

Work-Life Balance Practices and Employee Performance in Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: The study examines the influence of work-life balance practices on the employee performance of public universities in Kenya. The specific objective is to find out how work-life balance constructs (work-family conflict, flexible work arrangements, stress, burnout, psychosocial support) influence employee performance at public universities.

Methodology: Descriptive survey design was used guided by Spill over theory, and a positivism philosophy. The target population of the study comprised all employees in 30 accredited public universities in Kenya with a total population of 35,502 employees. A sample size of 385 employees was obtained using the statistical formula of Fisher for calculating sample size and respondents were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique.

Results: The study found that there was a significant positive correlation between work-life balance and employee performance with a regression coefficient of ($\beta = .844, p < .000$). Work-life balance constructs accounted for 71.1% variation in employee performance. This means that when work-life balance practices are well managed, employee performance is likely to increase.

Conclusion: The study recommends that public universities in Kenya should focus on improving their work life balance practices to improve their employee performance.

Keywords: *Work-life balance, Employee Performance, Public Universities*

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1.0 Introduction

The concept of work-life balance (WLB) has gained significant attention in recent years particularly in the context of employee performance (Annan, 2020; Abdulkadir, 2018; Mwangi, 2016; and Ngozi, 2017). Recent studies emphasize the importance of work-life balance in maintaining a happy workforce for organizational performance. For instance, (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2020) emphasize that organizations that prioritize work-life balance through flexible work arrangements and supportive policies enhance employee satisfaction, improved productivity, reduced burnout, and reduced turnover. For employers, poor work-life balance can result in adverse effects such as reduced performance, higher absenteeism, increased sick leave, greater staff turnover, and elevated recruitment and training costs (Mendis & Weerakkody, 2017).

According to (Charoensukmongkol & Puyod, 2021) work-life balance simply means that a person must have separate times and resources allocated specifically for work-related responsibilities as well as family-related matters. Research has shown that work-life balance is very crucial for employees because it helps them to mitigate stress, prevent burnout, and maintain a healthy working environment (Ejertsson, Heijbel, Ejertsson, & Andersson, 2018). For example, (Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui, 2019) showed that employees with good work-life balance are more productive and make fewer mistakes, thereby leading to outstanding work performance. Omar, Mohd, & Ariffin (2015) posit that work-life balance is a strong predictor of employee well-being and enhanced quality of life. In addition, (Harter & Arora, 2017) found that implementing work-life balance practices enhances employee happiness, engagement, and retention, by reducing conflicts between personal and professional lives - leading to better performance through flexible workplace conditions.

Work life balance has emerged as a critical determinant of employee performance in modern organizational contexts. As the boundaries between work and personal life become increasingly blurred, the ability to effectively manage these spheres is essential for maintaining high levels of productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being (Valery, Santati, & Hadjr, 2023). Globally, organizations are recognizing the importance of focusing on WLB to enhance employee engagement and organizational performance. In developed countries, numerous studies have demonstrated that flexible work arrangements, supportive work environments, and comprehensive wellness programs are instrumental in achieving optimal WLB and improving employee performance (Banu & Sundharavadivel, 2019).

Regionally, the discourse on WLB is gaining momentum as economies continue to grow and the workforce becomes more diversified. Studies in South Africa and Nigeria have highlighted the critical role of WLB in reducing employee burnout and increasing job satisfaction, underscoring the necessity for African organizations, including public institutions, to adopt policies that promote WLB as a means to boost employee performance and achieve organizational goals (Thevanes & Mangaleswaran, 2018).

Locally, in Kenya, the issue of WLB is particularly pertinent in the context of public universities, which play a pivotal role in natural development by fostering academic excellence and innovation. However, employees in these institutions often face significant challenges related to balancing their professional responsibilities with personal life demands. Factors such as heavy work-loads, inadequate support systems, and rigid work schedules contribute to high levels of stress and burnout, negatively impacting employee performance (Mwangi, Boinett, Tumwet, & Bowen, 2017). Despite the critical role of public universities in the country's economic development, there is limited empirical research on how WLB affects employee performance within these institutions (Onwonga, Omari, & Kiiru, 2020).

Additionally, findings from various studies on the relationship between work life balance and employee performance highlight different conclusions. For instance (Bataineh, 2019) found that employees with better WLB reported increased job satisfaction and productivity; (Mendis & Weerakkody, 2017) demonstrated that WLB initiatives lead to enhanced job performance and organizational commitment; (Jaya, Sudhartio, Soetjipto, & Sihombing, 2021) showed that flexible working arrangements and supportive work environments improve employee engagement and output; (Suhartini, 2021) discovered that effective WLB practices reduce burn out and enhance job performance. These studies indicate that WLB positively influences employee performance – meaning that employees who can effectively balance their work and personal life tend to perform better at their jobs, hence improved WLB is associated with higher productivity, job satisfaction, and overall efficiency.

In contrast, the research results by Keino & Kithae (2016) reported that factors like long working hours, and family-work conflict negatively impacted staff performance, indicating the WLB efforts were not effectively managed. Additionally, studies by (Sidik, 2019); (Kembuan, Sumolang, & Lopian, 2021) found that excessive focus on WLB could lead to lower productivity and job commitment if not properly balanced with organizational demands. These studies showed that WLB can have a negative impact on employee performance and suggests that in certain contexts, efforts to balance work and family life might reduce work hours, decrease engagement, or introduce dissatisfactions that interfere with work responsibilities. This highlights the necessity of conducting a study to further clarify these findings.

1.1 Problem Statement

Employee performance in public universities in Kenya is crucial given the critical role of universities in the provision of manpower required for the achievement of the Vision 2030, the Big Four Agenda and all other National Development Goals (CUE Report 2017/2018). Kibet, Miso, & Wanza (2020) argue that achieving outstanding and superior performance is only possible when employees operate with maximum efficiency and effectiveness. However, universities are facing challenges of employee retention, increased student enrollment, limited resources, and faculty burnout (Muma, et al., 2019); Mukhwana & Koskei, (2018); Muogbo et al., 2019); Maobe & Liping, 2020), Idua (2017) which affect their performance. Employees in these universities often experience high levels of stress due to heavy workloads, inadequate resources, and balancing work with personal responsibilities.

The reviewed literature reveals a positive correlation between work-life balance and employee performance across various sectors, yet significant gaps persist regarding public universities in Kenya. Indicators such as work-family conflict, flexible work arrangements, stress and burnout, and psycho-socio support are underexplored in this context. For example, Mwangi et al. (2017) discuss work-family conflict's impact on employee performance in a private university, while Valery et al. (2023) focus on flexible work arrangements in hybrid work systems, which differ from academic environments. Stress and burnout, critical in educational settings are insufficiently addressed, with studies like Thevanes & Mangaleswaran (2018) and Keino & Kithae (2016) concentrating on banking and telecommunication. Additionally, Agha et al. (2017) highlight psycho-socio support within Omani higher education, which may not directly apply to Kenyan Universities. Thus, tailored research is essential to examine these WLB indicators' effect on employee performance in Kenyan public universities considering their unique challenges and cultural dynamics.

By investigating this relationship in the context of Kenyan public universities, the study provides valuable insights that can inform policy and practice. The findings and recommendations are expected to lead to improved job satisfaction, reduced turnover, and enhanced employee performance. The study aimed to find out the influence of work-life balance practices on employee performance in Public Universities in Kenya.

1.2 Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study was:

H₀₁: Work-life balance does not have a significant influence on the employee performance in Public Universities in Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Spillover theory by Guest (2002) focuses on the relatedness between work life and family life, suggesting that they both affect each other. In this way, both positive and negative experiences/abilities at work can carry over into positive or negative experiences/abilities at home, and vice versa. It hypothesizes the conditions under which spill-over between the work micro system and the family micro system occurs. If work-family interactions are rigidly structured in time and space, then spill over in terms of time, energy and behaviour is negative. When flexibility occurs, individuals can integrate and overlap work and family responsibilities in time and space. This leads to positive spill over which is instrumental in achieving healthy work-life balance.

A study by (Mahesh, Prabhushankar, Chirag, & Amit, 2016) using spill over theory found that an organization cannot meet its maximum potential without the total participation and commitment from all the employees and this commitment comes from a sound balance between work and life. They add that an excellent quality of work life is necessary for an organization to achieve constant growth and profitability in the market through an increase in productivity, retention of deserving employees, efficient meld of people resources and work, positive working atmosphere, and fulfillment of management objectives.

2.2 Empirical Review

An empirical study by (Valery, Santati, & Hadjr, 2023) investigated the impact of WLB on employee performance at Telkomsel Regional Sumbagsel office, utilizing quantitative analysis of primary data from 64 employees. Their findings revealed a significant positive relationship between WLB and employee performance, highlighting the importance of support from superiors and colleagues, particularly in hybrid working arrangements. Banu and Sundharavadivel, (2019) examined the relationship between WLB and job performance among employees in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Utilizing a structured questionnaire and analyzing data from 100 employees, their research found a positive and significant correlation between WLB and job performance, contributing to the understanding of how WLB practices can enhance organizational performance.

In the banking industry, Thevanes and Mangaleswaran (2018) confirmed a positive relationship between WLB and job performance among employees in Sri Lanka. The study collected data from 166 employees in private banks and used univariate and bivariate analyses to demonstrate that effective WLB practices are crucial for improving job performance in the banking sector. The influence of work-life balance on employee performance at Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB) was conducted by (Nganga & Wanyoike, 2022). The results indicate that improving work-life balance can empower employees to better manage their work, leading to increased productivity.

A study by (Onwonga, Omari, & Kiiru, 2020) assessed the influence of organizational factors on the relationship between WLB and employee performance in Nairobi. Using a descriptive survey approach, they collected data from 267 employees at Safaricom PLC and Monarch Insurance. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between WLB and employee performance, suggesting that effective WLB initiatives, such as flexible work arrangements, are beneficial. Another study (Baburam, 2021) explored the quality of work-life among faculty members at Tribhuvan University. This study identified factors such as autonomy, relationships, and compensation adequacy as critical dimensions impacting job satisfaction and commitment. The findings indicated no perceptual difference in quality of work-life among

professors, associate professors, and lecturers, offering valuable insights for improving working conditions and enhancing faculty members' quality of work-life.

An empirical study focusing on higher education teachers in Oman by (Agha, Azmi, & Irfan, 2017) looked at work life balance and job satisfaction. Their research emphasized that WLB issues significantly impact job satisfaction, with work interference with personal life and personal life interference with work negatively affecting job satisfaction, while work and personal life enhancement positively influence it. In the Kenyan context, (Mwangi, Boinett, Tumwet, & Bowen, 2017) analyzed WLB's influence on performance among staff at Kabarak University. Their study found that work-family conflict significantly impacts employee performance, underscoring the importance of balancing job demands with family responsibilities to improve performance.

Keino and Kithae (2016) examined the influence of work-life balance on staff performance within Kenya's Telecommunication sector. The results indicated that factors such as long working hours, overtime, lack of vacation, family responsibilities, and family-work conflict negatively impacted staff performance. The study recommended reviewing overtime policies, introducing rotational work schedules, employing delegation strategies, providing counseling support, and allocating resources to meet family expectations. A study (Preena & Preena, 2021) investigated the impact of work-life balance on employee performance within a shipping company in Sri Lanka. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the data analysis. The study found a significant correlation between work-life balance and employee performance, with regression analysis confirming that work life balance significantly influences employee performance.

When carrying out their responsibilities, employees' performance can be influenced by a range of factors that may disrupt or impact their work. These factors can originate from issues both within the organization and from external sources, directly impacting their ability to perform effectively (Akbar, 2018). Improved employee performance can enhance morale and help employees manage their workloads more effectively, preserving their time outside of office hours (Ardiansyah & Surjanti, 2020). Conversely, decreased employee performance can lead to reduced productivity and lower product quality rendering the company less competitive compared to similar industries in the market (Lukmiati, Saputra, & Suryani, 2020).

According to (Platt, 2018), employee performance is influenced by effort, aptitude, and task perception. Armstrong (2016) expands on this by stating that motivation, aptitude, and engagement opportunities significantly affect performance levels. He argues that both aptitude and motivation are crucial for optimal performance. Although many factors impact an employee's performance, the workplace environment plays a key role in influencing their motivation and productivity. Several characteristics that support excellent employee performance, as outlined by (Stup, 2013) include the physical environment, available tools, quality of work, performance standards, appraisal systems, and systemic issues.

Tamunomiebi and Chika-Anya, (2020) argue that employee performance, including their accountability, satisfaction, competence, loyalty, and commitment is essential for achieving a sense of meaningfulness in their work. This, in turn, is crucial for their effectiveness, success, and productivity leading to improved organizational performance. According to (Hagos & Shimels, 2018) the success or failure of any organization is determined by its employees who combine other resources such as finance, technology, information, and production systems to ensure the attainment of competitive advantage for the organization. Additionally,

(Muhammad & Irfan, 2020) contend that the performance of employees shall decide the overall performance of an organization.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed descriptive survey design using a mixed methods approach, guided by the positivism paradigm. The target population was 35,502 employees of PU (teaching and non-teaching) from which a sample of 385 respondents was picked using the statistical formula of Fisher for calculating sample size. The researcher collected primary data from respondents using questionnaires circulated through Google Doc Platform, an interview guide was done through Google meet platform, and secondary data was collected from published materials and journals. The questionnaires were self-administered to various online staff platforms and also via individual emails for those who preferred to be sent the link by email. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for data analysis. Pilot testing was done on 10% of the population who were not used in the main study. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha while validity was tested using content and construct validity.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The study received 80.6% response rate from the distributed questionnaires which were considered excellent according to Cooper and Schindler (2014), who contend that a response rate of 70-80% is very good while responses of over 80% is excellent. Additionally, (Wu, Zhao, & Fils-Aime, 2022) argue that a response rate of 44% in an online investigation in an education-related field is acceptable. Therefore, the response rate of 80.6% was considered excellent and acceptable for the study.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics on Work-Life Balance

One of the key objectives of the study was to establish the influence of work-life balance on employee performance in public universities was undertaken. Several questions were asked to answer this objective. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with the statements regarding influence of work-life balance on employee performance. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Work-Life Balance Descriptive Statistics

Work-life balance statements	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am often required to work overtime or bring work home.	310	20	31.6	23.9	23.9	0.6	2.5355	1.08104
I frequently find it necessary to work on weekends or during holidays.	310	21.3	28.4	26.5	19.4	4.5	2.5742	1.15441
I feel that I have enough time to balance my work and personal life effectively	310	14.2	31.6	34.8	12.9	6.5	2.6581	1.076
This university has flexible work hours available to employees	310	14.8	21.9	35.5	18.1	9.7	2.8581	1.16829
I have utilized flexible work arrangements to manage personal responsibilities	310	9	20	42.6	17.4	11	3.0129	1.08528
This university has policies that support employees in achieving work-life balance.	310	27.7	23.2	20.6	11.6	16.8	2.6645	1.42233
I often feel stressed or overwhelmed by my workload	310	13.5	29	23.9	23.2	10.3	2.8774	1.21125
I sometimes experience burnout due to work-related pressures	310	9.7	31.6	29	23.9	5.8	2.8452	1.07422
I believe that work-life balance can help reduce stress and burnout	310	5.2	5.8	28.4	57.4	3.2	3.4774	0.86151
This university has recreational services such as onsite exercise facilities/gym services.	310	48.4	19.4	14.8	5.2	12.3	2.1355	1.38917
This university has employee assistance/wellness programs.	310	36.1	21.9	21.9	5.2	14.8	2.4065	1.40133
This university provides team-building activities.	310	41.9	25.2	13.5	5.2	14.2	2.2452	1.4089
This university provides sufficient leave for employees.	310	6.5	12.9	42.6	27.7	10.3	3.2258	1.01477
I believe that a better work-life balance would positively influence my job performance.	310	5.2	4.5	27.1	55.5	7.7	3.5613	0.89648
Aggregate							2.7913	1.1604

Source: Research data 2023

Overall, the findings in Table 1 above show that the variable generated a mean of 2.7913 and a standard deviation of 1.1604. The standard deviation indicates a greater variability or dispersion of responses from the mean while the mean indicates a moderate overall opinion. There is a notable variation in how the respondents perceived the influence of work-life balance on employee performance in public universities in Kenya. This variability might be an indication that opinions are diverse across the participants who were both teaching and non-teaching staff.

The respondents were asked to respond to the following statements on work-family conflict: I am often required to work overtime or bring work home - majority 31.6% disagreed, 23.9% agreed, 23.9% strongly agreed, 20% strongly disagreed and 0.6% were neutral. On the statement, ‘I frequently find it necessary to work on weekends or during holidays’ majority

28.4% disagreed, 26.5% agreed, 21.3% strongly disagreed, 19.4% strongly agreed while 4.5% were neutral. The respondents were further asked if they felt that they had enough time to balance their work and personal life effectively - majority 34.8% agreed, 31.6% disagreed, 14.2% strongly disagreed, 12.9% strongly agreed, and 6.5% were neutral. Work-family conflict continues to be a significant predictor of employee stress and burnout, with a strong negative impact on job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction as observed by (Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, & Shockley, 2020).

On flexible work arrangements, the respondents were asked if their university has flexible work hours available to employees - majority 35.5% agreed, 21.9% disagreed, 18.1% strongly agreed, 14.8% strongly disagreed and 9.7% were neutral. On the statement, 'I have utilized flexible work arrangements to manage personal responsibilities, majority 42.6% agreed, 20% disagreed, 17.4% strongly agreed, 11% were not sure, and 9% strongly disagreed. They were further asked to state if their university has policies that support employees in achieving work-life balance and majority 27.7% strongly disagreed, 23.2% disagreed, 20.6% agreed, 16.8% were not sure and 11.6% strongly agreed. Verma, Dhiman, & Kaur (2020) recommended that flexible working options and other WLB initiatives should be normalized for all employees, regardless of gender, seniority, or personal commitments.

On stress and burnout, the respondents were asked the following statements: I often feel stressed or overwhelmed by my workload – majority 29% disagreed, 23.9% agreed, 23.2% strongly agreed, 13.5% strongly disagreed, while 10.3% were not sure. I sometimes experience burnout due to work-related pressures – majority 31.6% disagreed, 29% agreed, 23.9% strongly agreed, 9.7% strongly disagreed while 5.8% were neutral. I believe that work-life balance can help reduce stress and burnout – majority 57.4% strongly agreed, 28.4% agreed, 5.8% disagreed, 5.2% strongly disagreed, while 3.2% were neutral. Mukhwana & Koskei, (2018); Muogbo et al., (2019); Maobe and Liping, 2020); Idua (2017) observed that university staff experienced burnout due to increased student enrollment which aligns with the findings of this study.

On whether the university had recreational services such as onsite exercise facilities/gym services, majority 48.4% strongly disagreed, 19.4% disagreed, 14.8% agreed, 5.2% strongly agreed while 12.3% were neutral. Asked if the university has employee assistance wellness programs, majority of the respondents 36.1% strongly disagreed, 21.9% disagreed, 21.9% agreed, 5.2% strongly agreed, while 14.8% were neutral. The respondents were further asked if the university provides team-building activities; majority of the respondents 41.9% strongly disagreed, 25.2% disagreed, 13.5% agreed, 5.2% strongly agreed, while 14.2% were neutral. On the statement, this university provides sufficient leave for employees, majority 42.6% agreed, 27.7% strongly agreed, 12.9% disagreed, 10.3% neutral while 6.5% strongly disagreed. Asked if they believed that better work life balance would positively influence their job performance, majority 55.5% strongly agreed, 27.1% agreed, 7.7% were not sure, 5.2% strongly disagreed while 4.5% disagreed. Muhammad (2023) observed that mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, mental fatigue, work-related stress, insomnia, burnout, turnover intentions, and techno-stress are all positively correlated with work-life balance.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics on Employee Performance

This section is concerned with the investigation of employee performance in public universities in Kenya. The findings presented in Table 2 below represent the respondent's responses to the questions on indicators of employee performance for the study which were: employee satisfaction, employee commitment, and employee loyalty.

Table 2: Employee Performance

Statements on employee satisfaction, employee loyalty, and employee commitment	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am satisfied with my current compensation and benefits package.	310	41.3	39.4	9	1.9	8.4	1.9677	1.15705
I believe that my compensation reflects my skills and contributions to this university	310	39.4	32.3	11.6	3.2	13.5	2.1935	1.35148
This university provides opportunities for my professional growth	310	25.8	29.7	27.7	9.7	7.1	2.4258	1.17662
I am satisfied with the training and development programs offered by this university	310	27.1	31.6	23.9	5.8	11.6	2.4323	1.26706
I am satisfied with my current job and feel a sense of loyalty to this university.	310	14.8	23.9	33.5	14.8	12.9	2.871	1.21857
I would still choose to work in this university even if other opportunities are available.	310	22.6	15.5	25.2	16.1	20.6	2.9677	1.43204
I would recommend this university to my family/friends as a great place to work	310	12.3	18.7	29.7	21.9	17.4	3.1355	1.2571
I am likely to explore job opportunities outside this university	310	9.7	14.8	27.1	33.5	14.8	3.2903	1.17673
I am likely to continue working at this university for the next 5 years	310	9	13.5	31.6	16.8	29	3.4323	1.28229
I am willing to invest extra effort to help this university achieve its objectives	310	4.5	10.3	48.4	24.5	12.3	3.2968	0.96659
The values of this university align with my personal values	310	5.8	16.1	40	16.1	21.9	3.3226	1.15434
This university prioritizes the well-being and growth of employees	310	20	36.1	18.7	7.1	18.1	2.671	1.36109
Aggregate							2.8339	1.2334

Source: Research data 2023

The respondents were asked the following questions in relation to employee satisfaction: I am satisfied with my current compensation and benefits package – majority 41.3% strongly disagreed, 39.4% strongly disagreed, 8.4% were not sure, 9% agreed, while 1.9% strongly agreed. I believe that my compensation reflects my skills and contributions to this university – majority 39.4% disagreed, 32.3% disagreed, 13.5% were not sure, 11.6% agreed, while 3.2% strongly agreed. This university provides opportunities for my professional growth – 29.7% strongly disagreed, 27.7% agreed, 25.8% strongly disagreed, 9.7% strongly agreed, while 7.1% were not sure. I am satisfied with the training and development programs offered by this university – majority 31.6% disagreed, 27.1% strongly disagreed, 23.9% agreed, 11.6% were not sure, while 5.8% strongly agreed.

The respondents were asked the following questions in relation to employee loyalty. I am satisfied with my current job and feel a sense of loyalty to this university – majority 33.5%

agreed, 23.9% disagreed, 14.8% strongly disagreed, 14.8% strongly agreed, while 12.9% were not sure. I would still choose to work at this university even if other opportunities are available – majority 25.2% agreed, 22.6% strongly disagreed, 20.6% were not sure, 16.1% strongly agreed, while 15.5% disagreed. I would recommend this university to my family/friends as a great place to work – majority 29.7% agreed, 21.9% strongly agreed, 18.7% disagreed, 17.4% were not sure, while 12.3% strongly disagreed. I am likely to explore job opportunities outside this university – majority 33.5% strongly agreed, 27.1% agreed, 14.8% disagreed, 14.8% were not sure, while 9.7% strongly disagreed. I am likely to continue working at this university for the next 5 years – majority 31.6% agreed, 29% were not sure, 16.8% strongly agreed, 13.5% disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed. These findings concur with a study by Muma, et. al., (2019) which established that University employees are somehow not satisfied with their work, and are undecided whether to quit their current jobs or not. Baquero (2022) found that employees are most likely to leave an organization when they realize that the performance is declining, leading to a lack of assurance of their job security.

The respondents were further asked the following questions in relation to employee commitment. I am willing to invest extra effort to help this university achieve its objectives – majority 48.4% agreed, 24.5% strongly agreed, 12.3% were not sure, 10.3% disagreed, while 4.5% strongly disagreed. The values of this university align with my personal values – majority 40% agreed, 21.9% were not sure, 16.1% disagreed, 16.1% strongly agreed, while 5.8% strongly disagreed. This university prioritizes the well-being and growth of employees – 36.1% disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed, 18.7% disagreed, 18.1% were not sure, while 7.1% strongly agreed. These findings agree with Muogbo et al., (2019) who contend that in situations where the needs of the employees are not met, they will not put in their best towards the accomplishment of the organization’s development/expansion, and that no organization can succeed or advance without addressing the needs of employees.

The findings generally point towards low levels of employee commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction which could be affecting employee performance in public universities. These findings align with a study by (Tamunomiebi & Chika-Anya, 2020) that employee performance, effectiveness, success, and productivity can only be achieved by accountable, competent, loyal, and committed employees who find some sort of meaningfulness in the job they are doing. Muhammad & Irfan, (2020) further contend that the performance of employees shall decide the overall performance of an organization.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The study revealed very strong positive relationships between work-life balance and employee performance ($r = 0.844$, $p = .000$).

Table 3: Model Summary for Work-Life Balance

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.844 ^a	.711	.711	.33980

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work-Life Balance

Source: Research data 2023

The results in Table 3 above show the fitness of the model used in explaining the strength of the relationship between the constructs of work-life balance and employee performance. This implies that work-family conflict, flexible working arrangements, stress & burnout, and psychosocial support explained 71.1% variation in employee performance. This was supported by the coefficient of determination (also known as R-square) value of 0.711. Thus, based on this coefficient, other factors that were not considered in the study accounted for 28.9% ($1 - 0.711 = 0.289$ expressed as a percentage) of the variability in employee performance of public universities in Kenya. According to (Ghozali, 2018) a low R^2 value suggests that the independent variables have a limited capacity to account for the dependent variable's variance. Conversely, an R^2 value close to 1 implies that the independent variables offer nearly complete information required to predict the variation in the dependent variable.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	87.701	1	87.701	759.570	.000 ^b
	Residual	35.562	308	.115		
	Total	123.264	309			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work-Life Balance

Source: Research data 2023

The purpose of ANOVA is to show the total amount of variation in a set of data broken down into two types, the amount that can be attributed to specified causes. F-test was carried out to test the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between work-life balance and employee performance. The results in Table 4 above confirm that the indicators of work-life balance (work-family conflict, flexible working arrangements, stress & burnout, and psychosocial support) are good predictors of employee performance. The F-statistic for the regression model was 759.570, which indicates a significant relationship between work-life balance and employee performance - the results are also statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Arif and Farooqi (2014) found a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and both job satisfaction and organizational commitment among university teachers.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients for Work-Life Balance

		Coefficients				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		β	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.322	.093		3.457	.001
	Work Life Balance	.874	.032	.844	27.560	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

Source: Research data 2023

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 above presents the regression coefficients for work-life balance. The study hypothesized that work-life balance has no significant influence on employee performance in public universities in Kenya. The study findings indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between work-life balance and employee performance ($\beta = .844$; $t = 27.560$, $p < .000$). Since the t value was 27.560 which is greater than 0 (zero), the null hypothesis: H_{01} : Work life balance has no significant influence on employee performance of public universities in Kenya was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. These findings are consistent with prior research by Banu & Sundharavadivel, (2019); Onwonga, Omari, & Kiiru (2020); Bhuvanendran (2022) and Verma, Dhiman, & Kaur (2020) who found a positive significant relationship between work-life balance and employee performance. These findings are in agreement with (Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui, 2019) who found that employees with good work life balance are more productive and make fewer mistakes, thereby leading to outstanding work performance.

The findings also concur with the findings of a study carried out by Thevanes and Mangaleswaran (2018) which established that work-life balance has a positive and significant relationship with the overall job performance. However, the findings contradict studies by (Sidik, 2019); (Kembuan, Sumolang, & Lapian, 2021); and (Keino & Kithae, 2016) who reported a negative impact of work-life balance on employee performance. These study findings are relevant in the context of the current mental health situation in Kenya where the mental health landscape reveals a significant prevalence of issues such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness exacerbated by societal stigma and inadequate mental health care infrastructure (GoK-MoH 2020).

Additionally, these findings are in line with previous research on the influence of work-life balance on employee performance (Aziz-Ur-Rehman & Siddiqui, 2019; Omar, Mohd, & Ariffin, 2015; Michel et al. 2014). This, in turn, is crucial for their effectiveness, success, and productivity leading to improved organizational performance. According to recent observations by (Gomathyi, Hrushikesh, Sharbha, & Swetha, 2022), time management and stress management are the two key challenges in work-life balance, with a notable rise in physical health issues like hypertension, diabetes, and heart attacks among employees.

Based on these results, the regression model fitted as: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon_i$ therefore holds. The following regression model was postulated; $Y = Y = 0.322 + 0.874X_1 + 0.093$

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study findings demonstrate a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and employee performance in public universities in Kenya. The high regression coefficient ($\beta = .844$, $p < .000$) suggests that work-life balance is a critical driver of employee performance, underscoring its importance in organizational effectiveness. The results further suggest that investing in work-life balance practices such as work-family conflict, flexible work arrangements, stress and burnout, and psycho-socio support can enhance employee performance at public universities. These findings highlight the need for institutions to prioritize work-life balance initiatives to enhance employee productivity and well-being. Implementing policies that promote flexible work arrangements, reduce burnout, and support for personal life balance can be key strategies for improving employee performance and overall organizational success.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that university management and policy makers should prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive work-life balance policies that support employees' mental well-being. This includes offering flexible work arrangements, promoting mental health resources, and encouraging a culture that values work-life balance. Given the current mental health challenges in the country, such initiatives are crucial to enhance employee productivity and overall organizational performance. Additionally, integrating wellness programs that address stress management, physical health, and mental health support will be vital in mitigating the rising incidences of work-related health issues like hypertension, diabetes, and heart conditions.

Further studies could investigate the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance in sectors beyond public universities such as all private universities or government institutions, to offer a broader understanding of this correlation. Other researchers could carry out longitudinal studies to observe how work-life balance initiatives impact employee performance over time, providing insights into the sustainability of this relationship. Further research could introduce variables like organizational culture or employee engagement to better understand how these factors mediate or moderate the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance.

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