employees and organization. Person with Disabilities (Act, 2003) states that no person shall deny a person with a disability access to opportunities for suitable employment: qualified employee with a disability shall be subject to the same terms and conditions of employment and the same compensation, privileges, benefits, fringe benefits, incentives or allowances as qualified able-bodied employees. Complaint by a person with a disability that his employer has discriminated against him in a way that is contrary to the Act may be presented to the Industrial Court through the appropriate trade union.

### **2.4.3 Trade Unions**

The core functions of any trade unions have been recruitment of members and handling their grievances, which is the mantle of the Industrial Relations department ([www.cotu-kenya.org](http://www.cotu-kenya.org)). The Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU-K) is the sole national trade union center in Kenya registered and operates within the provisions of the Trade Unions Act (Chapter 233). COTU-K's activities have been geared towards strengthening the affiliated unions, promoting worker education, lobbying and advocating for appropriate employment and labour market policies and legal regimes; articulating workers' views and representation at national, regional and international levels and building solidarity, alliances, partnership and networks with government, private sector, regional and international trade union confederations and other labour support institutions

Managers may feel the need to control the entry of employees to their organizations before they join a union, at which time discipline and control may become more difficult. Trade Unions may value items that employers are against and this becomes a challenge in adopting some of this programs for example, discouraging testing of current employees diseases opposed to the needs of the company due to confidentiality. According to Freeman and Medoff (1979) relationship between unionized and un-unionized staff should still hold: treating unionized and non unionized employees differently might affect morale.

### **2.4.4 Availability of Resources**

Availability of resources is a great factor determining the success of the program (Dorr, 2010). According to Gibbs (1983), availability of adequate funds is yet a major factor that

affects the success of wellness programs. He suggests that the top -level management must be supportive and set aside dedicated-funds in the annual budget for this. When adopting a wellness plan, human resource professionals and the wellness team need to create a budget that demonstrates value, and the return on investment. Top executives will also want to see the expected benefits to the organization from offering wellness plans.

Lack of time is the most common reason for not participating. Offering on-site programs and convenient activity scheduling reduces time and travel barriers to participation. Some evidence suggests that wellness programs offered on company time and employer subsidies of program costs increase participation (Parker and Wolfe, 1994). Programs that require staff to contribute financially are also affected based on the fact that an employee may decide that the program is not of much importance and hence plan for his money otherwise. According to Parker and Wolfe (1994) incentives linked directly to program outcomes such as bonuses for cholesterol level reduction have also contributed to increased participation and to positive behavior changes. Health competition, such as challenges between divisions, departments, or randomly assigned teams, has been found to result in increased program recruitment, decreased attrition, and improved outcomes with more members participating.

#### **2.4.5 Employee Awareness of the Programs**

Successful worksite wellness programs educated the employee population prior to the introduction of the wellness and health program on the types of programs available and its benefits. Programs should be easily accessible for employees to utilize them when

they are in need. According to Parker and Wolfe (1994) related surveys indicate many reasons why employees choose to avoid worksite wellness programs. For example: they cost money, the programs are offered at inconvenient times, the purpose for the program is not clearly explained, childcare is not provided, the benefits to the company and how these directly affect the employees is not explained, lower level management cannot convey the advantages of the program to the employees under their authority, employees are angry and distrustful of the employer, wellness and health programs are pushed up the priority list ahead of unhealthy daily work conditions, employees feel forced to relinquish control over their own health risks to the company resulting in a perceived violation of their rights.

#### **2.4.6 Staff Turnover**

Human resource functions is organized to recruit staff and try to develop a pool of staff that will offer the organization good service for an extended period of time (Bennett et al, 1994). Staff turnover is a major threat to competing organizations and can negatively influence programs that have been put in place to assist and develop employees.

Companies with high turnover may find the cost of employee wellness programs not worth the benefit since employees do not remain in the organizations for very long. Bennett et al (1994) observes that employee wellness programs are more likely to be found in organizations with low turn over, since it makes sense to invest in the programs if the employees stay long enough to return the investment the organization has made.

Employee wellness program main aim is to aid in retaining a health staff that will be able to work for the organization for a long period enhancing productivity.

#### **2.4.7 Availability of Wellness Programs**

Availability of programs influences adoption and success of employee wellness programs (Kramer 2004). Every individual has different needs and whatever satisfies one may not be the case on another person and hence the need of availability of several programs. Wellness programs should meet the needs of all workers, regardless of their current level of health and recognize the needs, preferences, and attitudes of different groups of participants. Employees are dynamic and ever changing hence the need of real time understanding of their needs and a flexible wellness program. Survey of employees is a good way to get valuable data and feedback on health issues they are facing and the programs they would want included.

Participation tends to vary based upon the level of commitment demanded by program components. This factor is a great challenge to a firm; program designers should consider the major health risks in the target population, the specific risks within the particular group of workers, and the organization's needs. Interventions should be tailor made to the characteristics and needs of the recipients. This means that varied programs must be offered at different levels. Participation and commitment may be increased if a group of workers has the opportunity to address a specific modifiable risk factor of their choice. It is very important when presenting a new health promotion program to staff that every effort is made to communicate the benefits of the health promotion program to the business and to the individual.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This was a case study design. Case study research design is an in-depth investigation of phenomena that may not be clearly known or understood (Yin, 1998). A case study focuses on one organization selected from the total population of other organizations in the same industry. The case study was deemed to be the most appropriate for this study as it had the benefit of providing in depth information on factors influencing the adoption of employee wellness programs in the Standard Group Limited.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

This study used primary data. An interview guide was used to collect the data (Appendix II). The respondent was the head of human resource function in the Standard Group Limited. The selection of the respondent was due to the fact that he is directly involved in designing and adoption of employee management programs in the Standard Group Limited.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis technique uses a set of categorization for making valid and replicable inferences from data to their context (Kothari, 2004). The findings were presented by making pertinent inferences and drawing conclusions.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Types of Employee Wellness Programs**

The study found out that employee wellness programs have existed since 2008. According to Armstrong (2006) employee wellness programs help improve the image of the firm and productivity while increasing commitment and loyalty of employees. Employee wellness programs has enhanced staff interaction, increased moral, health improvement hence increasing productivity. The study also found out that most of the programs are currently being implemented and some are still coming up.

Physical fitness program was found to be the oldest in the organization. Over the years staff encouraged have been encouraged keep fit by being physically active. Sponsorship of physical activities every quarter like marathons, golf games and football and encourage staff to compete by rewarding them and this has seen many employees participate. Examples of these activities are Standard Chartered Marathon, Kass marathon, golf tournaments and in-house interdepartmental competitions. Employees are also being encouraged to use the stairs instead of the lifts when within the premise. Currently, the elevator speed in the company has been greatly reduced so as to discourage staff using it. The company's parking spots have has also been put far from the entrance of the building so as to enhance more walking: some parking spots are five minutes walk to the building entrance. Investments in a gymnasium/fitness center to cater for all employees and are currently under construction. Williams (1997) argues that physical fitness programs increase morale and productivity and have reduced health care cost.

Smoking cessation programs, alcohol and substance abuse programs have also been put in place. The programs strive to assist cigarette and alcohol addicts, discourage use of the substance within the premise and warn staff against being influenced into using these drugs and cigarettes. Measures have been put in place warning against the use of drugs and smoking of cigarettes all over the premise and when one is found going against this warning, he/she faces dire consequences. According to the findings, once a staff is identified as a cigarette or drug addict, the company liaises with professionals for therapy and in extreme cases they identify rehabilitation centers for the victims to help them recover. Danahar (1980) argues that cigarette smoking is the fore-most preventable cause of death and disability yet it is the greatest public health problem. Company policies on drug and substance abuse and cigarette have also been uploaded in the intranet for each staff to access it. Benavides and Haillee (2010) say that this therapy mitigates existing issues by addressing core problems including personal, medical and emotional issues that affect the employees

The company has put up a cafeteria system with its food and beverage rates subsidized. The cafeteria serves three meals that is breakfast, lunch and dinner for the employees who work on nightshifts. Based on the location of the company premise, it was proving difficult for employees to get good affordable places for their meals and hence the introduction of the cafeteria services. The head of human resource functions ensures that the food provider maintains a healthy diet for its staff. The company and the food provider discuss on the best diet to provide monthly and this has been a success. According to Hoeger (1990) a person's body is the product of nutrition and what one eats determines how often they fall sick, how physically fit they are how long you will live

and a host of other vital factors hence the need of a well balanced and healthy diet. Healthy food and soft drinks only are provided in the cafeteria. This system are also enhanced more interaction of the staff members since it the only place most of the employees including management and non management meet.

Stress management and health education programs have recently been implemented. Employees in the company are being educated in forums on how to manage and avoid harmful stress. Professionals are normally outsourced every quarter of the year to talk to employees on various issues that affect their lives. Stress management manuals and policies have been uploaded in the company's intranet where every employee can use it. Health education on how to maintain a healthy living is also offered including healthy eating, keeping fit, disease prevention measures and first aid techniques for mild accidents both at home and at the work place. Armstrong (2006) points out that the harmful effects of stress, particularly when chronic are regarded as having a significant negative impact on the overall physical and psychological well being of individuals. Harmful stress is a contributory factor of a wide range of diseases and conditions and the recognition, management and reduction of stress can have substantial benefits of improving an individual's condition

According to the study, a quality work life program has been a major challenge in the organization. This is not the case employees in here are entitled to 25 annual leave days but employees hardly go on leave and this has made the head of human resource function to force staff to go on leave. The reason behind this is that most line managers do not go on leave and do not encourage their juniors to go on leave. The company however has

made it compulsory that employees get two days off after working for five days and this is the only way the company has ensured quality work life. Work life programs according to (Lobel, 1999) should help employees manage the interface between their paid work and other important life activities

Planned wellness programs in the firm include health facility. The study found out that the company should have a nurse to deal with minor health problems like headaches, stomach aches, cuts, checking pressure and sugar level which may in the long run help to diagnose and manage problems like blood pressure conditions at an early stage. Flexibility of working hours should also be taken a notch higher to encourage more quality of work life programs.

#### **4.2 Factors Influencing the Adoption of Employee Wellness Programs**

According to the study, much effort has been put to ensure that these programs are in place and operational but there is limited participation and the success of the programs is challenged. According to Dorr (2006) there are many factors that can contribute to the success or failure of these initiatives. Employee wellness programs in the Standard Group Limited have been influenced by various factors such as staff participation, support from top management, and availability of resources among others.

Attitude and support from the top management is a major factor. If the support is too low, success is difficult to attain regardless of how beneficial it is to those who are participating (Dorr, 2006). The study found out that the top management is rigid and in hardly embraces new ideas which have led to limited support from them. Employee wellness programs in the standard group are managed by the human resources department

headed by the respondent. The study further found out that whenever there is a new idea to be presented to management, it is normally one person who is the head of human resource function against the whole top management team campaigning for it which in most cases lacks their support. Top management rarely participates in these programs and this has negatively influenced the success of the programs because they do not lead by example.

The firm has some of its staff in trade unions that is the Kenya Union of Journalists (KUJ) and Kenya Union of Printing, Publishing, Paper Manufacturers and Allied Workers (KUPPRA). Trade unions ensure that employees are treated well and have good working conditions, hold negotiations with employers on general issues affecting the staff members according to (Freeman and Medoff, 1979). Trade union stewards in the company do not perform their role comprehensively. There is limited support from the stewards when pushing for the success of employee wellness programs in the company. Trade union stewards in the company seem to have concentrated only on salary increments for their members and have neglected other functions.

Staff turnover has also greatly affected the success of the programs. The media industry is a very vibrant sector and the employees keep moving from one company to the other. According to Bennet et al (1994) companies with high turnover may find the cost of employee wellness programs not worth the benefit since the employees do not remain in the organisation for long and the firm conforms to this. The main reason for high or low staff turnover in the company is staff poaching by other competitor companies who offer better packages. Through this the firm has lost employees who are good facilitators,

financial loss when a staff leaves yet the company had greatly invested in them for example rehabilitating an alcohol addict and when the person recovers he/she leaves the company for another company. The company loses both the expertise and the cost spent on such a person.

Legal factors have positively influenced the programs in the firm. There are various acts that are mandatory for each company to implement without question failure to which the company is legally liable.. Several Acts that may potentially impact wellness programs requires special attention and employers should be aware this. Examples of these acts are Occupation Health and Safety act and Work Injury Benefit act. Employee's health is taken care of by the acts by ensuring that the company has good healthy working environment with facilities that promote good health for example good computers, protective gear when handling machines, good chairs and tables and even fresh air in the company. Klein (2009) employee wellness programs should be carefully structured to comply with applicable laws

Resource availability is another factor according to the findings. The study found out that the company lacks enough space within the premise that can be used to implement some of the programs. An example is space for in house nurse to deal with mild cases like headaches. According to the findings the health facility has not been a success due to lack of space to house a nurse. Budgeting for the programs by the top management has also been a challenge since it is not a priority to them and hence has become a threat to already existing and upcoming programs. Availability of funds is a major determining factor of the success of the programs (Gibbs, 1983) and there is need to create a budget

that demonstrates value, and the return on investment for it to be supported. According to Dorr (2010) resources availability is a prime factor that determines the success of these programs and lack of it leads to its failure.

Physically challenged persons for example those who use wheel chairs have not been catered for. Every staff member should be treated equally and have facilities that will enhance free movement and interaction in the premise (Hoeger, 1990). There is need for consideration of such persons and should be provided with facilities that makes them comfortable and feel appreciated. Examples of such facilities are rest rooms that cater for them, parking spots and easy accessibility to different floors where they can operate easily. The study found out that the only way to access the building by this people is using the elevator. Wellbeing of some of such employees is at stake and proves hard for them to participate in the programs.

Employee attitude has greatly influenced the adoption of the programs. Employees in the company do not appreciate the programs and do not view it as a benefit to their health. The study found out that such staff have never participated in physical activities like marathon, do not use the cafeteria but instead order/eat unhealthy and hardly use the stair cases in the building. Attitude of an individual is a great determining factor on how he/she operates (Nzuve, 2002). People with negative attitude normally feel bothered when they are involved in such activities and are not supportive in most cases.

# **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Summary of the findings**

According to the findings, top management support, legal factors, employee attitude, company culture, availability of resources and staff turnover are the major factors that influence the adoption of employee wellness programs in the firm. There is need to adequately address the issues to ensure that the programs are a success.

In addition, if the employees fully participate in the employee wellness programs put in place, both the company and employees will benefit significantly by saving on health care cost and living a happy life hence high productivity and loyalty. It is essential for the top management to lead by example by participating; this will encourage employees to do the same and will contribute to the success of the programs.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the study concludes that employee wellness programs have benefits to both the employer and the employee. Employee moral and satisfaction is increased, quality of work life is enhanced and this leads to a healthy, happy and productive employee. For a firm to thrive it needs to invest on its main asset, the employee.

The study further concludes that with the introduction of employee wellness programs in the Standard Group Limited, there are various challenges that are facing its success. Lack



of employee wellness program's team is one of the factors. Having only one person (head of human resource function) advocating for the programs can be challenging especially when there is need to solicit funds for ongoing or existing programs from the top management. Other factors influencing these programs are lack of employee initiative to participate, limited resources, staff turnover and lack of support from trade union representatives.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

In order to sustain and improve the success of employee wellness programs in the firm, the organization should focus on the most significant factors that influence the successful implementation of the programs. The factors of great influence as found in the study are top management support, employee attitude and perception, support from the trade union stewards, staff turnover and availability of resources. The top management needs to fully embrace employee wellness programs due to its benefits and support the head of human function by participating and funding of the wellness programs.

There is need to form an employee wellness program team to help in developing, implementing and advocating for the success of the programs. This will be possible by selecting individuals who are aware of benefits of the programs and have a great influence on them and by getting the trade union stewards to participate in these programs by encouraging their fellow staff to participate and gaining support from top management.

Sensitizing employees on the importance of employee wellness programs is paramount. There should be forums on the benefits of these programs and the need to participate in

them. Every line manager should educate their juniors and encourage them to support and participate. Development and implementation of the programs should not be the role of human resources department only; it should involve every department starting with the directors campaigning for it.

The company needs to cater for the physically challenged. The whole company premise does not cater for the physically challenged. There is need to build rest rooms that caters for them, allocate parking and ensure easy access of various floors for such members. Through this, physically challenged persons will feel appreciated and treated well.

This study recommends need for culture change in the company. Employees in the company lack self initiative even in matters concerning them. The employees have a culture whereby unless they are forced to do something they will not do it. A culture of self initiation therefore needs to be created in the company for its members to reason and act on their own without the influence of any person.

#### **5.4 Suggestion for further studies**

The study recommends more research on employee wellness programs adopted in informal sectors and how culture change in a company influences the success of employee wellness programs.

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## APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
P.O. BOX 30197-00100  
NAIROBI

The Chief Executive Officer,  
Standard Group Limited,  
P.O. Box 30080-00100  
NAIROBI

September, 2011

Dear Sir,

**RE: REQUEST TO COLLECT DATA**

I am a post graduate student at the University of Nairobi pursuing a course in Master of Business Administration (MBA), specializing in human resource management.

In partial fulfillment of the course requirement, I would like to conduct a research on employee wellness programs in the Standard Group Limited which involve use of an interview guide.

I kindly seek authority to conduct the research at Standard Group Limited. The information provided is purely for the research project and will be treated with strict confidentiality. A copy of the final research report will be availed to you upon request.

Thank you in advance.

**RONO W.C.**

**MBA STUDENT.**

**MR. GEORGE OMONDI**

**SUPERVISOR**

## APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE

This interview guide seeks information on employee wellness programs in the Standard Media Group and the factors influencing its adoption. All information will be treated confidentially and for academic purposes only.

### SECTION 1: PERSONAL DETAILS OF RESPONDENT

1. Date.....
2. Name of Respondent (Optional).....
3. Number of years worked with Standard Group Limited.....

### SECTION II: EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

4. Does the Standard Group Limited have employee wellness programs? If yes, for how long has the group had these programs?.....
5. Which are the employee wellness programs that have been adopted in the Standard Group Limited? Please describe.....  
.....  
.....
6. Are there any other programs that are not in the company and you feel need to be included? Which one(s) and why?.....



7. Do the employees benefit from these programs? What are the employee benefits?.....  
.....

8. Does the employer benefit from these programs? What are the employer benefits?.....  
.....

**SECTION III: FACTORS INFLUENCING WELLNESS PROGRAMS**

9. How has the attitude of top management influenced the adoption of these programs?  
.....  
.....

10. Has legal factors affected the programs? How and which legal issues affect the adoption of employee wellness programs?.....  
.....

11. Does the company have employees who are members of trade unions? Which one and how does trade union influence adoption of these programs?  
.....  
.....

12. How does the company ensure that employees are aware of employee wellness programs? Are all employees aware of them and if not how has it affected success of the programs?

.....  
.....

13. What are the resources needed to adopt the programs? How does availability of these resources affect the adoption of employee wellness programs?

.....  
.....

14. How does staff turnover influence the adoption of the programs?

.....  
.....

15. Do the employee wellness programs in place cater for each of employee's needs? How does varying employee needs and preference affect the adoption of this programs?.....

.....

16. What other factors influence the adoption of employee wellness programs in the Standard Group Limited? Please explain

.....  
.....

17. What needs to be done to ensure a successful adoption of the employee wellness programs in the company?

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you for your cooperation.**