

## **ENHANCING WORKLIFE BALANCE TO FOSTER EMPLOYEE WORK ETHICS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: ANALYSIS OF THE KENYA NATIONAL POLYTECHNICS**

<sup>1\*</sup> **Mohamed Bonaya Abdi**  
*bonayam@yahoo.com*

<sup>2\*\*</sup> **Nkirina Severina Peter**  
*nkirinasp@yahoo.com*

<sup>1</sup> *Jomo Kenyatta University Of Science and Technology, Kenya*

<sup>2</sup> *Karatina University, Kenya*

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**Abstract:** *Employees play a crucial role in the performance and sustainability of any entity. The ability to offer fair reward is vital to management if they are to attract, motivate and retain their good employees. The pay structure in an organisation includes non-financial benefits such as holidays and vacations to reenergize. Worklife balance has gained prominence in the current world of work and organisations are using it as a reward strategy to attract and maintain motivated and well energized workforce. The notion of worklife balance has not been well researched as a reward system as well as a contributor to employee work ethics. This paper discusses findings of worklife balance programs at the Kenya National Polytechnics and their contribution to employee work ethics. The findings were generated from a population of 1635 drawn from the 12 registered National Polytechnics trainers and administrative staff categories. A sample size of 234 was selected. Correlation and regressions analysis was conducted on the data collected using questionnaires. From the findings, it is evident that work life balance is critical in fostering employee work ethics. The paper recommends that organisations should create programs that support employee work life balance so as to improve the work ethics and by extension performance. Future research can include wider sectors in their sample to establish the extent of work ethics and work life balance.*

**Keywords:** *Worklife Balance, Work Ethics, Kenya National Polytechnics, Employees, Public Sector*

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### **1. Background and Introduction**

Most employers have made an effort to adequately compensate their workers for the work they have done. However, the nature and scope of rewards differ widely among nations, which help to explain why there are conflicts between management and employees in various nations. Armstrong and Brown (2017) assert that the design and implementation of policies and strategies that are intended to be in line with the organization's values and directed toward a just reward system, with equity, and in agreement with dependability constitute reward management.

Employees are seen as important assets and essential resources for the business in the current corporate world. Employees are the key component in developing and carrying out strategies and guidelines. Whether or not they interact directly with clients, employees' behavior has a significant impact on a company's ability to

succeed (Alalade & Oguntodu, 2019). Businesses that are aware of how employee performance affects them are better equipped to impact employee output and productivity (Adjei, 2020). An organization can boost profitability and consistently achieve defined objectives by effectively managing employees' work ethics. Rewarding staff is one method of managing them effectively. Work life balance programs are an emerging strategy to improve employee work ethics without necessarily involving monetary measures.

Bishop (2018) asserts that compensation has a substantial impact on an organization's reward system and that it also has an impact on employees' work ethics. Organizations strive to achieve a sustainable balance between performance, loyalty, and dedication of their employees due to the competitive nature of the staff development and growth programs. Reward strives to provide a flexible and economical method of equally rewarding both good and poor employees. Due to the subjectivity involved in grading each employee's work ethics, there has been debate around the same. This is affected by differences in framing effective reward system that are innovative as well as comprehensive in nature including non-financial aspects.

Armstrong (2019) distinguishes between non-monetary and monetary benefits. According to him, financial incentives such as bonuses encourage workers to continually give their all to the company in order to meet their needs on a daily basis. Allowances are the perks that employees receive at the expense of the employer. Work-related benefits, such as housing, transportation, and medical allowances, help one achieve this. A key component of fostering and growing great people is reward strategy. Strategies for rewarding employees are influenced by personal characteristics like age, experience, and talents. Promotions, pay raises, and benefits are identified by Janabi (2018) as reward areas that have a significant impact on employees' work ethics and that should be actively controlled. In this paper, work life balance programs are considered as part of the reward framework.

Research evidence has often found that work-life balance policies contribute to job satisfaction, which in turn can influence ethical behavior. This suggest that when employees have a better balance between their work and personal life, they are more likely to exhibit ethical behavior in the workplace. Further employee work related stress can be greatly reduced by developing robust work life balance programs that target all employees at different levels and also implemented fairly.

The national polytechnics in Kenya are under the Ministry of education department of Vocational and Technical Training. They are established under the Kenyan Technical and Vocational Education and Training Act, No 29 of 2013. Kenya National Polytechnics are TVET institutions charged with the mandate of training middle level technical and vocational labor force. In the global arena, Science, Technology and Innovation are the drivers for rapid world's economic prosperity, social development and provide tools and solutions to address global challenges. These institutions contribute greatly to the technical skill development of the youth in line with vision 2030.

## **2. Problem and Focus**

Beardwell and Claydon (2021) found that in addition to rewards, there are many other elements that affect employees' work ethics. These include the working environment for employees, their interactions with their company, job security, opportunities for training and development, and the rules governing employee rewards. Aside from performance as a measure of progress in the organisation, wok ethics is becoming a key indicator of employee productivity and commitment. Work ethics ensures that employees do what is expected of them at all times. Satisfied employees are more likely to engage in ethical practices in their work places. Further more, because of the critical role the TVET sector plays in the attainment of vision 2030 and the country's

technical skill development amid various economic and environmental challenges, employees' work ethics in the sector is important to enhance performance and also attainment of the objectives of the sector. The key objective of TVET sector being to produce a critical mass of well-trained human resources to implement programmes and projects identified in Kenya's Vision 2030 and also the sustainable development goal number 4 relating to access to quality education.

Although research has been undertaken on TVET and work ethics, less studies have been undertaken relating work ethics, worklife balance and the TVET sector. This paper bridges this gap because it's evident that the sector is important and also employee work ethics is critical in imparting desirable skills.

From this understanding the paper focuses on the answering the following question:

- i) *How does work life balance programs influence employees' work ethics in Kenya National Polytechnics?*

### **3. Theoretical Review**

The theoretical review is a network of associations between variables judged pertinent to the recognized problem situation that is rationally explained, explored, and elaborated. In general, theories are developed to comprehend and explain phenomena as well as, in many situations, to challenge and advance our understanding of those phenomena within the confines of important limiting assumptions. The theoretical literature provides a foundation for research study theory by describing and introducing the theory that explains why the research problem under examination occurs (Sekaran, 2020). Work life balance and employee can be explained by different theories. Behavioural theories take prominence here because work ethics is a behavioural outcome. This section discusses some of these theories.

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) aims to explain the relationship between attitudes and behaviors within human action. It is mainly used to predict how individuals will behave based on their pre-existing attitudes and behavioral intentions. An individual's decision to engage in a particular behavior is based on the outcomes the individual expects will come as a result of performing the behavior. Developed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1967, the theory derived from previous research in social psychology, persuasion models, and attitude theories. Fishbein's theories suggested a relationship between attitude and behaviors (the A-B relationship). Work ethics is a behavioural outcome.

Other theories that can explain work life balance include; conflict theory, human capital theory, segmentation and integration theories, spillover over theory and border and boundary theory among others. These theories take note of the role work life and general roles affect each other to the extent that this effect may be negative and lead to poor performance. For example, the spillover theory portends that employee personal life will spill over to the work. This in essence means an employee facing a stressful life will carry over that effect to the work place and hence have behavioural outcome to work ethics.

This paper argues that an employee who has a balanced life is likely to be stable and conduct him/herself in an ethical way in the work place. Work-Life balance is becoming increasingly challenging in the modern context and the challenge arises from the fact that it is very difficult to strike the balance between work and other domains of life (Khateeb F.R. 2021).

#### 4. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

The concept of work life balance has a long history dating back to the early days of industrial revolution when factory workers starting agitating for less working hours and human work conditions (Myers 1924; Hogarth & Bosworth, 2009). Worklife balance creates a scenario of an employee who has control over their life and is able productively contribute to their companies. Work-Life Balance (WLB) is defined by Kirchmeyer (2000) as the achievement of fulfilling experiences in the different aspects of life that require various resources, like energy, time and commitment and these resources are spread across all the domains.

Employees and organisations often a times get conflicted on how much time, energy and resources should be allocated to non -work activities that affect individuals' well -being. Never the less organisations and HR practitioners are warming up to the idea of strategically creating policies and structural changes to accommodate work life balance activities to improve overall productivity of each employee. Employees too are increasingly paying attention to work life programs when seeking companies to work for (Khateeb F. R, 20021).

Several programs of work life balance have been identified and applied differently in different work environments. The following are often the most commonly used in different organisation set ups and with different outcomes in as far as work ethics is concerned.: flexi -time, flexi- place, job sharing/ shared work, off days/ leaves, and part- time work arrangements. These arrangements allow the employee time reenergize and also attend to personal projects that may give them contentment. Others programs include paid for vacations and family day events fully sponsored by the organisations.

Work ethics is used to describe various behavioural aspects of employees in the work place and as workers. Personal ethics are those moral precepts or moral laws that one should incorporate into their activities and behavior (Sen, 2020). Employee work ethics is portrayed in work activities, engagement and commitment. Work ethics is also used to describe various behavioural aspects of employees in the work place and as workers such as; professionalism in service delivery, timeliness in service delivery, employee overall work productivity and task commitment. The term ethics is used sometimes interchangeably with morality, though some attempts are made to differentiate them.

The term "moral" or "morality," which refers to the code of conduct or specific standards of conduct or behavior advanced by the community, the group, the individual, or reasonable beings, is derived from the Latin word "mores" (Gert, & Gert, 2018). However, some philosophers have suggested that they differ in the evolution of ethical discussions. On the one hand, some philosophers define "ethics" as the moral philosophy that examines the decency of a particular act or the criteria used to assess its decency (Singer, 2022). In other words, it is the study or science of morals, whereas morality refers to the code of conduct or moral norms. It addresses the notion of why a particular act or behavior is good or harmful/ bad /good/ desirable/ frowned on etc.

Work ethics is becoming an important topical issue in modern business world because of the challenging environments in which work is being performed. Globalisation and other trends have corrupted the moral fabric of society and hence behavioural change is unprecedented. Organisations and professional bodies are continuously reviewing their ethical stand by constantly formulating codes of ethics to guide their members. Ethics and integrity is gaining acceptance even among governments.

Based on the literature and theoretical review undertaken it is evident that work life balance has influence on employee work ethics. This paper delves into showing how this happens in the Kenyan public sector using

National polytechnics as a reference point. The conceptual framework below shows the relationship of these variables and the specific activities that are engaged in the programs.

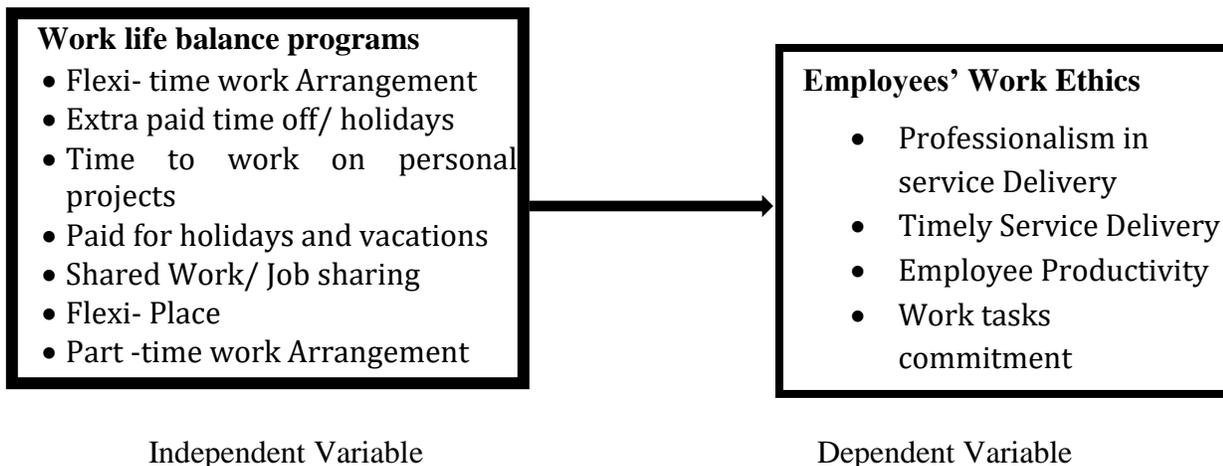


Figure1: Conceptual Framework

### 5. Methodology And Research Design

This paper reports on findings obtained using a descriptive design which enabled analysis of respondents' views on the key variables. A population of 1634 respondents who comprised of 1266 trainers and 368 administrative staff members was targeted. A sample of 234 respondents was obtained using Yamane formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e^2)}$$

Where;

N = Population, n = sample size, e = margin for error (0.05)

$$N = \frac{1635}{1 + 1635(0.05^2)} = 234 \text{ Respondents}$$

The table below gives the population and Sample distributions:

Table 1: Study Population and Sample Size

Category	Population	Sample Size
Trainers	1,266	181
Administrative staff	368	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,634</b>	<b>234</b>

## 6. Findings and Discussions

This paper gives findings at two levels, first level being a descriptive analysis and the second being inferential analysis that gives the extent of the relationship between the various constructs.

From descriptive analysis it is evident that the respondents were in agreement that worklife balance initiatives in public institutions are minimal. This in essence affect the effect such programs would have on work ethics. The respondents strongly disagreed with the existence of extra paid time off and holidays with 49.1% meaning that the same did not affect their work ethics. 50.9% of the respondents further disagreed that the organisation gives them time to work on personal projects. 52.2% of the respondents disagreed with the existence of company paid vacations as an influence of their work ethics. The respondents were in agreement that the organisations had flexible work arrangements which positively affected their work ethics.

Based on the findings, it is disturbing to note that public institutions have not paid much attention to employee worklife balance issues and hence this aspect may have a negative influence on the employee work ethics. The only aspect that was taken care of was the provision of paid leave and off days. This created time to relax and reenergize. However, since the law provides for such, it is not taken as an initiative by the firm and hence may not influence the work ethics of employees. The standard deviations and mean scores show consensus among the respondents. Table 2 below gives the findings in detail.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Work life balance programs

<b>Variables</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev</b>
The flexible work arrangement in my organization.	5.5%	8.6%	19.0%	27.6%	39.3%	<b>3.9</b>	<b>1.2</b>
My organization gives employees extra paid time off and holidays.	27.6%	20.9%	20.2%	21.5%	9.8%	<b>2.7</b>	<b>1.3</b>
My organization gives employees time to work on personal Projects affects concentration on work.	26.4%	24.5%	16.0%	22.7%	10.4%	<b>2.7</b>	<b>1.4</b>
The organization provides opportunity to employees to go for company paid vacations and holidays.	34.4%	17.8%	14.1%	22.7%	11.0%	<b>2.6</b>	<b>1.4</b>
The organization has work life balance programs tailored to employees and provides me with support to do my work.	19.0%	22.1%	21.5%	23.9%	13.5%	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.3</b>

The findings further review that although work life programs may be in place, it may be for very few employees most probably those in management. This means public institutions need to invest in employee work life balance to create a work team that is energized and ready to achieve the objectives of the TVET sector.

### 7. Inferential Statistics Analysis

The descriptive statistics showed a low level of provision of work life balance programs at the Kenya national polytechnics and by extension the public service. This section gives and discusses findings from the inferential statistics to establish the extent of influence that various programs have on the work ethics among the employees of the Kenya National polytechnics as a result of improved work life balance.

The correlation analysis is done to bring out the relationship on the variables of interest. From the analysis it shows that most of the aspects of work life balance have very low correlation with employee work ethics at Kenya National polytechnics. There is need to improve on these aspects if they have to contribute to work ethics. Table 3 below gives the findings.

*Table 3: Correlations Between Work life balance programs and Employee work ethics*

		Employee W ethic	Flexi-work	Pay extra time	Personal project	Paid vacation	Work structure
Employees work ethic	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
Flexi work	Pearson Correlation	.263**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001					
Pay extra time	Pearson Correlation	.152	.392**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.058	.000				
Personal project	Pearson Correlation	.248**	.390**	.570**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	.000			
vacation	Pearson Correlation	.128	.324**	.541**	.586**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.109	.000	.000	.000		
Work structure	Pearson Correlation	.210**	.323**	.510**	.528**	.674**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**\*\*.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the correlation analysis we note that flexi work time and time to work on personal projects have a higher correlation with work ethics and these can be improved so that employees’ work ethics are also enhanced. An

employee whose life is balanced has a lot of vigour to concentrate on the work and by extension improve productivity.

A regression analysis was also carried out and the findings show that there is a very weak relationship between employee work ethics and employee work life balance programs. The model shows a weak fit for the data too, with only 10.8% of the changes in employee work ethics being explained by work life balance programs. The findings are reflective of a low investment in employee work life balance initiatives in the public sector in Kenya. The model however represents a good fit for the data. Table 6 below gives these findings.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error of the Estimate
1	.329 <sup>a</sup>	.108	.079	.42469

a. Predictors: (Constant), work structure, flexi-work, paid extra time, personal project, vacation

b. Dependent Variable: Employees work ethics

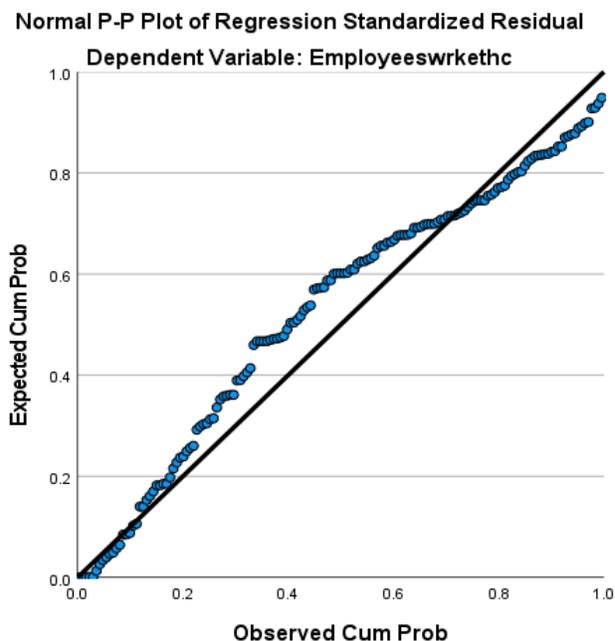


Figure 2: Regression line Plot

From the regression plot diagram it is seen that the variables are related and the dependent variable increases with the increase in the independent variable although all the observations did not fit in a straight line. They never the less followed same direction with minimal deviation from the regression line. This implies a positive relationship.

The analysis of variance -ANOVA model revealed that the changes in the work ethics could be explained by work life balance programs. The model is significant at 0.05 level as seen in table 5 below.

*Table 5: ANOVA Model*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.307	5	.661	3.667	.004b
	Residual	27.234	151	.180		
	Total	30.541	156			

a: Dependent Variable: employees work ethics

b: Predictors: (Constant), work structure, flexi-work, paid extra time, personal project, vacation

The regression model shows that there is a weak relationship between work ethics and work life balance. Paid for vacations had a negative and low relationship with work ethics. All the variables had insignificant relationship with work ethics. Employee work life programs had positive and insignificant influence on work ethics. The public sector should therefore strive to create more programs aimed at improving work ethics outside work life balance programs. Nevertheless, worklife balance is key in maintaining a motivated and energized work force in any sector,

*Table 6: Coefficients*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.174	.123		33.949	.000
	Flexi work	.074	.032	.198	2.304	.023
	Paid extra time.	.014	.033	-.043	-.421	.675
	Personal project	.061	.034	.188	1.794	.075
	Vacation	-.039	.035	-.127	-1.112	.268
	Work structure	.051	.036	.154	1.418	.158

a: Dependent Variable: Employees work ethics

## 8. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.

This paper found out that work life balance is critical in attaining employee work ethics. However, findings show that work life programs at the Kenyan Public sector are limited and hence contribute minimally to work ethics.

The paper concludes that work life balance being an emerging issue in the current labour practice more need to be done to make efforts to improve employee work life balance. The public sector may engage employees when coming up with work life balance initiatives so that the impact can be felt at the individual level.

The paper recommends that the public sector and more so the Kenya National polytechnics need to embrace the notion of employee work ethics and use work life balance initiatives to steer this behavior. Initiatives such as flexi work time, shared work programs as well as paid for vacations are all critical aspects to be considered in the work setup. Policy directions also need to be cultivated for entrenching work ethics in the public sector work force.

Future research can include wider sectors in their sample to establish the extent of work ethics and work life balance.

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