

Work Life Balance as a Determinants of Academic Staff Retention in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The study was meant to establish the extent to which work life balance determines the retention of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. Its specific objectives were to establish the status of work life balance of academic staff, the level of academic staff retention and finally the extent to which work life balance determines academic staff retention in the two universities. The study took a descriptive and cross-sectional survey designs with a number of 298 academic staff and 4 administrative staff selected using stratified random and purposive sampling technique. Findings on the status of work life balance revealed an average mean 3.29 showing that it was fair. On the level of academic staff retention, a moderate mean 3.25 revealed a fair retention of academic staff in the two universities. Results on the third objective, the study findings revealed that work life balance ($B = 0.318$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) had a statistically significant effect on the retention of academic staff (ASR). It was thus concluded that work life balance and academic ASR were fair among academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo universities. Whereas on the third objective it was concluded that work life balance (WLB) critical determinant of academic staff retention in the two universities. It was hence recommended that a fair work life balance need to be established by considering a fair work load, reducing on work time to academic staff. Furthermore ASR may need to be improved on through ensuring that academic staff work load is within their reach. The study recommends further that the management of Makerere and Kyambogo Universities should revise and effectively implement policies that favour of academic staff work life balance such as regulated work load. The study contributes to existing knowledge as have prove that the work life balance as one of the job fits and sacrifices significantly contributes to ASR Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

Key words: Work life balance, Retention, Academic Staff

INTRODUCTION

World over, academic staff retention poses one of the greatest challenges to universities. This dilemma is not far from what is happening in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities where academic staff attrition was reported to be high (Rwendeire Report, 2018, Okello & Lamaro, 2015). In this paper the background, to the study, problem study purpose, related literature, methodology, findings conclusions and recommendations were offered.

Background

The problem of employee retention is not a recent phenomenon (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016; Bibi, Pangila & Johari, 2016; Saleshe, 2014). According to Tanwar and Prasad (2016), the problem dates back to the early 1900's when industrial engineers attempted to identify the major reason why employees leave work organisations. Whereas, Bibi et al. (2016) observed that scholarly debates on employee retention stemmed from 1900'S when scholars and psychologists begun to identify reasons that affect employees level of interest to keep on their jobs. This scenario has not been different in the higher education field where

Salesho (2014) points out that the problem of academic staff retention has been part and parcel of the transition that has taken place in higher education institutions (HEIs). These transitions have necessitated the need for retaining academic staff of high calibre which has not been easy for any HEI.

According to Miller (2013) and Albaqami (2016), it is presumed that around 20 percent of public university faculty members in the United States of America leave their positions annually. Tetey (2006) also revealed that about 7.7 percent of full-time academic staff left their institutions for others places within one academic year (between 1997 and 1998). Whereas, Kyaligonza (2009) traced the origins of academic staff turnover in the year 1971 when General Idi Amin plunged Uganda into a dictatorship and economic ruin. In the period 1971-79, there was a general mismanagement of the economy. Academic staff that could not endure and persevere were driven by the hustle to survive in others sectors deepening the level of intellectual erosion. Since that time, academic staff turnover has remained high. This view was not far from Nabawanuka (2011) who revealed that in the 1970's and in the early 1980's those were years of political strife, war and downturn for Uganda. The higher education sector was greatly depleted. Which led to local and expatriate staff leaving the country. Hence the current study was aimed to establish the extent to which work life balance determined the retention of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

Besides, Ddungu (2013) stressed that Makerere University was supposed to have 2,491 academic staff members but the audit conducted by the office of the Auditor General found out that it had only 1,262(51%). Slightly differing from the above, Onen (2017) observed that in Makerere University, 1403 academic staff positions were filled against the establishment of 2,654 positions leaving a total of 1251 positions (approximately 67%) vacant. In this report, 68 lecturers left Makerere University between the years 2008 and 2012 (Ddungu, 2013). In the same period 15 dons left Kampala International University (Eilabu & Jaramogi, 2013). Owoeye and Oyebadde (2011) identified that Uganda like many African countries had experienced external mobility and migrations of best scholars from universities for greener pastures and better paying government, private agencies and firms where they may not be able to tap their talents effectively. Alternatively, none of these reviewed studies had employed Job Embeddedness Theory with greater emphasis on work life balance. Thus, the urgency for this current study to establish the extent to which work-life balance was a critical determinant of ASR in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

The study was premised on the Job Embeddedness Theory (JET) propounded in 2001 by Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski and Erez (Young, Aliang & Shuck, 2013). The theory states that for an employee to stay on his/her current job, there must be links, fits and sacrifices. According to Young, Aliang and Shuck (2013), links are discernible connection between people and institutions. According to the theory, an employee would prefer to stay and work longer for an organization if there are appropriate social, psychological, financial, and biographic links between the employee and the organization. The second concept that the theory considers is fits. According to Holmes, Burghurst and Chapman (2013), fits refers to the employees' perceived compatibility or comfort with the organization and the work environment. The third concept in the theory is sacrifice. According to Lee, Birch and Mitchell (2013), sacrifice is concerned with the material and psychological benefits that an employee can lose at any time one chooses to leave the work organization. According to JET, an employee would wish to stay and work for the university for fear of losing material and other psychological benefits including failure to respect work-life of academic staff. On the basis of JET, the researcher opted to establish whether there are links between work life balance of the academic staff and their retention at Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. lastly, the researcher intended to establish whether there are fits between work-life balance and academic staff retention in the two Universities.

According to Hong et al. (2012), retention refers to the prevention of valuable employees from leaving their current jobs. It involves taking measures to encourage employees by managers to remain in an organisation for a maximum period of time. Meanwhile, Janhua (2016) referred to retention as the ability to hold onto those employees which an organization wants to keep for longer than their competitors. Thus, retention of

academic staff was looked at in terms of academic staff’s intent to stay on their job, their continued service delivery, the intent to remain and keep on the job, the individual sense of belonging, and stability on the current job. Coetze, Oosthuizen and Stoltz (2015) defined determinants of retention as those organizational practices that influence the retention of employee or their decision to leave or remain in their job. Thus, the concept work life balance refers to the perception of harmony or conflict between work and life (Coetze et al., 2015). Work-life balance in this study was looked at in terms of; teaching load, lecture to student ratio, deadlines, responsibilities assigned, number of student supervisees assigned, flex time, holiday and leave opportunities.

Contextually this study was carried out in Makerere and Kyambogo universities. Evidence from Ddungu (2013) stated that in the year 2010, it was noted that over 50 senior academic staff left Makerere University to other universities in neighboring countries and private universities. In addition, 68 lecturers left Makerere University between 2008 and 2012. On the other hand, Rwendeire (2017) indicated that between the years 2015 and 2016, over 69 academic staff were lost from Makerere University. However, records from Directorate of Human Resources Registry 2019 revealed high cases of low academic staff retention as reflected in Table 1:

Table 1: Reasons for staff exit from Makerere University between 2014 – 2019

Year	Retired	Resignation	Contract expired	Dismissed	Death	Abscondment
2014	15	22	45	03	06	03
2015	16	14	16	02	14	00
2016	19	13	49	00	04	00
2017	20	11	27	03	02	02
2018	18	12	18	10	01	00
2019	24	07	13	00	00	00
	112	79	168	19	27	05

Source: Makerere University Human Resource Department Central Registry 2019.

According to Table 1 most of the academic staff that exited were due to contract expiry, 168 followed by academic staff who exited due to retirements 112, followed by 27 who exited due to death and least of the academic staff 5 exited due to abscondment. This table shows that there were fluctuations in academic staff exit indicating that retention of academic staff was low.

In Kyambogo University over 20 academic staff members left in September 2011. Whereas, Oyet and Alen (2015) identified that between 2010 and 2012, Kyambogo University lost over 25 top academic staff. Besides, the Auditor General’s Report of 2015 established out of the 2,774 established academic staff positions for Makerere University, only 1,333 or 48% were filled leaving a gap of 1,441 or 52% while for Kyambogo University out of 1,556 established posts 837 or 54% were filled leaving a gap of 46% posts. (Onen 2017, Kyambogo, Human Resource Department, 2019) identified that besides failing to fill staffing gaps Makerere and Kyambogo However, the extent to which work life balance determined retention of academic staff was not indicated as in the suggested study. This study was thus carried out to investigate work-life balance influence academic staff retention (ASR) in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

Problem Statement

High retention of academic staff on their job in higher institutions of learning like Makerere and Kyambogo Universities is critically vital for the realization of quality higher education (Tetty, 2006). As a result, several strategies like staff training and offering promotions have been put in place to enhance academic

staff retention. Meanwhile, Kasozi (2009), Muhwezi, Wamala and Atuhaire (2017) noted that academic staff retention in public universities in Uganda (Makerere and Kyambogo Universities) has remained low. Academic staff were associated with poor citizenship behavior such as lack of job ownership, poor sense of belonging, and being unstable on their jobs (Ddungu, 2013). Some Other academic staff had exhibited high intent to quit while other have continued to search for new jobs. Ddungu (2013) also revealed that in the year 2010 alone, over 50 senior academic staff left Makerere University for other universities and organizations. In fact, Okello and Lamaro (2015) reiterated that between 2009 and 2013 Makerere University, also lost 26 top performing academic staff. These statistics were corroborated with the Rwendeire Visitation Committee Report of 2017 which indicated that between 2015 and 2016, over 69 academic staff were lost from Makerere University alone. The situation has not been any different at Kyambogo University. According to Oyet and Alen (2013), Kyambogo University also lost almost the same number of staff in the same period. These loses in terms of senior academic staff leaves the responsibility of providing quality higher education in the hands of junior and inexperienced academic staff. If this scenario persists, the contribution of these universities to the realization of the National Vision 2040, Afrina Agenda 2063 would be curtailed and their reputation would most likely decline. The current study was therefore meant to establish how work life balance determine the retention of academic staff in the two universities in order to propose how the universities can reduce the loss of their most valued core employees in the academic heartland.

Study Purpose

To establish the extent to which work life balance determines the retention of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

Specific objectives

1. To find out the status of work life balance of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.
2. To establish the level of academic staff retention in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.
3. To establish the extent to which work life balance determines the retention of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo universities.

RELATED LITERATURE

Literature on this objective is done basing on the three study objectives that is to say the status of academic staff work-life balance, level of academic staff retention and finally on the extent to which work-life balance determines retention of academic staff.

Work Life Balance of Academic Staff. Work life balance is the equilibrium in which the demands of both person's life and a personal life are equal (Dhas & Karthikeyan, 2015). Work life balance is also referred to as the stability created by an individual which enhances independent and separate affairs on the job and off the job domains (Babatunde, Olampekin, Lateef & Babalola, 2020). Empirical studies like Abdullah (2018) studied work-life balance and performance of academic staff in Nigerian Universities showed that despite the worldwide quest for work-life balance (WLB), the university system has been found to be more challenging where academic staff work round the clock. The multi-faced demand between work and home responsibilities have assumed increased relevance for academic staff of Nigerian Universities. Hence, it is reported that is no longer news that most academic staff not only work in their offices and lecture rooms, they are also engaged at home reading, research, grading of assignment/ examination, among others at the detriment of family care. However, the finding presented in the earlier reviewed study was from a desktop review of literature while this current study had findings on the first two objectives descriptively analysed.

Kharunneezam, Suriani and Nadurah (2017) studied work life balance satisfaction among academics in

public higher education section. Findings revealed that there are mixed responses in regard to general feelings of satisfaction with work life balance among the interviewed academic staff. Working overtime and weekends, family support were established to be highly affected by work life balance issues among academic staff. Empirically, Gragnano, Simbula and Miglioretti (2020) studied work-life balance that is, weighting the importance of work-family and work-health balance. Findings from the SAQ survey revealed that workers considered work health balance as equally important as work family balance. However, this study was not from a university environment as was the case with this current study.

Elsewhere, Adebayo (2016) studied work-life balance among academic staff of University of Lagos. Findings were descriptively arrived at and revealed that the achievement of work-life balance in the university system is difficult due to the number of working hours expended on the job over 11 lecturers revealed that they worked for over 12 hours on average per day. Some leave far with tight work deadline to meet. This work schedule meant that academic staff in University of Lagos were over whelmed with work.

Retention of Academic Staff in Higher Education Institutions. Minogharan, Thivaharan and Rahman (2018) studied academic staff retention in public higher education institute with specific reference to private colleges in Kuala Lumpur. Using qualitative analysis techniques findings revealed that there were lower retention rates among academic staff in this college. Academic staff would work for a minimum period and move away. However, this study did not indicate whether it is work life balance contributing to the same. In addition, the reviewed study was qualitatively done while this study was quantitatively done with use of simple linear regression analysis technique. Likewise, the earlier reviewed study was in a private university while this current study was from public universities (Makerere and Kyambogo). Similarly, Mkulu (2018) studied academic staff retention in private universities in Southern highland zone, Tanzania as a strategy of attaining sustainable development. Findings revealed that universities in Southern high land zone in Tanzania were experiencing low job retention of academic staff. This finding showed that 77 percent had left their universities. The universities that were affected with this low retention of academic staff were private while this current study was in public universities (Kyambogo and Makerere Universities) in Uganda. Besides all the above reviewed studies were not anchored by the job embeddedness theory as was the case with this current study

Work-life Balance as a Determinant of Employee Retention. Khairunneezam, Suriani and Nadirah (2017) showed that work life balance is a pertinent issue among university academics. Multiple work place roles by university academics alongside university community pressures have pertinent consequences on the work life of academic staff in Malaysia and on many occasions significantly influence on the levels of satisfaction and turnover intentions of academic staff. In addition, Monogharan, et al.; (2018) analyzed academic staff retention in a private higher education institute (Kuala Lumpur) and with use of interpretive paradigm established that task and workload were the main factors affecting employees, retention. Slightly differing from this study the relationship between work life balance and academic staff retention was arrived at quantitatively with use simple and multiple linear regression.

Mustablia, Ghee (2013) found out that lecturers in Kalatan, Malaysia had a total workload of between 43-46 hours per week about 47% of showed that workloads a caused high dissatisfactions and low job citizenship behaviors increasing their possibilities to leave the job. However, the study findings were presented in a descriptive form while this study went both descriptive and inferential analysis. Agha, Azmi and Irfan (2017) studied work life balance and satisfaction of teachers' higher education in Oman and the findings revealed that work life balance significantly related with job satisfaction and consequently turnover intentions. Work and personal life enhancement were revealed as helpful in reducing absenteeism and employee turnover. However, this study was carried out in the Asian world which context was different from that of public universities in Uganda. Sultana and Hassan (2014) studied factors affecting employee retention in an organization and with use of exploratory factor analysis revealed that provision of health and wellness programs were insignificantly related with employees' retention. However, it was not indicated

whether this organization was academic oriented. Still among the factors studied demographic characteristics, interpersonal relationships and terms of work were not included.

Maphanga (2014) revealed that work life balance significantly impacted on the intentions to quit. However, this study was in a utility industry quite different from a university setting. Whereas Munro (2015) studied work life balance, job and turnover intentions amongst information technology employees using t-tests, correlations and regressions and established that work life balance had a significant relationship on turnover intention. Work life balance dimensions like offering flex time, holidays creates' possibilities for employees to retain on the job. Likewise, Surfan, Abdallah and Diab (2016) studied the influence of work life balance on turnover intention in private hospitals revealed that work life balance practice mainly work scheduling and work life conflict had a negative relationship with turnover intentions. However, issues related with working at weekends, were not addressed in the previous review which this study did.

METHODOLOGY

The study mainly followed the positivist research paradigm with limited qualitative approaches. It employed a descriptive, cross-sectional survey design. The study respondents were 298 academic staff and four administrative staff drawn from both universities. Academic staff were sampled using stratified random sampling technique while administrative staff were purposively sampled. Data were collected using an adapted self-administered questionnaire and a researcher constructed interview guide. Data were analysed with the use of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations; and inferential statistics Simple Linear Regression method. The study faced methodological limitations as the scope of academic staff in the two universities was wide which created sampling challenges however proportionate samples were drawn to ensure that the two universities were fairly represented in the stud.

RESULTS

In the section descriptive results on academic staff retention that is means and standard deviations are provided.

Objective One: Status of academic staff work life balance.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Work Life Balance

Questionnaire item	Response category (Statistics)		
	\bar{x}	SD	Average \bar{x}
At the moment because of job demands I usually work long hours	3.29	1.42	3.29
There is not much time to socialize or relax with my partner/ see family in the week	3.19	1.15	
I have to take work home most evenings	2.92	1.19	
I often work late or at week end to deal with paper work without interruptions	3.18	1.29	
Relaxing or forgetting work issues is too hard for me to do	3.42	1.09	
I worry about the effect of work stress on my health	3.59	1.23	
My relationship with my partner is suffering because of pressure or long hours of my work	3.02	1.25	

Finding time for hobbies, leisure activities or maintain friendships and extended relationship is difficult.	3.20	1.28	
I would like to reduce my working hours but I have no control over it.	3.60	1.17	
My family are missing out on my input either because I do not see enough of them or I am always tired.	3.47	1.29	

Table 2 shows that the mean values on work life balance were all nearing or slightly above code 3 = not sure on the Likert scale that was used. This meant that work life balance of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities was moderate.

Objective Two: Level of Academic Staff Retention (ASR)

Table 2: Means on ASR

Questionnaire item	Response category (Statistics)		
	\bar{x}	SD	Average \bar{x}
I am planning on working for another university within a period of three years.	2.60	1.27	3.25
Within this university, my work gives me satisfaction.	3.57	1.07	
If I wanted to do another job or function, I would look first at all possibilities within this university.	3.42	1.12	
I see a future for myself within this university	3.42	1.20	
If it could start over again, I would choose to work for another university	3.07	1.09	
If I received an attractive job offer from another university, I would take the job offer.	3.805	1.16	
The work I am doing is important to me.	3.85	0.98	
I love working for this university	3.76	1.04	
I know of my colleagues who wanted to leave this university in past six months	2.93	1.19	
I would not advice any one to join this university people leave it very fast	2.27	1.16	
I have to admit, but if I had a place to go, I would not hesitate to leave this university	2.96	1.25	
It does not matter if I am working for this university or another as long as I have work.	3.36	1.24	

Table 2 suggest that the majority of the respondents were almost on neutral ground on all items about academic staff retention that it is implying that it was fair among academic staff in Kyambogo and Makerere Universities. While the standard deviations meant that respondents views did not differ from one respondent to another.

Testing of the study hypothesis

To test the hypothesis of the study to the effect that work life balance significantly relates with ASR, a regression was done. Results are given in Tables 3-5:

Table 3: Regression Analysis Model Summary on Work Life Balance and ASR

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.318 ^a	.101	.098	.38809
a. Predictors: (Constant), WorkLB				

Table 4: Regression Analysis ANOVA Table on Work Life Balance and ASR

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.002	1	5.002	33.214	.000 ^b
	Residual	44.581	296	.151		
	Total	49.583	297			
a. Dependent Variable: asr2						
b. Predictors: (Constant), WorkLB						

Table 5: Regression Analysis Co-efficient Table on Work Life Balance and ASR

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.688	.100		26.888	.000
	WorkLB	.171	.030	.318	5.763	.000

Results in Table 3-5 show that WorkLB explained 98% of the variation in ASR ($Adjusted R^2 = 0.098$). This means that only 2% of the variation was accounted for by extraneous variables, other factors not considered in the study. The regression model was good $t = 33.214$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. These findings were further confirmed by a Beta value 0.318 and a significance P Value = 0.00. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of research hypothesis that work life balance significantly determine retention of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. This implies that ASR is highly determined by WorkLB. Hence work life balance is effectively administered on academic staff the greater the possibility of staying on the job. These findings are in favour of sacrifices aspect of Job Embeddedness Theory to the extent that even if the workload is too high academic staff have to sacrifice for the sake of the job. If this crops in their mind retention enhances and the reverse is true. The study contributes to the existing world of knowledge as it has established that too much workload and failure to respect work life balance like flex time and relaxation creates high possibilities for low job retention.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings that work life balance is fair among academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities was in tandem with Kharunneezam et al. (2017), Gragnano et al. (2020) who indicated that it is fair in universities where their studies were done. However, the fair work life balance differed from Babatonde et al. (2020) who indicated that work life balance was challenging and difficult, and challenging in Nigerian Universities. The findings which showed a fair ASR in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities differed from Minogharan et al. (2018) and Mkulu (2018) who revealed low retention rates of academic staff in

universities where their studies were done.

Simple Linear Regression analysis, findings revealed that there was a highly positive significant relationship between WorkLB and academic staff retention in Makerere and Kyambogo universities. Beta = 0.304, $p = .000$ ($p > 0.000$). This suggested that WorkLB significantly related with ASR in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. This implied that as work life balance of academic staff is improved through offering reasonable work hours, offering flex time, recreational activities among other work life balance alternatives, academic staff retention enhances and the reverse is true. This finding is in favour of the sacrifices aspect of Job Embeddedness where the aspect of academic staff sacrificing to work with the university alongside heavy work load, teaching load, marking load and supervision may not determine the retention of academic staff in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities.

The findings were similar to those of Munro (2015) who studied work life balance, job and turnover intentions amongst information technology employees using t-tests, correlations and regressions and established that work life balance had a significant relationship on turnover intention. Work life balance dimensions like offering flex time, holidays create possibilities for employees to retain on the job. However, the findings of the study differed from Surfan, Abdallah and Diab (2016) who studied the influence of work life balance on turnover intention in private hospitals revealed that work life balance practice mainly work scheduling, work life conflict had a negative relationship with turnover intentions.

The study findings consistently supported Watanabe and Falci (2014) who studied demands and resource approach to understanding faculty turnover intentions due to family demand and found out that work related demand were stronger predictors of turnover intentions. Work to family negative spillover was significantly related with turnover intentions of staff. In the same study work was revealed as involving high pressures and heavy workloads like preparing, actual teaching, marking, supervision and working with students outside class. Furthermore, the study findings resonated those of Monogharan, Thinagaran and Rehman (2018) analyzed academic staff retention in a private higher education institute (Kuala Lumpur) and with use of interpretive paradigm established that task and workload were the main factors affecting employees retention. The study findings opposed those of Sultana and Hassan (2014) who studied factors affecting employee retention in an organization and revealed that provision of health and wellness programs were insignificantly related with employees' retention. Conclusively, Work life balance and retention of academic staff are fair and moderately established in Makerere and Kyambogo Universities. WorkLB significantly determine retention of academic staff retention in Makerere and Kyambogo universities, the two universities management, Council and Senate should design policies that consider providing a reasonable fair work life balance. In such policies, adequate recruitment of staff to reduce on workload should be considered.

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