Effect of Work Life Balance on Employee Performance among Non-Teaching Staff in Selected Public Universities, Kenya

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.101000382

Received: 16 October 2026; Accepted: 21 October 2026; Published: 03 November 2026

ABSTRACT

Employee performance is essential for effective service delivery in public universities in Kenya. However, balancing work responsibilities with personal and family obligations remains a concern that may affect the performance of non-teaching staff. This study examined the effect of work-life balance on employee performance among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya. The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and an explanatory research design. It was conducted at the University of Nairobi, Moi University and Egerton University. The target population comprised 6,350 non-teaching staff, from which a sample size of 376 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The reliability analysis indicated that the work-life balance measurement scale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.700, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency. The findings revealed that work-life balance had a statistically significant negative effect on employee performance. This suggests that the work-life balance conditions experienced by non-teaching staff may be associated with challenges that affect their effectiveness in performing their duties. The study concludes that work-life balance is an important consideration in understanding employee performance in public universities, although its observed negative relationship with performance warrants further investigation into the contextual factors underlying this finding. The study recommends that public universities review existing work-life balance policies, promote manageable workloads, provide adequate staffing, and introduce flexible work arrangements where feasible. These measures may help employees manage their work and personal responsibilities more effectively and contribute to improved performance and service delivery.

Keywords: Work-life balance, employee performance, employee commitment, non-teaching staff, public universities

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is defined as the attained outcome of actions with the skills of employees who perform in a particular situation (Khudhair et al., 2020). Employee performance is a cornerstone of institutions in achieving strategic objectives and overall success. It is influenced by several factors, including employee motivation, skills, attitudes, working conditions, leadership and human resource management practices. Employee performance is therefore not only a reflection of an employee's individual ability but also an outcome of the organizational environment within which employees perform their duties. The successful organization understands the importance of human resources as a critical factor that directly affects and contributes to

organizational performance. Chadwick and Flinchbaugh (2021) observed that strategic human resource management can contribute to organizational performance and competitive advantage by aligning human resource practices with organizational strategy.

More recently, Komol, Githaiga and Kinuthia (2025) established that human resource practices, including remuneration, recruitment, training and work-life balance, positively influenced employee performance in Kenya, further demonstrating the importance of effective human resource practices in achieving organizational outcomes. Employee performance is therefore critical to the success of any organization, and a successful organization is driven by effective Human Resource Management practices that address employee needs while simultaneously enabling the organization to attain its objectives.

Work-life balance has become an important human resource management concern because employees are increasingly required to reconcile their professional responsibilities with family obligations, personal interests, and other non-work activities. Work-life balance refers to an employee's ability to manage work demands and personal life responsibilities in a manner that promotes well-being while enabling effective performance at work. Achieving this balance is important because excessive work demands, limited recovery time, and competing responsibilities may contribute to stress, fatigue, reduced concentration, and diminished work effectiveness. Conversely, appropriate working arrangements, supportive organisational policies, and adequate time for personal and family responsibilities can enable employees to maintain their energy, motivation, and productivity. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023) highlights the importance of working hours and work schedules in shaping employees' work-life balance, noting that working longer hours than preferred can negatively affect the balance between work and personal life.

Employee performance is a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness, particularly in institutions that depend on the coordinated delivery of administrative, technical, financial, and support services. In universities, employee performance contributes to the efficient management of institutional resources, timely delivery of services, maintenance of operational systems, and achievement of institutional objectives. Although academic staff are directly involved in teaching and research, non-teaching staff perform essential functions in human resource management, procurement, finance, information technology, library services, student administration, and facilities management. Their ability to execute assigned duties effectively may be influenced by the extent to which they can manage workplace demands alongside their personal and family responsibilities. Consequently, work-life balance is relevant not only to employee welfare but also to the quality, efficiency, and reliability of university services.

The relationship between work-life balance and employee performance can be understood through the interaction between employees' work and non-work experiences. When work demands interfere excessively with family and personal responsibilities, employees may experience role conflict, psychological strain, and exhaustion, which can undermine concentration, attendance, task completion, and overall job effectiveness. In contrast, employees who have reasonable workloads, access to leave, supportive supervisors, and appropriate flexibility in managing their schedules may be better positioned to sustain their performance. The ILO (2023) similarly emphasizes that working-time arrangements that provide employees with greater control over their schedules can support improved work-life balance and benefit both workers and employers. Nevertheless, the relationship may vary across occupations and organisational settings because some jobs require fixed working hours, continuous service provision, or physical presence at the workplace.

In Kenya, work-life balance has attracted attention in research examining employee performance in public institutions and universities. For example, Agunda et al. (2024) examined work-life balance practices and employee performance across Kenyan public universities, considering work-family conflict, flexible work arrangements, stress, burnout, and psychosocial support. Their findings indicated a significant positive relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance. Similarly, Ngela and Kamaara (2024) investigated work-life balance and employee performance among administrative staff in public universities in Nairobi City County, identifying flexible working arrangements and organisational support as important considerations in employee performance. These studies demonstrate the relevance of work-life

balance to university management while providing an empirical basis for further investigation of the experiences of different employee groups within the public university sector.

Despite the growing scholarly attention to work-life balance in Kenyan public universities, further investigation of non-teaching staff in selected institutions remains important. Non-teaching employees perform diverse functions that may involve different workload patterns, operational demands, service schedules, and opportunities for flexible working arrangements. Findings drawn from broader university employee populations or administrative staff in a particular geographical area may not fully explain the relationship between work-life balance and performance among non-teaching staff in other institutional settings. Examining this relationship can therefore provide context-specific evidence to inform human resource policies and management practices. Accordingly, this study examines the effect of work-life balance on employee performance among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya, with the aim of contributing empirical evidence to the management of employee well-being and performance in higher education institutions.

Statement of the Problem

Work-life balance is an important human resource management concern because employees are required to reconcile their work responsibilities with family obligations and personal needs. An appropriate balance between work and personal life can support employee well-being, reduce work-related stress, and enhance performance. Conversely, excessive working hours, inflexible work schedules, and competing work and family responsibilities may contribute to fatigue, burnout, absenteeism, and reduced productivity. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023), in its global report on working time and work-life balance, established that working longer hours than employees prefer is associated with poorer work-life balance. The report further emphasised that flexible working-time arrangements can benefit employees and employers by supporting well-being and productivity.

The challenge of maintaining work-life balance is particularly relevant in higher education institutions, where effective service delivery depends on the performance of both academic and non-teaching staff. Non-teaching staff undertake essential administrative, technical, financial, procurement, information technology, and support functions that facilitate university operations. However, competing work and personal responsibilities may affect their ability to concentrate, complete assigned tasks, meet deadlines, and maintain consistent performance. Where employees experience persistent work-family conflict, limited flexibility, and inadequate organisational support, their capacity to perform effectively may be compromised. Consequently, understanding the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance is important for improving human resource management and service delivery in public universities.

In Kenya, empirical studies have examined the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance in public universities. Agunda et al. (2024) investigated work-life balance practices in Kenyan public universities and reported a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and employee performance. Their study considered work-family conflict, flexible work arrangements, stress, burnout, and psychosocial support. Similarly, Ngela and Kamaara (2024) examined work-life balance among administrative staff in public universities in Nairobi City County, focusing on flexible working arrangements and organisational support. In addition, Andeyo (2024) investigated work-life balance strategies and the performance of non-teaching employees in selected public universities in Kenya. These studies demonstrate the established relevance of work-life balance to employee performance in the university sector.

Despite this existing evidence, further investigation may be warranted to establish how work-life balance relates to employee performance within the specific universities covered by the present study. Differences in institutional working arrangements, employee responsibilities, workload demands, and access to work-life balance support may produce different experiences and outcomes. Moreover, the findings of previous studies need to be considered in relation to their geographical coverage, study populations, measures of work-life balance, and analytical approaches. Accordingly, the research gap for the present study should be defined by the particular institutional context and methodological or empirical differences that distinguish it from previous research, rather than by assuming that the relationship has not previously been investigated.

This study therefore examines the effect of work-life balance on employee performance among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya. By focusing on the specified employee population and institutional context, the study seeks to generate empirical evidence that can inform university administrators and human resource practitioners in developing appropriate work-life balance practices to support employee well-being and enhance performance.

Objective of the study

To determine the effect of work life balance on employee performance among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya

Hypothesis of the study

H_{01} – There is no statistically significant effect of work life balance on employee performance among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Social Exchange Theory (SET) was developed by Homans (1958) and further elaborated by Blau (1964). The theory posits that social and workplace relationships are founded on reciprocal exchanges in which individuals respond to favourable treatment with positive behaviours. In organizational settings, employees contribute their skills, time, and effort, while employers provide support through favourable working conditions, flexible work arrangements, and policies that accommodate employees' personal and family responsibilities.

Social Exchange Theory is relevant to this study because it explains how work-life balance practices may influence employee performance. When employees perceive that their employer supports their efforts to balance work and personal responsibilities, they may reciprocate through greater commitment, dedication, and improved job performance. In public universities, supportive work-life balance practices may therefore contribute to the effective performance of non-teaching staff by enabling them to manage competing work and family demands.

However, the theory has limitations because employees may respond differently to organizational support depending on their personal circumstances, expectations, and perceptions of fairness. Furthermore, favourable work-life balance arrangements do not automatically guarantee improved performance, as other organizational and individual factors may influence employee outcomes. Despite these limitations, Social Exchange Theory provides an appropriate foundation for explaining the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance by emphasizing the role of perceived organizational support and reciprocal employee behaviour.

Empirical review

Work-life balance refers to an employee's ability to manage work-related responsibilities alongside family commitments and other personal activities without experiencing excessive conflict between these domains. It encompasses the extent to which individuals can fulfil their professional obligations while maintaining personal well-being and meeting family and social responsibilities. Work-life balance is therefore an important human resource management concern because competing work and non-work demands may influence employees' concentration, motivation, job satisfaction, and performance.

Empirical evidence suggests that work-life balance is associated with employee performance across different organizational contexts. Susanto et al. (2022), in a study of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises, examined the relationship between work-life balance, job satisfaction, and job performance using partial least squares structural equation modelling. The findings indicated that work-life balance positively influenced job satisfaction and job performance, while job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between work-life balance and performance. These findings suggest that employees' ability to manage work and personal responsibilities may contribute to improved performance, partly through enhanced job satisfaction. However,

the study was conducted in small and medium-sized enterprises, limiting the extent to which its findings can be generalized to non-teaching staff in public universities.

In the Kenyan public university context, Agunda et al. (2024) examined work-life balance practices and employee performance across 30 accredited public universities. Using a descriptive survey design and data from 385 employees, the study found a statistically significant positive relationship between work-life balance and employee performance ((beta = .844, $p < .001$)). The authors also reported that the work-life balance constructs included in their model accounted for 71.1% of the variation in employee performance. The findings provide evidence of an association between work-life balance practices and employee performance within Kenyan public universities. Nevertheless, the study considered employees across multiple public universities, creating an opportunity for further examination of the relationship among non-teaching staff in selected institutions.

Similarly, Ngela and Kamaara (2024) investigated work-life balance and employee performance among administrative staff in two public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study employed a descriptive research design and collected questionnaire data from 356 administrative employees. The findings indicated that flexible working arrangements, organizational support, employee well-being, and social support were important work-life balance considerations associated with employee performance. These findings highlight the relevance of organizational support and working arrangements in helping university employees manage competing responsibilities. However, the geographical and institutional scope of the study differs from the present study, which focuses on non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya.

The relationship between work-life balance and employee performance may also be explained by the challenges associated with work-family conflict, excessive workloads, and inadequate recovery time. When work demands interfere with family and personal responsibilities, employees may experience stress and fatigue that can undermine their concentration, efficiency, and ability to complete assigned tasks. Conversely, supportive supervision, reasonable workloads, appropriate leave arrangements, and flexible working practices may enable employees to manage competing responsibilities more effectively. However, the availability of such practices does not necessarily guarantee improved performance, since employee outcomes may also depend on organizational resources, individual circumstances, and working conditions.

Although previous studies have examined work-life balance and employee performance in different organizational settings, further investigation among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya remains worthwhile. Existing Kenyan studies have examined broad employee populations across public universities or administrative staff in particular geographical settings. The present study focuses specifically on non-teaching staff in selected public universities, thereby providing an opportunity to examine the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance within this defined institutional context. Accordingly, the study tests whether work-life balance has a statistically significant effect on employee performance, using an explanatory research design and appropriate inferential statistical analysis. The findings are intended to contribute context-specific evidence to human resource management practice in public universities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an explanatory research design because sought to examine the relationship between work life and employee performance and to explain how variations in work life were associated with variations in employee performance. Explanatory research design is appropriate where the objective is to investigate relationships among variables and provide an understanding of the mechanisms underlying the observed relationships (Hamaker et al., 2020).

The target population comprised 6,350 non-teaching staff from three selected public universities in Kenya, namely the University of Nairobi, Moi University and Egerton University. A sample of 376 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. Stratified, proportionate, and simple random sampling techniques were employed to ensure adequate representation of the different categories of non-teaching staff. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires. The quantitative data were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 25.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, while inferential analysis involved Pearson correlation and simple linear regression. Pearson correlation was used to establish the direction and strength of the relationship between work life and employee performance, while simple linear regression was used to determine the influence of work life on employee performance.

To test the study hypothesis, the following simple linear regression model was specified:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

EP = Employee Performance, the dependent variable

β_0 = Constant /intercept

β_1 = Regression coefficient of work life balance

X_1 = Worklife

ε = Error term

The null hypothesis was tested at the 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis was rejected when the p-value was less than 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's product moment correlation was conducted to establish the direction, strength and statistical significance of the relationship between work life balance and employee performance among non-teaching staff in the selected public universities in Kenya. The results presented in Table 1 indicate a weak, negative and statistically significant relationship between work life and employee performance ($r = 0.-205$, $p < .001$). This finding suggests that higher scores on the work life measure were associated with lower scores on employee performance measure in the study sample.

The correlation coefficient indicates a weak negative association between the two variables. The relationship was statistically significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed). Therefore, the findings provide evidence of a statistically significant negate association between work life balance and employee performance among the response. However, correlation does not establish causation; consequently, the result should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence that work life balance causes a decrease in employee performance.

Table 1: Correlation between Work Life Balance and Employee Performance

		Employee Performance	Work life Balance
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	-.205**
	Sig. (2- tailed)	-	<0.001
Work-life balance	Pearson Correlation	-.205**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	-

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Regression Analysis

Simple linear regression analysis was intended to determine whether work life balance significantly predicted employee performance among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya. The analysis was based on the following regression model:

$$EP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WLB + \varepsilon$$

Where EP represents employee performance, WLB represents work life balance, β_0 is the regression intercept, β_1 is the regression coefficient and ε represents the error term.

Table 2: Model Summary Results

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.205a	.042	.039	1.002	.042	13.63	1	312	.001

The model summary in Table 2 reveals that the coefficient of correlation (R) was .205. The results show that there was a positive relationship between work life and employee performance among staff in selected universities in Kenya. The value of R^2 was used to show the proportion of variation in the dependent variable explained by the model in Table 2. The R^2 value was indicated that the explanatory power of the independent variables was 0.042. This suggests that 4.2% of the variation in employee performance was explained by work life balance as the independent variable.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that work-life balance has a significant negative effect on employee performance among non-teaching staff in selected public universities in Kenya. This finding suggests that the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance may be influenced by contextual factors within the university work environment, including workload demands, staffing levels, job responsibilities and the effectiveness of existing work-life balance policies. The negative relationship should not necessarily be interpreted to mean that work-life balance is detrimental to performance, but rather that the work-life balance measures and conditions experienced by the respondents may not have translated into improved performance. The study therefore concludes that public universities should review and strengthen their work-life balance policies by promoting manageable workloads, flexible working arrangements where feasible, adequate staffing and supportive working environments. These measures may help non-teaching staff manage their work and personal responsibilities more effectively, thereby enhancing their productivity and overall performance. Further research is recommended to establish the contextual factors that explain the observed negative relationship between work-life balance and employee performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that public universities in Kenya should strengthen work-life balance practices by reviewing employees' workloads, working hours, leave arrangements and staffing levels. Management should regularly consult non-teaching staff to identify challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities and introduce flexible working arrangements where feasible. Universities should also develop and periodically review work-life balance policies in line with applicable labour laws and institutional requirements. Given the significant negative effect of work-life balance on employee performance established in this study, universities should investigate the contextual factors underlying this relationship before implementing interventions. The findings also suggest the need to consider employee commitment and organizational conditions when applying existing theories to explain the relationship between work-life balance and performance. Future studies should employ longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches, include additional institutions, and examine factors such as workload, organizational culture and staffing levels to provide deeper insights into this relationship.

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