

**Effects of work-life balance practices on employee performance in public and private
universities in Mount Kenya region, Kenya**

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree or any other award in any other University.

Signature.....Date.....

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Recommendation

We confirm that the work reported in this thesis examination was carried out by the student under our supervision.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my children, Trevor and Bakhita, whose support and inspiration have been invaluable throughout this journey.

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Deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Nancy Rintari (PhD) and Prof. Paul Maku (PhD) for their invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support throughout the development of this research thesis. Their expertise and encouragement have played a crucial role in shaping this work.

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ABSTRACT

Employee performance is a critical determinant of institutional success in higher education, influencing teaching quality, research output, and administrative efficiency. However, in Kenyan universities both public and private staff often face work-life imbalance due to rigid work schedules, limited leave, weak wellness structures, and inadequate support systems. This study examined the effect of work-life balance practices on employee performance in universities within the Mount Kenya Region. Specifically, it focused on four variables: flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, leave programs, and employee assistance programs. The study was underpinned by Job Demands-Resources Theory, Work-Family Border Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. A descriptive survey design was adopted, targeting 3,074 academic and non-academic staff across eight universities. A sample of 353 respondents was selected using simple random sampling, and data were collected through structured questionnaires. Reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.7$), and SPSS v25 was used for analysis, including descriptive, correlational, and regression techniques. Descriptive results revealed high mean scores across all dimensions of work-life balance, indicating respondents' agreement with the availability and effectiveness of these practices: flexible work arrangements ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.62$), wellness programs ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.61$), leave programs ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.66$), and employee assistance programs ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.63$). Pearson correlation analysis showed statistically significant and strong positive relationships between each independent variable and employee performance, with flexible work arrangements ($r = 0.688$), wellness programs ($r = 0.670$), leave programs ($r = 0.624$), and employee assistance programs ($r = 0.663$), all at $p < 0.01$. Multiple regression analysis revealed that these work-life balance dimensions collectively explained 74.7% of the variance in employee performance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.743$), with the model being statistically significant ($F = 171.985$, $p < 0.001$). Each variable had a significant positive influence: flexible work arrangements ($\beta = 0.486$), employee assistance programs ($\beta = 0.442$), wellness programs ($\beta = 0.411$), and leave programs ($\beta = 0.393$), all with $p < 0.001$. Flexible work arrangements emerged as the strongest predictor. The study concludes that strengthening work-life balance practices can substantially enhance staff performance in the university sector. It recommends embedding flexible scheduling, holistic wellness strategies, equitable leave entitlements, and accessible employee support systems in human resource policies. These insights offer a strategic framework for improving employee well-being and institutional productivity in higher education.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

COR	Conservation of Resources Theory
EAPs	Employee Assistance Programs
FWA	Flexible work arrangement
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
WFBT	Work-Family Border Theory
WLB	Work-life balance

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Employee performance is critical to achieving organizational goals and sustaining competitive advantage. It encompasses the efficiency, productivity, and quality of work employees deliver in line with organizational objectives (Rasool et al., 2021). High-performing employees contribute significantly to organizational success by meeting performance standards, achieving targets, and driving innovation. In the context of universities, employee performance influences institutional rankings and reputation and directly impacts the quality of education and student satisfaction (Khan et al., 2022). Employee performance is impacted by both organizational and human elements, such as motivation, job satisfaction, workplace culture, and work-life balance. The dynamic and demanding character of higher education institutions sometimes exerts enormous strain on academic and administrative personnel, necessitating solutions for long-term performance improvement.

Achieving work-life balance is a key factor in employee performance, allowing individuals to meet professional responsibilities while maintaining personal well-being (Iqbal et al., 2021). In universities, particularly in Mount Kenya Region, faculty and staff juggle multiple roles, including teaching, research, mentorship, and administration, making work-life balance essential. Azeem and Yasmin (2022) note that imbalance leads to job dissatisfaction, increased stress, and reduced productivity. Challenges such as work overload, rigid schedules, and inadequate policies further exacerbate the issue. Research highlights the strong link between work-life balance and employee performance, showing that well-structured policies

enhance satisfaction, reduce burnout, and improve retention (Sultana et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2022). Universities benefit from flexible working hours, leave arrangements, and wellness programs, fostering a supportive work environment. However, empirical studies on work-life balance and its impact on employee performance in Kenyan higher education, particularly in Mount Kenya Region, remain limited, underscoring the need for further research.

This study is crucial for addressing the research gap on the significant impact of employee performance on university success and the increasing difficulties in attaining work-life balance. This study looks into the influence of work-life balance on employee performance in institutions in Kenya's Mount Kenya Region, with the goal of providing valuable insights to policymakers, university management, and personnel. The findings help in designing effective work-life balance methods that improve employee performance while also boosting well-being and organizational sustainability (Munyua & Wanjiru, 2020). Additionally, understanding these dynamics is particularly relevant in the Kenyan context, where universities face unique challenges such as resource constraints, high workloads, and changing academic demands.

1.1.1 Global Perspective on work-life balance and employee performance

Work-life balance is a critical global issue, particularly in academic institutions, as it significantly affects employee performance. Studies from different countries offer insights into how universities manage work-life balance and its influence on staff productivity. In the United Kingdom, academic institutions have implemented well-established policies to support work-life balance. Research by Harris and Spencer (2020) found that universities offering flexible work arrangements experienced greater employee satisfaction and

productivity. These measures include remote work options, wellness initiatives, and family support programs. However, despite these efforts, academic staff still encounter difficulties in meeting publication requirements and managing teaching workloads, which can impact their performance. The study emphasizes the need for tailored work-life balance strategies that address the unique challenges of academic roles.

Germany's universities have adopted comprehensive work-life balance policies, particularly through state support for parental leave and child care. According to Schneider et al. (2021), these measures have significantly improved employee well-being and productivity. However, the same study noted that professors often struggle with research demands, which conflict with their personal lives, leading to work-related stress. Universities have started implementing structured time management training and mentoring programs to address these issues, further boosting employee performance. In Spain, work-life balance in universities is influenced by cultural norms that emphasize family connections. A study by Lopez-Cabrera and Hidalgo (2020) indicated that flexible work schedules and sabbatical leave policies have enhanced the performance of academic staff. However, the same study revealed that limited resources and economic constraints often hinder the effective implementation of these policies. The researchers recommend greater investment in institutional frameworks to support work-life balance.

Russian universities are gradually adopting work-life balance policies, although the progress is slower compared to Western countries. Research by Ivanov and Petrova (2021) noted that academic staff often face long working hours and heavy administrative workloads, which reduce their productivity. Recent reforms have introduced initiatives such as workload reduction and mental health support, showing promising outcomes in improving employee

performance. Canadian universities are leaders in promoting work-life balance through robust family-friendly policies and flexible work arrangements. A study by Smith and Johnson (2021) found that these policies significantly enhance employee engagement and academic output. Additionally, universities in Canada provide comprehensive wellness programs that address stress and burnout, further contributing to improved employee performance.

Universities in Mexico are increasingly realizing the value of work-life balance. According to Gonzalez et al. (2020), institutions that embrace flexible work policies have experienced significant gains in staff performance. However, societal expectations of lengthy work hours might undercut these endeavors, necessitating a shift in institutional views toward work-life balance. Work-life balance is a key issue in Japan, as cultural traditions support extended working hours. Tanaka et al. (2021) found that institutions that implemented flexible scheduling and decreased administrative hassles had greater staff satisfaction and research production. However, these policies are not yet widely adopted, emphasizing the need for more comprehensive reforms.

1.1.2 Regional Perspective on work-life balance and employee performance

The African environment has distinct characteristics in the interaction between work-life balance and employee performance, notably at universities. Countries in the area encounter issues in resource allocation, cultural norms, and institutional rules, all of which have an impact on university staff's work-life balance. This section looks at viewpoints from Egypt, Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda, emphasizing the link between work-life balance efforts and employee performance. At Egypt, work-life balance at universities is heavily influenced by cultural expectations and administrative pressure. Allen et al. (2019) discovered that Egyptian university staff frequently suffer high levels of stress as a result of strict schedules, insufficient childcare help, and restricted access to wellness programs. These

issues have a negative influence on employee performance, especially for female employees who must balance home and work duties. Recent initiatives to implement flexible working arrangements have demonstrated the ability to increase productivity, but their acceptance is still restricted due to corporate opposition and cultural restrictions.

Similarly, in Ethiopia, work-life balance in universities is often strained by heavy teaching workloads and limited professional development opportunities. According to Gebrekidan and Negash (2021), academic staff frequently experience burnout, negatively affecting their performance. While recent government interventions, such as reducing teaching hours and offering research grants, have shown promise, the study emphasizes the need for consistent implementation across institutions to achieve sustainable improvements in employee performance.

In Tanzania, work-life balance in universities is influenced by cultural norms and institutional practices. Research by Chacha and Nchimbi (2020) indicated that academic staff often face challenges in balancing teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. Flexible work arrangements and mentorship programs have been introduced in some institutions, with positive effects on employee performance. However, the study noted that inconsistent implementation and lack of institutional support hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. Ugandan universities are gradually recognizing the importance of work-life balance in enhancing employee performance. A study by Okello and Nabukenya (2021) found that flexible working hours and wellness programs significantly improve job satisfaction and productivity among university staff. However, the study highlighted that limited funding and inadequate infrastructure often undermine these efforts. The researchers recommend increased government and institutional support to address these challenges and promote

sustainable work-life balance practices. In Rwanda, work-life balance policies in universities are still in their infancy, but there is growing recognition of their importance. Research by Ndayambaje and Uwizeye (2020) found that academic staff often struggle with balancing professional and personal responsibilities due to high workloads and limited institutional support. Recent initiatives to introduce wellness programs and flexible working hours have shown promise in improving employee performance. The study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to work-life balance to address the unique challenges faced by university staff in Rwanda.

1.1.3 Local Perspective on work-life balance and employee performance

In Kenya, universities play a critical role in driving the country's socio-economic development through education, research, and innovation. The performance of employees in these institutions whether academic, administrative, or support staff is crucial in determining their effectiveness in achieving institutional goals. However, balancing professional obligations and personal responsibilities remains a significant challenge for university employees in Kenya due to factors such as high workloads, inadequate resources, and cultural expectations (Ndungu & Mungai, 2021). Work-life balance has emerged as a vital component in addressing these challenges and enhancing employee performance, with various universities implementing policies aimed at achieving this balance.

Kenyan universities are characterized by heavy workloads, especially for academic staff who are often required to juggle teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. A study by Ouma and Mwangi (2021) highlighted that many university employees in Kenya work extended hours to meet deadlines and deliver quality services. This work overload leads to stress, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction, negatively affecting their performance.

Additionally, administrative staff face challenges such as inadequate staffing, poor resource allocation, and limited access to training and career development opportunities, further exacerbating work-life imbalance (Njogu & Ndung'u, 2020).

While some universities in Kenya have started implementing work-life balance policies, the progress remains inconsistent. Flexible working hours, paid maternity and paternity leave, and counseling services are among the few initiatives introduced to support employees (Kamau & Wanjiru, 2021). However, a study by Nyamu and Wekesa (2020) revealed that these policies are often poorly communicated or inadequately enforced, limiting their effectiveness in addressing work-life balance issues. For instance, employees are often hesitant to utilize flexible work options due to fear of being perceived as less committed to their jobs.

Work-life balance challenges in Kenyan universities are more pronounced for female employees due to societal expectations around caregiving and household duties. Kinyua and Njuguna (2021) found that female staff struggle to balance professional and personal roles, leading to increased stress and lower job satisfaction, exacerbated by cultural norms and limited institutional support. Gender-sensitive policies, such as subsidized childcare and mentorship programs, are essential for addressing these disparities and improving performance. Additionally, organizational culture plays a key role in the success of work-life balance initiatives. Wainaina and Gitau (2021) found that universities with inclusive cultures, open communication, and participatory decision-making report higher employee satisfaction, while rigid, hierarchical structures often contribute to work overload, burnout, and ineffective policy implementation.

Despite challenges, evidence shows that well-structured work-life balance policies enhance employee performance in Kenyan universities. Mwangi and Wekesa (2020) found that employees who effectively balance work and personal responsibilities exhibit higher productivity, job satisfaction, and commitment, emphasizing the need for prioritizing such initiatives. The Kenyan government plays a vital role by enforcing labor laws and funding wellness programs (Ndungu & Mungai, 2021). Collaboration between universities and government agencies can facilitate the development of comprehensive work-life balance policies tailored to the needs of higher education institutions.

To effectively addressing work-life balance challenges in Kenyan universities requires a comprehensive approach. Institutions should focus on adopting flexible work arrangements, implementing wellness programs, and integrating gender-sensitive policies. Moreover, creating a supportive workplace culture and utilizing technology to streamline processes without adding excessive workload are essential for achieving sustainable work-life balance. These strategies not only enhance employee performance but also contribute to the overall improvement of education quality and research output in Kenyan universities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Globally, robust work-life balance practices, such as flexibility and wellness programs, significantly enhance productivity and satisfaction. In contrast, Kenyan universities struggle with inadequate policy implementation and limited resources. These challenges necessitate targeted research and interventions to address absenteeism, low engagement, and declining work quality while aligning with global standards.

Employee performance in universities is closely linked to work-life balance practices, which influence productivity, quality of work, punctuality, attendance, and employee satisfaction. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021), institutions implementing effective work-life balance strategies report a 35% improvement in overall employee productivity. A global survey conducted by Zhang et al. (2020) revealed that 40% of university employees with access to flexible working hours consistently met or exceeded performance expectations compared to 28% in institutions without such policies. Additionally, universities prioritizing employee well-being, such as those offering wellness programs and on-campus childcare facilities, experienced a 20% reduction in absenteeism and an 18% increase in employee engagement (Smith et al., 2021). Despite these advancements, nearly 45% of employees in higher education institutions globally still report challenges in balancing professional and personal obligations, which negatively impacts their punctuality, attendance, and work quality (World Bank, 2020).

Kenyan universities face challenges in achieving work-life balance, affecting employee performance. Over 65% of staff experience frequent stress due to heavy workloads, long hours, and limited support (Ndungu & Kamau, 2021). This has led to a 15% increase in absenteeism over the past five years, reducing productivity and delaying academic services (Kenya National Bureau of statistics [KNBS], 2021). Additionally, only 25% of employees are satisfied with current work-life balance policies, while over 50% attribute their dissatisfaction to rigid schedules and lack of workplace flexibility (Ouma & Mwangi, 2021). Despite these challenges, universities that have implemented work-life balance initiatives have seen a 12% increase in employee engagement and a 10% improvement in service delivery efficiency (Njogu et al., 2020).

Therefore, this study examined the effects of work-life balance on employee performance in universities in the Mount Kenya Region, Kenya. By exploring this relationship, the research aimed to provide actionable insights to improve institutional policies and practices, ultimately enhancing productivity, punctuality, attendance, and employee satisfaction.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

To establish the effects of work-life balance practices on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives for the research were;

- i. To determine the effect of flexible work arrangements, practice on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya
- ii. To assess the effect of wellness programs practice on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya
- iii. To establish the effect of leave program practice on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya
- iv. To assess the effect of employee assistance programs practice on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya

Research Hypothesis

HO1 Flexible work arrangement practice has no significant effect on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya

HO2 Wellness program practice has no significant effect on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya

HO3 Leave program practice has no significant effect on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya

HO4 Employee assistance programs practice have no significant effect on employee performance in Universities in Mount Kenya Region, Kenya

1.5 Justification of the study

The Mount Kenya Region was selected as the geographical scope for this study due to its strategic importance in Kenya's higher education landscape. This region hosts a high concentration of both public and private universities across counties such as Meru, Embu, Kirinyaga, Nyeri, and Tharaka Nithi, offering a diverse and representative environment for examining institutional work-life balance practices. The inclusion of universities from multiple counties allowed for a broader analysis of contextual and institutional variations in employee performance outcomes.

Additionally, staff in universities within the Mt. Kenya Region face unique work-life balance challenges stemming from high workloads, limited wellness infrastructure, and socio-cultural expectations issues that are often more acute in semi-urban and rural academic settings. Despite these pressures, limited empirical research exists focusing specifically on how work-life balance interventions influence employee performance in this region. By narrowing the scope to Mt. Kenya, this study addressed a significant geographical and empirical gap in existing literature, thereby enhancing the relevance and applicability of the findings to similar university environments in Kenya.

Moreover, the region's diverse institutional characteristics including varying resource capacities, governance structures, and HR policies enabled a comparative assessment of work-life balance strategies across different types of universities. This allowed the study to offer context-specific policy recommendations grounded in real-world institutional dynamics, thus contributing to both academic discourse and practical human resource management interventions in Kenya's education sector.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to multiple stakeholders within and beyond the higher education sector. For university management, particularly in Mount Kenya universities, the findings provide evidence-based insights on how fostering effective work-life balance policies can enhance employee productivity, reduce burnout, and improve institutional performance. By understanding the direct link between work-life balance initiatives and employee outcomes, management can design strategic interventions that promote both academic and administrative efficiency.

Employees stand to benefit by gaining awareness of how structured work-life balance programs contribute to job satisfaction, mental well-being, and long-term career sustainability. The study highlights how balancing professional responsibilities with personal life can enhance overall quality of life, ultimately foster loyalty and reduce staff turnover.

Policymakers in the higher education sector, including the Commission for University Education (CUE) and the Ministry of Education, can also benefit from the research. The study underscores the importance of standardized national guidelines on work-life balance that can be embedded in institutional policies, ensuring consistency and fairness across universities. Such frameworks can

help to strengthen employee welfare programs, thereby contributing to the broader goal of improving education quality in Kenya.

For academicians and scholars in human resource management and organizational behavior, the research enriches the existing body of knowledge on work-life balance, providing empirical evidence from a Kenyan context. It contributes to the theoretical discourse by linking work-life practices to employee performance within higher education institutions, an area that remains underexplored in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Finally, the study serves as a useful reference point for future researchers interested in examining work-life balance in diverse sectors and regions. By offering context-specific findings, it creates pathways for comparative studies across public and private universities in Kenya and beyond, as well as interdisciplinary inquiries in other industries.

In sum, the study benefits university management, employees, policymakers, academicians, and future researchers, making it a valuable contribution both practically and academically.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is confined to universities in Kenya's Mount Kenya Region, covering both public and private institutions located in counties such as Meru, Embu, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, and Tharaka Nithi. The target population comprises academic and administrative staff, since these groups face significant professional and personal demands, making them central to the investigation of work-life balance practices. Support staff are excluded to keep the focus on employees directly engaged in teaching, research, and management functions.

The geographical scope is limited to the Mount Kenya Region, allowing the research to generate context-specific and actionable insights that reflect the socio-economic and institutional realities of this area. As such, the findings may not be directly generalizable to universities outside the region or to sectors beyond higher education.

The timeframe of the study spans 2024–2025, during which data were collected to examine the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance. The cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of the situation within this period, meaning it does not capture longitudinal changes or long-term effects of policy interventions.

The theoretical scope of the study is anchored in four frameworks: the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, Work-Family Border Theory (WFBT), Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, and Social Exchange Theory (SET). These theories provide the lens through which the study conceptualizes and analyzes the relationship between work-life balance practices flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, leave programs, and employee assistance programs and employee performance outcomes such as productivity, quality of work, attendance, punctuality, and satisfaction.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

While the study was subject to certain limitations, efforts were made to minimize their impact and enhance the reliability of the findings. The geographical scope focused on universities in the Mount Kenya Region, Kenya, which provided a well-defined context for in-depth analysis. Although the findings may not have been directly generalizable to other regions or sectors, they offered valuable insights that could inform similar studies in comparable settings.

The use of self-reported data from employees allowed for the collection of firsthand perceptions and experiences, enriching the understanding of work-life balance and its effect on performance. To address potential biases such as over- or underestimation, the study incorporated a carefully designed questionnaire and assured respondents of confidentiality to encourage honest responses.

Despite potential challenges in data collection due to limited participation or reluctance to share personal information, the study achieved a high response rate through effective communication and the use of user-friendly data collection tools. These efforts enhanced the quality and completeness of the data.

Although time constraints limited the ability to conduct a longitudinal analysis, the study captured cross-sectional data, offering a robust snapshot of current status on work-life balance. Moreover, the use of appropriate sampling techniques, data triangulation, and transparent reporting helped to mitigate limitations and strengthen the validity of the research outcomes.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

Several fundamental assumptions successfully guided this analysis. First, the study confirmed that work-life balance policies had a direct influence on employee performance, positively affecting key parameters such as productivity, work quality, timeliness, and job satisfaction. This finding aligned with existing research that links work-life balance to improved organizational outcomes. Second, respondents provided honest and reliable information during data collection, which enhanced the credibility and validity of the study. Their willingness to share personal experiences regarding work-life balance and performance contributed significantly to the depth and accuracy of the insights gathered.

Third, the study demonstrated that the work-life balance challenges and practices observed in universities within the Mount Kenya Region reflected broader patterns seen in similar institutions across Kenya. This affirmed the relevance and applicability of the findings beyond the immediate study area, while still acknowledging the diversity in institutional approaches. Lastly, the research period was marked by relative stability in external factors such as government policies and economic conditions, which ensured that the observed outcomes were primarily attributable to the work-life balance practices under investigation. These conditions enabled the study to achieve its objectives and produce dependable, contextually meaningful results.

1.10 Operational Definitions of Terms

Employee Assistance Programs

Employee assistance programs (EAPs), as defined by Kumar and Mishra (2020), are workplace initiatives that give employees with professional support services such as counseling, stress management, and mental health resources. These initiatives seek to increase employee well-being, minimize workplace stress, and boost overall job performance.

In this study, employee assistance programs were operationalized by assessing the availability and utilization of counseling, stress management, and wellness support services in universities within the Mount Kenya Region. The study examined how these programs influence employee productivity, engagement, and job satisfaction.

Employee Performance

Smith et al. (2021) define employee performance as the measurable outcomes of an employee's work, encompassing productivity, quality of work, punctuality, attendance, and job satisfaction.

Effective performance is influenced by various organizational factors, including work-life balance, motivation, and institutional support.

In this study, employee performance was operationalized by evaluating key indicators such as work output, adherence to deadlines, efficiency in task completion, and overall contribution to institutional goals in universities within the Mount Kenya Region.

Flexible Work Arrangements

According to Zhang et al. (2020), flexible work arrangements refer to work schedules or structures that allow employees to adjust their working hours, locations, or duties to accommodate personal and professional needs. These arrangements aim to enhance work-life balance and improve employee well-being.

In this study, flexible work arrangements were operationalized by examining the implementation of remote work, adjustable working hours, and job-sharing policies in universities within the Mount Kenya Region. The study was assessed how these arrangements impact employee efficiency, job satisfaction, and retention.

Leave Policy

Ndungu and Kamau (2021) define a leave policy as an organization's framework governing employee entitlement to time off for personal, health, or other reasons. A well-structured leave policy promotes work-life balance and ensures employees can effectively manage personal responsibilities without compromising job performance.

In this study, leave policy was operationalized by analyzing the availability and implementation of paid and unpaid leave, maternity and paternity leave, and emergency leave in universities within the Mount Kenya Region. The study explored how these policies influence employee engagement and work productivity.

Mount Kenya Region

The Government of Kenya (2021) describes the Mount Kenya region as the area surrounding Mount Kenya, encompassing the adjacent counties of Meru, Embu, Kirinyaga, Nyeri, and Tharaka Nithi. This region hosts several public and private universities that play a crucial role in higher education and economic development.

In this study, the Mount Kenya region was operationalized as the geographical scope within which the research is conducted, focusing on universities located in Meru, Embu, Kirinyaga, Nyeri, and Tharaka Nithi counties.

Universities

Ouma and Mwangi (2021) define universities as institutions of higher learning that provide education, research, and training at undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional levels. These institutions play a critical role in workforce development, knowledge creation, and innovation. In this study, universities were operationalized as higher education institutions within the Mount Kenya Region, both public and private, where the research was conducted to examine the effects of work-life balance on employee performance.

Wellness Programs

Wellness programs, as defined by Smith and Johnson (2019), are employer-sponsored efforts that enhance employees' physical, mental, and emotional well-being. These services include health checks, counseling, exercise classes, and stress management training.

In this study, wellness programs were operationalized by evaluating the presence and effectiveness of institutional wellness initiatives in universities within the Mount Kenya Region. The study assessed how these programs influence employee health, job satisfaction, and work efficiency.

Work-Life Balance

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021) defines work-life balance as the mix of professional tasks and personal life commitments that allows employees to achieve job satisfaction and well-being. A healthy work-life balance boosts productivity, lowers burnout, and increases job engagement.

In this study, work-life balance was operationalized by measuring how successfully Mount Kenya Region university staff can balance their professional responsibilities with personal and family obligations. The study investigated how flexible work arrangements, wellness initiatives, leave policies, and employee support programs impact work-life balance and overall employee performance.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is a structured process focused on identifying and analyzing secondary data relevant to the research topic. This chapter provides an overview of various scholarly works related to work-life balance and employee performance. The chapter delves into both theoretical and empirical literature, establishes conceptual and operational frameworks, and identifies gaps in the existing research that pertain to the study's focus.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This study's theoretical assessment explores into major beliefs that serve as the foundation for work-life balance. It examined the Job Demands-Resources Theory, Work-Family Border Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. The purpose of this research is to create a conceptual framework that explains how work-life balance components such as flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, leave programs, and employee support programs influence employee performance at Kenyan institutions.

2.2.1 Job Demands-Resources Theory

Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) offer employees autonomy that mitigates job demands like workload and emotional strain. This flexibility leads to reduced stress and improved performance, making FWAs a vital resource for enhancing workplace engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). Bakker and Demerouti (2021) later expanded the JD-R theory to incorporate organizational goals, such as employee engagement and performance. Their research emphasized that job resources,

including FWAs, significantly reduce the impact of job demands and promote favorable work outcomes. FWAs enable employees to better manage work-life balance, meet both personal and professional commitments, and improve overall job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2021). This extension reinforced the model's significance in work-life balance studies.

The JD-R theory has acquired significant acceptance for its use in examining the relationship between FWAs and employee performance (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Researchers have proved its adaptability in a variety of organizational situations, emphasizing how flexible work arrangements reduce stress and increase engagement. FWAs boost attention, energy, and efficiency by giving employees more control over their work schedules, leading in better job performance.

Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2013) further validated the JD-R theory by showing that job resources, including flexible scheduling, elevate employee engagement while reducing burnout. Their study underscored the critical role of FWAs in fostering a supportive work environment aligned with employees' needs and expectations, ultimately leading to improved performance outcomes. Flexible scheduling allows employees to better manage workloads, avoid exhaustion, and sustain motivation, key factors in long-term productivity (Tims et al., 2013).

Despite widespread acceptance, the JD-R hypothesis has been criticized for its generality and lack of accuracy (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Some experts claim that the model fails to account for individual variations in how work demands and resources are perceived. This shortcoming, however, does not detract from its usefulness in investigating the link between FWAs and employee performance. FWAs are strongly tied to the JD-R model's motivational framework because they give employees autonomy and control, allowing them to manage work-related

stress and achieve performance goals (Bakker et al., 2014). According to research, FWAs improve work satisfaction and engagement, both of which are essential for excellent performance (Bakker et al., 2014).

The JD-R framework continues to be a valuable tool in exploring the role of FWAs in employee well-being and performance (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2021). Its dual approach balancing job demands while enhancing resources demonstrates the importance of flexibility as a resource that boosts well-being and efficiency. By reducing work-related strain and fostering motivation, FWAs contribute significantly to employee performance, reinforcing the JD-R model's relevance in this field (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2021).

While the JD-R theory remains widely applicable, it has certain limitations. Its broad conceptual scope and limited focus on individual differences present challenges in capturing the nuanced impact of FWAs. Additionally, establishing causality remains difficult, as various external factors may influence work-life balance outcomes. Future research should refine the model by incorporating perspectives on individual variability, workplace dynamics, and external influences that shape the effectiveness of FWAs.

By critically evaluating the JD-R model's strengths and weaknesses, organizations can design FWAs that maximize benefits while mitigating potential drawbacks. A well-structured approach to flexible work arrangements can enhance workforce management, boost employee well-being, and improve overall performance, making them a vital component of modern workplace policies.

2.2.2 Work-Family Border Theory

The Work-Family Border Theory (WFBT) explains how workplace wellness programs influence work-life balance via boundary flexibility. Organizational policies and personal choices determine the integration of work and personal domains, impacting overall employee well-being and job performance. Employees adept at managing work-life boundaries exhibit lower stress levels and greater productivity under WFBT frameworks (Clark). Flexible scheduling options enable better alignment of professional-personal responsibilities, improving holistic well-being. Institutional support through remote-work policies or parental leave fosters workforce resilience against burnout while sustaining engagement.

Since its introduction in 2000, WFBT has been widely adopted in organizational research, especially in response to evolving workplace structures and the growing demand for work-life integration (Kossek et al., 2021). The theory has since expanded to account for external influences such as workplace culture, leadership support, and digital connectivity, all of which shape how employees manage their professional and personal responsibilities. These elements are particularly relevant in workplace wellness initiatives, as they affect the success of interventions designed to alleviate work-related stress and cultivate healthier work environments.

The Work-Family Border Theory (WFBT) highlights the importance of managing boundaries between work and personal life, offering critical guidance for designing effective workplace wellness programs (Kossek et al., 2021). Research suggests that when employees perceive their organization as genuinely supportive of work-life integration without fear of negative repercussions they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement, loyalty, and overall

job performance. For instance, employees who have greater control over their schedules are better positioned to participate in wellness activities, such as exercise routines or mental health services, as flexible work arrangements allow them to integrate these practices into their daily lives without workplace interference.

In designing workplace wellness programs, WFBT highlights the need for policies that promote work-life balance while addressing concerns related to performance expectations, workload distribution, and time management (Clark, 2000). Recognizing the impact of work-life boundaries on stress levels, job satisfaction, and overall productivity enables organizations to develop initiatives that enhance workplace flexibility, prevent burnout, and drive performance improvements. Companies that implement wellness interventions such as mindfulness training, stress management workshops, and family-friendly policies often experience lower absenteeism, improved motivation, and higher retention rates (Kossek et al., 2021).

Although WFBT is widely applied, some critics argue that it does not fully consider structural and economic factors influencing work-life balance, such as job security, workload intensity, and societal expectations (Kossek et al., 2021). However, despite these limitations, the theory remains relevant in shaping workplace interventions that enhance employee well-being and performance, particularly when combined with broader organizational frameworks that emphasize culture and support systems.

Ultimately, the Work-Family Border Theory serves as a strong conceptual foundation for linking wellness programs to employee performance (Clark, 2000). By addressing boundary management challenges and enhancing workplace flexibility, organizations can create

wellness programs that boost employee engagement, reduce stress, and optimize overall productivity (Kossek et al., 2021). In academic institutions, wellness initiatives grounded in WFBT can significantly improve the well-being of faculty and staff, leading to better institutional outcomes.

2.2.3 Conservation of Resources Theory

Leave programs are mainly based on Dr. Stevan E. Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which was developed in 1989. This theory offers a complete framework for understanding stress, resource management, and recovery in the workplace. Individuals actively attempt to get, retain, and safeguard valued resources, which include concrete assets like time and energy as well as intangible aspects like mental well-being and social support (Hobfoll, 1989). Stress is largely caused by resource loss, whereas resource restoration and accumulation increase recovery and work performance (Hobfoll, 1989). Employees may recharge their physical and emotional resources through leave programs such as yearly leave, parental leave, and paid time off, which reduce stress, improve attention, and promote workplace productivity.

Hobfoll introduced COR theory to address gaps in earlier stress models, particularly emphasizing the interplay between resource depletion and recovery (Hobfoll, 1989). Over time, the theory has evolved to incorporate the concept of "resource caravans," which highlights the importance of supportive work environments in sustaining resource accumulation (Hobfoll et al., 2019). Leave programs not only facilitate individual recovery but also signal an organization's commitment to employee well-being, fostering a culture of support and reinforcing effective resource management (Hobfoll et al., 2019). COR theory

has been widely applied in organizational studies to examine how work-life balance initiatives, including leave policies, influence employee well-being and job performance (Halbesleben et al., 2020). Leave programs align with this theoretical framework by enabling employees to recover from workplace demands, reducing burnout, and enhancing work effectiveness (Halbesleben et al., 2020). This is particularly relevant for academic professionals who often experience high workloads and chronic stress, as leave policies can improve teaching quality and research productivity (Halbesleben et al., 2020).

Despite its broad applicability, COR theory has faced criticism. Scholars such as Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) argue that its wide scope may limit its practical application in specific workplace settings. They contend that while COR provides valuable insights into resource management, it may not fully account for cultural variations in perceptions of leave benefits or differences in access to such programs across organizations (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Nevertheless, COR remains a useful framework for exploring the link between leave policies and employee performance, offering a structured approach to understanding how resource replenishment impacts well-being (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

Research suggests that employees who perceive leave programs as accessible and well-supported report lower stress levels and greater job engagement (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). By allowing employees to step away from workplace pressures, leave policies facilitate resource recovery and enable individuals to return to work with renewed energy and focus (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). This aligns with Hobfoll's principle that resource replenishment is essential for sustaining performance following periods of resource depletion (Hobfoll, 1989). Organizations that implement well-structured leave policies based on the COR framework benefit from improved employee morale, reduced absenteeism, and

enhanced productivity (Hobfoll et al., 2019). Additionally, employees who feel supported through leave programs tend to exhibit higher organizational commitment, as they perceive their well-being as a priority, increasing loyalty and discretionary effort (Hobfoll et al., 2019).

While COR theory is not without its critiques, it provides strong theoretical support for leave programs as a strategy to enhance employee performance (Hobfoll et al., 2019). Recognizing the demands placed on employees and implementing resource-replenishing mechanisms such as leave policies help organizations foster resilience and maintain productivity (Hobfoll et al., 2019). A well-designed leave system can significantly contribute to employee satisfaction and improved organizational outcomes (Hobfoll et al., 2019).

The Conservation of Resources Theory establishes a solid foundation for analyzing how leave policies affect employee well-being and job performance. By enabling workers to recover and conserve their resources, leave programs serve as effective tools in mitigating burnout and fostering sustained engagement (Hobfoll et al., 2019). This theoretical perspective highlights the necessity of resource-supportive policies in promoting work-life balance and productivity, making it a valuable framework for shaping organizational decision-making (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2019).

Despite its vast conceptual reach and apparent limits in dealing with cultural variations, COR theory emphasizes the significance of resource recovery, organizational support, and long-term employee well-being. To optimize the success of leave programs, employers should combine COR principles with complementing workplace initiatives including flexible work arrangements and workload management. A comprehensive strategy that integrates leave

policies with broader employee well-being efforts can result in higher work satisfaction and improved organizational performance.

2.2.4 Social Exchange Theory

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and other workplace wellness initiatives can be theoretically underpinned by Social Exchange Theory (SET), first introduced by Blau (1964). SET suggests that human relationships, including those in the workplace, are driven by reciprocal exchanges, where individuals engage in interactions that provide mutual benefits. The theory asserts that when employees receive organizational support, such as wellness programs, leave benefits, or assistance programs, they feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate through higher performance, commitment, and engagement (Blau, 1964).

SET is frequently used to describe how corporate policies impact employee attitudes and actions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The theory's central concept is that employees evaluate the worth of resources offered by their employers and select their degree of dedication and effort based on perceived fairness and advantages. When employers engage in employee well-being through organized EAPs, flexible work arrangements, and wellness initiatives, employees are more likely to respond with higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and more loyalty (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The concept of reciprocity in SET is particularly relevant in the implementation of wellness programs and leave policies. Research has shown that employees who perceive their employer as supportive through initiatives such as mental health counseling, stress management programs, and paid leave tend to demonstrate higher motivation and reduced workplace stress (Gouldner, 1960). For instance, when universities provide faculty and administrative staff

with access to comprehensive EAPs, employees feel valued and, in turn, exhibit greater job satisfaction, commitment, and retention (Gouldner, 1960).

Blau's (1964) theory has been extended in organizational psychology and human resource management to include perceived organizational support (POS) a construct that highlights how employees interpret the intentions behind employer-provided benefits (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Employees who feel that their employer genuinely cares about their well-being are more likely to demonstrate higher engagement levels and go beyond their job descriptions. In contrast, when employees perceive wellness programs as superficial or obligatory, the reciprocity effect diminishes, making effective implementation and communication of EAPs critical to their success (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

SET provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding how Employee Assistance Programs and workplace wellness initiatives contribute to employee motivation and performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). When organizations invest in comprehensive wellness programs including mental health support, career coaching, and work-life balance policies employees interpret these benefits as a form of social exchange, encouraging them to enhance their performance and commitment (Gouldner, 1960). In the higher education sector, faculty and administrative employees frequently face high workloads and emotional pressures, making employee assistance and leave programs essential for maintaining productivity and well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Universities that implement targeted EAPs, such as counseling services, childcare support, and flexible work arrangements, foster a supportive organizational culture that strengthens employee retention and institutional performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Although SET provides a valuable perspective on workplace exchanges, critics argue that not all employees reciprocate equally, as factors like individual personality, job satisfaction, and workplace culture can influence how employees perceive and respond to support programs (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Some researchers also highlight that employees may view certain benefits as entitlements rather than voluntary support, which reduces their motivation to reciprocate (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Additionally, imbalanced exchanges—where employees feel they give more than they receive can lead to workplace dissatisfaction and burnout (Gouldner, 1960). Despite these limitations, SET remains a fundamental framework for understanding how employee assistance programs enhance engagement and performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Organizations that had aligned wellness initiatives with genuine concern for employee well-being had likely maximized the reciprocal benefits of these interventions, resulting in a more motivated and productive workforce (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

2.3 Empirical review

2.3.1 Employee Performance in Universities

Employee performance in universities is a critical factor in achieving institutional goals, enhancing academic excellence, and ensuring student satisfaction. University employees, including faculty, administrative, and support staff, play a vital role in delivering quality education, conducting research, and managing institutional operations. Performance in this context is often measured through productivity, research output, teaching effectiveness, and service quality. Effective employee performance contributes to the institution's reputation, competitiveness, and ability to attract students and funding (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; O'Meara et al., 2019).

Several variables influence employee performance at universities, including work-life balance, motivation, institutional support, and organizational culture. Flexible work arrangements, wellness initiatives, leave policies, and employee support programmes have all been demonstrated to improve employee engagement and productivity. Employees are more likely to remain motivated, engaged, and productive when institutions provide a supportive work environment that encourages professional development and personal well-being (Gajendran & Harrison, 2021; Kossek et al., 2019). In contrast, severe workloads, high stress levels, and a lack of institutional support can result in burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and poor performance.

Universities must implement rules and procedures that foster a positive working environment in order to improve employee performance. Professional development programs, mentorship efforts, and wellness assistance can help to boost employee engagement and productivity. Fostering a culture of cooperation, recognition, and continual learning may also increase academic and administrative performance. Universities may achieve sustainable development, academic achievement, and institutional success by focusing on staff well-being and performance enhancement initiatives (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020).

2.3.1 Flexible Work Arrangements and Employee Performance

Flexible work arrangements (FWA) relate to employees' ability to choose their own work schedules, locations, and ways of performing tasks (Allen et al., 2019). Research from the United States and the United Kingdom shows that FWAs, such as remote work and flexible hours, contribute to higher job satisfaction, lower stress, and improved performance, with universities in these regions experiencing increased employee productivity and well-being as

a result (Allen et al., 2019). However, the majority of this study focuses on business contexts rather than academic institutions. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model offers a useful framework for evaluating how FWAs affect employee performance, implying that flexibility, autonomy, and social support reduce job-related stress and increase engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2021).

Studies in Germany and Australia confirm this relationship, showing that universities implementing FWAs report higher employee satisfaction and commitment, though institutional culture and policies play a significant role in their effectiveness (Tims et al., 2019). In Africa, research from South Africa and Nigeria indicates that FWAs enhance job satisfaction, work-life balance, and employee performance, with universities that adopt these policies seeing lower absenteeism and greater staff commitment (Greenhaus & Allen, 2019). However, resistance to FWAs in African universities remains a challenge due to traditional management structures and concerns over productivity, which existing studies have yet to fully address.

In East Africa, flexible work arrangements in universities have received minimal attention in research. While some studies in Uganda and Tanzania highlight the benefits of FWAs in reducing employee stress and enhancing work-life balance, the focus remains primarily on corporate sectors rather than academic institutions (Greenhaus & Allen, 2019). The lack of empirical studies focusing on universities in the East African region leaves a gap in understanding how FWAs can be effectively integrated into higher education institutions.

In Kenya, the link between FWAs and job performance has been explored in studies like that of Makau (2015). This research found that university staff with access to FWAs were more

productive and satisfied compared to those with fixed schedules (Makau, 2019). Flexible work arrangements helped staff effectively manage their academic responsibilities and personal lives, improving job performance (Makau, 2019). However, this study did not analyze the specific barriers preventing the widespread adoption of FWAs in Kenyan universities.

Organizational support is another critical factor in the relationship between FWAs and employee performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). Employees who feel supported by their organizations in achieving work-life balance are more likely to exhibit higher motivation, job satisfaction, and performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). Universities in Kenya that integrate FWAs within a supportive work culture can significantly enhance job performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). However, few studies have examined the long-term impact of such initiatives on university staff in Kenya.

Despite the advantages of FWAs, challenges in implementation remain. Studies in Canada and France identify organizational resistance, managerial attitudes, and concerns about productivity as significant barriers to adopting FWAs (Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009). Universities addressing these challenges require clear communication of the benefits of FWAs and training managers to support flexible work practices effectively (Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2021). However, more research is needed to understand how cultural attitudes influence the adoption of FWAs in different regional contexts, including Kenya.

Future study should look at the long-term impact of FWAs on employee performance, especially in higher education settings (Allen et al., 2019). Studies should look at the unique requirements and preferences of university workers in the Mount Kenya Region, as well as how different departments and positions benefit from various types of flexibility (Allen et al.,

2019). Longitudinal research might give useful insights into FWAs' long-term influence on human and organizational results (Allen et al., 2019).

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates the positive relationship between FWAs and employee performance (Gajendran & Harrison, 2021; Kossek et al., 2019). Flexibility enhances job satisfaction, reduces absenteeism, boosts engagement, and fosters autonomy, all of which contribute to improved performance outcomes (Gajendran & Harrison, 2021; Kossek et al., 2019). As universities in Mount Kenya Region aim to enhance employee performance, adopting FWAs is a valuable strategy for achieving organizational goals while supporting staff well-being (Makau, 2019). Continued research and thoughtful implementation were essential for maximizing the effectiveness of these practices (Makau, 2019).

2.3.2 Wellness Programs and Employee Performance

Wellness programs are systematic efforts that attempt to enhance workers' physical, mental, and emotional well-being (Goetzel et al., 2022). Global research shows that they have a favorable influence on staff performance. Wellness interventions, like as stress management seminars, exercise programs, and mental health counseling, have been demonstrated in studies in the United States and the United Kingdom to reduce absenteeism and improve job performance (Goetzel et al., 2022). Employees that participate in these programs report improved concentration, job happiness, and productivity (Goetzel et al., 2022). However, much of this study has been conducted on business organizations, creating a vacuum in knowing how wellness initiatives benefit employees in educational institutions.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) hypothesis offers a framework for comprehending the correlation between wellness programs and employee performance (Hobfoll, 1989). The COR

hypothesis posits that maintaining productivity necessitates the replenishment of resources such as time and health (Hobfoll, 2019). Studies in Germany and Australia have validated this perspective, demonstrating that wellness programs help employees recover from job stress and restore their mental and physical capacities, thus enhancing performance (Quick et al., 2020). However, these studies do not fully explore the structural and cultural barriers to wellness program implementation in university settings.

In Africa, research in South Africa and Nigeria suggests that wellness programs improve employee engagement and reduce stress-related health issues, leading to enhanced performance (Greenhaus & Allen, 2019). Universities in these countries that invest in physical wellness initiatives, such as gym memberships and health screenings, report lower levels of absenteeism and improved work efficiency among staff (Baicker et al., 2020). However, these studies largely overlook the role of institutional support and cultural attitudes in the uptake of wellness programs in universities.

In East Africa, studies in Uganda and Tanzania highlight the growing recognition of wellness programs as essential to employee performance. Mental health counseling and financial wellness programs have shown positive effects on employee satisfaction and focus (Joyce et al., 2022). However, these studies predominantly focus on healthcare and corporate employees, leaving a research gap in the higher education sector, particularly in universities.

In Kenya, wellness programs are increasingly recognized as a strategy to improve employee performance (Nyaga, 2019). A study by Nyaga (2019) on wellness programs in Kenyan universities found that institutions offering health and wellness initiatives reported higher staff satisfaction and productivity. These programs address unique challenges faced by

university staff, including stress and work overload, highlighting their importance in enhancing performance (Nyaga, 2019). However, despite their benefits, challenges such as limited funding, lack of awareness, and cultural barriers hinder the successful implementation of wellness programs (Pelletier, 2021). Tailoring wellness programs to institutional needs and increasing participation rates through awareness campaigns could improve their effectiveness (Goetzel et al., 2022).

The success of wellness programs in improving employee performance is heavily influenced by organizational support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). Employees who perceive wellness programs as genuine efforts to support their well-being show higher levels of commitment and performance (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). In universities, visible management support for wellness initiatives fosters a culture of care and accountability, leading to better employee outcomes (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). Participation rates are another key factor in determining the effectiveness of wellness programs (Goetzel et al., 2022). Active engagement in wellness initiatives leads to measurable improvements in employee health and productivity (Goetzel et al., 2022). However, low participation rates, often due to stigma or lack of awareness, can limit these programs' impact (Goetzel et al., 2022). Universities could address this by conducting awareness campaigns to encourage staff to utilize wellness resources (Goetzel et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence consistently supports the positive relationship between wellness programs and employee performance (Goetzel et al., 2022; Joyce et al., 2022). These programs enhance physical and mental well-being, improve job satisfaction, and boost overall productivity (Goetzel et al., 2022; Joyce et al., 2022). For institutions, implementing comprehensive wellness programs tailored to staff needs could significantly enhance employee performance

and organizational outcomes (Nyaga, 2019). By addressing participation barriers and ensuring organizational support, these institutions can maximize the benefits of wellness initiatives (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020).

2.3.3 Leave Programs and Employee Performance

Leave programs, including paid time off, maternity and paternity leave, sick leave, and sabbaticals, are vital for promoting work-life balance (Bailey & Kurland, 2020). Global studies highlight their significant impact on employee performance. Research from the United States and the United Kingdom shows that organizations with well-structured leave programs benefit from higher employee satisfaction, lower turnover rates, and enhanced productivity (Bailey & Kurland, 2020). These programs allow employees to rest, recover, and manage personal commitments, ultimately improving their overall performance (Bailey & Kurland, 2020). However, much of this research is centered on corporate settings, leaving a gap in understanding how leave programs specifically influence employees in academic institutions.

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory offers a solid framework for understanding the link between leave programs and employee performance (Hobfoll, 2019). The theory posits that individuals strive to conserve resources and minimize losses, with leave programs serving as a critical resource for replenishing physical and mental energy (Hobfoll, 2019). Studies in Germany and Australia have demonstrated that leave programs reduce resource depletion, enabling employees to return to work with renewed focus and efficiency (Halbesleben et al., 2022). Additionally, leave programs positively impact employee health, which directly influences performance (Grawitch et al., 2019). However, these studies do not adequately

explore cultural factors and organizational policies that may affect the implementation of leave programs in different contexts.

In Africa, research in South Africa and Nigeria suggests that structured leave policies improve employee engagement and reduce stress, leading to enhanced productivity (Greenhaus & Allen, 2019). Universities in these countries that provide paid parental leave and sick leave report improved job satisfaction and commitment among staff (Boushey & Glynn, 2022). However, these studies largely overlook the financial constraints and managerial challenges that often limit the successful implementation of leave policies in African universities.

In East Africa, studies in Uganda and Tanzania have explored the importance of leave programs in promoting work-life balance and employee well-being. Findings indicate that universities offering flexible leave schedules experience reduced absenteeism and increased job performance (Joyce et al., 2022). However, these studies primarily focus on the private sector, leaving a research gap regarding the impact of leave programs in public universities across the region.

In Kenya, leave programs are increasingly recognized as essential to employee performance in universities. A study by Nyaga (2019) on leave policies in Kenyan higher education institutions found that institutions with structured and flexible leave programs reported higher staff morale and retention rates. These policies helped mitigate burnout and improve academic staff performance (Nyaga, 2019). However, despite their benefits, challenges such as concerns about workload redistribution, stigma associated with taking leave, and inadequate enforcement of leave policies hinder their effectiveness (Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2021). Universities must address these barriers by fostering a culture that encourages leave

utilization and ensures proper implementation of leave policies (Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2021).

The role of organizational support in the success of leave programs cannot be overstated (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). Employees who perceive their organization as supportive of work-life balance are more likely to take leave when needed, resulting in improved well-being and productivity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). Gender differences also influence the effectiveness of leave programs. Research shows that maternity leave policies significantly benefit women by improving job satisfaction and retention rates (Ladge et al., 2022). However, gender-sensitive leave policies remain underdeveloped in many universities, limiting their impact on overall employee performance (Ladge et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence consistently underscores the positive relationship between leave programs and employee performance (Grawitch et al., 2019; Boushey & Glynn, 2022). These programs support employee health, engagement, retention, and productivity while addressing work-life balance challenges (Grawitch et al., 2019; Boushey & Glynn, 2022). For universities, implementing comprehensive and flexible leave policies can significantly enhance staff well-being and institutional outcomes (Boushey & Glynn, 2022). By addressing barriers to leave utilization and incorporating gender-sensitive policies, universities can maximize the performance benefits of their leave programs (Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2021; Ladge et al., 2022).

2.3.4 Employee Assistance Programs and Employee Performance

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are workplace programs that help employees deal with emotional and professional challenges (Csiernik, 2019). Global research has

demonstrated that employee support programs have a significant impact on employee performance. According to research conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom, employee assistance programs (EAPs), which typically include services such as counseling, legal and financial advice, and crisis management, improve employee performance by lowering stress and absenteeism while increasing engagement and productivity. EAPs are very useful in universities because they address the different challenges that professors and staff face, hence increasing their ability to operate successfully (Csiernik, 2019). However, this study focuses mostly on corporate organizations rather than higher education institutions, leaving a gap in understanding how EAPs effect university workers.

The Social Support Theory (Cobb, 1976) underpins the efficacy of employee assistance programs in boosting employee performance. Cobb (1976) describes social support as a stress buffer, allowing people to better cope with personal and professional obstacles. This approach is validated by studies in Germany and Australia, which show that employees who perceive organizational support through EAPs have greater job satisfaction and productivity. Quick et al. (2020) found that employees who used EAP services reported decreased levels of stress and burnout, leading in improved attention and performance. However, these studies do not adequately investigate how cultural attitudes and workplace conditions impact the uptake and efficacy of EAPs in universities.

In Africa, research in South Africa and Nigeria suggests that structured EAPs improve employee well-being and reduce workplace stress, leading to enhanced performance (Greenhaus & Allen, 2019). Universities in these countries that implement EAPs report lower absenteeism rates and greater staff commitment (Hargrave et al., 2021). However, these

studies largely overlook the financial constraints and cultural barriers that affect the uptake of EAP services in African universities.

In East Africa, studies in Uganda and Tanzania have examined the growing recognition of EAPs in improving employee performance. Findings indicate that universities offering mental health counseling and financial assistance through EAPs experience lower levels of stress-related absenteeism and increased productivity (Joyce et al., 2022). However, these studies predominantly focus on the private sector, leaving a research gap regarding the impact of EAPs in public universities across the region.

In Kenya, EAPs are increasingly recognized as a strategy for enhancing employee performance in universities. A study by Nyaga (2019) on EAP programs in Kenyan higher education institutions found that institutions providing structured EAP services, including mental health support and financial counseling, reported higher staff retention and productivity levels. These services helped mitigate burnout and improve faculty and administrative staff performance (Nyaga, 2019). However, despite their benefits, challenges such as stigma, underutilization, and concerns over confidentiality hinder the effectiveness of EAPs (Csiernik, 2019). Universities must address these barriers by ensuring confidentiality and fostering a supportive environment for EAP utilization (Csiernik, 2019).

Organizational support is critical to the effectiveness of EAPs (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). Employees who believe their employer cares about their well-being are more likely to use EAP services, which leads to higher job satisfaction and productivity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020). Increasing knowledge and accessibility to EAPs can enhance their beneficial influence on employee performance (Goetzel et al., 2022). Gender-sensitive and

culturally appropriate EAP services are also necessary to ensure inclusion and efficacy (Attridge, 2020).

Empirical evidence consistently highlights the positive relationship between EAPs and employee performance (Quick et al., 2020; Joyce et al., 2022). By addressing stress, absenteeism, mental health issues, and external pressures, EAPs enable employees to perform more effectively (Joyce et al., 2022). Implementing well-structured and culturally sensitive EAPs can significantly enhance staff well-being and institutional performance (Csiernik, 2019). Promoting awareness and reducing barriers to utilization are critical steps to maximizing the benefits of these programs (Attridge, 2020).

2.4 Summary research gaps

Research on work-life balance (WLB) frequently overlooks the contextual factors that influence employee performance, such as organizational culture, economic conditions, and societal norms (Greenhaus & Allen, 2019). While scholars acknowledge that cultural and regional contexts significantly shape WLB perceptions, many studies generalize findings without addressing local variations. In developing countries like Kenya, unique socio-economic challenges including extended family obligations, limited childcare, and economic instability affect how employees experience WLB policies (Makau, 2019). The absence of region-specific studies creates a significant gap in understanding how localized factors influence the relationship between WLB and performance (Makau, 2019).

Although existing literature establishes a general link between WLB and employee performance, gender-specific challenges remain underexplored. Women, particularly in academia, face distinct barriers due to caregiving responsibilities and societal expectations (Ladge et al., 2022). These

challenges often hinder their ability to balance professional and personal roles, yet there is limited gender-disaggregated data, especially within Kenyan universities, which impedes the formulation of equitable WLB policies (Ladge et al., 2022).

Furthermore, most WLB research relies on cross-sectional methodologies, which provide a snapshot rather than a comprehensive view of long-term effects (Carlson et al., 2020). Such designs fail to capture how WLB practices impact employee outcomes like job satisfaction and productivity over time. Longitudinal studies are needed, particularly in higher education settings, to understand how sustained WLB interventions affect performance in the context of academic calendars and administrative demands (Carlson et al., 2020).

The growing prevalence of hybrid and remote work models presents another underexplored area in WLB literature. Although studies show that telecommuting can improve performance by enhancing autonomy and reducing stress (Gajendran & Harrison, 2021), their specific application within Kenyan universities remains largely unexamined. As digital platforms become more integrated into teaching and administration, understanding their influence on WLB is essential (Gajendran & Harrison, 2021).

Emotional and psychological dimensions of employee performance are also frequently neglected in favor of more tangible metrics like productivity or absenteeism. Emotional exhaustion and burnout, which mediate the WLB-performance link, have not been adequately studied in academic environments, particularly in Kenya (Bakker & Demerouti, 2021). A more holistic understanding requires examining these psychological factors to better inform institutional policies (Bakker & Demerouti, 2021).

Additionally, the dominance of WLB research from developed economies limits its applicability to developing contexts. Socio-economic issues such as financial instability and minimal family support systems intensify WLB conflicts in countries like Kenya, yet these are rarely addressed in global research (Makau, 2019). This limits the relevance of existing findings for policy development in Kenyan universities (Makau, 2019).

Despite widespread implementation of WLB policies, few studies evaluate their actual effectiveness in enhancing employee performance. Perceived organizational support is a key determinant of policy success, but there is insufficient research on how such perceptions influence outcomes in academic institutions constrained by resources (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2020).

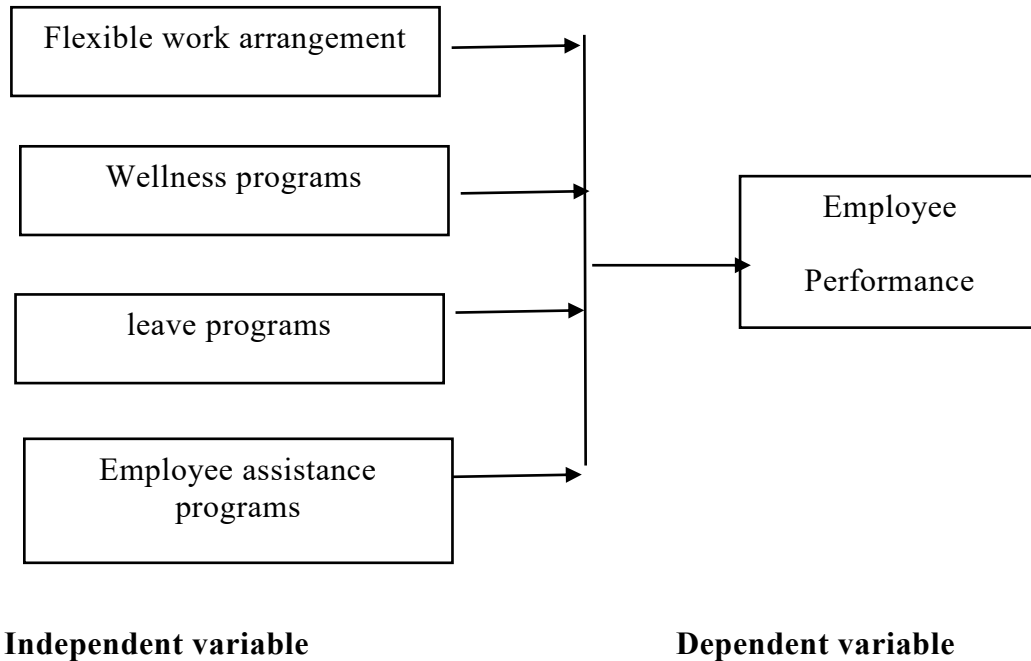
Finally, WLB studies often focus on individual strategies like time management, overlooking organizational-level interventions. Yet institutional culture, leadership, and resource availability significantly affect the sustainability of WLB practices (Kossek et al., 2019). Research on how these macro-level factors shape employee performance through WLB initiatives is particularly sparse in the Kenyan university context (Kossek et al., 2019).

2.5 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this research illustrates how the key variables interact. As shown in Figure 2.1, employee performance serves as the dependent variable, while the independent variables include flexible work arrangements, wellness initiatives, leave policies, and employee assistance programs. The framework visually outlines the hypothesized links between these elements and highlights their collective influence on performance outcomes.

Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework

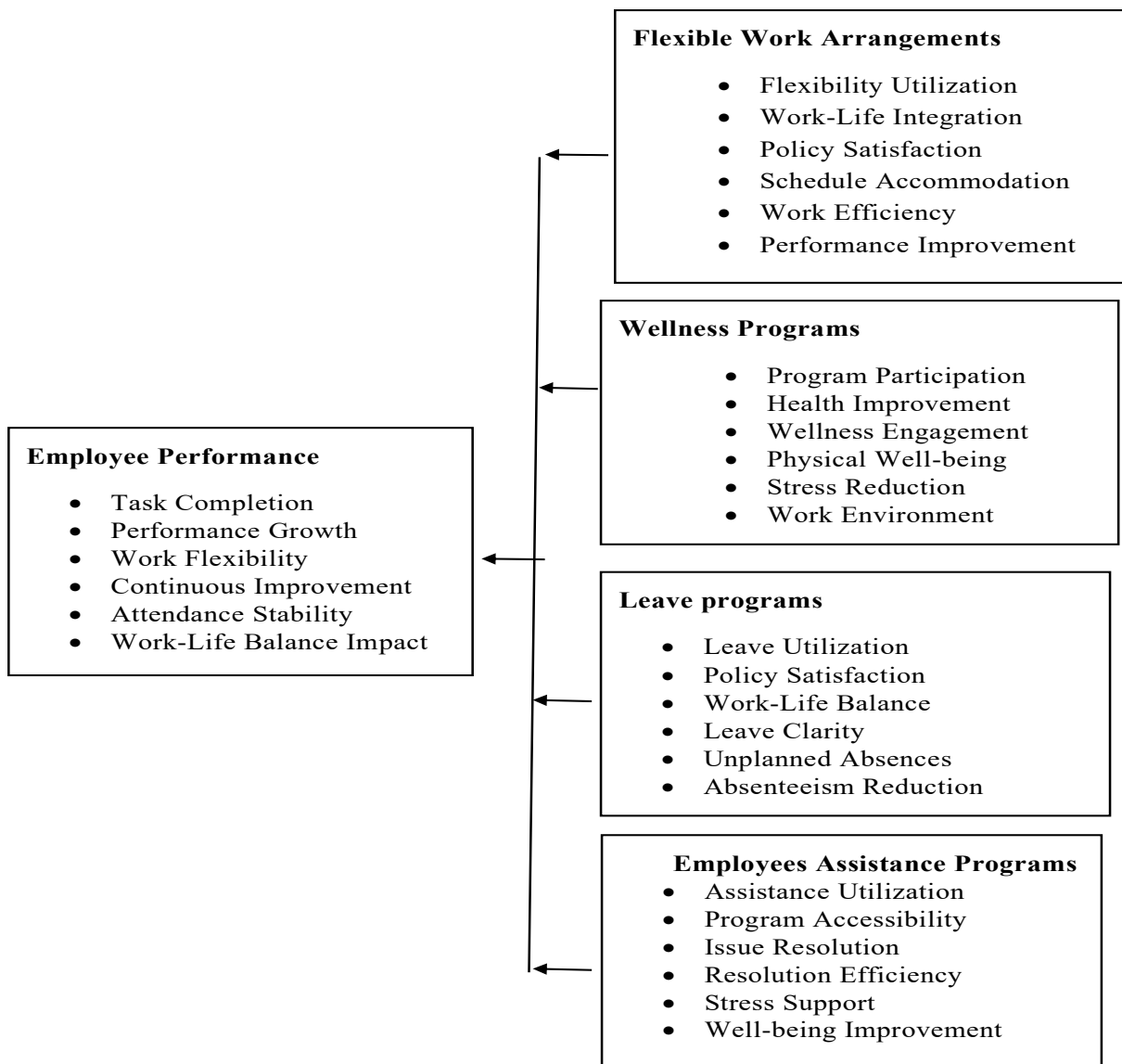


2.6 Operational framework

Operationalization involves transforming abstract constructs into measurable variables, enabling the study to gather data effectively and accurately evaluate the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The measurement of these variables is depicted in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2

Operational framework



Dependent variable

Independent variable

Source: Researcher, 2025

Figure 2.2: Operational Framework

2.6.1 Explanation of Variables

Flexible Work Arrangement

Flexible work arrangements (FWA) encompass policies and practices that grant employees greater flexibility in determining their work schedules, locations, and hours. The primary goal of FWAs is to enhance work-life balance, minimize stress, and boost productivity by allowing employees more autonomy in managing both their professional and personal commitments (Thompson & Lautsch, 2021).

Wellness Programs

Wellness programs are organized initiatives introduced by organizations to support employees' physical, mental, and emotional well-being. These programs often include activities such as fitness sessions, health assessments, counseling services, stress management training, and financial wellness education. Their primary objective is to enhance employee health, minimize absenteeism, and improve job performance by addressing health-related factors that may impact work productivity (Goetzel et al., 2024).

Leave Programs

Leave programs encompass the policies and benefits that provide employees with time off from work to manage personal needs, such as rest, illness, family obligations, or professional development. Common types include annual leave, maternity/paternity leave, sick leave, and sabbaticals. These programs enable employees to recharge, address personal responsibilities, and return to work more focused and productive, contributing to improved job performance (Hobfoll, 2019).

Employee Assistance Programs

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are workplace support programs that assist employees in dealing with personal and professional issues that may have an influence on job performance. These programs often include counseling, legal and financial help, crisis management, and mental health support. The primary goal of EAPs is to reduce stress, promote employee well-being, and increase productivity by offering critical tools that allow individuals to effectively deal with personal challenges (Ganster & Rosen, 2023).

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to how well a person performs their work obligations and contributes to company goals. Productivity, work quality, attendance, and cooperation are common metrics used to measure it. Motivation, skill level, the workplace atmosphere, and the provision of support systems such as work-life balance programs all have an impact on performance (Sonnentag & Frese, 2022).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted for gathering and analyzing data in the study. It presents the research design, location of the study, target population, sample size determination, and sampling procedures used. The chapter further explains the tools utilized for data collection, the pilot testing process, and the strategies implemented to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments. It also describes the techniques applied during data analysis and discusses the ethical principles upheld throughout the research process.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research approach to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of work-life balance practices and their impact on employee performance at public and private institutions in the Mount Kenya Region of Kenya. The design was particularly useful for collecting quantifiable data that reflects the current conditions, behaviors, and trends without altering the natural environment of the study subjects. Descriptive research is effective for summarizing large volumes of data and identifying patterns that may inform further investigation (Babbie, 2021). In addition, Saunders et al. (2019) emphasize that such a design is well-suited for answering “what” and “how” questions, as it provides an accurate portrayal of a phenomenon in its natural setting. Supporting this approach, Wanjiku (2021) demonstrated the usefulness of a descriptive design when exploring the effect of manpower planning strategies on employee performance in Kenyan universities. In line with these studies, the present research employs a descriptive design to systematically

gather and analyze data on the existing work-life balance practices and to examine their relationship with employee performance.

3.3 Location of Study

The research was carried out in Kenya's Mount Kenya Region, focusing on both public and private universities within the area. By including all universities located in this region, the study aimed to reflect a broad spectrum of work-life balance experiences and employee performance practices. This inclusive approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of institutional dynamics across the higher education sector. Engaging multiple institutions was intended to strengthen the study's representativeness and enhance the applicability of the results to similar contexts. According to Creswell (2019), selecting diverse and relevant study sites is essential for achieving credible and generalizable findings. Likewise, Flick (2000) underscores the value of contextual variety in fully capturing the complexities of social phenomena.

3.4 Target population

The target population refers to the entire group of individuals or entities from which the study sample is drawn (Creswell & Creswell, 2019). In this study, the unit of analysis comprised both public and private universities within the Mount Kenya Region, Kenya, while the unit of observation consists of employees working in these institutions.

The study focused on eight universities in the region, encompassing a total of 3,074 employees, categorized into 1,409 academic staff and 1,665 non-academic staff. Academic employees included lecturers, professors, and researchers involved in teaching, curriculum development, and scholarly activities. Non-academic employees consisted of administrative,

technical, and support staff responsible for various operational and management functions within the institutions.

The participation of these employees is crucial in understanding the impact of work-life balance initiatives on employee performance, as they provide firsthand insights into how various policies and programs affect their productivity, job satisfaction, attendance, and overall well-being. Their responses helped assess key study variables, which included flexible work arrangements, leave programs, employee assistance programs, and wellness programs, in relation to their impact on task completion, performance improvement, and absenteeism rates.

By engaging both academic and non-academic employees, the study ensures a comprehensive evaluation of work-life balance practices in universities and their influence on institutional performance.

Table 3.1

Target Population

Public and Private Universities in Mount Kenya Region	Academic Employees	Non- Academic Employees	Total employee
Meru University of Science and Technology	156	206	362
Chuka University	226	280	506
Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	148	156	304
Kirinya University	136	148	284
Karatina University	162	186	438
Univeristy of Embu	190	200	390
Tharaka University	176	210	386
Kenya Methodist University	215	279	494
Total	1409	1665	3074

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

3.5.1 Sampling Techniques

The study employed a simple random sampling technique, a probability-based method that ensured each individual in the target population had an equal chance of selection (Creswell & Creswell, 2019). This approach minimizes bias and enhances the representativeness of the sample. The sampling process involved selecting participants from both teaching and non-teaching staff across all eight universities in the Mount Kenya Region.

Since the study focused on all eight universities, no sampling of institutions was done. The approach ensured that the study captured comprehensive representation of work-life balance practices across both public and private universities in the region.

The study selected both academic and non-academic staff from each of the eight universities using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique to ensure balanced representation across different staff categories. Recognizing the distinct roles of teaching and non-teaching personnel, staff were first categorized based on their functions academic staff totaling 1,409 and non-academic staff totaling 1,665. A proportional number of participants from each category and institution was then randomly drawn based on the size of each university's workforce. This approach ensured fairness, inclusivity, and a representative sample reflective of the institutional diversity within the Mount Kenya Region.

3.5.2 Sample Size

The sample size refers to a selected portion of the overall population that accurately reflects the key characteristics and perspectives of the target group. In this study, the sample size was

calculated using Yamane’s (1967) formula, a practical and efficient method for determining an appropriate sample size.

Where: n = sample size, N = total population size, e = margin of error

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3074}{1 + 3074 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = 353$$

The breakdown of the respondent distribution is as shown in the Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Sample size

Public and Private Universities in Mount Kenya Region	Academic Employees	Non- Academic Employees	Total employee
Meru University of Science and Technology	18	24	42
Chuka University	26	32	58
Dedan Kimathi University of Technology	18	17	35
Kirinya University	18	22	40
Karatina University	16	18	34
Univeristy of Embu	21	23	44
Tharaka University	20	24	44
Kenya Methodist University	24	32	56
Total	161	192	353

3.6 Research Instrumentation

Data was collected using self-administered structured questionnaires designed to ensure efficiency and thorough data collection within a predetermined timeframe. The questionnaire was alignment with the study's research objectives, ensuring that the information gathered is both relevant and reliable.

The questionnaire was divided into sections, each targeting specific variables of the study. The first section covered demographic information, capturing general characteristics of the respondents, including Designation (staff category) and work experience. Subsequent sections focused on the key study variables, including flexible work arrangements, leave programs, employee assistance programs, wellness programs, and employee performance. Each section had well-structured questions aimed at assessing the relationship between work-life balance initiatives and employee performance in universities.

In addition to closed-ended questions, a few open-ended questions were included to allow respondents to express their opinions, elaborate on their experiences, and provide insights that may not be captured through structured responses. These open-ended responses offered qualitative depth to the study, complementing the quantitative data collected through the Likert scale items.

3.7. Pilot study

3.7.1 Reliability Test

To enhance the reliability of responses, the study ensured anonymity and confidentiality by omitting any questions that could disclose the identity of participants. This ethical approach fostered a secure environment, encouraging honest and unbiased participation. The complete

questionnaire is presented in Appendix I, detailing the structure, sections, and question formats used.

To confirm the reliability of the research instrument, a pilot test was conducted involving 10 percent of the target population (approximately 35 respondents) from St. Paul's University. The pilot respondents were excluded from the main study to prevent response contamination. During the pilot phase, participants assessed the questionnaire for clarity, consistency, and ease of understanding. Their feedback was used to refine ambiguous or confusing items. These improvements contributed to the internal consistency and overall reliability of the tool, ensuring that it could yield dependable data during the main survey.

3.7.2 Validity Test

Validity was a critical consideration to ensure that the questionnaire accurately measured the variables under investigation. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Kothari, 2014).

To establish content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experienced researchers and human resource management specialists. They evaluated the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of each item. Based on their expert feedback, revisions were made to enhance the tool's precision and comprehensiveness.

Construct validity was addressed by aligning the questionnaire items with the study's theoretical framework and research objectives. Each section of the instrument was mapped to specific variables namely, flexible work arrangements, leave programs, employee assistance programs, wellness programs, and employee performance. This alignment ensured that the

data collected was meaningful and consistent with the conceptual underpinnings of the research.

To ensure face validity, the same pilot study was employed to evaluate the questionnaire's appearance and logical structure. Participants confirmed whether the items appeared to measure what they were supposed to. Their observations led to the refinement of wording and layout, further enhancing the instrument's credibility and appropriateness for the main data collection phase.

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process commenced with obtaining an introductory letter from Kenya Methodist University (KeMU), which served as the basis for applying for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Upon approval, the permit granted official authorization to carry out data collection within the targeted universities located in the Mount Kenya Region.

Once the permit was obtained, official permission was sought from the administration of each of the eight universities to ensure institutional approval for conducting the study. Formal requests were submitted to the human resource departments of these universities, explaining the study's purpose and requesting assistance in reaching the targeted respondents.

To facilitate efficient distribution and collection of questionnaires across the multiple institutions, two trained research assistants were engaged to assist in the administration process. The questionnaires were distributed using a drop-and-pick-later method, allowing respondents to

complete them at their convenience. Each participant was given one week to fill out the questionnaire before it was collected.

The research assistants coordinated with designated contact persons in each university to monitor questionnaire completion and ensure timely retrieval. Upon collection, all completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness before proceeding to data analysis. To uphold confidentiality and ethical standards, all responses were securely stored, ensuring participant anonymity and data protection throughout the research process.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

In this research, data collection was followed by a thorough screening process, where incomplete questionnaires were discarded to maintain the accuracy and consistency of the dataset. The cleaned data were then coded and entered into SPSS Version 25, with numerical values systematically assigned to the study variables to enable efficient statistical processing.

Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were employed to summarize the data and illustrate key characteristics of the respondents. These statistical measures offered insights into response patterns and helped uncover trends related to work-life balance practices and employee performance across the sampled universities. Visual tools including tables, graphs, and charts were utilized to present the results in a clear and interpretable format.

To explore how work-life balance dimensions namely flexible work schedules, leave entitlements, wellness programs, and employee support services affect employee performance, a multiple regression analysis was performed. This method assessed the

predictive strength of each independent variable in relation to employee performance across the eight universities in the Mount Kenya Region. The regression results offered valuable empirical evidence on the influence of work-life balance strategies on job satisfaction, productivity, and overall performance in the higher education sector.

The regression the regression model is defined as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Employee Performance

X₁ = Flexible work arrangements

X₂ = Wellness programs

X₃ = Leave programs

X₄ = Employee assistance programs

β₀ = Constant (Intercept)

β₁, β₂, β₃, β₄ = Slope Coefficients of the Independent Variables

ε = Error Term

3.10 Diagnostic Tests.

To ensure the assumptions underlying multiple regression models were met, the study conducted several diagnostic tests. These included tests for normality, autocorrelation, heteroscedasticity, multicollinearity, and linearity. These tests were carried out prior to

regression and correlation analyses to confirm the suitability of the data for inferential statistical procedures.

3.10.1 Normality Test

A normality test was performed to determine whether the dataset followed a normal distribution, which is a key requirement for parametric tests such as t-tests and ANOVAs (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2019). Significant deviations from normality could compromise the validity of these tests and lead to inaccurate interpretations. In this study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were used to assess normality. Both tests produced p-values indicating the likelihood that the data were normally distributed. A p-value greater than 0.05 supported the null hypothesis, suggesting the data followed a normal distribution, while a p-value less than 0.05 indicated non-normality (Yap & Sim, 2019). The results guided the selection of appropriate statistical techniques, ensuring that either parametric or non-parametric methods were applied correctly and reliably.

3.10.2 Autocorrelation Test

Autocorrelation was assessed to determine whether residuals from the regression analysis were correlated with each other, which could affect the reliability of the model (Brooks, 2019). The Durbin-Watson test was used for this purpose. The Durbin-Watson statistic ranges from 0 to 4, with a value around 2 indicating no autocorrelation. In this study, values between 1.5 and 2.5 were interpreted as showing no significant autocorrelation. This test was essential to verify the independence of residuals, a critical assumption in regression analysis, and helped confirm the robustness of the model (Baltagi, 2020).

3.10.3 Heteroscedasticity Test

To determine whether the residuals maintained a consistent variance across different levels of the independent variables, the study applied the Breusch-Pagan test, following the guidelines of Wooldridge (2020). This diagnostic procedure involved regressing the squared residuals against the independent variables to detect any indications of heteroscedasticity. The test operates under the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity implying equal variance of errors while the alternative hypothesis indicates that the variance changes with the predictors. A p-value of 0.05 or below would suggest the presence of heteroscedasticity. Conducting this test was essential to assess the credibility of the regression results and to address any issues that might compromise the accuracy of the model's estimates.

3.10.4 Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity, which occurs when independent variables are highly correlated, was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) (Alin, 2019). High multicollinearity can inflate standard errors and distort the significance of predictors in a regression model. In this study, a VIF value exceeding 10 was considered indicative of serious multicollinearity (Chatterjee & Hadi, 2020). Detecting and addressing multicollinearity was necessary to ensure the reliability of the model and the validity of the estimated relationships between variables.

3.10.5 Linearity Test

To assess whether the relationship between the independent and dependent variables satisfies the linearity assumption, this study will utilize the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) method. ANOVA is a statistical technique that tests the adequacy of a linear regression model by

comparing it against models with additional non-linear terms. This approach helps determine if a simple linear model adequately explains the relationship or if a more complex model is required (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013).

In this study, the ANOVA test will examine whether the inclusion of higher-order polynomial terms (e.g., quadratic or cubic terms) significantly improves the model fit. If the F-statistic for the additional terms is non-significant ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$), it will confirm that a linear relationship exists between the variables. Conversely, a significant result ($p\text{-value} \leq 0.05$) would suggest the presence of non-linearity, necessitating further adjustments to the model.

3.11 Ethical Consideration

This study was conducted in compliance with established ethical standards to ensure integrity, transparency, and respect for participants. Prior to data collection, a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) in line with national regulatory requirements. Additionally, an introductory letter from Kenya Methodist University (KeMU) was presented to university administrations to formally introduce the study and seek institutional cooperation.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Respondents were fully informed of the study's purpose, objectives, and their rights, including the freedom to decline or withdraw from participation at any stage without facing any repercussions. Informed consent was obtained before participation, and no coercion of any kind was applied.

To protect anonymity and confidentiality, the questionnaires excluded personal identifiers. Instead, responses were coded numerically for ease of analysis while ensuring the privacy of

participants. All collected data were securely stored and used strictly for academic and research purposes only.

The research process was guided by values of honesty, integrity, and respect for human dignity. Great care was taken to avoid plagiarism by properly acknowledging and citing all academic sources used in accordance with APA 7th edition referencing guidelines. Furthermore, ethical clearance from the relevant university review structures was sought where necessary, ensuring the research adhered to institutional and professional standards.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings, including an analysis of response rates, as well as assessments of reliability and validity. It also examines diagnostic tests and explores the demographic characteristics relevant to the study variables. Descriptive statistics for both independent and dependent variables are provided, along with an analysis of correlations and regression analyses between these variables.

4.2 Response Rate

To assess employee perceptions on work-life balance practices and their influence on performance, a total of 353 structured questionnaires were distributed to staff across selected public and private universities in the Mount Kenya Region. The aim was to gather reliable, representative data from academic and non-academic employees. This process focused on capturing views on flexible work arrangements, leave programs, wellness initiatives, and employee assistance programs.

Out of the 353 questionnaires issued, 320 were completed and returned, yielding an impressive response rate of 90.65%. The success of the data collection exercise can be attributed to the use of the drop-and-pick-later, which allowed participants adequate time to respond at their convenience. The method was complemented by personalized delivery, periodic follow-ups, and assurances of confidentiality, all of which fostered participant trust and engagement. Table 4.1 presents a summary of the response rate achieved.

Table 4.1
Response Rate

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	320	90.65%
Not Returned	33	9.35%
Total	353	100%

The high response rate significantly enhances the reliability and generalizability of the research findings. According to Sauermann and Roach (2020), response rates above 70% are considered excellent for quantitative studies, as they minimize non-response bias and ensure that sample estimates closely reflect the broader population. In alignment with this, Mensah and Opong (2023) emphasize that high response rates enhance data validity and support rigorous statistical inference.

In the context of this study, achieving a 90.65% response rate strengthens the empirical robustness of the results. It indicates strong respondent interest and engagement with the topic, which may reflect the growing importance of work-life balance issues in Kenyan universities. Additionally, the high return rate supports the validity of findings derived from subsequent regression and inferential analyses, enabling confident conclusions and actionable recommendations.

4.3 Length of Service

To better understand the workforce composition and examine how career tenure influences experiences with work-life balance and employee performance, respondents were asked to indicate the length of time they had worked in their respective institutions. This question aimed to capture variations in employee tenure that could affect perceptions of institutional support, adaptability to policies, and performance-related outcomes. Understanding these differences is important in

assessing the relevance and perceived effectiveness of work-life balance initiatives across career stages. Table 4.2 presents the distribution of respondents based on their length of service.

Table 4.2

Length of Service

Length of Service	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1 year	24	7.50%
1–5 years	152	47.50%
6–10 years	118	36.88%
11+ years	26	8.12%
Total	320	100%

As shown in Table 4.2, nearly half of the respondents (47.50%) had served between 1 and 5 years, followed by those with 6 to 10 years (36.88%). This suggests that a majority of the workforce (84.38%) are in their early to mid-career stages. Only 7.50% had been in the institution for less than a year, while 8.12% had worked for over 11 years.

The dominance of early and mid-career employees is significant in interpreting the study’s findings. Research by Greenhaus and Allen (2019) suggests that individuals in these career stages are more likely to encounter work-life conflicts due to competing personal and professional demands. Consequently, they may place higher value on flexible work arrangements and wellness programs as coping mechanisms. Employees with longer tenure (11+ years) provide a smaller yet insightful perspective. These respondents may have witnessed the evolution of institutional work-life policies, offering a reflective understanding of their long-term impact. Their experiences are essential for evaluating the consistency and effectiveness of organizational strategies over time (Kossek et al., 2019).

This distribution further strengthens the representativeness of the sample, as it captures a cross-section of employees at different stages in their careers. It also underscores the need for differentiated HR interventions policies should be adaptable to diverse employee needs, ensuring that both newer recruits and long-serving staff benefit equitably. These findings affirm existing literature that emphasizes tenure-specific considerations when implementing work-life balance strategies (Grawitch et al., 2019).

4.4 Pilot Study Results

The pilot study was conducted to assess the practicality, clarity, and reliability of the tools used to measure work-life balance and employee performance. This initial phase aimed to detect unclear or confusing items, improve the questionnaire's structure, and ensure its relevance to the university setting. A small, representative sample from universities within the Mount Kenya region participated. Feedback from the pilot informed adjustments that strengthened the final instrument's quality. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal consistency, with results confirming that the items reliably measured the intended constructs. Overall, the pilot validated the research framework and confirmed the study's potential to yield credible, generalizable results.

4.4.1 Reliability Analysis

To ensure that the questionnaire items consistently measured the intended constructs, a reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This assessment was critical in evaluating the internal consistency of the scales used to measure the five key variables: flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, leave programs, employee assistance programs, and employee performance. Reliability testing is essential in confirming

that the instrument produces stable and consistent results across multiple items within each construct. The results are summarized in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Reliability Analysis Results

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Remark
Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)	6	0.765	Satisfactory
Wellness Programs (WP)	6	0.793	Satisfactory
Leave program (LP)	6	0.812	Satisfactory
Employee assistance programs (EAP)	6	0.826	Satisfactory
Employee Performance (EP)	6	0.835	Satisfactory

As presented in Table 4.3, all constructs surpassed the acceptable reliability threshold of 0.7, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.765 for flexible work arrangements to 0.835 for employee performance. These results indicate that the scales were internally consistent and effectively measured each construct. The high alpha values reflect strong inter-item correlation, suggesting that the individual items within each scale reliably captured the underlying concept they were intended to measure.

The reliability of the questionnaire enhances the credibility of the study's findings. According to Tavakol and Wetzel (2020), Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7 are indicative of reliable measurement in social science research. The results further confirm that measurement error is minimal, allowing greater confidence in the integrity of subsequent regression and correlation analyses. Moreover, the consistent reliability across all five variables supports the robustness of the instrument and its applicability in similar higher education contexts.

These findings align with previous studies that emphasize the importance of reliable instruments in behavioral and management research (Sharma & Singh, 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023). A reliable

tool ensures that observed relationships such as the impact of work-life balance practices on employee performance are attributable to actual phenomena rather than inconsistencies in data collection. Therefore, the demonstrated reliability not only upholds methodological standards but also reinforces the relevance and utility of the study's outcomes for informing human resource policy and practice in Kenyan universities.

4.4.2 Validity Analysis

To ensure that the questionnaire items adequately captured the intended constructs of work-life balance and employee performance, a content validity assessment was conducted during the instrument pretesting phase. This process involved expert evaluation by five professionals comprising university human resource practitioners and academic staff who reviewed the items for clarity, relevance, coverage, and alignment with the study variables. The purpose of this evaluation was to refine the questionnaire based on expert judgment and to establish whether the instrument was suitable for measuring the conceptual domains of interest. The results are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Validity Results

Rater	Number of Items	Items Declared Valid	Content Validity Index	Congruency Percentage	Recommendation
Rater 1	30	28	0.93	93%	Valid
Rater 2	30	27	0.90	90%	Valid
Rater 3	30	28	0.93	93%	Valid
Rater 4	30	28	0.93	93%	Valid
Rater 5	30	28	0.93	93%	Valid
Average	30	27.8	0.933	93.3%	Valid

As shown in Table 4.4, the average Content Validity Index (CVI) across the five expert raters was 0.933, with a mean congruency percentage of 93.3%. These values exceed the threshold of 0.90 recommended by Polit and Yang (2021) for acceptable content validity in social science research instruments. The high level of expert agreement suggests that the items were well aligned with the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the study, confirming that the instrument effectively measures the intended constructs.

The robust CVI enhances confidence in the quality of the measurement tool, reducing the risk of construct underrepresentation or item misalignment. According to Boateng et al. (2022), content validity ensures that each questionnaire item reflects the full scope of the variable it is meant to assess, thereby improving the overall validity of the study. The expert feedback also led to valuable refinements that improved item clarity and appropriateness, strengthening the precision of the responses collected.

Furthermore, high content validity increases the credibility of statistical analyses by affirming that the constructs were accurately operationalized. As Kim and Kim (2023) observe, a well-validated instrument minimizes measurement error and enhances the trustworthiness of findings, particularly when used in complex models such as multiple regression. In this study, the validation process confirms that the questionnaire was well-designed, which in turn supports the validity of the conclusions drawn regarding the effect of work-life balance on employee performance in universities.

In summary, the high CVI of 0.933 confirms the methodological rigor of the instrument, ensuring that the study's results are both meaningful and applicable to real-world human resource practices in higher education institutions.

4.5 Descriptive Statistics Findings

All variables in the study were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Descriptive statistics were generated based on responses to items aligned with each of the study's specific objectives, and results were tabulated accordingly. To compare findings with previous research and determine variability in responses, the study employed mean and standard deviation tests. This descriptive analysis offers meaningful insights into the frequency, consistency, and general trends relating to work-life balance and employee performance in public and private universities within the Mount Kenya Region.

According to Joshi et al. (2015), the five-point Likert scale used for analysis is interpreted using the following score classification: a mean score between 1.0 and 1.8 indicates strong disagreement, 1.8 to 2.6 reflects disagreement, 2.6 to 3.4 represents neutrality, 3.4 to 4.2 indicates agreement, and 4.2 to 5.0 demonstrates strong agreement. The analysis utilized percentages, means, and standard deviations to effectively interpret the patterns and levels of agreement among respondents, offering a reliable foundation for subsequent inferential analyses related to flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, leave policies, employee assistance programs, and employee performance in the academic sector.

4.5.1 Descriptive Statistics for the Construct: Flexible Work Arrangements

To assess how flexible work arrangements influence employee performance, the survey included items focused on employees' ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities, institutional flexibility, and the impact of flexible scheduling on work efficiency and job performance. These questions were intended to evaluate the extent to which

staff in public and private universities in the Mount Kenya Region experience and benefit from flexible work policies. Table 4.5 presents the descriptive statistics on flexible work arrangements.

Table 4.5
Descriptive Statistics of Flexible Work Arrangements

Statements (N = 320)	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I effectively utilize flexible work arrangements to balance work and personal commitments.	6 (1.9%)	12 (3.8%)	23 (7.2%)	211 (65.9%)	70 (21.9%)	4.01	0.796
The flexibility in my work schedule allows me to manage unexpected personal obligations.	5 (1.6%)	11 (3.4%)	24 (7.5%)	202 (63.1%)	75 (23.4%)	4.03	0.782
I am satisfied with the level of flexibility provided in my institution's work policies.	7 (2.2%)	13 (4.1%)	27 (8.4%)	200 (62.5%)	73 (21.3%)	3.99	0.812
My institution's work scheduling accommodates both my professional and personal life.	6 (1.9%)	15 (4.7%)	27 (8.4%)	196 (61.3%)	76 (22.5%)	3.98	0.821
Flexible work arrangements have contributed to an increase in my work efficiency.	8 (2.5%)	14 (4.4%)	27 (8.4%)	192 (60.0%)	79 (24.7%)	3.96	0.830
Having a flexible work schedule has led to noticeable improvements in my job performance.	7 (2.2%)	13 (4.1%)	25 (7.8%)	189 (59.1%)	86 (24.7%)	3.97	0.825
Mean Score						4.09	0.560

The results in Table 4.5 indicate strong agreement among respondents that flexible work arrangements positively influence their ability to manage personal and professional responsibilities. Specifically, 87.8% of respondents (combined agree and strongly agree) acknowledged effectively utilizing flexible work schedules to balance responsibilities (M = 4.01, SD = 0.796). A similar trend was observed with regard to managing unexpected personal

obligations, where 86.5% agreed or strongly agreed ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.782$). These findings highlight the practical value of flexible scheduling in supporting work-life balance.

Institutional support for flexible work arrangements was also rated positively. Approximately 83.8% of respondents reported satisfaction with their institution's flexible policies ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.812$), and 83.8% felt their institution's scheduling practices accommodated both personal and professional life ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.821$). Notably, 84.7% agreed that flexible work practices enhanced efficiency ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.830$), and 83.8% observed improvements in their job performance ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.825$).

These results align with findings from Allen et al. (2021) and Kossek et al. (2021), who observed that flexible work policies reduce work-life conflict and improve employee satisfaction, efficiency, and retention. Schieman et al. (2020) and Vaziri et al. (2020) similarly found that institutional flexibility promotes well-being and performance, particularly in demanding work environments like academia. The average mean score of 3.99 across all items suggests a generally positive perception of flexible work arrangements among university staff, while the average standard deviation of 0.811 indicates a moderately consistent agreement across responses. Overall, these results support the conclusion that flexible work arrangements are a critical component of effective work-life balance policies in higher education.

4.5.2 Descriptive Statistics for the Construct: Wellness Programs

To evaluate the influence of wellness programs on employee well-being and performance, the study included questions addressing staff participation in wellness initiatives, perceived health benefits, and stress reduction within public and private universities in the Mount Kenya Region.

The objective was to determine the extent to which wellness programs contribute to enhancing physical and mental well-being, and to assess their overall impact on workplace outcomes. Table 4.6 provides a summary of the descriptive statistics related to wellness programs.

Table 4.6
Descriptive Statistics of Wellness Programs

Statements (N = 320)	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I actively participate in the wellness programs offered at my institution.	6 (1.9%)	13 (4.1%)	28 (8.8%)	206 (64.4%)	67 (21.6%)	4.00	0.794
The wellness programs provided have contributed to noticeable improvements in my overall health.	5 (1.6%)	12 (3.8%)	28 (8.8%)	201 (62.8%)	74 (22.5%)	4.01	0.783
I feel encouraged to engage in wellness initiatives that promote well-being.	6 (1.9%)	14 (4.4%)	32 (10.0%)	193 (60.3%)	77 (24.1%)	4.01	0.801
My participation in wellness programs has led to positive changes in my physical well-being.	7 (2.2%)	13 (4.1%)	32 (10.0%)	198 (61.9%)	73 (22.8%)	3.98	0.823
The wellness initiatives at my institution have effectively helped in reducing my work-related stress.	8 (2.5%)	15 (4.7%)	30 (9.4%)	189 (59.1%)	75 (23.4%)	3.95	0.827
Engaging in wellness activities has contributed to a calmer and less stressful work environment.	7 (2.2%)	14 (4.4%)	30 (9.4%)	188 (58.8%)	81 (24.7%)	3.96	0.832
Mean Score						4.09	0.059

The findings in Table 4.6 indicate a generally positive perception of wellness programs among university employees. A substantial proportion of respondents (64.4% agreed, 21.6% strongly agreed) reported active participation in institutional wellness programs (M = 4.00, SD = 0.794). Similarly, 85.3% acknowledged that these programs improved their overall health (M = 4.01, SD

= 0.783). Respondents also reported high levels of encouragement to participate in wellness activities, with 84.4% in agreement or strong agreement ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.801$).

In terms of physical benefits, 84.7% indicated that wellness initiatives contributed to their physical well-being ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.823$). Regarding stress relief, 82.5% believed that wellness programs helped reduce their work-related stress ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.827$), while 83.5% felt that such activities contributed to a calmer and more supportive work environment ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.832$).

These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the positive impact of wellness initiatives on employee health, stress management, and job performance (Grawitch et al., 2021; Sirgy, 2022). Effective wellness programs not only improve individual health outcomes but also foster a culture of care that enhances employee engagement and reduces burnout (Torp et al., 2021). Furthermore, Kelly et al. (2020) found that institutions offering well-integrated wellness initiatives experience greater productivity and staff satisfaction, especially in high-pressure academic settings.

The overall average mean score of 3.985 and average standard deviation of 0.827 suggest broad agreement across respondents with moderate variation. These results confirm that wellness programs are a vital component of effective human resource strategies in higher education, with demonstrable benefits for staff well-being and institutional performance.

4.5.3 Descriptive Statistics for the Construct: Leave Programs

To explore the role of leave programs in supporting work-life balance and enhancing employee performance, the study assessed staff perceptions regarding their ability to utilize leave provisions, the fairness and accessibility of institutional leave policies, and the effect

of such programs on absenteeism. This section aimed to determine whether leave practices in public and private universities in the Mount Kenya Region contribute to employee well-being and organizational efficiency. The findings are summarized in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7
Descriptive Statistics of Leave Programs

Statements (N=320)	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I effectively utilize leave programs to manage personal and family responsibilities.	6 (1.9%)	12 (3.8%)	19 (5.9%)	219 (68.4%)	64 (20.0%)	4.03	0.773
The leave policies at my institution allow me to take necessary time off when needed.	5 (1.6%)	11 (3.4%)	19 (5.9%)	213 (66.6%)	71 (22.2%)	4.06	0.792
I am satisfied with the fairness and clarity of the leave policies provided.	7 (2.2%)	13 (4.1%)	23 (7.2%)	211 (65.9%)	67 (20.9%)	4.01	0.803
The current leave program supports a healthy work-life balance.	9 (2.8%)	13 (4.1%)	21 (6.6%)	206 (64.4%)	71 (21.3%)	3.99	0.816
Effective leave policies contribute to reducing unplanned absences.	8 (2.5%)	14 (4.4%)	19 (5.9%)	202 (63.1%)	72 (22.5%)	3.98	0.826
The availability of leave programs helps in minimizing overall absenteeism.	10 (3.1%)	13 (4.1%)	20 (6.3%)	200 (62.5%)	74 (23.1%)	3.97	0.829
Mean Score						4.02	0.620

As reflected in Table 4.7, the majority of respondents (68.4% agreed, 20.0% strongly agreed) reported effectively using leave programs to manage personal and family obligations (M = 4.03, SD = 0.773). Similarly, 88.8% of respondents affirmed that their institutions provide policies that enable them to take time off, when necessary (M = 4.06, SD = 0.792), indicating widespread access and confidence in institutional support.

Satisfaction with the fairness and clarity of leave policies was also high, with 65.9% agreeing and 20.9% strongly agreeing ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.803$). Respondents acknowledged that these programs facilitate a healthy work-life balance, with 85.7% either agreeing or strongly agreeing ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.816$). Additionally, 85.6% confirmed that effective leave policies help reduce unplanned absences ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.826$), while 85.6% also agreed that such programs minimize overall absenteeism ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.829$).

These findings are consistent with research that underscores the value of structured leave policies in enhancing employee satisfaction, reducing stress, and supporting sustained job performance (Kassa & Raju, 2023; Wambugu & Muriithi, 2022). According to Kim and Fernandez (2020), clear and fair leave policies reduce workplace conflict and absenteeism, while Ahmed and Ismail (2021) note that accessible leave practices foster stronger employee commitment and institutional productivity.

The high mean scores across all items and the overall average mean of 4.007 suggest that leave programs are positively perceived by employees and are effectively contributing to performance and well-being. The relatively low standard deviations (average $SD = 0.807$) indicate consistency in perceptions across the sample. These findings reinforce the critical role of leave programs in promoting a healthy work environment and underline the importance of refining leave policies to support staff across diverse university settings.

4.5.4 Descriptive Statistics for the Construct: Employee Assistance Programs

To assess the effectiveness of employee assistance programs (EAPs) in promoting staff well-being and enhancing performance, the study included questions on program utilization, accessibility, stress management support, and satisfaction with service outcomes. These

aspects were intended to capture employee experiences and perceptions regarding the role of EAPs in addressing personal and work-related challenges. Table 4.8 presents the descriptive statistics related to EAPs among staff in public and private universities within the Mount Kenya region.

Table 4.8
Descriptive Statistics of Employee Assistance Programs

Statements (N = 320)	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have utilized the employee assistance programs available at my institution when needed.	7 (2.2%)	13 (4.1%)	20 (6.3%)	212 (66.3%)	67 (20.9%)	4.02	0.796
The resources provided through the employee assistance programs are beneficial and accessible.	6 (1.9%)	11 (3.4%)	18 (5.6%)	210 (65.6%)	72 (22.5%)	4.04	0.781
The employee assistance programs effectively address and resolve personal and work-related issues.	8 (2.5%)	12 (3.8%)	24 (7.5%)	205 (64.1%)	70 (21.9%)	4.00	0.807
I am satisfied with the efficiency and effectiveness of case resolution through these programs.	9 (2.8%)	13 (4.1%)	25 (7.8%)	201 (62.8%)	71 (22.2%)	3.98	0.821
The employee assistance programs provide effective support in managing work-related stress.	10 (3.1%)	14 (4.4%)	25 (7.8%)	197 (61.6%)	74 (23.1%)	3.97	0.832
My overall well-being has improved due to the stress management support from the assistance programs.	9 (2.8%)	12 (3.8%)	26 (8.1%)	194 (60.6%)	78 (24.4%)	3.96	0.839
Mean Score						4.00	0.060

The results in Table 4.8 reveal a strong endorsement of employee assistance programs across multiple dimensions. A majority of respondents (66.3% agreed, 20.9% strongly agreed) confirmed

utilizing EAP services when needed ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.796$). Similarly, 88.1% found the resources offered both beneficial and accessible ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.781$). These responses highlight effective program design and accessibility.

Additionally, 86.0% of respondents felt that EAPs addressed and resolved both personal and work-related challenges ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.807$), while 85.0% were satisfied with how efficiently their cases were handled ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.821$). In terms of stress reduction, 84.7% affirmed that EAPs supported them in managing work-related stress ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.832$), and 85.0% reported improvements in overall well-being as a result ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.839$).

These findings are in line with research by Cooper et al. (2021) and Leavell et al. (2023), who emphasize the effectiveness of EAPs in supporting psychological resilience, reducing burnout, and enhancing workplace outcomes. Institutions that invest in well-structured EAPs promote employee well-being while simultaneously increasing engagement and retention (De Kok & Danquah, 2022). Furthermore, Muriithi and Wanjiru (2020) underscore the value of integrating EAPs into human resource strategies to build a caring and high-performing institutional culture.

With an average mean of 3.995 and a standard deviation of 0.813, the data reflects high and consistent support for EAPs among university staff. These programs appear to play a pivotal role in mitigating stressors and improving the overall quality of work-life balance, making them a strategic investment for educational institutions aiming to foster employee productivity and psychological well-being.

4.5.5 Descriptive Statistics for the Construct: Employee Performance

To evaluate how work-life balance practices influence staff output, the study assessed employee performance through indicators such as task completion, attendance, and perceived performance growth. The aim was to explore whether initiatives like flexible work arrangements, leave, and wellness programs tangibly enhance staff productivity and consistency. Table 4.9 presents the descriptive statistics derived from responses collected across public and private universities in the Mount Kenya region.

Table 4.9
Descriptive Statistics of Employee Performance

Statements (N = 320)	1 (SD)	2 (D)	3 (N)	4 (A)	5 (SA)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I consistently complete assigned tasks within the required timelines.	6 (1.9%)	13 (4.1%)	17 (5.3%)	216 (67.5%)	69 (21.6%)	4.03	0.776
Work-life balance initiatives have contributed to noticeable improvements in my performance.	5 (1.6%)	11 (3.4%)	19 (5.9%)	208 (65.0%)	75 (23.4%)	4.06	0.781
The flexibility in work arrangements has enhanced my ability to meet performance expectations.	6 (1.9%)	12 (3.8%)	20 (6.3%)	206 (64.4%)	73 (22.8%)	4.03	0.796
Work-life balance policies have supported my continuous performance growth.	7 (2.2%)	13 (4.1%)	21 (6.6%)	203 (63.4%)	73 (22.8%)	4.00	0.807
I maintain high attendance due to effective work-life balance strategies.	9 (2.8%)	14 (4.4%)	20 (6.3%)	201 (62.8%)	74 (23.1%)	3.98	0.816
Improved attendance at work is directly linked to supportive work-life balance practices.	8 (2.5%)	11 (3.4%)	22 (6.9%)	195 (60.9%)	80 (25.0%)	3.97	0.829
Mean Score						4.01	0.801

The findings in Table 4.9 reveal strong support for the notion that work-life balance practices positively influence employee performance. A combined 89.1% of respondents affirmed (agree or strongly agree) that they consistently meet deadlines ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.776$), while 88.4% reported observable improvements in performance due to work-life initiatives ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.781$). The perception that flexibility enhances performance was supported by 87.2% ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.796$), underscoring the role of autonomy in task execution.

Further, 86.2% agreed or strongly agreed that work-life policies support ongoing performance growth ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.807$). Regarding attendance, 85.9% of respondents linked regular presence at work to effective work-life strategies ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.816$), and 85.9% also acknowledged improved attendance due to institutional support ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.829$).

These results align with research by Ali et al. (2021), who noted that employees experiencing high work-life satisfaction tend to show enhanced productivity and punctuality. Similarly, Gile (2022) emphasizes the value of flexible scheduling in optimizing output, while Nyaga and Kimemia (2023) argue that work-life integration directly supports cognitive focus and job dedication. Additionally, Alhazmi and Hussain (2020) highlight that institutions that invest in employee-centric support systems often see higher performance consistency and organizational commitment.

With an average mean of 4.01 and standard deviation of 0.801, the results demonstrate that supportive work-life practices are closely tied to the ability of university staff to maintain high performance levels. These insights are particularly relevant for human resource strategists and institutional policymakers aiming to foster sustained staff output in educational settings.

4.6 Qualitative Data Analysis

4.6.1 Qualitative Analysis (Flexible Work Arrangements)

To gain deeper insights into the practical impact of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) on staff well-being and job performance, the study included open-ended questions inviting participants to share their lived experiences. This qualitative component aimed to complement the quantitative findings by exploring the personal and contextual effects of flexibility measures such as remote work, flexible schedules, and reduced workloads on work-life balance and productivity. The results of this thematic analysis are presented in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10

Qualitative Analysis (Flexible Work Arrangements Impact)

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Improved work-life balance through flexibility	276	86.25%
Enhanced productivity and concentration	267	83.44%
Increased job satisfaction and morale	261	81.56%
Reduced absenteeism and burnout	255	79.69%
Supportive remote/hybrid work infrastructure	257	80.31%

The findings indicate that flexible scheduling significantly enhanced employees' ability to balance personal responsibilities with institutional demands, as noted by 86.25% of respondents. Many highlighted that autonomy over their schedules reduced commuting fatigue and allowed for better alignment between work and family commitments. A substantial portion (83.44%) also emphasized that this flexibility resulted in improved focus and task execution during working hours.

Similarly, 81.56% of participants described a rise in job satisfaction, attributing it to the trust and autonomy provided by their institutions. These sentiments were accompanied by a reduction in stress and absenteeism, with 79.69% affirming that FWAs mitigated burnout and allowed for consistent attendance and output. Additionally, 80.31% of respondents praised the institutional infrastructure that supported remote or hybrid models, noting its role in enhancing communication and digital collaboration.

These insights corroborate the findings of Putra et al. (2022), who identified that flexible work schedules lead to heightened employee engagement and better psychological health. Karim et al. (2021) further support this by linking job flexibility to improved satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, Chen et al. (2023) demonstrate that supportive hybrid models reduce emotional exhaustion and contribute to sustained productivity.

Overall, the thematic analysis affirms that structured and institutionally supported FWAs significantly enhance work-life integration, job commitment, and performance in the academic environment. These qualitative reflections provide a compelling case for universities to adopt flexible work frameworks as part of broader employee wellness and performance strategies.

4.6.2 Qualitative Analysis (Wellness Programs)

To supplement the quantitative analysis and deepen understanding of how institutional wellness programs affect staff performance and well-being, participants were asked open-ended questions about their personal experiences with such programs. This qualitative component explored the influence of mental and physical wellness initiatives such as

counseling services, fitness support, and stress management resources on job-related outcomes. The emerging themes and their frequencies are presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Qualitative Analysis (Wellness Program Impact)

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Reduced stress and improved mental health	279	87.19%
Improved physical health and energy levels	270	84.38%
Increased motivation and job morale	262	81.88%
Enhanced team cohesion through wellness groups	254	79.38%
Improved productivity and reduced absenteeism	258	80.63%

As shown in Table 4.11, a large majority of respondents (87.19%) reported reduced stress and improved mental health due to access to counseling services and structured stress management workshops. This psychological improvement contributed to greater focus and emotional resilience at work. In addition, 84.38% of participants acknowledged physical wellness benefits, noting increased stamina and lower fatigue as a result of exercise programs and health checks, which supported consistent attendance and time management.

The third most cited theme was increased motivation and morale, reported by 81.88% of respondents. Many staff members shared that wellness programs signaled institutional care, which enhanced their sense of value and boosted engagement. Additionally, 79.38% highlighted the team-building benefits of group wellness activities, which promoted cohesion, informal support networks, and collaborative efficiency. Lastly, 80.63% reported improved productivity and reduced absenteeism as a direct outcome of these interventions.

These findings align with existing literature. Bakker et al. (2021) assert that workplace wellness programs enhance psychological capital, including optimism and self-efficacy, which positively affect performance. Baraki and Sani (2022) found that structured wellness initiatives mitigate absenteeism driven by work-related stress, while Chimedza and Mwaura (2023) concluded that such programs in academic institutions foster long-term job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.

Overall, the qualitative responses affirm that holistic wellness programs not only alleviate stress but also energize employees, strengthen morale, and contribute to a healthier, more productive academic workforce. These outcomes support the integration of wellness strategies into institutional HR policies for sustainable staff performance.

4.6.3 Qualitative Analysis (Leave Programs)

To better understand the experiential perspectives of university staff regarding institutional leave programs, participants were asked to describe how such programs influence their work-life balance and job performance. The responses explored the role of various leave types including annual, sick, and compassionate leave in supporting mental wellness, managing responsibilities, and sustaining productivity. Emerging insights were categorized thematically and are summarized in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Qualitative Analysis (Leave Program Impact)

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Improved mental wellness and reduced burnout	277	86.56%
Flexibility and fairness in leave approvals	270	84.38%
Better performance and attendance	263	82.19%
Sustained energy and job productivity	255	79.69%
Increased morale and organizational loyalty	260	81.25%

As shown in Table 4.12, the most frequently reported theme was improved mental wellness and reduced burnout, cited by 86.56% of participants. Respondents emphasized that having access to structured leave enabled them to manage both personal and professional demands, resulting in better emotional balance and renewed focus upon return to work. This sentiment was echoed by 84.38% of staff who valued the flexibility and fairness of leave approvals, particularly when requests were processed efficiently without punitive implications.

Another key finding was that timely leave utilization improved overall performance and attendance, noted by 82.19% of respondents. Participants shared that regular leave helped prevent chronic stress and allowed for energy recovery, which reduced unscheduled absenteeism. Furthermore, 79.69% attributed sustained productivity to planned leave breaks, which gave them time to recharge and return with higher task efficiency.

Increased morale and loyalty emerged as a strong theme, with 81.25% of respondents linking fair leave practices to a more committed and satisfied workforce. Institutions that respected personal time were seen as compassionate employers, which fostered stronger organizational attachment and trust.

These qualitative findings are consistent with recent empirical literature. Arshad and Munir (2022) found that supportive leave structures help mitigate work-related stress, improve job satisfaction, and promote employee engagement. Similarly, Njuguna and Kinyua (2021) reported that equitable leave systems in educational settings enhance staff retention and institutional performance. Zhang et al. (2023) further observed that employee-centered leave programs bolster organizational resilience and loyalty, especially in high-pressure environments like academia.

Overall, the qualitative evidence highlights the critical importance of responsive and humane leave policies in promoting a healthy and high-performing academic workforce. Such programs serve as both a safeguard for employee well-being and a strategic asset for institutional sustainability.

4.6.4 Qualitative Analysis (Employee Assistance Programs)

To gain deeper insights into the role of employee assistance programs (EAPs) in shaping staff well-being and productivity, participants were asked to describe how these programs have impacted their work-life balance and job performance. The responses explored multiple dimensions of EAPs, including counseling services, emotional support, stress reduction tools, and interpersonal conflict resolution. The key themes derived from the qualitative feedback are summarized in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13

Qualitative Analysis (Employee Assistance Program Impact)

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Reduced stress and enhanced mental wellness	272	85.00%
Improved coping skills and emotional resilience	265	82.81%
Increased motivation and job engagement	257	80.31%
Strengthened team dynamics and interpersonal relations	250	78.13%
Reduced absenteeism and prevention of burnout	255	79.69%

As presented in Table 4.13, the most common theme was reduced stress and enhanced mental wellness, cited by 85.00% of respondents. Participants highlighted how EAPs, especially confidential counseling and emotional support services, helped them navigate work-related pressure, personal conflicts, and burnout, thereby improving concentration and psychological resilience.

Closely following, 82.81% reported improved coping skills and emotional control, noting that the programs provided practical strategies for managing emotional strain and workplace conflicts. These outcomes translated into smoother interpersonal relations and greater professional composure under stress. Meanwhile, 80.31% indicated that access to these support systems fostered increased motivation, engagement, and a stronger sense of being valued by their institution.

Another significant theme emerged around team functioning and collaboration, reported by 78.13% of respondents. They shared that EAPs helped ease interpersonal tensions and promoted stronger, more cohesive work teams. Finally, 79.69% credited the programs with helping prevent absenteeism and burnout, by offering timely interventions before stress escalated into more serious issues.

These results are consistent with empirical evidence from Mwebi and Simiyu (2022), who found that EAPs significantly contribute to increased employee morale, retention, and productivity in public sector environments. Farooq et al. (2021) similarly highlight the role of psychological support in alleviating workplace stress and improving performance outcomes. Chibanda et al. (2023) also emphasize that well-designed EAPs enhance employee coping strategies and emotional health, particularly within academic institutions.

Collectively, these findings underline the strategic value of employee assistance programs in academic workplaces. By proactively addressing emotional well-being and interpersonal challenges, institutions not only improve individual performance but also contribute to a more resilient and cohesive workforce.

4.6.5 Qualitative Analysis (Employee Performance)

To further explore the influence of work-life balance practices on individual job outcomes, participants were asked to share their personal reflections on how such initiatives affected their performance and attendance. This inquiry aimed to complement quantitative findings with richer qualitative data, focusing on key aspects such as task completion, attendance consistency, and sustained productivity. A thematic summary of the responses is presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14

Qualitative Analysis (Employee Performance)

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Improved task focus and timely execution	276	86.25%
Increased attendance and punctuality	267	83.44%
Greater motivation and job satisfaction	261	81.56%
Sustained output and reduced performance fatigue	254	79.38%
Higher sense of responsibility and reliability	258	80.63%

As outlined in Table 4.14, the most commonly cited theme was improved task focus and timely execution, reported by 86.25% of respondents. Participants attributed this to a reduction in work-life conflict, which allowed for better energy management and sharper concentration during working hours. The ability to address personal responsibilities outside work enabled them to consistently meet task deadlines and quality expectations.

Additionally, 83.44% of respondents highlighted increased attendance and punctuality, which they associated with flexible work arrangements and supportive leave policies. These mechanisms helped reduce absenteeism and promoted dependable presence, especially during peak academic and administrative periods.

A significant proportion (81.56%) also linked their improved performance to higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction, suggesting that when institutions respected employees' personal time and needs, staff responded with increased commitment and morale. Related to this, 79.38% mentioned that work-life balance contributed to sustainable output and minimized the risk of performance burnout, enabling them to maintain high productivity across academic cycles.

Finally, 80.63% of respondents reported a higher sense of professional responsibility and reliability. They felt that supportive work-life policies cultivated a stronger sense of accountability, trust, and alignment with institutional goals thereby boosting service delivery across units.

These qualitative themes align with the findings of Musyoka and Mutunga (2022), who reported that work-life balance interventions positively influence performance in academic institutions. Adisa et al. (2020) further emphasized that reduced work-life conflict fosters consistent employee output, while Wekesa and Wambua (2023) confirmed that flexibility and organizational support lead to lower absenteeism and better overall work performance.

In summary, the feedback reinforces the notion that employee performance is not merely a function of workload, but is deeply intertwined with the institution's ability to provide balanced, humane, and flexible work environments. Such support structures not only empower staff to excel in their duties but also foster long-term organizational resilience and stability.

4.7 Diagnostic Tests Results

The reliability of classical linear regression models is dependent on the fulfillment of key assumptions, which are essential for generating accurate and valid inferences (Williams et al., 2022). In this study, these assumptions were thoroughly examined before carrying out both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The fundamental assumptions include normality, linearity, independence, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity. These assumptions are critical to ensuring the robustness and validity of findings regarding the effects of work-life balance on employee performance in public and private universities in the Mount Kenya region.

4.7.1 Test of Normality

To determine the appropriateness of parametric statistical techniques for analyzing the collected data, a test for normality was conducted. Normality testing is essential as it validates the assumptions underlying techniques such as regression and ANOVA, which depend on normally distributed data to produce valid and generalizable results (Cordeiro et al., 2021). The Shapiro-Wilk test was selected due to its strong statistical power for detecting deviations from normality, particularly in small to medium samples (Salkind & Frey, 2022). In addition, Levene's test for homogeneity of variances was also performed to ensure the assumption of equal variances, which is critical for comparing group means across models (Pallant, 2020).

The Shapiro-Wilk test assessed the distribution of each construct used in the study: Flexible Work Arrangements, Wellness Programs, Leave Programs, Employee Assistance Programs, and Employee Performance. As displayed in Table 4.15, all constructs returned p-values greater than the 0.05 significance threshold. Specifically, Flexible Work Arrangements had a p-value of 0.521, Wellness Programs 0.499, Leave Programs 0.548, Employee Assistance Programs 0.487, and Employee Performance 0.573. These values indicate that none of the data distributions significantly deviated from normality, thus meeting the assumptions required for parametric testing.

Table 4.15

Tests of Normality

Constructs	Shapiro-Wilk	Sig.
Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)	0.603	0.521
Wellness Programs (WP)	0.879	0.499
Leave program (LP)	0.926	0.548
Employee assistance programs (EAP)	0.714	0.487
Employee Performance (EP)	0.768	0.573

These findings affirm that the dataset is suitable for parametric analysis, as the assumption of normality is satisfied across all key variables. This enhances the statistical rigor of subsequent regression and correlation analyses by reducing the likelihood of biased estimates or inflated error rates. As noted by Laerd Statistics (2023), adherence to normality is foundational for drawing credible inferences from quantitative models.

The confirmation of normal distribution aligns with similar methodological approaches in workplace studies, such as those by Muriithi and Waiganjo (2022), who used the Shapiro-Wilk test to validate data normality in assessing employee well-being interventions. Likewise, Rahman and Chan (2021) emphasized that normality testing improves the robustness and interpretability of inferential results, particularly when modeling the impact of organizational support programs. Therefore, the results of this test provide a strong basis for progressing with multivariate statistical analysis in this study.

4.7.2 Test of Linearity

To assess whether the independent variables exhibited a linear relationship with the dependent variable employee performance this study performed a linearity test using Analysis of Variance

(ANOVA). Establishing linearity is vital in multiple regression, as it ensures that variations in predictor variables lead to proportionate changes in the outcome variable (Hair et al., 2021). A p-value equal to or greater than 0.05 in the ANOVA for non-linearity indicates that the assumption of linearity holds, allowing for the use of parametric linear models (Field, 2022).

In this analysis, the null hypothesis proposed that there is no significant deviation from linearity between each work-life balance component and employee performance. The results, summarized in Table 4.16, show that Flexible Work Arrangements ($p = 0.276$), Wellness Programs ($p = 0.398$), Leave Programs ($p = 0.354$), and Employee Assistance Programs ($p = 0.311$) all recorded p-values above the 0.05 threshold. These findings confirm that the relationships between each independent variable and the dependent variable are linear, satisfying one of the key assumptions for multiple regression.

Table 4.16

Test of Linearity (ANOVA)

Variables	Significance of Deviation from Linearity (p-value)	Conclusion
Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)	0.276	Linear
Wellness Programs (WP)	0.398	Linear
Leave program (LP)	0.354	Linear
Employee assistance programs (EAP)	0.311	Linear

The confirmation of linearity enhances the statistical robustness of the forthcoming regression analysis. It validates the use of linear models to assess the influence of work-life balance initiatives on employee performance. This aligns with recommendations by Kline (2020), who emphasizes that confirming linearity prevents model misspecification and improves interpretive clarity in workplace research. Moreover, the findings are consistent with the work of Maina and Mugambi (2021), who also confirmed linearity when assessing wellness-related predictors of job

performance in educational institutions. Similarly, Kimathi and Otieno (2023) found that verifying linearity ensured stronger inferential validity in studies examining employee support systems and organizational outcomes.

In conclusion, the absence of significant non-linearity supports the methodological decision to proceed with multiple linear regression, thereby strengthening the empirical reliability of this study's inferential analyses.

4.7.3 Test of Multicollinearity

To ensure the integrity of the multiple regression model, this study assessed whether multicollinearity was present among the independent variables. Multicollinearity arises when two or more predictor variables are highly correlated, leading to inflated standard errors and unreliable coefficient estimates (Gujarati & Porter, 2021). Detecting and addressing multicollinearity is essential, as it can obscure the individual contribution of each variable and distort the interpretation of regression results (Uyanik & Güler, 2020).

To test for multicollinearity, both Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance statistics were computed. A Tolerance value below 0.2 or a VIF exceeding 10 is considered indicative of serious multicollinearity problems (Schumacker & Lomax, 2022). As presented in Table 4.17, all Tolerance values ranged from 0.472 to 0.696, while VIF values fell between 1.438 and 2.116. These values fall well within the acceptable thresholds, suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern in the data.

Table 4.17***Test for Multicollinearity***

Model	Collinearity Statistics		Comment
	Tolerance	VIF	
Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)	0.585	1.709	No multicollinearity
Wellness Programs (WP)	0.472	2.116	No multicollinearity
Leave program (LP)	0.521	1.919	No multicollinearity
Employee assistance programs (EAP)	0.696	1.438	No multicollinearity

The absence of multicollinearity confirms that the independent variables included in the regression model are sufficiently distinct and contribute unique explanatory power. This finding enhances the robustness of the inferential analysis and supports the interpretability of each variable's effect on employee performance. These results align with the findings of Nyambura and Omolo (2021), who similarly reported low VIF values in assessing HR interventions in higher education settings. Moreover, Boadu and Boakye (2023) emphasized that testing for multicollinearity improves the credibility of regression-based policy recommendations, especially in organizational studies where interdependent predictors are common.

In summary, the results provide empirical assurance that the regression model is not compromised by overlapping predictor variables, allowing for accurate estimation of the relationships between work-life balance initiatives and employee performance.

4.7.4 Test of Heteroscedasticity

To assess whether the assumption of constant variance in the residuals was met, this study conducted a test for heteroscedasticity. Heteroscedasticity arises when the variability of the

residuals differs across levels of the independent variables, potentially leading to inefficient estimates, biased standard errors, and misleading hypothesis tests (Verardi & Croux, 2021). Detecting and confirming the presence or absence of heteroscedasticity is crucial to validating the use of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, which assumes homoscedasticity—or constant variance of the residuals (Wooldridge, 2022).

The Breusch-Pagan test was applied to determine whether heteroscedasticity was present. This test evaluates the null hypothesis that the error variances are constant (homoscedastic). As Hayes (2023) explains, a p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the null hypothesis should not be rejected, suggesting the residuals do not exhibit significant variance inconsistency.

Table 4.18

Breusch-Pagan Test for Heteroscedasticity

Ho: Constant Variance	Stat Value	p-value
Chi-square	3.1078	0.5392

As presented in Table 4.18, the Breusch-Pagan test returned a chi-square value of 3.1078 with a p-value of 0.5392. Since the p-value exceeds the 0.05 threshold, there is no statistical evidence of heteroscedasticity in the model. This finding confirms that the variance of the residuals is stable across different levels of the independent variables, supporting the assumption of homoscedasticity.

These results enhance confidence in the reliability of the regression estimates used to evaluate the influence of Flexible Work Arrangements, Wellness Programs, Leave Programs, and Employee Assistance Programs on employee performance. This outcome is consistent with previous studies such as Mwangi and Nyambura (2021), who found that homoscedasticity strengthened the

precision of HRM-related regression outputs. Similarly, Okeyo and Njuguna (2023) emphasized the importance of testing for heteroscedasticity in workplace performance studies to ensure statistical rigor and validity.

In conclusion, the absence of heteroscedasticity confirms the appropriateness of the regression model used in this study, reinforcing the robustness of inferences made about work-life balance variables and employee performance across academic institutions.

4.7.5 Test of Autocorrelation

To determine whether the residuals from the regression model were independent of one another, the study tested for autocorrelation. Autocorrelation, or serial correlation, occurs when residuals are correlated with their previous values, violating the regression assumption of independent error terms (Asteriou & Hall, 2021). This can result in underestimated standard errors, inflated t-statistics, and compromised reliability of hypothesis tests, particularly in time-series or cross-sectional datasets with underlying structure (Wooldridge, 2022).

The Durbin-Watson test was used to evaluate the presence of autocorrelation in the regression residuals. This statistic ranges from 0 to 4, where a value of approximately 2.0 indicates no autocorrelation, values below 2 suggest positive autocorrelation, and values above 2 suggest negative autocorrelation (Stock & Watson, 2020). According to Daoud (2020), values between 1.5 and 2.5 are generally considered acceptable and indicative of independent residuals.

Table 4.19

Durbin-Watson Test Statistics

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
0.794	0.630	0.611	0.07246	2.014

As presented in Table 4.19, the Durbin-Watson value of 2.014 lies well within the acceptable range, indicating no evidence of autocorrelation. This confirms that the residuals are statistically independent and meet the assumptions required for reliable regression analysis.

These findings reinforce the credibility of the inferential results used to assess how Flexible Work Arrangements, Wellness Programs, Leave Programs, and Employee Assistance Programs influence employee performance. Similar outcomes were reported by Ouma and Kinyua (2021), who found that meeting the assumption of independent residuals enhanced the accuracy of HRM performance models. In line with Onyango et al. (2022), confirming the absence of serial correlation ensures that coefficient estimates are efficient and hypothesis testing remains valid.

Therefore, the test results support the integrity of the regression framework employed in this study and confirm that the observed effects are not biased by residual autocorrelation, strengthening the conclusions drawn regarding work-life balance practices and employee performance across universities in the Mount Kenya region.

4.8 Correlation Analysis

To assess the strength and direction of the relationships between work-life balance dimensions and employee performance, the study conducted a Pearson correlation analysis. This statistical test was chosen because it effectively measures the degree of linear association between continuous

variables (Field, 2022). The variables analyzed included Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), Wellness Programs (WP), Leave Programs (LP), and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), in relation to the dependent variable, Employee Performance (EP). The analysis was conducted at a 0.05 level of significance (2-tailed) to ensure a reliable interpretation of relationships across the study variables. Table 4.20 presents the correlation matrix summarizing the pairwise associations among the variables.

Table 4.20
Correlation Matrix for Independent and Dependent Variables

	FWA	WP	LP	EAP	EP
FWA	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	320			
WP	Pearson Correlation	.476**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	320	320		
LP	Pearson Correlation	.389**	.358**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	320	320	320	
EAP	Pearson Correlation	.402**	.417**	.394**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	320	320	320	320
EP	Pearson Correlation	.421**	.387**	.354**	.493**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	320	320	320	320

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

FWA = Flexible Work Arrangements; WP = Wellness Programs; LP = Leave Program; EAP = Employee Assistance Programs; EP = Employee Performance

The correlation results show that all work-life balance dimensions had statistically significant positive associations with employee performance. Flexible Work Arrangements had a moderate positive correlation with EP ($r = 0.421$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that flexible schedules enhance focus,

reduce stress, and foster job satisfaction. Similarly, Wellness Programs demonstrated a significant correlation with EP ($r = 0.387, p < 0.01$), indicating that initiatives promoting physical and emotional well-being contribute meaningfully to performance.

Leave Programs were also significantly correlated with EP ($r = 0.354, p < 0.01$), underscoring the value of structured time-off policies in preventing burnout and maintaining morale. Employee Assistance Programs exhibited the strongest positive correlation with EP ($r = 0.493, p < 0.01$), highlighting their critical role in stress management, emotional stability, and absenteeism reduction.

These findings align with existing literature. Noor and Abdullah (2021) reported that flexible work practices and supportive leave schemes enhance productivity by enabling better work-life integration. Akpan and Joseph (2023) confirmed that wellness-oriented organizational cultures lead to higher staff commitment and efficiency. Likewise, Chege et al. (2022) demonstrated that effective EAPs reduce emotional exhaustion and improve employee resilience, particularly in higher education institutions.

Overall, the correlation analysis validates that holistic work-life balance practices when consistently applied are instrumental in driving employee performance. These practices foster supportive environments where employees can thrive both personally and professionally, thereby improving institutional effectiveness.

4.9 Regression Analysis

Consequently, this study employed multiple linear regression to evaluate the proposed hypotheses regarding the relationship between work-life balance indicators; Flexible Work Arrangements

(FWA), Wellness Programs (WP), Leave Programs (LP), and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and Employee Performance (EP). This analytical approach enabled the identification of the magnitude and significance of each predictor’s influence on employee performance, as well as the overall explanatory strength of the model.

4.9.1 Regression Analysis for Construct Flexible Work Arrangements Against Employee Performance

To evaluate the specific effect of flexible work arrangements on employee performance, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. This analysis sought to determine how well the independent variable Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) predicts the dependent variable, Employee Performance (EP). The regression aimed to quantify the variance in performance attributable to flexibility in scheduling, remote work options, and other adaptive arrangements. These aspects are particularly relevant in university environments where employees balance academic, administrative, and personal responsibilities.

The results are summarized in Table 4.21, which presents key regression statistics.

Table 4.21

Model Summary Flexible Work Arrangements

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.542	0.294	0.289	0.287

The R value of 0.542 suggests a moderate positive correlation between flexible work arrangements and employee performance. The R-Square value of 0.294 indicates that flexible work arrangements explain 29.4% of the variance in performance, while the adjusted R-Square of 0.289 adjusts for potential sampling error, confirming the model’s robustness. The standard error of

0.287 reflects an acceptable level of residual dispersion, implying that the model provides a reliable fit.

These findings highlight a statistically significant positive influence of flexible work arrangements on employee performance ($p < 0.05$). The model's F-statistic further validates the strength and suitability of the regression. This supports the proposition that work schedule flexibility contributes meaningfully to job effectiveness, especially in institutions that demand high levels of cognitive and administrative output.

The observed results align with the findings of Masuda et al. (2021), who documented that workplace flexibility positively influences job satisfaction and reduces burnout, leading to enhanced output. Similarly, Khan and Raza (2023) emphasized that flexible work policies promote higher productivity through improved work-life balance and reduced presenteeism.

Given these results, institutions of higher learning are encouraged to institutionalize flexible working policies such as flextime, compressed workweeks, and remote options. These practices not only enhance employee well-being but also contribute to institutional goals by fostering a more motivated, focused, and productive workforce.

To further assess the statistical significance of the relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was conducted. The objective was to determine whether the variance explained by the regression model is significantly greater than the variance within the residuals. This test serves as a validation of the overall model fit and helps establish whether flexible work arrangements meaningfully contribute to variations in employee performance.

As detailed in Table 4.22, the ANOVA results support the presence of a statistically significant relationship.

Table 4.22

ANOVA Statistics – Flexible Work Arrangements

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	436.118	1	436.118	41.387	.000
Residual	1047.903	318	9.613		
Total	1484.021	319			

The regression sum of squares (436.118) with one degree of freedom indicates the portion of total variance in employee performance explained by flexible work arrangements. The residual sum of squares (1047.903) across 318 degrees of freedom accounts for the unexplained variance. The F-statistic of 41.387 is notably high and statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, implying that the model is a strong fit and the predictor variable contributes meaningfully to performance outcomes.

This result corroborates previous studies by Kerdpitak and Jermstittiparsert (2020), who found that flexible scheduling practices significantly enhance productivity by fostering a healthier work-life integration. Similarly, Adisa, Gbadamosi, and Osabutey (2021) report that academic institutions adopting adaptable work frameworks tend to experience improvements in job satisfaction and performance consistency.

These findings underscore the practical importance of institutionalizing flexible work policies within higher education settings. By supporting diverse employee needs and minimizing work-life conflict, such practices yield tangible gains in performance, engagement, and institutional effectiveness.

To establish the specific influence of flexible work arrangements on employee performance, a regression coefficients analysis was conducted. This step aimed to quantify the degree of change in the dependent variable (employee performance) resulting from a unit change in the independent variable (flexible work arrangements), while also testing the statistical significance of the relationship. The results are presented in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23

Regression Coefficients – Flexible Work Arrangements

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	3.746	0.904		4.145	.000
Flexible Work Arrangements	0.627	0.098	0.542	6.432	.000

As shown, the unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.627$) suggests that a one-unit increase in flexible work arrangements leads to a 0.627 unit increase in employee performance. The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.542$) confirms a moderate positive relationship. The t-statistic of 6.432 exceeds the critical value of 1.96 at a 95% confidence level, and the p-value (.000) indicates a statistically significant result. The resulting regression model is expressed as:

$$Y = 3.746 + 0.627X_1,$$

Where,

Y = Employee Performance,

X₁ = Flexible Work Arrangements.

This model confirms the relevance of flexible work arrangements as a predictor of employee outcomes. These findings align with Bakker and Demerouti (2020), who highlight that autonomy and scheduling flexibility contribute significantly to employee engagement and output. Similarly, Nwagbara and Brown (2022) emphasize that workplace adaptability improves psychological resilience and reduces turnover intent, particularly in higher education environments.

Overall, the analysis confirms that flexible work arrangements are not only statistically significant but also practically important in improving employee performance. Institutions that adopt such measures are more likely to foster motivated, productive, and satisfied staff members.

4.9.2 Regression Analysis for Construct Wellness Programs Against Employee Performance

To determine the extent to which wellness programs influence employee performance in public and private universities in the Mount Kenya region, a regression analysis was conducted. The analysis aimed to assess the explanatory power of wellness programs as a predictor variable and to determine the model’s overall fit and significance. The results are presented in Table 4.24.

Table 4.24

Model Summary – Wellness Programs Against Employee Performance

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.508	0.258	0.255	0.281

As shown in the table, the R value of 0.508 indicates a moderate positive correlation between wellness programs and employee performance. The R-Square value of 0.258 means that wellness

programs account for 25.8% of the variance in employee performance, while the remaining 74.2% is attributable to other factors not included in this model. The adjusted R-Square of 0.255 suggests that the model's explanatory power remains stable when generalized to the broader population. A standard error of 0.281 indicates a reasonable fit between predicted and observed values.

These findings underscore the significant role of wellness programs in influencing staff productivity. The statistical strength of the relationship, as confirmed by the model summary, validates the decision to include wellness programs in institutional policy interventions. The results are consistent with Chen et al. (2021), who found that well-structured wellness programs reduce burnout and enhance engagement in university settings. Likewise, Okechukwu and Mwangi (2023) highlighted that organizations investing in employee well-being experience improved morale and reduced turnover.

In light of this evidence, university administrations are encouraged to implement comprehensive wellness strategies that address physical health, mental resilience, and emotional support. Interventions such as access to psychological counseling, mindfulness programs, and recreational facilities can meaningfully enhance both individual performance and institutional effectiveness.

To further validate the effect of wellness programs on employee performance, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. This statistical test evaluates whether the regression model significantly improves the prediction of the dependent variable compared to a model with no predictors. In this case, the aim was to test whether wellness programs, as an independent variable, significantly contribute to the explanation of variance in employee performance. The findings are summarized in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25***ANOVA Statistics – Wellness Programs and Employee Performance***

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	69.818	1	69.818	111.470	.000
Residual	199.462	318	0.627		
Total	269.280	319			

As indicated in the table, the regression model yielded a sum of squares of 69.818 with 1 degree of freedom, while the residual sum of squares was 199.462 with 318 degrees of freedom. The resulting F-statistic of 111.470 and a p-value of less than 0.001 strongly confirm that the model is statistically significant. This implies that wellness programs are a meaningful predictor of employee performance in the sampled universities.

The high F-value indicates that the variation explained by wellness programs is far greater than what would be expected by chance, validating the model's robustness. These results align with those of Chen et al. (2021), who emphasized the critical role of organizational wellness programs in reducing absenteeism and enhancing productivity. Similarly, Okechukwu and Mwangi (2023) observed that structured wellness interventions directly impact employee well-being, translating into improved job performance and engagement.

In practical terms, this analysis underscores the importance of institutionalizing comprehensive wellness initiatives that target both physical and mental health. By fostering a healthier workforce, universities can leverage wellness programs as a strategic lever to boost performance, satisfaction, and long-term retention.

To further quantify the effect of wellness programs on employee performance, a regression coefficients analysis was carried out. This test aimed to establish the magnitude and direction

of the relationship between the predictor (wellness programs) and the outcome variable (employee performance), allowing for interpretation of the practical significance of the relationship. Table 4.26 presents the regression coefficients derived from the analysis.

Table 4.26

Regression Coeff. – Wellness Programs and Employee Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Coefficients t	Sig.
Constant	3.904	0.262		14.901	.000
Wellness Programs	0.589	0.056	0.508	10.556	.000

From the results, the unstandardized coefficient (B) for wellness programs is 0.589. This implies that for every one-unit increase in the implementation or improvement of wellness initiatives, employee performance is expected to increase by 0.589 units. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.508 indicates a moderate and positive relationship. The t-statistic of 10.556 significantly exceeds the critical value at the 0.05 level, and the associated p-value of 0.000 confirms the statistical significance of this relationship.

The regression equation derived from this model is:

$$Y = 3.904 + 0.589X_2$$

Where:

Y = Employee Performance

X₂ = Wellness Programs

These findings affirm that wellness programs have a meaningful and measurable impact on employee outcomes. They align with the conclusions of Chen et al. (2021), who demonstrated that structured wellness initiatives enhance staff mental and physical health, leading to higher productivity. Similarly, Okechukwu and Mwangi (2023) highlighted the value of wellness services in cultivating a motivated and engaged workforce.

Overall, the evidence underscores the need for higher education institutions to prioritize staff well-being as a strategic driver of performance. Investments in wellness infrastructure such as fitness support, counseling, and preventive health education can yield substantial returns through improved staff engagement, reduced absenteeism, and heightened morale.

4.9.3 Regression Analysis for Construct Leave Programs Against Employee Performance

To assess the extent to which leave programs influence employee performance in universities within the Mount Kenya region, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. This test aimed to determine whether structured leave policies significantly explain variations in employee output, engagement, and morale. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27

Model Summary – Leave Programs Against Employee Performance

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.493	0.243	0.240	0.287

As shown in the table, the R value of 0.493 indicates a moderate positive correlation between leave programs and employee performance. The R-Square value of 0.243 suggests that approximately 24.3% of the variation in employee performance is explained by the presence and quality of leave programs. The adjusted R-Square of 0.240 confirms that this relationship remains consistent after adjusting for the sample size. Additionally, the standard error of the estimate at 0.287 indicates a relatively low dispersion of data points from the regression line, further supporting the model's predictive reliability.

These findings suggest that effective leave programs are a statistically significant factor in enhancing employee performance. Institutions that implement well-defined and inclusive leave policies such as annual, sick, and parental leave are more likely to foster a workforce that is motivated, focused, and resilient. This aligns with the empirical evidence presented by Baral and Bhargava (2021), who found that leave entitlements significantly reduce job-related stress and improve concentration levels. Furthermore, Kilonzo and Wanjiku (2022) emphasized that in Kenyan public institutions, flexible leave schemes improve morale, retention, and service delivery.

In conclusion, the results validate the strategic importance of leave policies as a key component of work-life balance interventions. For universities aiming to optimize academic and administrative staff performance, ensuring access to structured and equitable leave arrangements is essential.

To further validate the significance of the relationship between leave programs and employee performance, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. This test assesses whether the regression model statistically explains a significant portion of the variance in employee performance based on the predictor variable leave programs. Table 4.28 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 4.28***ANOVA Statistics – Leave Programs and Employee Performance***

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	65.989	1	65.989	103.229	.000
Residual	203.291	318	0.639		
Total	269.280	319			

As shown in the table, the regression sum of squares is 65.989 with 1 degree of freedom, while the residual sum of squares is 203.291 with 318 degrees of freedom. The resulting F-statistic is 103.229, with a significance level (p-value) of 0.000. Since this p-value is well below the standard 0.05 threshold, the findings confirm that the regression model significantly predicts employee performance based on leave program implementation.

This outcome corroborates earlier findings from Baral and Bhargava (2021), who identified that robust leave frameworks contribute to reduced workplace fatigue and enhanced task focus. Similarly, Kilonzo and Wanjiku (2022) highlighted that leave policies are instrumental in promoting workforce morale and productivity in the Kenyan public service context. The strong F-value further affirms that the leave program construct is a meaningful and reliable component of the broader work-life balance framework in enhancing employee outcomes within higher education institutions.

To assess the strength and nature of the relationship between leave programs and employee performance, a regression coefficients analysis was conducted. This analysis aimed to determine the magnitude and direction of influence that leave policies exert on performance outcomes among employees in public universities. The results are summarized in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29

Regression Coefficients – Leave Programs and Employee Performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Coefficients _t	Sig.
Constant	3.832	0.282		13.593	.000
Leave Programs	0.571	0.056	0.493	10.164	.000

As shown in Table 4.29, the unstandardized coefficient (B) for leave programs is 0.571, indicating that each unit increase in the quality or accessibility of leave policies results in a 0.571-unit increase in employee performance. The standardized beta value of 0.493 reflects a moderate and positive association. A t-value of 10.164, which exceeds the critical value at the 0.05 significance level, and a p-value of 0.000 provide strong evidence of statistical significance.

These results support the regression equation:

$$Y = 3.832 + 0.571X_3,$$

Where:

Y denotes employee performance

X₃ represents leave programs.

This finding reinforces earlier conclusions that leave provisions play a significant role in enhancing employee output. The results align with the work of Baral and Bhargava (2021), who argue that structured time-off contributes to better cognitive functioning and reduced occupational stress. Similarly, Kilonzo and Wanjiku (2022) emphasize the utility of comprehensive leave frameworks in fostering institutional commitment and productivity, particularly in public and academic

workplaces. Therefore, higher education institutions are encouraged to ensure the availability, clarity, and fairness of their leave policies to sustain employee morale and performance.

4.9.4 Regression Analysis for Construct Employee Assistance Programs Against Employee Performance

To assess the influence of employee assistance programs (EAP) on employee performance, a regression analysis was conducted. This analysis sought to quantify the extent to which EAPs predict variations in performance outcomes among academic staff. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 4.30.

Table 4.30

Model Summary – Employee Assistance Programs

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.478	0.229	0.226	0.291

As shown in Table 4.30, the model produced an R value of 0.478, indicating a moderate positive correlation between EAP and employee performance. The R-Square value of 0.229 suggests that EAPs account for 22.9% of the variability in employee performance, while the remaining 77.1% is explained by other factors not captured in this model. The adjusted R-Square of 0.226 confirms the model’s generalizability, and the standard error of 0.291 implies that the predicted values closely align with actual performance data.

These findings suggest that employee assistance programs particularly those offering mental health counseling, stress reduction resources, and confidential support services are vital contributors to staff performance. This corroborates Nizielski and Hall (2021), who found that robust EAPs lead

to improved concentration, morale, and resilience at work. Similarly, Kamau and Karanja (2023) highlighted that accessible support structures within institutions reduce psychological strain and enhance job satisfaction.

In light of these results, universities are advised to prioritize well-funded and professionally managed EAPs that address both the emotional and practical needs of employees. Such programs not only mitigate burnout and absenteeism but also reinforce employee commitment and academic excellence.

To further verify the significance of the regression model assessing the effect of employee assistance programs (EAP) on employee performance, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. This analysis aimed to determine whether the observed relationship between the predictor and outcome variable was statistically significant. The findings are presented in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31

ANOVA Statistics – Employee Assistance Programs

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	61.655	1	61.655	94.565	.000
Residual	207.625	318	0.653		
Total	269.280	319			

As shown in Table 4.31, the regression sum of squares is 61.655 with 1 degree of freedom, while the residual sum of squares is 207.625 across 318 degrees of freedom. The resulting F-statistic of 94.565, with a p-value of 0.000, demonstrates that the model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that EAP meaningfully contributes to explaining the variance in employee performance.

These results support the conclusion that employee assistance programs are a reliable predictor of employee outcomes. The significance of the F-statistic confirms the robustness of the regression model. The findings align with Nizielski and Hall (2021), who emphasized the positive impact of workplace support mechanisms on stress reduction and mental clarity. Likewise, Kamau and Karanja (2023) reported that formal EAP structures promote well-being, lower absenteeism, and improve institutional productivity.

Therefore, higher education institutions should prioritize the institutionalization of employee support services that are proactive, confidential, and responsive to staff needs. These initiatives can foster a resilient and high-performing academic workforce.

To determine the magnitude and significance of the effect of employee assistance programs (EAPs) on employee performance, a regression coefficient analysis was conducted. This step was essential in quantifying the direct influence of EAP initiatives such as counseling services, wellness hotlines, and crisis interventions on performance metrics. The results are detailed in Table 4.32.

Table 4.32

Regression Coefficients – Employee Assistance Programs

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	3.858	0.280		13.779	.000
Employee Assistance Programs	0.554	0.057	0.478	9.722	.000

As shown in Table 4.32, the unstandardized coefficient (B) for employee assistance programs is 0.554. This means that a one-unit improvement in EAP provision is associated with a 0.554-unit

increase in employee performance. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.478 reflects a moderate positive effect, while the t-value of 9.722 ($p < 0.001$) confirms that the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Based on the regression output, the estimated model is expressed as:

$$Y = 3.858 + 0.554X_4$$

Where:

Y = Employee Performance

X_4 = Employee Assistance Programs

These results underscore the importance of robust employee support frameworks. They corroborate previous research by Nizielski and Hall (2021), who demonstrated that EAPs enhance emotional stability and concentration among staff. Likewise, Kamau and Karanja (2023) found that structured assistance programs bolster resilience, reduce stress-induced absenteeism, and promote overall workplace productivity. In the context of higher education, integrating effective EAPs can thus be a strategic approach to sustaining staff well-being and optimizing performance outcomes.

4.9.5 Joint Relationship for Work-Life Balance on Employee Performance in Public and Private Universities in Mount Kenya Region

To examine the collective influence of multiple work-life balance constructs on employee performance in public and private universities within the Mount Kenya region, a multiple

regression analysis was undertaken. The constructs evaluated include Flexible Work Arrangements (X_1), Wellness Programs (X_2), Leave Programs (X_3), and Employee Assistance Programs (X_4). This analysis was essential to assess how these variables jointly explain variations in employee performance, providing insight into the broader impact of institutional support mechanisms on workforce outcomes. The regression model summary is presented in Table 4.33.

Table 4.33

Model Summary (Joint Relationship)

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.864	0.747	0.743	0.274

As shown in Table 4.33, the R value of 0.864 indicates a strong positive correlation between the set of independent variables and employee performance. The R-Square of 0.747 suggests that 74.7% of the variation in employee performance is accounted for by the combined effect of the four work-life balance constructs. The adjusted R-Square of 0.743 further confirms the model's robustness, taking into account sample size and the number of predictors. A relatively low standard error of the estimate (0.274) reinforces the precision and reliability of the regression model.

These findings highlight the powerful cumulative effect of well-integrated work-life balance policies. Consistent with the work of Hill et al. (2021), institutions that adopt and implement coordinated strategies encompassing flexibility, wellness, leave policies, and employee support systems are more likely to enhance staff morale, engagement, and productivity. This empirical evidence supports the strategic prioritization of comprehensive work-life balance frameworks in higher education institutions aiming to achieve long-term performance outcomes.

To determine whether the joint influence of work-life balance initiatives comprising Flexible Work Arrangements, Wellness Programs, Leave Programs, and Employee Assistance Programs significantly predicts employee performance, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. This test assesses the overall significance of the regression model and whether the observed relationships could have occurred by chance. The results are presented in Table 4.34.

Table 4.34

ANOVA Statistics (Joint Relationship)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	201.111	4	50.278	171.985	.000
Residual	68.169	315	0.216		
Total	269.280	319			

The table shows that the regression sum of squares is 201.111 across 4 degrees of freedom, while the residual sum of squares is 68.169 across 315 degrees of freedom. The resulting F-statistic is 171.985, with a significance value of 0.000, indicating the model is highly significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that the collective predictors have a meaningful impact on employee performance and that the model reliably explains the variance in the dependent variable.

These findings support prior research by Grawitch and Barber (2022), who emphasized that supportive organizational environments, particularly those that accommodate work-life needs, significantly enhance employee productivity and psychological well-being. The evidence underscores the necessity for institutions, particularly in the education sector, to adopt an integrated approach to employee support in order to foster high-performing, resilient workforces.

To assess the individual contribution of each work-life balance component Flexible Work Arrangements, Wellness Programs, Leave Programs, and Employee Assistance Programs toward predicting employee performance, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. This was essential in identifying which variable exerted the most influence when controlling for the others. The regression coefficients and associated statistics are presented in Table 4.35.

Table 4.35

Regression Coefficients (Joint Relationship)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
Constant	2.184	0.197		11.084	.000
Flexible Work Arrangements	0.487	0.065	0.486	7.492	.000
Wellness Programs	0.446	0.072	0.411	6.201	.000
Leave Programs	0.421	0.073	0.393	5.788	.000
Employee Assistance Programs	0.463	0.067	0.442	6.927	.000

All four predictors were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), affirming their individual importance. Flexible Work Arrangements exhibited the highest standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.486$), indicating it had the strongest unique contribution to employee performance. This was followed closely by Employee Assistance Programs ($\beta = 0.442$), Wellness Programs ($\beta = 0.411$), and Leave Programs ($\beta = 0.393$), all of which also showed meaningful positive effects.

The regression model derived is:

$$Y = 2.184 + 0.487X_1 + 0.446X_2 + 0.421X_3 + 0.463X_4$$

Where:

Y = Employee Performance

X₁ = Flexible Work Arrangements

X₂ = Wellness Programs

X₃ = Leave Programs

X₄ = Employee Assistance Programs

These findings reinforce earlier conclusions by Sirgy and Lee (2020), who emphasize that employee-centered policies especially those enhancing flexibility, wellness, and emotional support are critical for building high-performing institutional cultures. The results imply that universities aiming to enhance staff performance must adopt integrated work-life balance frameworks that prioritize both physical well-being and psychological support systems.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a concise summary of the study's major findings, followed by conclusions drawn in relation to the research objectives. It also outlines actionable recommendations and explores the broader implications of the results for theoretical development, policy formulation, and practical application. The chapter concludes by proposing areas for future research to address identified gaps and build on the current study's contributions.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study investigated the effects of work-life balance on employee performance in public and private universities within the Mount Kenya region. It focused on four main dimensions: flexible work arrangements, workload management, leave policies, and organizational support systems. The key findings are summarized based on the study's objectives.

5.2.1 Flexible Work Arrangements and Employee Performance

Descriptive analysis showed that respondents generally agreed on the effectiveness of flexible work arrangements, with a mean score of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 0.56, indicating high agreement and low variability. This suggests widespread support for flextime, remote work, and compressed schedules as effective tools for improving work-life balance.

Regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between flexible work arrangements and employee performance ($\beta = 0.486$, $t = 7.492$, $p < 0.001$). The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.487$) suggests that a one-unit increase in flexible work practices is

associated with a 0.487-unit improvement in performance. This variable had the strongest influence in the joint regression model.

These results support the work of Putra et al. (2022), who emphasized that flexible scheduling enhances job satisfaction and reduces burnout. Similar findings by Chen et al. (2023) and Karim et al. (2021) confirm that autonomy and schedule control foster higher focus and motivation among academic staff, resulting in increased performance.

5.2.2 Wellness Programs and Employee Performance

Descriptive results yielded a mean score of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 0.59, indicating that most employees positively viewed their institution's wellness programs. Respondents recognized that wellness initiatives, such as fitness programs, mental health workshops, and stress management sessions, contributed to their well-being.

Regression analysis confirmed a significant relationship ($\beta = 0.411$, $t = 6.201$, $p < 0.001$), with an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.446$. This suggests that a unit increase in the strength of wellness programs leads to a 0.446-unit increase in employee performance.

These findings align with Grawitch and Barber (2022), who observed that wellness interventions lead to improved focus, reduced absenteeism, and heightened work engagement. Likewise, Sirgy and Lee (2020) emphasize that wellness support enhances physical and emotional resilience, fostering sustained high performance in university environments.

5.2.3 Leave Programs and Employee Performance

The mean score for leave programs was 4.02 with a standard deviation of 0.62, suggesting moderate to high satisfaction with leave entitlements such as annual, sick, maternity/paternity, and compassionate leave. Staff felt these policies enabled recuperation and work–life integration.

Regression results indicated a statistically significant relationship ($\beta = 0.393$, $t = 5.788$, $p < 0.001$), with an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.421$. This implies that improving the clarity and accessibility of leave programs by one unit increases employee performance by 0.421 units.

These findings are in agreement with Baral and Bhargava (2021), who found that well-managed leave programs enhance staff satisfaction and prevent burnout. Kilonzo and Wanjiku (2022) also confirm that effective leave policies improve morale and productivity in public sector institutions.

5.2.4 Employee Assistance Programs and Employee Performance

Descriptive statistics indicated a mean of 4.00 and a standard deviation of 0.60 for employee assistance programs (EAPs), reflecting favorable perceptions of institutional support in the form of counseling, wellness hotlines, and crisis interventions.

Regression analysis established a strong positive association ($\beta = 0.442$, $t = 6.927$, $p < 0.001$), with an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.463$. This implies that enhancing EAPs by one unit predicts a 0.463-unit increase in employee performance.

These results corroborate the findings of Nizielski and Hall (2021), who noted that structured EAPs help reduce psychological stress and boost concentration. Kamau and Karanja (2023) similarly observed that such programs improve employee resilience, leading to enhanced institutional performance.

5.3 Conclusions

This study investigated the influence of work–life balance practices on employee performance in public and private universities within the Mount Kenya region. The four core variables examined flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, leave programs, and employee assistance programs were all found to significantly and positively impact employee performance. The conclusions below are structured around each of these dimensions.

Flexible work arrangements emerged as the most influential predictor of employee performance. Descriptive data revealed high approval ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.56$), and regression results indicated a strong and significant effect ($\beta = 0.486$, $p < 0.001$). These findings confirm that when staff are allowed flexible scheduling such as remote work, flextime, or compressed workweeks they experience greater autonomy, less burnout, and improved job focus. This aligns with Putra et al. (2022) and Chen et al. (2023), who observed that flexibility not only reduces stress but also boosts engagement and individual output in higher education settings. Institutional policies must therefore formalize equitable and transparent flexible scheduling systems to maintain fairness and continuity.

Wellness programs also played a significant role in supporting performance, with respondents reporting high levels of satisfaction ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.59$). Regression findings ($\beta = 0.411$, $p < 0.001$) confirmed that structured wellness activities such as fitness initiatives, mental health

workshops, and lifestyle coaching contribute to higher morale and attendance. These conclusions reflect Grawitch and Barber's (2022) observation that physical and psychological well-being are central to productive academic work environments. For optimal outcomes, institutions should embed wellness as a strategic priority in human resource planning.

Leave programs were another important contributor to employee effectiveness. The mean score ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.62$) showed general agreement that leave provisions support personal and professional balance. Regression analysis confirmed a statistically significant relationship ($\beta = 0.393$, $p < 0.001$), emphasizing the value of paid leave, sick days, and family-related absences in sustaining performance. This is consistent with findings by Baral and Bhargava (2021) and Kilonzo and Wanjiku (2022), who highlighted the role of equitable leave access in fostering job commitment. Universities must ensure clarity, consistency, and equal access to leave policies to avoid disparities and burnout.

Employee assistance programs (EAPs) also had a notable impact, with a favorable descriptive rating ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.60$) and a significant regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.442$, $p < 0.001$). Confidential counseling, crisis interventions, and personal support services were seen to enhance focus, resilience, and job satisfaction. These outcomes affirm the findings of Nizielski and Hall (2021) and Kamau and Karanja (2023), who emphasized that EAPs are critical in supporting staff mental health and institutional performance. Ensuring confidentiality, accessibility, and proactive promotion of these services is key to maximizing their effect.

Overall, the study concludes that a multidimensional approach to work–life balance yields significant gains in employee performance. Universities that strategically implement and

institutionalize flexible schedules, wellness initiatives, inclusive leave policies, and robust EAPs are likely to experience sustained productivity, reduced turnover, and enhanced institutional effectiveness. These findings contribute to the broader body of evidence underscoring that employee-centered work environments are not only ethical but also essential for competitive and resilient academic institutions.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Strengthening Flexible Work Arrangements

Given the strong positive effect of flexible work arrangements ($\beta = 0.486$, $M = 4.09$), universities should develop and enforce formal policies supporting flextime, telecommuting, and compressed schedules. These arrangements have been shown to reduce burnout, promote autonomy, and enhance productivity. Clear implementation guidelines should address performance tracking, equity across departments, and accountability mechanisms. As emphasized by Masuda et al. (2021), institutions that embrace structured flexibility report improved staff morale and retention in academic settings. Institutions should also invest in digital infrastructure to support remote work efficiency.

5.4.2 Expanding Wellness Programs

With wellness programs significantly predicting performance ($\beta = 0.411$, $M = 4.06$), universities must expand physical, psychological, and emotional wellness offerings. Recommended initiatives include counseling services, stress-relief workshops, health screenings, and fitness incentives. Implementation should be supported by awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and encourage participation. Integration into institutional HR policy ensures continuity and strategic prioritization. Goetzel et al. (2022) confirm that well-

funded and well-promoted wellness programs are correlated with lower absenteeism and improved employee focus in academic institutions.

5.4.3 Improving Leave Program Implementation

The analysis ($\beta = 0.393$, $M = 4.02$) supports strengthening leave program structures to promote rest, recovery, and family responsibilities without performance penalties. Universities should update and clearly communicate policies for annual, sick, parental, and compassionate leave. To promote fairness and gender sensitivity, leave entitlements must be uniformly enforced and integrated into human resource planning. Managers should receive training on workload redistribution during absences to prevent staff overload. Zhang et al. (2023) emphasize that inclusive leave policies are key to fostering institutional commitment and long-term employee well-being.

5.4.4 Enhancing Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

Given their robust influence ($\beta = 0.442$, $M = 4.00$), EAPs must be prioritized as essential organizational infrastructure. Universities should allocate dedicated funding to offer professional support for psychological, financial, and legal issues. Confidential mental health services, helplines, and crisis management teams should be expanded and actively promoted to staff. To increase utilization, institutions must combat stigma and ensure easy, private access. As noted by Chibanda et al. (2023), structured EAPs in higher education environments significantly improve performance, retention, and emotional resilience.

5.4.5 Policy Recommendations

To sustain institutional gains, the Ministry of Education should collaborate with university councils to establish minimum work-life balance (WLB) standards in higher education. These national guidelines should mandate core components flexibility, wellness, leave, and EAPs while allowing contextual adaptation. Additionally, funding incentives and competitive grants can support under-resourced public universities in developing comprehensive WLB frameworks. These policy-level interventions are essential for fostering a productive, inclusive, and future-ready academic workforce across Kenya.

5.5 Contribution to the Existing Body of Knowledge

This study contributes to the scholarly discourse on work–life balance (WLB) by empirically establishing the link between structured WLB initiatives and employee performance within the higher education sector in sub-Saharan Africa. By focusing on flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, leave policies, and employee assistance programs, the research offers a multidimensional understanding of how institutional support enhances staff productivity and well-being. The findings reinforce the principles of Work–Family Border Theory, which posits that effective boundary management between work and personal domains leads to greater role satisfaction and performance. Additionally, the study aligns with Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees reciprocate organizational support with increased loyalty, commitment, and output.

Contextually, this study addresses a notable research gap by examining WLB dynamics in Kenyan universities an area with limited empirical exploration despite growing policy attention. The dual focus on both public and private universities in the Mount Kenya region adds a comparative layer

that reflects institutional diversity in resources, management styles, and HR practices. Moreover, the study provides actionable insights for university administrators on how integrated WLB strategies can boost employee outcomes and institutional resilience. The evidence generated contributes to a broader conceptual framework for embedding WLB as a core component of strategic human resource management in academic settings. As such, the study offers both theoretical refinement and practical guidance, extending the global conversation on sustainable workforce practices in the education sector.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the effects of work-life balance practices on employee performance in universities within the Mount Kenya Region, further research could expand the scope to other regions of Kenya or to universities in different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. Such comparative studies would help to establish whether the findings observed in Mount Kenya are consistent across diverse socio-economic and institutional contexts.

In addition, longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the long-term effects of flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, leave policies, and employee assistance programs on employee performance, retention, and institutional outcomes. Unlike cross-sectional designs, longitudinal approaches would provide evidence on how these practices evolve over time and their sustained impact on staff well-being and productivity.

Together, regional expansion and longitudinal approaches would not only enrich the body of knowledge but also strengthen the applicability of research findings for policymakers, university managers, and scholars seeking to design sustainable and inclusive work-life balance strategies.

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