

Leveraging Principal Leave Management for Teacher Work-Life Balance: Empirical Evidence from Secondary Public Schools in Kenya

Peter Ochieng Okatch^{1*}, Susan Chepkonga¹, Ouru Nyaegah¹

¹Department of Educational Management, Policy, and Curriculum Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya

*Corresponding author emails: peteochiengokatch@students.uonbi.ac.ke; syego@uonbi.ac.ke; jnyaega@uonbi.ac.ke

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between principals' adherence to leave policies and teachers' work-life balance. The study analyzed the effects of various types of leave granted to teachers on their work-life balance in public secondary schools in Isiolo County, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive survey design and a mixed-methods approach to integrate quantitative and qualitative data. It provides clear insight into principals' practices and teachers' experiences. The sample comprised 254 respondents, including 220 teachers and 34 principals. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS v25. The study reveals a non-statistically significant association between principals' adherence to leave policy and teachers' work-life balance, $F(1,220) = 0.290$, $p = 0.591$, $p > .05$. The study indicates that leave policy adherence has a weak impact on the work-life balance among teachers. Also, if these policies are inconsistently applied throughout the school, adherence may fail to produce the benefits for which they are intended. Improvements might be achieved through more efficient communication of leave entitlements, uniform administration, and training for principals in effective leave management to improve teaching conditions.

Keywords: *Leave Policies, Work-Life Balance, public secondary schools, Kenya*

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1. Introduction

In modern education systems, teachers' well-being is emerging as a major issue as teachers increasingly balance their professional duties with their personal and family lives. It is widely acknowledged that maintaining this balance is the only way to keep teachers effective and the educational process at the desired level. Consequently, numerous education systems have implemented leave policies, such as sick, maternity, and compassionate leave, to support employees' recovery and personal needs (Ostoj, 2019). Adherence to leave policies refers to the uniform application of organizational leave policies, including their types, application processes, and approval conditions. This compliance aims to ensure equity, uniformity, and coordination of employee interests with organizational demands. However, the success of such policies is ultimately determined by their consistency in application across institutions.

In the last 10 years, increased workloads, administrative demands, and institutional responsibility have increased the strain on teachers to have a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives (Mathews et al., 2021; Matula, 2022). Consequently, education systems and organizations have implemented workplace policies intended to serve employees' best interests, including official leave provisions that allow employees to temporarily leave work for illness, family matters, or other reasons.

Leave policies usually provide different types of leave, such as annual leave, sick leave, and maternity leave, as well as compassionate leave, which are intended to help employees maintain a professional-personal balance (Ostoj, 2019). Such policies might decrease stress, improve staff satisfaction, and increase workplace productivity when implemented well (Mohamud, 2021; Al-Kabir & Tirno, 2018). On the same note, Ezeani and Udentia (2025) have observed that compliance with leave policies in Nigerian universities is associated with employee performance and institutional stability; thus, they emphasize the importance of administrative commitment to ensuring that policy provisions translate into effective benefits for employees.

However, the reviewed studies indicate that the presence of workplace policies is not a definitive sign of improved employee well-being. Rather, they are usually effective depending on their implementation in institutions. For example, Opoku, Kwao, and Johnson (2023) argue that employees' work-life balance can be enhanced by human resource policies in an environment with high organizational engagement and effective management practices. Without this kind of administrative support, policies can be only symbolic rather than functional.

Work-life balance has received significant academic attention in the education sector due to its effects on teachers' well-being, work performance, and retention. Teachers who fail to balance professional and personal life tend to burn out, feel dissatisfied with their work, and show reduced professional commitment (Sanza & Asparin, 2025). Similarly, Phiwphong and U-on (2025) note that several organizational factors influence work-life balance, including job demands, institutional support, and psychological resources. Bowers (2025) goes further, offering a broader analysis of trends in teacher attrition, noting that a lack of institutional support for teacher well-being has contributed to rising levels of teacher burnout and turnover across a number of education systems.

There are also empirical studies that investigate teachers and indicate that both institutional and personal factors determine the work-life balance. For example, Patagan et al. (2025) found that personal factors influencing teachers' work-life balance included family, career level, and workload stress. These findings establish the complexity of the interplay between organizational conditions and individual circumstances in shaping teachers' professional experience.

The issue of teacher work-life balance is usually compounded by structural factors, which in the African context include resource constraints, high student-teacher ratios, and growing administrative demands. Though most African education systems have formal policies intended to benefit employees, implementation varies across institutions. Surveys in Tanzania and Kenya have demonstrated that working mothers, including breastfeeding teachers, often have difficulty accessing institutional support systems, such as maternity or personal leave (Mhando & Kayuni, 2019; Muasya, 2016). Similarly, Okojide et al. (2020) found that poor

leave practices among female workers adversely affected family life and personal well-being, underscoring the broader societal implications of inadequate policy implementation.

The Teachers Service Commission regulates teacher welfare policies in Kenya, including rules governing the various types of leave teachers may take. These are meant to ensure that teachers can cope with their professional life, as well as their personal and family lives. Yet, the implementation of many of these policies is usually based on administrative practices in particular schools, especially the choices that school administrators, specifically school principals, make regarding the daily operation of the institution.

In other studies, conducted in the Kenyan education system, the supportiveness of institutions in influencing teacher outcomes has been emphasized. For example, Mathews, Jeremiah, and Ursulla (2021) found that work-life balance characteristics played a significant role in affecting job satisfaction among teachers in Nairobi public secondary schools. In the same vein, Matula (2022) found that work-life balance practices were positively related to teachers' performance in public secondary schools. Although these studies present work-life balance as a problem of teacher effectiveness and professional satisfaction, they primarily report performance and job satisfaction as outcomes rather than examining administrative processes that can affect these experiences.

The study on school leadership practices also shows that administrative decisions can influence teachers' professional experiences. Akinyi et al. (2021) established that principals' compliance with leave policies significantly influenced teacher performance in public secondary schools in Homa Bay County. Nevertheless, their research focused primarily on performance outcomes and did not provide much detail on the impact of policy implementation on teachers' ability to balance their professional and personal lives.

The literature reviewed indicates that, even though institutional policies such as leave provisions are intended to promote employee welfare, little attention has been paid to how school administrators apply them and to their impact on teachers' work-life balance. This gap is particularly significant in places like Isiolo County, where schools often have limited resources and staff, making the administrative decision-making process more difficult.

The path-goal Theory of leadership by Robert J. House anchored this study. This theory, initially developed in 1971 and later revised in 1996, suggests that successful leaders increase subordinates' performance by eliminating obstacles that impede goal achievement and by providing appropriate direction, support, and resources (House, 1971; House, 1996).

In schools, principals are organizational leaders whose duty is to establish an environment under which teachers can do their work efficiently. Path-Goal Theory posits that leaders shape employees' outcomes by setting expectations, providing institutional support, and eliminating barriers that impede performance. Dixon and Hart (2010) also add that leadership behavior ought to be responsive to subordinates' needs, achieved through structured guidance, motivation, and appropriate rewards.

Within the framework of this study, leave policies are among the institutional tools that can help teachers balance their professional and personal lives. By following these policies and ensuring that teachers can take legitimate leave, principals help eliminate organizational barriers that can be a source of stress, burnout, and role conflict. On the other hand, inconsistent implementation of leave policies can harm teachers' well-being and negatively impact institutional performance. Path-Goal Theory, hence, offers an effective model through which the administrative behavior of principals can be seen to affect teachers' work-life balance.

The conceptual model describes the relationship between principals' compliance with leave policies and teachers' work-life balance. The independent variable in this research is compliance with leave policies by principals, which is indicated by the granting of annual and sick leaves, maternity and paternity leaves, compassionate leaves, and promptness in granting leave. The dependent variable is the work-life balance of teachers, measured by the capacity to balance professional and personal life, reduced work-related stress, greater job satisfaction, and lower absenteeism.

Moreover, the framework identifies several intervening variables, such as teachers' workload, staffing levels, and the existing school administrative culture, that can influence the relationship between the implementation of the leave policy and teachers' work-life balance. Overall, according to the framework, if principals successfully introduce leave policies, teachers can better combine their professional and personal duties, which contributes to better work-life balance.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite the Teachers Service Commission's leave policies, their application differs significantly in Kenyan public secondary schools. In challenging situations like those in Isiolo County, teachers can claim they are delayed or denied their legal rights to leave, including personal and medical leave, due to administrative crunch or staffing shortages in schools.

Consequently, such gaps in policy implementation can call into question the meaning of leave provisions, as they are meant to help teachers balance work commitments with personal and family values. Stress levels, burnout, and job dissatisfaction among teachers may be high when they cannot enjoy their leave entitlements, which can eventually affect teachers' well-being and the standard of teaching and learning in schools.

Despite existing studies in Kenya, most focus on teacher performance, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. Little empirical research has examined how principals' adherence to leave policies affects teachers' work-life balance, especially in challenging schools. Thus, this paper reviewed compliance with the leave policy among principals and teachers' work-life balance in public secondary schools in Isiolo County.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Principals' Adherence to Leave Policies and Teacher Work-Life Balance

Institutional leave policies have been established as a significant aspect of employee welfare and organizational administration. Such policies in most workplaces offer employees orderly opportunities to temporarily retire from work on grounds of illness, family matters, or personal conditions. According to Ostoj (2019), leave policies, including annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, and compassionate leave, are critical tools for minimizing burnout and improving employee well-being. Ideally, such policies are meant to help employees manage work-related stress while still performing their professional duties.

Nevertheless, studies indicate that the value of leave policies lies not only in their presence but also in their implementation within institutions. Research in management suggests that policy outcomes usually depend on leadership practices and organizational culture. For example, as Ezeani and Udentia (2025) found, compliance with leave policies at Nigerian universities was positively correlated with employee performance and workplace stability, implying that administrative commitment was significant in translating formal policy provisions into meaningful employee support. Similarly, Opoku, Kwao, and Johnson (2023) found that when

organizational leaders pay active attention to workers' engagement and well-being, human resource policies help increase work-life balance.

In the education sector, work-life balance has attracted growing academic interest due to its implications for teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. A number of studies have shown that teachers who struggle to balance competing professional and personal responsibilities tend to burn out and experience diminished job satisfaction. For example, Sanza and Asparin (2025) showed that organizational support significantly reduces burnout among public school teachers by enhancing their capacity to remain resilient in both their work and personal lives. Similarly, Phiwphong and U-on (2025) emphasize that work-life balance is determined by various workplace factors, including job demands, institutional support, and psychological resources. These results indicate that positive administrative behaviors are important in determining teachers' work experiences.

Studies that focus more specifically on teachers also point to the multifaceted nature of work-life balance in educational organizations. For example, Patagan et al. (2025) found that family responsibilities, workload pressures, and career stage are personal factors that shape teachers' work-life balance. On the same note, Bowers (2025) notes that the lack of institutional support for teacher well-being has led to increased teacher burnout and turnover across most education systems. All these studies suggest that a coalescence of personal, organizational, and institutional factors, rather than an individual policy intervention, defines teacher work-life balance.

The problem of balancing work and life in the African context is, in many cases, exacerbated by the structural conditions of the education systems. Most schools operate under resource limitations, high student-teacher ratios, and growing administrative responsibilities. Consequently, although formal policies on teacher welfare are adopted in most countries, their implementation in most institutions varies. Studies carried out in Tanzania and Kenya have shown that working mothers, particularly breastfeeding teachers, often lack access to institutional support mechanisms (e.g., maternity leave or flexible working arrangements) (Mhando & Kayuni, 2019; Muasya, 2016). Similarly, Okojide et al. (2020) found that poor leave policies had a detrimental impact on the personal and family lives of female workers in Lagos State, indicating the far-reaching social consequences of poor policymaking.

In Kenya, teacher policies are set by the Teachers Service Commission, which specifies the rules for the different forms of leave that teachers can take. These policies assist teachers when dealing with professional duties, as well as personal and family issues. Nevertheless, the success of these provisions usually lies in their implementation in individual schools. The major role in this process is played by school principals, since they are involved in controlling administrative procedures and the utilization of institutional regulations.

A number of Kenyan studies have examined teachers' work-life balance and its relationship to professional outcomes. For example, Mathews, Jeremiah, and Ursula (2021) found that work-life balance characteristics had a significant effect on the job satisfaction of teachers at government-owned secondary schools in Nairobi. Similarly, Matula (2022) has found that work-life balance practices are positively correlated with teacher performance in Kenyan secondary schools. These studies demonstrate the need to ensure that the work environment of teachers is supportive but emphasize the end outcome as job satisfaction and performance, rather than the administrative practice that could affect the work-life balance.

Other studies investigating school leadership practice have also highlighted the role of administrative decisions in shaping teachers' experiences. Akinyi, Matula, and Okoth (2021) established that compliance with principals' leave policies had a significant impact on teachers' performance in secondary schools in Homa Bay County. Their research implied that successful policy implementation can lead to better teacher productivity and institutional performance. The study also found that policy adherence was just one of the factors explaining the observed variation in teacher performance; therefore, it may be suggested that other organizational factors influence teacher performance.

2.2 Knowledge Gap

Though existing research provides a substantive basis for the concepts of teacher well-being and institutional support, a more detailed examination of the literature reveals serious gaps that this research needs to address. Many researchers have been inclined to refer to work-life balance aspects such as teacher performance, job satisfaction, or the horrendous rates of burnout, which Bowers (2025) and Sanza and Asparin (2025) have detected. However, it is notable how quiet it is regarding the actual administrative machinery that produces these results. Burnout is a familiar phenomenon, but the data details of the more mundane, everyday administrative choices and the customary compliance of the principal, which may or may not support a balance for a teacher, are much fewer.

Prior studies such as Ezeani and Udentia (2025) and Matula (2022) reveal that leave policies are perceived through the prism of organizational productivity or bottom-line employee output. This is a limited scope, which is likely to deny the human factor: whether the teacher can balance professional life with personal and family lives. In the Kenyan context specifically, although the Teachers Service Commission has already put down in writing the specifics of their regulations, there has been minimal empirical execution of the fact that when a principal chooses to follow the specifications or to go against these regulations, this is a personal state of affairs that is directly affected by such a decision.

Geographically, perhaps, this is the most urgent gap. Mosso and our current knowledge base rely on statistics in cities or other stable school areas, e.g., the Nairobi-based study by Mathews et al. (2021) or that of Muasya (2016). When relocated to more unstable, dubbed challenging, spots such as Isiolo County, these models are not evident. In such areas, there is always a shortage of school staff, as well as tight administrative constraints; thus, policy implementation remains a complicated negotiation process rather than a simple task. The current research, by analyzing leadership practices in the high-stress environment of Isiolo, broadens the literature's urban emphasis by uncovering the functioning or failure of leave policies in the most stressful situation.

Therefore, the study aims to fill this gap by investigating the influence of principals' adherence to the leave policy on teachers' work-life balance in public secondary schools in Isiolo County, Kenya.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This research used a mixed-methods design to determine the relationship between principals' adherence to leave policy and teachers' work-life balance in public secondary schools in Isiolo County. The design was suitable for integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to complement each other. The quantitative data were gathered using structured questionnaires administered to teachers, and the qualitative data were collected through interviews with the school principals.

This design enabled the research to examine the problem from varying perspectives. The quantitative aspect facilitated the measurement of patterns and relationships among variables, while the qualitative aspect provided contextual explanations of how principals understand and implement leave policies in their respective schools. According to Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017), a mixed-methods design enables researchers to combine numerical trends with contextual explanations to enhance the credibility of the findings. Triangulation of the two data sources used in this study enhanced the validity of the conclusions regarding policy adherence and teachers' work-life balance.

3.2 Target Population

The target population was teachers and principals employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in public secondary schools within Isiolo County. Records posted at the TSC County Office in 2025 indicated that the county had 492 teachers and 34 principals in public secondary schools. The two groups were used to constitute the study population, since the principals are responsible for implementing the leave policies, and the teachers are the ones who enjoy the benefits of those policies.

3.3 Sample Size Estimation

The sample size for the teachers was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n=Sample size

N=Population size

e=Margin error (5%)

1=constant.

Substitution: the target population of 492 teachers was calculated as follows.

$$n = \frac{492}{1 + 492(0.05)^2}$$

n=220 teachers.

The study used a census method, involving all principals in the county, since there were few but sufficient for analysis. The design also captured all the school leaders and their role in implementing the policies as heads of institutions. The number of respondents was 254, including 220 teachers and 34 principals.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The study employed proportional stratified random sampling to sample the teachers. Isiolo County is administratively organized into 10 wards, with teachers grouped by ward. The stratification was done to ensure that the wards were proportionately represented, with the number of teachers in each ward proportional to its population, thereby minimizing sampling bias and maximizing representativeness.

Simple random sampling was used to select the teachers in each stratum (ward). This strategy meant that all teachers in each ward had an equal chance of being selected for the sample. Purposive sampling was used to recruit and identify the school principals. Principals were involved in their leadership roles and in the direct implementation of leave policies in their respective schools. Further, principals were purposively included for their institutional knowledge required to describe how policy is adhered to.

3.5 Research Instruments

The study involved two sets of tools for data collection: an interview guide for school principals and a structured questionnaire for teachers. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions to assess constructs such as principal compliance with teacher leave policies and teachers' work-life balance.

Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Leave policy adherence was measured by approval processes, equity in granting leave, and policy consistency. Work-life balance items looked at teachers' capacity to balance professional, personal, and family life.

The principal interview guide was an open-ended questionnaire intended to investigate the interpretation of leave policies, issues that arise in the implementation process, and how school leaders cope with teachers' leave requests. These interviews offered more insight into institutional practices that cannot be obtained using questionnaires.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The study received ethical approval from the study's institutional review board before data collection began. The Teachers Service Commission and the Isiolo County education office also granted permission to conduct the study in public secondary schools. Participation in the study was voluntary. The respondents were made aware of the purpose of the research and assured that the information they provided would be used for academic purposes only. Secrecy and anonymity were preserved during the study because no personal identifiers were included in the data analysis and the presentation of results.

3.7 Reliability

Reliability is a concept that describes how a measurement tool produces consistent, stable outcomes over time (Mohajan, 2017). Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess the questionnaire's reliability. To assess the instrument's internal consistency, a pilot test was conducted before data collection. A total of 24 participants (10% of 243) were pilot participants in this study. The Cronbach's alpha values for all scales were above 0.70 in the reliability analysis, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The principal adherence to leave policy was =.857 (5 items), and the work-life balance of teachers =.973 (5 items). These findings indicate that the measurement scales were reliable enough to conduct the study.

3.8 Data Analysis

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were coded and analyzed in SPSS. First, the data were screened to identify missing values, entry mistakes, and irregularities. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were then used as descriptive statistics to summarise the characteristics of the respondents and the distributions of the key variables. Regression analysis was used as an inferential method to investigate the correlation between compliance with the principals' leave policies and teachers' work-life balance.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected during the interviews. The interview transcripts were read several times to identify commonalities and themes related to policy implementation and teacher welfare. The quantitative findings were then complemented and explained using these themes.

Statistical Tests of Assumptions

The concept of linearity is the existence of a straight-line relationship among the independent and dependent variables. Scatter plots were also analyzed to establish whether the correlation between principal policy compliance and teacher work-life balance is linear.

Q-Q plots, histograms, and the Shapiro-Wilk test were used to determine the normality of residuals. The significance value of the Shapiro-Wilk test was more than 0.05, implying that residuals were normally distributed.

Homoscedasticity is when it is assumed that the variation of the residual is constant across the levels of the independent variable. The residual plots were also checked to assess whether the error dispersion remained relatively homogeneous. This assumption was met, thus making the regression estimates reliable.

4. Results

4.1 Response Rate

Respondents achieved a 100% response rate, with the teachers allotted 220 questionnaires completing the entire survey. This complete voluntary involvement means there are no fears of nonresponse bias or analyses that may adversely impact the entire dataset. Additionally, such a high level of internal consistency and reporting of the target population is present in this response rate.

4.2 Compliance of Principals with Leave Policy and Work-life Balance of Teachers.

A composite variable, named the commitment of the principals to leave policies, was calculated by summing responses to five Likert-scale items measuring handling of time off, equity in granting leave, promptness in processing benefits, care for teachers during leave, and awareness of leave policies.

In the descriptive results, adherence is high ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.78$), suggesting that principals tend to adhere to the established practice for leave management. As shown in Table 1, most of the responses to all items are concentrated on "often" and "always," indicating a consistently positive perception among teachers of leave management practices and work-life balance in public secondary schools.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for principals' adherence to leave policies and teachers' work-life balance

Statement	N	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean	SD
There are effective ways of handling teachers' time-off	220	4 (1.8%)	2 (.9%)	8 (4%)	68 (31%)	137 (63%)	4.5	.77
Address of time-off requests in a fair, timely, and equitable manner	220	3 (1.4%)	4 (1.8%)	9 (4%)	68 (31%)	135 (62%)	4.5	.78
Teachers are entitled to benefits that are processed and availed in time	220	4 (1.8%)	6 (2.8%)	8 (4%)	63 (29%)	137 (63%)	4.5	.84
Teachers' welfare is properly addressed while on leave	220	2 (.9%)	4 (1.8%)	10 (4.6%)	69 (32%)	132 (61%)	4.5	.75
Teachers understand leave policies and their significance	220	3 (1.4%)	3 (1.4%)	8 (4%)	65 (30%)	140 (64%)	4.5	.75
Valid N (listwise)	220							

The study revealed that principals are compliant with leave policies by successfully managing teacher leave time, processing and handling time-off requests fairly, processing teachers' entitlements in a timely manner, managing teachers' welfare while on leave, and ensuring teachers' understanding of leave policies and their importance.

4.2.1 Effective ways of handling teachers' time-off

The results reveal that 63% of teachers agree that there are effective ways to handle time off, while only 1.8% say they never experience this. A mean score of 4.5 indicates that the majority of the instructors accept procedures in place. Nonetheless, with a standard deviation of 0.77, the responses vary significantly, suggesting that while most teachers can effectively manage leave, some still face challenges. Schools must adopt a leave management system to address these gaps.

4.2.2 Addressing time-off requests fairly and equitably

Most teachers have a positive outlook on their time off request management, as indicated by 62% of respondents agreeing with the statement (mean score = 4.5, SD = 0.78). 1.4% of respondents said they never received fair treatment during the institution's processing of their leave application. Most staff members feel supported, though you may sometimes face delays

or decisions that feel unfair. All organizations should review their policies and clarify their leave approval processes to ensure paid time off is distributed equitably.

4.2.3 Timely processing of teachers' entitlements

The majority of the teachers (63%) say that they process their benefits on time. Conversely, very few of them (1.8) do not get their benefits as expected. According to the survey, teachers generally receive their benefits with the least delay, as they rated it at 4.5 points ($SD = 0.84$). Processing inefficiencies, occasional delays, and teachers not receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled will require administrative intervention.

4.2.4 Teacher welfare during off duty.

According to the study data, 61% of the teachers support the appropriate management of their welfare requirements during their leave period. The analysis of the assessment score (4.5) ($SD = 0.75$) shows that teachers believe that school management can provide a wide range of support. There are teachers who lack assistance during their days off. Teacher welfare is strengthened through consistent contact with school authorities, effective communication, and support provided after leave.

4.2.5 The knowledge of teachers about leaves policies and their importance.

The high mean ($M = 4.50$, $SD = .75$), with 64% of teachers strongly agreeing, reveals a need to continue sensitizing most teachers to the policies and their importance, as only 1.4% of teachers demonstrate insufficient knowledge of the policies. Regular policy awareness training would help teachers understand their leave rights as they strive to achieve a better work-life balance and adhere to proper leave policies.

4.3 Forms of leaves provided to teachers.

The research collected principals' views on the nature, implementation, and efficacy of leave opportunities offered to teachers working in challenging conditions in Isiolo County. Figure 1 summarizes the analyzed findings.

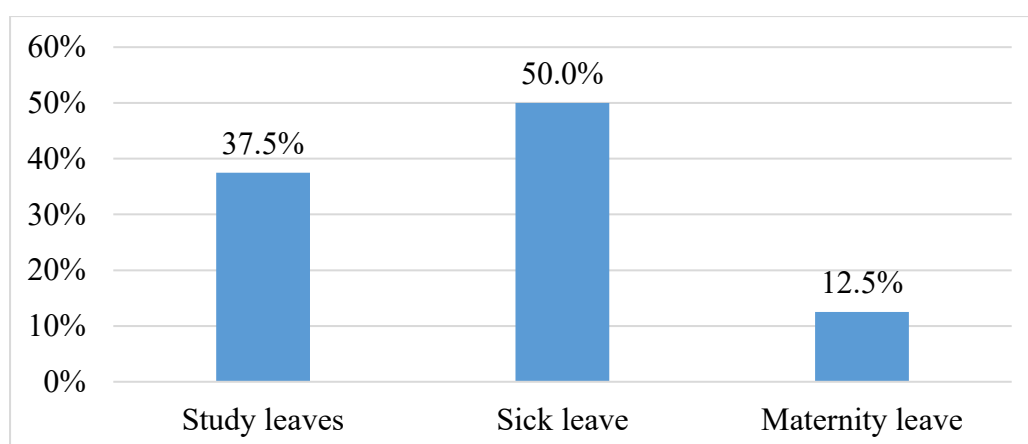


Figure 1: Types of Leaves Offered to Teachers

Figure 1 shows that sick leave is the most frequently offered, accounting for 50%, followed by other flexible leave types at 37.5%. Maternity leave, on the other hand, is the least available, sitting at just 12.5%. This trend likely indicates that institutions prioritize immediate and unavoidable needs, such as illness and emergencies, that directly impact school operations. In

contrast, the limited availability of maternity leave may highlight structural and staffing challenges that restrict longer-term absences in resource-limited environments. Overall, it seems that leave practices are more influenced by operational demands than by an integrated approach to supporting teacher well-being.

4.4 Principals' Views on Adherence to Leave Policy and Teacher Work-Life Balance

The study offers insights from principals regarding how adherence to leave policies affects teachers' work-life balance in public secondary schools in Isiolo County. The findings, summarized in Table 1, shed light on the key factors that influence teachers' well-being and performance in these challenging educational settings (See Table 2).

Table 2: Principals' Views on Influence of Adherence to Leave Policy

Ways leave policy promotes teachers' work-life balance	Frequency	Valid Percent
Teachers attend to other duties	8	42.1
Teacher's personal growth	5	26.3
Teachers get free time	4	21.1
Manage their health-wellbeing	2	10.5
Total (N)	20	100.0

As the findings indicate, the perception held by the largest number of principals (42.1) is that "leave policies allow teachers to fulfill personal and social duties," which seems to be the dominant advantage. There is a moderate percentage (26.3%) that relates "leave compliance to professional and personal development," and 21.1% relate leave compliance to the need to take time off to rest and recover. The least-mentioned benefit (10.5%) is associated with health management, suggesting that well-being is recognized but not prioritized.

The particularity of this case is that principals are inclined to frame leave policies more in terms of flexibility than holism. That is, leave is viewed as an instrument to hold roles at work rather than to enhance teachers' health or work-life balance, which is why, at the quantitative level, its overall effects are not as expansive.

4.5 Correlational Analysis

Pearson's correlation analysis was used to determine the association between teachers' work-life balance and principals' adherence to leave policies. The outcome shows a very weak, non-significant negative relationship ($r = -.030$, $p = .654$, $N = 220$) between adherence to leave policies and changes in teachers' work-life balance.

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to investigate the relationship between principals' behavior in implementing leave policies and teachers' work-life balance. The findings show that there is no statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($p > .05$), implying that adherence to leave policies does not depend on changes in teachers' work-life balance (See Table 3).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Between Leave Policy Adherence and Teacher Work-Life Balance

		Correlations	
		Principals' adherence to leave policies	Teachers' work-life balance
Principals' adherence to leave policies	Pearson Correlation	1	-.030
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.654
	N	220	220
Teachers' work-life balance	Pearson Correlation	-.030	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.654	
	N	220	220

The results are presented in Table 3 and demonstrate a negative, statistically insignificant correlation between the two variables ($r = -.030$, $p = .654$, $N = 220$). This finding indicates that, in the context of the given study, differences in how principals comply with leave policy are unrelated to shifts in teacher work-life balance. Since the p-value is far greater than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is that no relationship exists between these variables.

4.6 Linear Regression Analysis

To determine the predictive effect, a linear regression analysis was conducted. These findings reveal that principals' adherence to leave policies has no significant predictive value for teachers' work-life balance, as indicated by the non-significant variance explained (Adapted $R^2 = -.003$). This observation can be compared with the correlation results, which show no significant correlation between the variables.

The model summary analysis was conducted to assess principals' compliance with leave policies and teachers' work-life balance. The insignificance of the variance explained (Adjusted $R^2 = -.003$) indicates that compliance with leave policies by principals does not significantly predict the work-life balance of teachers. Table 4 summarizes the model results.

Table 4: Model summary for Principals' adherence to leave policies and teacher work-life balance

Model Summary^b				Std. Error of the
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Estimate
1	.037 ^a	.001	-.003	1.56516

a. Predictors: (Constant), Principals' adherence to leave policy
b. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Work-life balance

The regression model was analyzed to assess the extent to which principals' adherence to leave policies affects teachers' work-life balance. The findings show a very weak link between these factors ($R = .037$), with the model accounting for almost no variation in work-life balance (Adjusted $R^2 = -.003$). This implies that adherence to leave policies does not significantly affect teachers' work-life balance in this study.

Table 5: ANOVA Statistics for principals' adherence to leave policies and teacher work-life balance

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.709	1	.709	.290	.591 ^b
	Residual	516.893	216	2.450		
	Total	517.603	220			

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Work-life balance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Principals' Adherence to Leave Policy

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) assessed the significance of the regression model, particularly regarding how principals' adherence to leave policies affects teachers' work-life balance. As shown in Table 4, the results indicate that the model is not statistically significant ($F = 0.290$, $P = 0.591$, $P > .05$). This means that following leave policies does not meaningfully predict teachers' work-life balance.

In fact, the model accounts for minimal variance in work-life balance (Adjusted $R^2 = -.003$), suggesting that other factors influence teachers' work-life balance in this study. We also used coefficient analysis to investigate how well school principals comply with leave policies and how that relates to teachers' work-life balance, especially in the challenging environment of Isiolo County.

Table 6: Coefficient statistics for principals' adherence to leave policy and teacher work-life balance

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.541	.783		3.245	.001
	Principals' Adherence to Leave Policy	-.093	.172	-.037	-.538	.591

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Work-life balance

Statistics revealed some eye-opening insights: the coefficient test showed that principals adhering to leave policies had a -0.93-unit negative effect on teachers' work-life balance in Isiolo County ($B = 2.541$, $P = 0.001$). This analysis suggests that while it's important for principals to follow leave policies, simply doing so isn't enough to improve teacher well-being.

5. Discussion

The results of this study show that principals' compliance with leave policies is not significantly related to teachers' work-life balance in public secondary schools in Isiolo County. Even though adherence levels were high in the reports, they did not translate into measurable changes in teachers' ability to balance professional and personal roles. This indicates that, in the context of the study, adherence to leave policy does not play a decisive role in defining teachers in the challenging environment of school and work-life balance.

The teacher data and the principal interviews were integrated by theme. The results of the study indicated that quantitatively the relationship between adherence to leave policy and teachers' balance did not correspond (Pearson $r = -0.030$, $p = .654$; model $R = 2.001$, $F(1, 218) = 0.290$, $p = .591$; Tables 3-6). On the other hand, 42.1% of principals thought that compliance helps teachers focus on other tasks, 26.3% cited personal or professional development, 21.1% cited free time, and 10.5% cited health and well-being. Thus, principals expect various gains that teachers had not reported. For example, the regression ($b = -0.037$, $p = .591$) suggests that leave did not have a positive influence, despite principals tending to associate it with a lower incidence of stress.

Regarding Isiolo, the workload on teachers and the lack of staff probably offset any advantage of the leave policy. Teachers can maintain the same work-life balance even when granted leave, but they still need to address unresolved classroom needs when they are on substitute leave. The mixed-methods results, in general, are complicated, with one end showing the principals indicating potential well-being benefits. On the other hand, information from teachers indicates that structural limitations, such as understaffing, resource shortages, and excessive workloads, impede any quantifiable impact of leave-policy compliance on work-life balance.

The qualitative results describe the nature of the relationship, explaining how the leave policy may be effective in supporting work-life balance, whereas the quantitative results show that the effect is not significant. The current results are consistent with Marmol (2019), who reported that work-life balance is not significantly correlated with teacher commitment, as salary, medical benefits, and retirement provisions become more significant. The study examined lesson overload, inadequate time off work, and limited bereavement leave as the primary reasons teachers could be overcome by burnout. Mworira et al. (2021) found that government service workers in Isiolo are unable to reconcile work and personal life, resulting in a decline in performance.

These results do not contradict each other but clearly introduce a position. Most previous work has focused on distinguishing between the significance of organizational support and administrative practices in improving employee well-being. For example, Ezeani and Udentia (2025) and Opoku et al. (2023) note that adherence to human resource policies leads to better employee outcomes, whereas Sanza and Asparin (2025) highlight the importance of institutional support in mitigating teacher burnout. The current results, however, indicate that these relationships might not be similar across contexts. Rather, they suggest that the institutional and environmental contexts of administrative practices, including observance of leave policies, may influence their effectiveness.

This finding reflects the reviewed literature on work-life balance, which posits it as a multidimensional outcome interdependent with interacting factors. According to Phiwhpong and U-on (2025), organizational support influences work-life balance, job demands, and individual coping strategies. Likewise, Patagan et al. (2025) focus on personal factors, such as family responsibilities and career paths. In this context, the non-significant relationship observed in the current research indicates that compliance with the leave policy is only part of a broader mechanism shaping teachers' experiences.

The results can also be explained in terms of Path-Goal Theory, which holds that leaders' effectiveness depends on the extent to which they eliminate barriers and align support with subordinates' needs. Within the framework of the current research, principals' compliance with leave policies can be considered an administrative measure to assist teachers. Nonetheless, the

theory also suggests that such support can succeed only when it is used to tackle employees' most urgent obstacles.

Adherence to leave policies may not be sufficient to address the problematic environment, which leaves a trace on the work-life balance of teachers in Isiolo County, where schools operate under staffing shortages, excessive workloads, and resource constraints. In Isiolo County, the schools are operating amid staff shortages, excessive workloads, and resource constraints. This means that even well-implemented policies may not have a significant practical impact in situations where they pay no particular attention to the fundamental causes of strain.

Schools in challenging environments tend to be full of structural limitations cutting into the effectiveness of otherwise healthy administrative practices. Teachers may receive leave according to the policy, but they experience a burden on their workload due to understaffing, or they are forced to compensate for the lost teaching time. In such cases, formal access to leave does not necessarily imply anything significant among teachers. This is among the reasons why improvements in work-life balance do not lead to higher policy adherence rates, as Isiolo's count does not correlate with high policy adherence rates.

The path-goal theory proposes the importance of contingency perspectives in leadership and organizational studies. The theory shows that there is no linear relationship between administrative practices and employee outcomes, but that contextual factors mediate this relationship. In this sense, the research continues the application of Path-Goal Theory by demonstrating how leadership behaviors, such as policy conformity, should be considered in relation to the challenges employees encounter. The desired outcomes may not be obtained if there is any discrepancy between the support provided and the reality of the workplace.

The results have significant implications for the management of education. Although compliance with leave policies is also a pressing issue in institutional governance, one should not assume that such compliance alone is sufficient to enhance teachers' work-life balance. Treatment focused on improving work-life balance must take a more holistic approach, addressing workload allocation, staffing sufficiency, and expanded working conditions. The possible advantages of leave policies would still be minimal unless such measures are complemented.

The research has some shortcomings. To begin with, self-reported data may be subject to response bias because teachers' perceptions may fail to capture the multifaceted nature of administrative practices. Second, the cross-sectional design does not allow causal conclusions because the relationship between the variables may vary over time. Third, the research is context-based, focusing on secondary schools in the challenging environment of Isiolo County, rather than on schools under other institutional conditions.

These drawbacks pose significant opportunities for future study. For example, longitudinal research would provide a better understanding of the long-term impact of administrative practices on work-life balance. Future research could also include variables such as work intensity, organizational culture, and leadership styles to better understand the mechanisms that influence teacher well-being. A cross-regional study would also be useful in determining whether the trends observed in Isiolo County are local or mirror broader trends in the education system.

The research is significant in the literature as it shifts the focus from the outcomes of work-life balance to the administrative processes that underlie it. Although previous studies have concentrated on teacher performance, job satisfaction, and burnout, the current research paper places greater emphasis on the idea that policy adherence alone can explain work-life balance. By showing that higher degrees of compliance do not always lead to better outcomes in the teaching fraternity, the research questions the assumptions about the efficiency of official administrative practices and the significance of context in educational management.

6. Conclusion

This paper concludes that there is no statistically significant impact between compliance with leave policies by principals and the work-life balance of teachers in Isiolo County public secondary schools. The findings reveal a significant correlation between the variables and that differences in policy compliance are not associated with significant variation in teachers' work-life balance. The lack of explanatory power is also supported by the regression and ANOVA results, as the model cannot explain the change in work-life balance ($F = 0.290$, $p = 0.591$). This means that factors beyond the administrative observance of leave policies play a greater role in shaping teachers' well-being in the study context. The research accepted the null hypothesis (H_{01}) and concluded that compliance with leave policies, although significant for institutional compliance, had no statistically significant impact on teachers' work-life balance. The study concludes that there is a need for more context-specific, comprehensive behavioral and strategic approaches to address structural and workload-related variables that may affect teachers working in difficult settings.

7. Recommendations

The results show that although principals tend to comply with leave policies, the compliance does not play a significant role in defining how teachers balance their work and life in public secondary schools in Isiolo County. The research suggests that the department responsible for enhancing teachers' work-life balance should not be limited to administrative-level compliance with leave regulations. Educational stakeholders need to focus more on institutional interventions, including workload management, staffing sufficiency, and supportive working conditions, which can have a more direct effect on teachers' well-being. Good governance at the school level needs to ensure that principals follow established leave-taking procedures, but greater focus ought to be on ensuring excellent working conditions that alleviate daily work strain. This can involve an elastic distribution of tasks, workload sharing, and other systems that enable the teacher to manage work pressure without affecting instructional duties.

Moreover, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) ought to supplement its efforts to ensure policy implementation with measures that address structural issues affecting teachers, especially in challenging contexts such as Isiolo County. Periodic reviews must be used not only to check adherence to leave policies but also to assess the wider circumstances that affect teacher welfare.

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