

# Work-Life Balance Practices, Employee Commitment and Employee Performance in County Referral Hospitals, Kenya; Testing a Mediation Model

 Naibei Chebet Lydia,  Korir Michael and Kipsang Stanley

School of Business and Economics, Moi University, P.O Box 3900-30100 Eldoret, Kenya

## Abstract

Existing studies attest the mediating role of employee commitment; however, there is limited knowledge regarding its specific dimensions and how it mediates relationships with other variables in the health sector of developing countries, especially in Kenya. The study thus explores the mediating role of affective, normative and continuance commitments in the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance. The study anchored in Spillover Theory and Controlled Commitment Continuum Theory. The study was guided by post-positivist paradigm and adopts explanatory research with a structured questionnaire that collected cross-sectional survey data from employees of 4 County Referral Hospitals in Kenya. A sample size of 432 employees was selected from the specified population using a mix of stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Multiple-mediation analysis was carried out using Haye's PROCESS macro (Version 4.0) through model 4. Findings showed that work-life balance practices, affective and continuous commitments had a positive significant direct effect on employee performance whereas, normative commitment did not. Hence, only affective and continuous commitments partially mediate the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance. The outcome of this study validates the Controlled Commitment Continuum Theory by illustrating that the influence of work-life balance on employee performance can be partially conveyed through affective and continuous commitments. Hence, drawing on this empirical evidence, the policy makers and managers in the health sector need to embrace strategies that concurrently support work-life balance practices and employee commitment through affective and continuous commitments.

**Keywords:** Employee performance, work-life balance practices, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment, county referral hospitals, Kenya

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**Correspondence:** [lydiana444@gmail.com](mailto:lydiana444@gmail.com)

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## Introduction

The contemporary competitive work environment necessitates attracting and retaining competent employees who ensure optimal organizational performance (Abayneh, 2020). Employee performance is viewed as expertise portrayed by a worker in executing duties in a manner that enables an organization to attain its intended goals (Dundon & Rafferty, 2018). Employee performance is usually determined by the quality and quantity of tasks accomplished as a section of assigned responsibilities to a worker. Employee performance directly influences the financial and non-financial results of an organization (Abayneh, 2020). Hence, modern organizations require high-performing teams to attain intended company goals, vision and mission as well as achieve competitive edge over rivals in the industry.

In line with the argument of Garg, Lazar, Sania, Angayarkanni, & Janani (2023), employee performance stems from work-life balance practices such as friendly leave policy, flexible work arrangements, welfare policies and workplace support systems. Work-life balance entails working arrangements in a place of work which ensures balance between an employee's individual issues and job responsibilities (Kaufman, 2015). Majority of workers

usually find it challenging to ensure a balance between their individual aspect of life and employment responsibilities thus, leading to unsatisfactory performance among employees (Gachui, 2022). Until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concept of work-life balance didn't get considerable attention and was understood as being lesser challenging as compared to the contemporary perception. Work-life balance is a crucial phenomenon with great concern to several workers in both public and private organizations.

Jolaolu (2022) postulates that competent and committed workforce play a vital role in the survival of an organization in the ever-changing world, in spite of the role of these employees, recruitment and retention of such staff remains a challenge to the majority of organizations. Retaining employees who are committed to their duties is a challenge in the country's health sector hence; cases of unsatisfactory performance amongst employees remain the order of the day (Garg *et al.*, 2023). Annan (2020) argues that performance levels among employees are determined by work-life balance initiatives in an organization. Additionally, the ability to manage work-life balance has become one of the important managerial strategies for ensuring improved employee performance.

According to the report issued by WHO (2022), governments across the globe through the ministry of health play a vital role in health development by improving health systems and provision of human, financial and other resources. According to the report, such initiatives tend to allow health systems to attain the intended goals of mitigating health inequalities, safeguarding equity in health care financing, and responding to people's needs. People from different backgrounds tend to experience illnesses and diseases which usually require the attention of medical facilities; mainly through public medical facilities, such people access affordable medical attention. This in turn renders people of a given country healthy hence, being able to contribute positively to the various activities that are vital for economic growth (WHO, 2022).

A report by WHO (2022) contends that most ministries of health in developing countries are still in a state of transition coupled with contemporary matters like personnel shortage, unsupportive work environment, financial challenges, devolution, corruption cases, harnessing advanced health technology, the emergence of new deadly diseases such as Covid 19, patient safety and the necessity for a successful staff with a worldwide mentality which infiltrate all aspects of the organization. The report additionally adds that the health sectors all over the globe have been making immense contributions since they are obligated for health protection and undertake the same obligation by executing crucial public health tasks including surveillance systems and provision of public goods for instance programmes for environmental protection, mass immunization, food safety and food fortification.

A review of the Kenyan healthcare system reveals that new policies and management practices are needed to

provide solutions to problems that plague the health sector (Jemesunde & Ng'eno, 2022). Inconsistent performance of health employees has revealed the fact that the country has an inadequate system which has remained unchecked for long; additionally, the priorities of the country have not been satisfactorily aligned with the global developmental agenda, where alleviating health is among the key pillars (Jemesunde & Ng'eno, 2022). Employers in the country have recently ensured some regulatory organizational programmes and policies in cognizance of the dominant significance of work-life balance (Odengo & Kiiru, 2019). The government has urged both public and private institutions to purposely introduce policies which are family-friendly at workplace to help employees balance work and family life; however, the efforts have been inadequate since some employees still complain of the lack of balance between life at work and private life (Oyiolo, 2018).

Therefore, initiatives towards aligning Kenya's developmental agenda in the health sector with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) need to be strengthened particularly, work-life balance practices to enhance productivity among employees and attain "decent work and economic growth" as enumerated specifically by SDG 8. Other key goals in the SDGs as itemized by the United Nations member states are to: build a terrific infrastructure; improve health care; advocate for decent work and growth in the economy; advocate for inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (Bali Swain & Yang-Wallentin, 2020). The SDGs are a combination of 17 world-wide goals planned as a blue print for achieving better future for all; the objective is geared towards producing a set of goals which are universal and meet contemporary political, environmental, economic and social challenges

experienced world-wide (Bain, 2019). On the other hand, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have driven development in numerous essential areas including: mitigating poverty; availing water and sanitation; reducing child mortality rate and radically enhancing maternal health (Bain *et al.*, 2019).

Organizations are considered social systems that are created to fulfill certain needs of individuals and society through performance; a social system is comprised of workers who are expected to execute their roles in order to achieve particular goals through optimum employee performance (Gragnano & Miglioretti, 2020). Certainly, the performance of medical facilities plays an instrumental role in the social system through steering the overall health development which encompasses: designing health policies and programmes; securing essential public health functions and regulation of the delivery of health services (WHO, 2022). The execution of these roles essentially relies on highly motivated, competent and committed workforce in the health sector, whose fundamental roles constitute diagnosis, research, care and treatment of patients. However, in the recent past, the Kenyan health sector has been noted to experience unsatisfactory delivery of services by its workforce (Adnan, 2019; Abayneh, 2020; Garg *et al.*, 2023).

Hence, the study stems from the concern in the Kenyan health sector which has been noted as the inability to put in place relevant HR measures to guarantee satisfactory employee performance among employees (KMOH, 2023). According to (Garg *et al.*, 2023), unsatisfactory performance among workforce in the sector is characterized by inconsistent administration of patients' treatment, unnecessary delays in attending to patients and failure to execute follow-up care for

patients. It's imperative to keep track of an organization's performance since today's work environment is dynamic (Ibiba, 2023). Satisfactory performance among employees tends to make an instrumental contribution towards the success of an organization; it enables an organization to attract high profitability, experience sound industrial relations, attain its intended corporate goals and gain a competitive edge over rival companies (Adnan, 2019; Abayneh, 2020; Garg *et al.*, 2023).

It has been observed that among other factors which influence employees' performance in an organization is work-life balance practices (Khan *et al.* 2020; Chandrasekara 2019; Hussain 2019; Jiatong 2022). Work-life balance practices have been recommended as a model for alleviating employees' welfare and enhancing employee performance (Ibiba, 2023; Katili, 2021; Nzabirinda *et al.*, 2022). As stipulated by Shaari (2022), employee performance is a response to work-life balance practices such as; flexible work schedules, leave policy and welfare initiatives. Correspondingly, in a study carried out by Ibiba (2023), it was ascertained that 67% of workers illustrated that the inability to balance job and family-life had led to underperformance at work. Additionally, Preena (2021) noted that 25% of employees experienced high levels of work-family conflict which had impacted negatively on their performance. Work-life balance remains a contentious concept with limited empirical studies and unclear model for connecting it to employee performance.

Soythong (2023) ascertained that employee commitment is another determinant of high levels of performance among employees; this is further reiterated by Labetubun and Dewi (2022), Mahfouz (2022) and Abayneh (2020). When a worker is committed to his/her duties, he/she tends to be aware of his

obligations towards attaining organizational goals hence, enabling an organization to gain a competitive edge over rivals. However, little extant literature exists on the mediation role of employee commitment on the nexus between work-life balance and employee performance in an inclusive model, prompting the need to conduct a study on the same with specific reference to employees in county referral hospitals in Kenya.

Notably, existing studies on employee performance are conceptual in nature; majority of the work focused on the direct effects between employee performance and its determinants, neglecting the indirect effects mainly occasioned by possible intervening variables. Moreover, Susanto (2022) recommends that future researchers ought to develop a testable model and theory on employees' performance with associated moderators, mediators and other relevant variables that have been ignored in the previous framework in order to widen the scope of employee performance. Hence, based on these existing knowledge gaps, this study sought to fill the gaps by addressing the mediating role of forms of employee commitment (affective, normative and continuance commitment) on the nexus between work-life balance practices and employee performance in the country's county referral hospitals.

## Theoretical Foundation

The spillover theory was employed in this study to explain the connection between work-life balance practices and employee performance. This theory posits that there tend to be a resemblance between what goes on at work environment and whatever takes place in the personal environment (Sidin *et al.*, 2010). This theory stresses the tendency of staff members to transfer their attitudes,

emotions and behaviours established at the workplace to their family-life and vice-versa (Sidin *et al.*, 2010). The spillover effect could be either desirable or undesirable. The undesirable spillover prompts stress among employees while the desirable ones could result in higher levels of job satisfaction and satisfactory performance. Ibiba (2023) states that members of staff who continue to work for longer hours tend to have a higher degree of conflicts related to work-life issues (Dex & Bond, 2005). Abdulrahman (2018) asserts that, in reference to an institutional viewpoint, positive spillover could have a direct influence on organizational financial well-being. A satisfied worker is likely to have a positive spillover on customers which is associated positively with performance and vice-versa. The relevance of this theory to this study is that institutions are expected to implement effective work-life balance policies and practices, enabling staff to balance work and personal life. This in turn, enhances employee commitment and improves performance (Hutagalung *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, the controlled commitment continuum theory is adopted to elucidate the contribution of employee commitment as a mediator between work-life balance practices and employee commitment. The theory presumes that roles take a wider perspective which comprises factors of planning, execution and operational upgrading (Robinson, 2003). Accordingly, the anticipation is that workers need to illustrate adequate commitment so as to guarantee an organization optimum performance. Employee commitment is delineated in to affective, normative and continuance commitment and recognized as a major stimulus in an organization that desires competition of target achievement, which is a product of long tenure among employees (Robinson, 2003). Funminiyi

(2018) argues that members of staff tend to be willing to diligently work in a meticulous way which attracts value towards the organization through alleviating organizational goods and services and seeking to realize progressive improvement at the workplace. In return they are after; work-life balance, personal empowerment and growth, necessary resources for accomplishing tasks and educational and training opportunities thus indicating relationship between spillover theory and the controlled commitment continuum theory. Arguably, implementing work-life balance measures enhance optimal employee performance. Hence, if flexible work arrangements, essential employee breaks, and employee welfare initiatives are sufficiently availed to workers, then there is a likelihood of enhanced employee commitment in terms of affective, normative and continuance commitment which in turn prompts exemplary performance among employees.

## Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

### Work-life balance practices and employee performance

An organization which observes work-life balance initiatives including flexible work arrangements, essential employee breaks and employee welfare initiatives tends to experience phenomenal performance among employees. Such arrangements usually enable employees to manage their time at work and at home equally. Some empirical studies have documented the linkage between work-life balance practices and employee performance. Mwiikisa (2020) has for instance demonstrated that work-life balance practices and other related initiatives have extensively been adopted

by several workplaces to enhance workers' performance.

Garg *et al.* (2023) observed impact of work-life balance on employee performance and job satisfaction in the health sector, the United States of America. Among the components of work-life balance practices was flexible job arrangement that was measured using compressed work weeks, part-time and sharing of jobs; whereas, employee performance indicators were quality of service delivery, efficiency and effectiveness. The study findings verified that all the dimensions of flexible work arrangements had a positive influence on employee performance; due to flexible work arrangements, performance levels among employees were high. Fundamentally, these findings corroborated those of Mwiikisa (2020). However, the dimensions of employee performance analyzed in the study are limited; other relevant dimensions like task, contextual and adaptive performance were not divulged. The current study addresses the gap by studying task, contextual and adaptive performance.

Gagnano & Miglioretti (2020) weighed the importance of work-family and work-health balance on employee performance in the Italian Public Sector. This study sought to address the following components of work-life balance in relation to employee performance; parental leave, sabbatical leave and annual leave. The findings reiterate those of Wanjau (2019), whose results affirmed that the various leaves taken by employees had a positive influence on employee performance; due to the leaves taken by employees, they felt valued and cared for thus, contributing relentlessly to their roles. However, the study suffered a weakness related to the inability to indicate how the outcome variable was measured; this made the study appear

narrow. Thus, the current study clarifies the measurement of the dependent variable as task, contextual and adaptive performance.

Preena (2021) observed the impact of work-life balance on employee performance: an empirical study on a shipping company in Sri Lanka. Aspects used to measure employee well-being activities included; fitness programmes and social activities. The findings confirmed that initiatives towards employee well-being had a positive influence on employee performance. Limitations of the study is related to the selection of sampling process which was judgmental; employing this process leads to biasness of respondents' representation in the population of the study; therefore, the above results could be deceptive. This weakness has been addressed in the current study by employing stratified and simple random sampling technique.

Mwiikisa (2020) explored management of work-life balance and employee performance in the banking sector, a case of AB Bank Zambia. Dimensions of work-life balance examined included shift work, condensed workweeks and hybrid work; whereas, employee performance was measured in terms of commitment, efficiency and quality of work done by employees. The results uncovered were consistent with those of Garg *et al.* (2023); it was shown that all the dimensions of the predictor variable played an instrumental role in positively shaping the level of performance among employees. It was further established that the bank had inadequacies in addressing work-life balance. The situation had in turn led to inefficiency and substandard work in the bank. Though, the study lacked a third variable preferably a moderating or mediating variable, this would have been useful in providing more insights in regards to how work-life balance influence on

employee performance. The limitation has been addressed by incorporating a mediator in addition to the independent and dependent variable.

Wanjau (2019) sought to investigate the contribution of motivational factors on employee performance in the manufacturing sector, Bungoma County, Kenya. Facets of work-life balance measured included parental and annual leave entitled to employees. Employee performance on the other hand was measured in terms of employee commitment, service delivery and labour turnover. In accordance with the revelations of Gragnano & Miglioretti (2020); the results findings connoted a positive significant link between the independent variable and the dependent variable; due to the inability to adequately observe annual and parental leaves, there was low employee commitment at work, poor service delivery and high rate of labour turnover. Nevertheless, the study area was confined in only one county hence; the findings could not reflect the real scenario in the whole country. The weakness has been addressed through studying a total of four different organizations located in four different counties in the country. Therefore, organizations aspiring to attain higher level of employee performance need to invest heavily on work-life balance initiatives.

Mwangi *et al.* (2018) studied influence of work-life balance on employee productivity in government institutions, Kenya. Work-life balance elements included teleworking, flex-work schedule and job sharing; whereas employee productivity was measured using turnover rate, employee satisfaction and employee performance. Results illustrated positive nexus between aspects of employee productivity and work-life balance. These results correspond with those of Mungania (2017). Further findings evidenced that

measures towards addressing flexible work arrangements in the organization served to minimize work-life conflict hence, heightening employee productivity. The study limited its scope on the constituents of flexible work arrangements; fundamental components such as part-time working and job sharing were not considered. The current study widens the scope of flexible work arrangements to include part-time working and job sharing among others.

Odengo and Kiiru (2019) established the influence of work-life balance practices on organizational performance in Kenyan public sector. In contrast with the findings of Gachui (2022); compressed work weeks, telecommuting and telecommuting were found to be the main elements of flexible work arrangements that positively influenced organizational performance. Further results showed that there were tendencies of deteriorated organizational performance due to the inability of the management side to observe the said work-life balance practices. The study incorporated two variables only; the predictor and outcome variable, the inclusion of a third variable preferably a moderator or a mediator would have added credence to the study. The limitation has been addressed by incorporating a mediator in addition to the independent and dependent variable. In light of this extant literature, it was hypothesized that;

*H1: Work-life balance practices are positively related to employee performance.*

### **Employee commitment and employee performance**

Commitment among employees is integral to company's survival and one of critical elements that managers employ to drive an organization to the next frontiers

(Funminiyi, 2018). Committed employees are associated with positive organizational outcomes including; improved sales, customer satisfaction, enhanced profitability and general organizational performance (Davila & Troncoso, 2018). Therefore, employee commitment is an antecedent of organizational performance. Various studies have confirmed the pertinent role that employee commitment plays in an attempt to mitigate expenses, boost employee productivity and as such achieve extraordinary performance.

Soythong (2023) examined effect of quality of work life and organizational commitment to employee performance; in a case study of transportation business in Nakhon Phanom Province of Thailand. The study observed that the forms of organizational commitment (affective, normative and continuance) partially mediated the nexus between the quality of work life and employee performance hence, indicating a positive link between normative commitment and employee performance. It was noted that employees whose quality of work-life had been observed reciprocated by committing themselves more in their roles hence, making an immense impact to job performance in the transportation business.

Mahfouz (2022) determined the mediating role of employee commitment in the relationship between transactional leadership and employee performance, Malaysian context. Resultantly, employee commitment positively affected employee performance among employees. Equally, Abayneh (2020) indicated that, employee commitment had a direct positive effect on employee performance. Thus, organizational initiatives including observation of leave, weekly days off and public holidays made employees feel valued, cared for and appreciated. The very employees responded by increasing their

commitment at work which in the long run enabled the organization to achieve its intended goals. Hence, based on this literature review, it was hypothesized that;

*H2a: Affective Commitment is positively related to employee performance.*

*H2b: Normative Commitment is positively related to employee performance.*

*H2c: Continuance Commitment is positively related to employee performance.*

### **Work-life balance practices and employee commitment**

Organizational activities such as putting in place child care centers for employees and allowing employees to proceed for various types of leaves including; annual, compassionate, sick off and maternity/paternity leaves tend to encourage employees to stay put in an organization hence, intensifying their commitment. Abayneh (2020) observed that HRM practices which promote work-life balance among employees need to be enhanced for maximum commitment among employees since; the practices provide an opportunity for employees to divide their time based on their significance. Flexible work arrangements escalate the level of commitment in an organization through balancing workers' job demands of family (Jemesunde & Ng'eno, 2022).

Hutagalung *et al.* (2020) determined the role of work-life balance in organizational commitment in Indonesia. It was indicated that all the dimensions of work-life balance including welfare programmes, leaves and flexible work arrangements positively influenced organizational normative commitment among employees. Further findings noted

there were inadequate initiatives towards work-life in the public sector hence, employees felt dissatisfied, and this had in turn contributed to low commitment among them.

Likewise, Ibiba (2023) conducted a study on initiatives of work-life balance and commitment among workers in oil servicing organizations in Revers Estate, Nigeria. Initiatives of work-life balance were measured in form of availability of recreational services, managerial support and technological equipment at work. The study discovered that all the predictor variables positively determined employees' continuance commitment; however, managerial support was the most fundamental predictor that drove employees' commitment. Nevertheless, the study lacked a third variable preferably a moderating or mediating variable. The limitation has been addressed by incorporating a mediator in addition to the independent and dependent variable.

Additionally, Darko-Asumadu *et al.* (2018) noticed that the unmarried workers balanced their jobs and personal roles better than the married respondents. Additionally, women experienced extra job-life struggles than the men. Thus, there was a weak positive correlation between work-life balance and employees' affective commitment, because they weren't contented with the stipulated study leave, parental leave and part-time work. Accordingly, organizations that embrace initiative including putting in place child care centers for employees and allowing employees to proceed for various types of leaves including; annual, compassionate, sick off and maternity/paternity leaves tend to encourage employees to stay put in an organization hence, intensifying their commitment. It was thus hypothesized that;

*H3a: Work-life balance practices are positively related to affective commitment.*

*H3b: Work-life balance practices are positively related to normative commitment*

*H3c: Work-life balance practices are positively related to continuance commitment*

### **The mediating role of employee commitment**

Committed employees are associated with positive organizational outcomes including; improved sales, customer satisfaction, improved profitability, and general organizational performance (Igella, 2019). Therefore, employee commitment is an antecedent of organizational performance. Various studies have confirmed the pertinent role that employee commitment plays in an attempt to mitigate expenses, boost employee productivity and as such achieve superior performance. Hence, employee commitment has been established as a mediator between work-life balance practices and employees' performance in contemporary workplaces (Igella, 2019).

Soythong (2023) examined effect of quality of work-life and organizational commitment to employees' performance; a case study of transportation business in Nakhon Phanom Province of Thailand. The study observed that the quality of work-life had a statistically positive substantial effect on employee job performance, and that organizational commitment partially mediated the nexus between the quality of work-life and employee job performance. It was noted that employees whose quality

of work-life had been observed reciprocated by committing themselves more in their roles hence, making an immense impact to job performance in the transportation business.

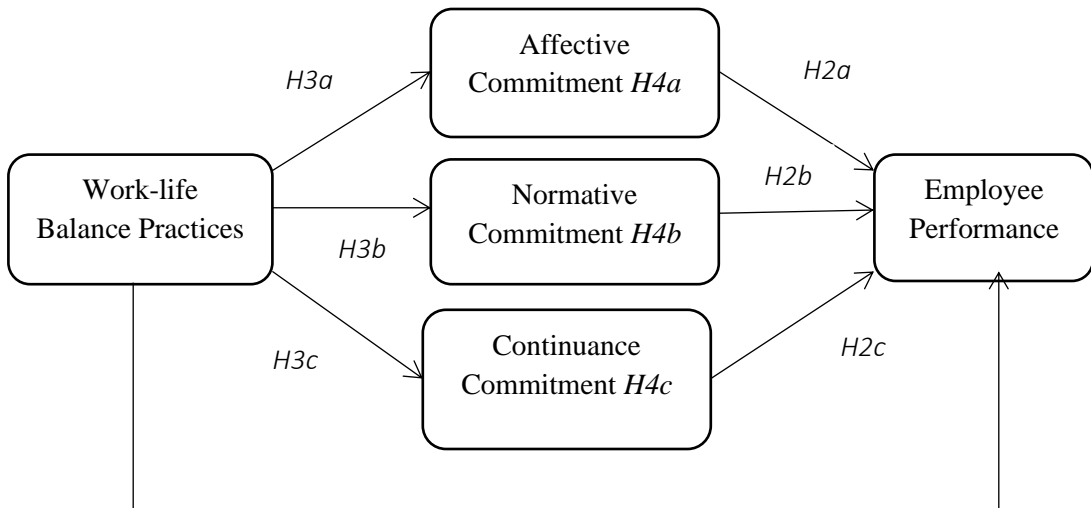
Arifin *et al.* (2022) observed the mediating role of organizational commitment: a supply chain management for examining the effect of quality of work-life and job satisfaction on employee performance, the Indian context. The outcomes of the study supported all the hypotheses; accordingly, organizational commitment positively played the role of mediation between work-life balance and employee performance. When aspects of work-life balance including adjustable job schedules, welfare initiatives and essential breaks were streamlined, employees became more committed to their jobs thus, bringing about improved performance. Deriving from aforementioned literature, it was thus hypothesized that;

*H4a: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance.*

*H4b: Normative commitment mediates the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance.*

*H4c: Continuance commitment mediates the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance.*

In light of the reviewed literature, a model was developed as presented in Figure 1 to guide the study.



**Figure 1:** Research Model for Mediation  
 Source: Researcher (2024)

## Methodology

### Research design and population

Explanatory research design was settled on in this study. Explanatory design is ordinarily quantitative and tends to facilitate testing of assumptions made in regards to the relationship among study

variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study targeted 8 county hospitals in the North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB) which has a population of 6,188 employees. Out of these, four county referral hospitals were selected as depicted in Table 1 below hence; the study population was 3,480 employees.

**Table 1:** Distribution of the study population

County Referral Hospitals	Employees
Iten County Referral Hospital	844
Kitale County Referral Hospital	924
Kapsabet County Referral Hospital	832
Kapenguria County Referral Hospital	880
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,480</b>

Source: Selected County Hospital's Records (2023)

### Sampling procedure and research instruments

The study employed Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1973) to arrive at a sample size of 432 from the four selected medical facilities as shown below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{3480}{1+3480(0.045)^2} = 432$$

Where:

- n = Sample size
- N = Population size
- e = Margin error (0.045)

According to Zikmund *et al.* (2014), a sample size of between 400 and 500 is considered adequate for explanatory research. Accordingly, both stratified and

simple random sampling methods were employed at diverse phases of selection of the sample from the population of the study as illustrated in Table 2 and 3. A structured questionnaire was designed and physically delivered by the research team to the target hospitals between May and

June, 2024. Members of staff were targeted since issues pertaining work-life balance practices and employee performance are a common phenomenon in their day-to-day engagement with the employer, hence fitting as the unit of analysis.

**Table 2:** Hospital stratification and proportion of sample per hospital

County Referral Hospitals	Study Population	Calculations	Sample Size
Iten County Referral Hospital	844	844/3480x432	105
Kitale County Referral Hospital	924	924/3480x432	115
Kapsabet County Referral Hospital	832	832/3480x432	103
Kapenguria County Referral Hospital	880	880/3480x432	109
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,480</b>		<b>432</b>

Source: Selected County Hospital's Records (2024)

**Table 3:** Employees' category stratification and proportion of sample size per category

Hospital	Employee Category	Employees No.	Calculation	Sample Size
Iten County Referral Hospital	Supervisors	74	74/844x105	9
	Middle Level	196	196/844x105	24
	Low Cadre	574	574/844x105	72
	Employees			
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>844</b>		<b>105</b>
Kitale County Referral Hospital	Supervisors	81	81/924x115	10
	Middle Level	192	192/924x115	24
	Low Cadre	651	651/924x115	81
	Employees			
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>924</b>		<b>115</b>
Kapsabet County Referral Hospital	Supervisors	70	70/832x103	9
	Middle Level	178	178/832x103	22
	Low Cadre	584	584/832x103	72
	Employees			
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>832</b>		<b>103</b>
Kapenguria County Referral Hospital	Supervisors	74	74/880x109	9
	Middle Level	183	183/880x109	23
	Low Cadre	623	623/880x109	77
	Employees			
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>880</b>		<b>109</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,480</b>		<b>432</b>

Source: Selected County Hospital's Records (2024)

### Validity and reliability of instruments

For content validity, the measurement scales used were sourced from past studies. Work-life balance practices as a single process variable was measured using the scales advanced in the literature of Dex & Bond (2005) and Abdulrahman (2018). Affective, normative, and continuance commitment were measured using the scales advanced by Meyer & Allen (1991) and Meyer *et al.* (2012). Employee performance was measured using the scales advanced by (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. To ensure face validity, the drafted questionnaire was pilot tested on 50 employees at Bungoma County Referral Hospital. This allowed for adjustments to be made that enhanced item clarity and relevance.

Reliability statistics, specifically Cronbach's Alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency of items within each variable. Reliability analysis was conducted to depict the internal consistency of the measurement scales for the four variables: employee performance, work-life balance practices and employee commitment. Across the constructs, the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients ranged from 0.815 to 0.916, demonstrating reliability satisfactory to high levels. These coefficients suggested that the items within each construct consistently measured their respective concepts. Final data collected using the revised questionnaire was further explored to ensure construct validity and reliability. Through running factor analysis, results showed that majority of the items used to measure each construct had a Kaiser Meyer - Olkin loading of above 0.5 which was above the acceptable value (Field & Wilcox, 2017), illustrating that the data for the variables under study were suitable for

factor analysis (Shrestha, 2021). The few items whose factor loading were below 0.5 were dropped.

### Data analysis, interpretation and presentation

Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Consequently, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were employed to present the findings of the study. Descriptive statistics for instance standard deviations, means, minimum and maximum were used to illustrate respondents' responses.

Inferential statistics for instance Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Regression Analysis were used to test the research hypotheses and discern meaning from the derived hypotheses outcomes. Analyzed data has been presented in tables. In regards to regression analysis hierarchical and multiple regression equations were employed to test the hypothesized effects. The assertions are further expounded as follows:

## Results

The final data collected was checked for completeness and missing values. Indeed, 9 surveys were found to be unsuitable after data screening and cleaning procedures; 6 of them had more than 50% missing values, and 3 were outliers, which resulted in their deletion. Subsequently, for cases with less than 50 percent missing values, the study adopted Pallant's (2020) approach for treating missing values. This method involves replacing missing values with the mean, calculated based on the variables, as suggested by Pallant (2020). Thereafter, the 403 complete cases were aggregated into the four hospitals which formed the unit of analysis. Further parametric test results showed; probabilities of Mahalanobis distance scores above .001,

non-significant Shapiro-Wilk ( $p>.05$ ), tolerance values of 0.1, and variance inflation factor values of less than 10 (Shrestha, 2020). These results confirmed that data was multivariate normally distributed and free from multicollinearity (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

**Respondent and hospital profile**

The gender distribution among employees was relatively balanced with 51.6% male employees and 48.4% female employees. This near-parity suggested that the hospital workforce was gender-inclusive, ensuring that the views of both the genders are adequately represented. In regards to age distribution, the majority of employees (36.2%) were within the 41-50 years age group. This illustrated a mature workforce. The work experience distribution revealed that the largest group of employees (26.1%) had between 11-15 years of experience. This showed a highly experienced workforce. The significant presence of mature workforce and experienced employees suggests that most staff members were well-versed with

matters work-life balance practices, employee commitment and employee performance in the hospitals.

**Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis**

Results in Table 4 present the means and standard deviations (SD) for work-life balance practices, employee commitment, and employee performance. All the mean scores are above 2.5 on a Likert scale of 1-5 indicating that the sampled hospitals were performing above average in terms of work-life balance practices, employee commitment and employee performance. The standard deviation values relatively close to zero showed that data was less skewed and close to the mean. Further zero-order correlation results show that all the main study variables were positively and significantly related. Affective commitment and employee performance emerged the highest ( $r=.360^{**}$ ) while the correlation between normative commitment and employee performance scored the lowest ( $r=.189^{**}$ ).

**Table 4:** Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

Variables	Min.	Max.	Mean.	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Work-life Balance Practices (1)	1.3	4.93	3.26	0.49	1				
Affective Commitment (2)	1.57	5	3.83	0.83	.478 <sup>**</sup>	1			
Normative Commitment (3)	1.14	5	3.24	1.20	.336 <sup>**</sup>	.389 <sup>**</sup>	1		
Continuance Commitment (4)	1.29	5	3.29	1.05	.287 <sup>**</sup>	.205 <sup>**</sup>	.268 <sup>**</sup>	1	
Employee Performance (5)	1.3	4.93	4.04	0.49	.356 <sup>**</sup>	.360 <sup>**</sup>	.189 <sup>**</sup>	.289 <sup>**</sup>	1

Notes:  $N=403$ , <sup>\*\*</sup> $p<.01$

Source: Field Data (2024)

**Hierarchical regression analysis for work-life balance practices and the dimensions of employee commitment on employee performance**

The first objective of this study sought to establish the direct effect of work-life balance practices, and the dimensions of employee commitment on employee performance. Using hierarchical

regression analysis, the results in Table 5 show the unique effect of each predictor variables on the dependent variable. In Model 1, age and work experience was entered as control variables and the results showed that age ( $\beta =-.196^{***}$ ) and work experience ( $\beta =.178^{***}$ ) had a significant effect on employee performance.

**Table 5:** Hierarchical regression analysis for work-life balance practices and the dimensions of employee commitment on employee performance

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	Beta	t	Beta	t	Beta	t	Beta	t	Beta	t
(Constant)		37.124		13.043		12.123		10.234		12.076
Age	<b>-.196***</b>	-2.461	-.086	-.870	-.131	-1.654	-.163	-2.456	-.117	-1.45
Work Experience	<b>.178***</b>	3.856	.223	5.654	.126	4.134	.112	4.345	.156	2.871
Work-life Balance Practices			<b>.393***</b>	8.432	<b>.298***</b>	7.245	<b>.197***</b>	6.567	<b>.089***</b>	2.912
Affective Commitment					<b>.286***</b>	10.156	<b>.211***</b>	8.974	<b>.188***</b>	2.634
Normative Commitment							<b>.236</b>	10.568	<b>.234***</b>	6.873
Continuance Commitment									<b>.098***</b>	7.987
<b>Model Summary Statistics</b>										
R <sup>2</sup>	<b>.033</b>		<b>.156</b>		<b>.275</b>		<b>.414</b>		<b>.534</b>	
R <sup>2</sup> Change	.033		.123		.119		.139		.120	
F	4.489		18.452		30.110		46.724		48.678	

**Notes:** N=403, \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , **Dependent Variable:** Employee performance, **Predictor Variables:** Work-life Balance Practices, Affective Commitment, Normative Commitment and Continuance Commitment, **Control Variables:** Age and Work Experience.

Source: Field Data (2024)

Model 1 had a weak explanatory power of 3.3% of the variance in employee performance. In Model 2, work-life balance practices were entered on top of the control variables and the results showed that work-life balance practices had a significant positive effect on employee performance ( $\beta=.393^{***}$ ). The Model accounted for 12.3% of the variance in employee performance. Based on Model 2 results, *H1* is supported. Next, the effect of each dimension of employee commitment (affective, normative and continuance) was tested on employee performance. Results in Models 3, 4, and 5 showed that affective and continuous commitment positively and significantly affected employee performance; whereas as normative commitment did not. Model 3, 4, and 5 respectively explained 11.9%, 13.9%, and 12% of the variance in employee performance. Based on the results, *H2a*, and *H2c* were supported, while *H2b* wasn't. Overall, the direct effect model explained about 53.4% of the variance in employee performance.

#### **Multiple-mediation analysis for dimensions of employee commitment in the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance**

The second objective of this study sought to examine the mediating effect of each dimensions of employee commitment in the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance. Using Hayes's SPSS multiple-mediator PROCESS macro (Version 4.0) through model 4, the mediation conditions were first tested as suggested by MacKinnon (2012). Standardized path coefficients were checked to determine the strength, direction, and significance level of the relationship. Results in Table 6 under *a1*, *a2*, and *a3* paths show that work-life balance practices had a significant

positive direct effect on affective commitment ( $\beta=.243^{***}$ ), normative commitment ( $\beta=.312^{***}$ ), and continuous commitment ( $\beta=.457^{***}$ ). These results also provide support for *H4a*, *H4b*, and *H4c*. Under the *b* paths, only affective commitment ( $\beta=.249^{***}$ ) and continuance commitment ( $\beta=0.048^{***}$ ) had a positive and significant effect on employee performance, whereas normative commitment did not ( $\beta=.314$ ).

Having satisfied the conditions suggested by MacKinnon (2012) under *paths a1*, *a2*, *b1*, and *b2*, the next move was to test the mediation effect of the affective, and continuous commitment. Preacher and Hayes's bootstrapping technique, with a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval (5000 bootstrap resamples requested) was used to determine the significance level of the mediation effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Specifically, the lower and upper bounds of confidence intervals were checked to establish whether the mediating effect was statistically significant or not. Accordingly, results in Table 6 under indirect effects show that affective commitment is a significant mediator, where;  $a_1 \times b_1$  standardized *Coeff.* = .061, *SE* = .019,  $p < .001$ , 95% *Boot CI* = [.029, .102]. Also, continuance commitment emerged as a significant mediator, where;  $a_1 \times b_1$  standardized *Coeff.* = .024, *SE* = .021,  $p < .001$ , 95% *Boot CI* = [.023, .076]. The upper and lower confidence interval (CI) values not containing a zero indicate that both affective and continuance commitment are significant mediators in the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance, hence providing support for *H4a* and *H4c*. Results further reveal a partial mediating effect since the direct effect of work-life balance practices on employee performance reduced from  $\beta=.506$  to  $\beta=.315$ , upon introducing

ffective and continuance commitment as mediators in the model, although path  $c_1$  remained significant. The non-significant result obtained for the  $b_2$  path implied that the mediating effect of normative commitment could not be tested, since this violates one of the key mediation conditions (significant  $b$  paths) as suggested by MacKinnon (2012). Nonetheless, Muele (2019) encourages researchers to proceed with mediation analysis despite obtaining non-significant

results for either path  $a$ ,  $b$  or  $c$ . Based on this view, the mediating effect of normative commitment was further tested, and the results confirmed that normative commitment was not a significant mediator, where;  $a_1 \times b_1$  standardized  $Coeff.=.092, SE=.023, p>.001, 95\% Boot CI=[-.048, .139]$ . This is because zero lies along the upper and lower confidence intervals. Therefore,  $H4b$  is not supported.

**Table 6:** Multiple-mediation analysis for dimensions of employee commitment in the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance

Models	Bias Correlated Bootstrap 95% Confidence Interval				
	R <sup>2</sup>	Stand. Coeff.	SE	Lower	Upper
<b>Independent Variable on Mediators (a paths)</b>					
Work-life Balance Practices - Affective Commitment (1)	.068	.243***	.086	.188	.535
Work-life Balance Practices - Normative Commitment (2)	.113	.312***	.085	.268	.623
Work-life Balance Practices - Continuance Commitment (3)	.216	.457***	.101	.648	1.049
<b>Mediator on Dependent Variable (b paths)</b>					
Affective Commitment- Employee Performance (1)	.443	.249***	.039	.118	.289
Normative Commitment- Employee Performance (2)		.314	.038	.158	.329
Continuance Commitment- Employee Performance (3)		0.048***	.033	-.029	.102
<b>Total effect (c' path)</b>	.253	.506***	.064	.477	.728
<b>Direct effect (c<sub>1</sub> paths)</b>		.315***	.065	.255	.518
<b>Indirect effects</b>					
Total		.178***	.039	.102	.258
Affective Commitment		.061***	.019	.029	.102
Normative Commitment		.092	.023	-.048	.139
Continuance Commitment		.024***	.021	.023	.076

**Notes:** Based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, N=403, \*\*\* P<.001

Source: Field Data (2024)

### Discussion

Overall, the results of this study confirm that work-life balance practices, affective commitment, normative commitment, age and work experience contribute to positive variances in employee performance of the county referral hospitals in the country. Results further revealed that work-life balance practices significantly contribute

to employee performance. This suggests that the medical facilities that engage in work-life balance practices by way of; putting in place flexible work arrangements, allowing employees to proceed on leave in time and ensuring general employee welfare, tend to realize exemplary performance among its employees. Essentially, these findings

reiterate extant literature particularly those of Garg *et al.* (2023) who verified that all the dimensions of flexible work arrangements had a positive influence on employee performance in the United States of America; the study reported immense development in the health sector through streamlined work-life balance practices such as extended parental leaves, part-time work, compressed work weeks, job sharing, and part-time work; such arrangements had enabled employees to manage their time at work and at home equally. Similarly, Nzabirinda *et al.* (2022) noted a positive linkage between flexible work schedules and employee performance in the warehousing sector, the United Kingdom; here major antecedents for optimum employee performance were noted as being; workplace support systems, family-friendly policies, and telecommuting options. However, the findings contradicted those of Gachui (2022) whose outcome demonstrated a negative connection between work-life balance practices and performance amongst employees in the ministry of education in Kenya. Other factors such as competency level and organizational culture were responsible for determining performance levels in the ministry.

The study further indicates that affective and continuous forms of commitment significantly affect employee performance. This result suggests that medical facilities with higher levels of affective and continuous commitment are more likely to experience incredible performance relative to their counter parts in the same region. Thus, medical facilities that ensure employees feel satisfied to spend the rest of their careers in the hospitals and find it costly to leave the work places are more likely to perform well. In essence, the results echo those of Soythong (2023) who observed a positive

link between affective form of commitment and employee performance in the transportation business, Thailand. Correspondingly, Labetubun & Dewi (2022) revealed that low levels of continuous employee commitment were the main cause of unsatisfactory productivity in Indonesia. Conversely, the results contrasted with those of Saleh *et al.* (2018) who reported a negative linkage between continuance commitment and organizational performance in the manufacturing sector of Yemen.

Additionally, work-life balance practices emerged as a significant predictor of affective, normative and continuous commitment. This result makes contributions to the existing literature which suggests that employee commitment is an outcome of work-life balance practices among other factors. The findings connote that exemplary employee commitment in the hospitals can be triggered through leveraging initiatives related to work-life balance practices; thus, the hospitals should be deliberate in their efforts to ensure robust work-life balance practices through the following: flexible work arrangements such as job sharing, flextime, part-time work, compressed work weeks, telework and job sharing; employee welfare initiatives including spiritual/psychological development programmes, opportunities for recreation, catering services, on-site child care facilities and health clinic within the workplace set-up; and lastly the practice of ensuring employees take their annual leaves, weekly day offs and public holidays accordingly.

Fundamentally, these findings resonate with the outcome of Khan *et al.* (2018) who elucidated that work-life balance initiatives like compressed job week, telecommuting and annual and parental leave had a direct positive association with affective and continuance

forms of organizational commitment in the United Kingdom. Similarly, Abdulrahman (2018) established that work-life balance initiatives such as telecommuting, job sharing, compressed work weeks and flextime served to strengthen continuance commitment among employees who in turn made a significant contribution towards increasing organizational sales, profitability and competitive edge in India. The findings equally agreed with those of Nazi, Li & Nisar (2020) where the findings clarified that supportive work environment initiatives had a direct positive association with affective employee commitment in multinational fast food brands in Lahore, Pakistan.

The study results on mediation analysis provide new insights into existing organizational performance literature by affirming that both affective continuance commitments play a significant partial mediating role in the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance. This suggests that the contribution of work-life balance practices to employee performance is greater through both affective, continuance forms of commitment. These results bring to limelight that initiatives which seek to address effective and continuance commitments are essential to ensuring work-life balance practices result in exemplary performance an organization.

Basically, these findings resonate with the outcome of Soythong (2023) observed that the quality of work-life had a statistically positive substantial effect on employee job performance, and that affective commitment partially mediated the nexus between the quality of work-life and employee job performance. Similarly, Arifin *et al.* (2020) observed that continuous commitment positively played the role of mediation between work-life balance and employee performance. When aspects of work-life balance including

adjustable job schedules, welfare initiatives and essential breaks were streamlined, employees became more committed to their jobs thus, bringing about improved performance.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Work-life balance has become one of the central debates in the contemporary organization's agenda. In the present study, a theoretical framework examining the interrelationship between work-life balance practices, dimensions of employee commitment and employee performance was developed and empirically tested among the County Referral Hospitals in Kenya. Results revealed that work-life balance practices as a single process construct had a direct positive effect on affective, normative and continuous commitment, and employee performance. Additionally, affective and continuous commitments are positively related to employee performance. Most importantly, the study uncovers the outstanding role of affective and continuous commitments by demonstrating their partial mediating effect in the relationship between work-life balance practices and employee performance. This study confirms that higher levels of employee performance in the medical facilities in Kenya cannot be premised solely on the initiatives of work-life balance practices. The indirect effect of employee commitment in terms of affective and continuous commitments also plays a critical role. Impliedly, positive initiatives as a result of embracing work-life balance practices in the hospitals including: flexible work arrangements; employee welfare initiatives and ensuring employees take their essential breaks in time should enhance affective and continuous commitments among employees. Affective and continuous commitments are essential

in ensuring optimum employee performance in the medical facilities.

Theoretically, the results of this study validated the importance of integrating spillover theory with controlled commitment continuum theory to explain how work-life balance practices and employee commitment can enhance employee performance in the hospitals. Furthermore, the results of this study make contributions to the body of existing empirical literature that supports the significant interrelationship among work-life balance practices and forms of employee commitment (affective commitment, normative commitment and continuous commitment). Specifically, the study brings to knowledge the mediating role of affective and continuance commitments in the relationship between the work-life balance practices and employee performance in the country's county referral hospitals.

In regards to policy and managerial implications to the hospitals under study, the Ministry of Labour, the Federation of Kenyan Employers (FKE), the Industrial Court and the Trade Unions in the country, based on the results obtained, it is recommended that in an effort to address work-life balance practices in terms of its holistic elements namely: flexible work arrangements; observation of essential employee breaks (leave, weekly day offs and public holidays); and employee welfare initiatives – the respective policy makers/management should consider actualizing flexible work arrangement through ensuring: flexibility in arrangement of work shifts so as to allow employees to choose whether to work daytime or at night; provision of job sharing among employees so as to inculcate the idea of knowledge passage from experienced and skillful employees to amateurs at work; options of part-time jobs for certain employees like those who

provide information technology services and maintenance services. It is also worth noting that, in order to ensure that the arrangements address the needs of employees, their views should be sought on the same while developing the respective policies and practices.

With respect to observation of leave, weekly day offs and public holidays as provided by the Employment Act 2007 - the respective authorities should ensure that employees take timely breaks from work. This is crucial since the breaks allow workers to relax and rejuvenate their minds in preparation for job resumption and soonest they report to duty after the break, their mindsets tends to be fresh, relaxed with recharged strength that enable them to deliver their roles more effectively with minimum confusion as opposed to when they are fatigued after failing to take any break. Apart from relieving them from work tension, such breaks also give them time to attend to their personal/family issues away from work thus, forming a balance between job and their other activities.

In an effort to embrace employee welfare initiatives, the respective authorities should put in place robust initiatives including: provision of supervisory support where immediate bosses support their subordinates to ensure every assignment is accomplished accordingly; offering recreational/fitness programmes opportunities for employees such as swimming, meditation, reading, playing games and dancing; provision of spiritual development programmes and social activities like team building to employees; and provision of on-site childcare facilities for parents who may need baby-sitting services at work. Workers who experience welfare initiatives tend to execute their role more effectively, are more dedicated to their bosses, and are less likely to fall sick due to unnecessary

stress. All these combined will trigger increased commitment levels among employees which will in turn lead to optimum employee performance.

The recommendations are geared towards enabling the respective stakeholders to review, shape and align their HR policies (particularly, policies related to work-life balance practices, employee commitment and employee performance) with local and global developmental agendas including Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) respectively, where the need to achieve decent work, economic growth and improving health are some of the key pillars.

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