



## WORK-LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES AND STAFF RETENTION: A CASE OF PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTION IN MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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**ABSTRACT** :Human resources are the life-blood of any organization. Good health among the Kenyan citizenry is expected to play an important role in boosting economic growth, poverty reduction and the realization of one of the social goals in line with Kenya Vision 2030. The aim of this study was to explore the influence of work-life balance practices on the retention of health care staff in public health care institutions in Machakos County in Kenya. The study adopted a mixed research design and targeted all the 772 health care staff in the 156 public health facilities in the eight sub-counties in the county. The population was stratified into 8 main strata consisting of doctors, dentists, clinical officers, nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, laboratory technicians and radiographers. Respondents were selected through both purposive and stratified random sampling. Interviews were used to collect data from the officers in charge of sub county facilities and the four hospitals while self-administered questionnaires were used on the rest of the respondents. Data was analyzed with the help of the SPSS programme. The finding was that there is a significant positive relationship between the work-life balance practices and retention of staff in the public health care institutions in the county. These findings thus suggest that there is need for the Machakos county government to look into the issues of work-life balance and put in place mechanisms that would address these issues and thus minimize their negative effects on staff satisfaction and commitment hence retention in the health care institutions in the county.

**Key words:** Retention, Work-life Balance, Health Care Institutions, Machakos County, Kenya

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the currently rapidly changing and highly competitive business environment, in addition to hiring the top talent, capturing the hearts and minds of employees remains a critically important challenge facing the organizations striving to achieve the highest levels of performance. Retaining an adequate and qualified workforce is a prerequisite for a well-functioning organization, but this is sometimes difficult to realize when conditions tend to increase the turnover of the workforce. The relationship between members and organizations affects the attitudes and behaviors of the members hence their retention (Cole 2 04 Conference on Excellence in Research and Education (CERE-2013) and Bruch, 2006). Effective job design involves creation of work place policies more conducive to maintain balance between work and personal life (Burke, 1999). The phrase “family friendly firms” was coined to describe those firms attempting to support work-personal life balance (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989).



Health workers are vitally important for the effective functioning of healthcare systems (Ndetei et al, 2008). However studies show that health care is one of the sectors highly affected by turnover. Empirical studies show that Kenya's health system faces a variety of human resource problems, primarily an overall lack of personnel in key areas, which is worsened by high numbers of trained personnel leaving the health sector to work overseas (Dambisya, 2007). Indeed studies show that Kenya loses on average 20 medical doctors each month through either brain drain or brain waste (Ndetei et al, 2008). Furthermore, those personnel who remain are inequitably distributed between urban and rural areas. If the current trend of poaching of scarce human resources for health (and other professionals) from Kenya continues, the chances of achieving the Millennium Development Goals on health and Kenya vision 2030 would remain bleak

Machakos County Government in its 2012 integrated strategic plan commits itself to live up to the vision 2030 expectations *"to provide equitable and affordable health care at the highest affordable standard to her citizens"*. However the biggest challenge facing the County in health care sector is the increasing cases HIV/AIDS in spite of the awareness level of over 85 per cent. It also faces the challenges of providing medical care for the infected and support for the affected. Currently the County estimates that there are over 15,000 children who are in need of special care (CSP) and this numbers is expected to rise due to the increasing number of HIV/AIDS orphans. The most prevalent diseases are Malaria and Skin diseases while the childhood diseases include anemia, marasmus, eye infection, pneumonia, malaria, Kwashiorkor. Despite these high levels of disease prevalence the Doctor to Population Ratio is at 1:62,325 which is far below prescribed WHO ratio of 1:435, while the Infant Mortality Rates and Under Five Mortality Rates are 27/1000 and 38/1000 respectively; both of which are high when compared against 25 / 1,000, and 33 /1,000 targeted in the vision 2030. These statistics imply that the county government must strategies to keep the existing health care staff and even attract more to be able to realize its 2017 goal of reducing the current high maternal mortality rate 147 per 1000, high infant mortality rate 80 per 1000, high under five infant mortality rate 52 per 1000, low Immunization rate- 54.3% and low Safe delivery 30.5%, to desirable levels (Machakos Strategic Plan, 2012).



Theoretical and empirical studies have shown that there are many push and pull factors affecting retention of staff in organizations among them human resource management practices such as remuneration (Dockel ,2003; Bierrglee,Nguyen, Clenney & Taylor 2009), career advancement (Gupta,2008 and Mello, 2009), work-life balance (( Kar and Misra,2013), work environment, (Winterton, 2011) , employee relations, job design, recruitment and selection among others can enhance employee motivation and attachment to the organization hence retention.

It is against this background that the researcher carried out a research to explore the role of work-life balance practices on the retention of staff in the health care institutions in Kenya to provide a better insight into the relationship between these variables.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

### **2.1 Specific Objective**

The specific objective of the study was to investigate the role work-life balance practices on retention of staff in public health institutions in Machakos County in Kenya

### **2.2 Hypothesis**

The study helped to test the following hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between employee work-life balance practices and retention of staff in public health institutions in Machakos County, Kenya.

H<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant relationship between employee work-life balance practices and retention of staff in public health institutions in Machakos County, Kenya.

## **3.0. THEORY AND LITERATURE ON WORK–LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES AND STAFF RETENTION.**

### **3.1 Theory on Work-Life Balance**

The study was guided by Hackman and Oldham theory of Job Characteristics Model. Richard Hackman, Greg Oldham, and their associates (Pinder, 1984) in their approach proposes a set of features that should be built into jobs in order that they be satisfying and motivating. According to Hackman and Oldham (1980) and as cited in Pinder (1984), an employee will



experience internal motivation from her/his job when that job generates three critical psychological states. First, the employee must feel personal responsibility for the outcomes of the job. Second, the work must be experienced as meaningful by the employee. This is where the employee feels that her/his contribution significantly affects the overall effectiveness of the organization. The third aspect deals with the employee being aware of how effective she/he is converting her/his effort into performance. Pinder (1984) summarized this approach saying that jobs should be designed so as to generate experiences for the employee of meaningfulness, responsibility, and a knowledge of the results of one's effort. To generate experienced meaningfulness, Hackman and Oldham (1980) stated that three specific core factors of jobs are particularly needed for making work feel meaningful. These factors are skill variety, task identity, and task significance. Skill variety is "the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, involving the use of a number of different skills and talents of the person" (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

Hackman and Oldham (1980) proposed that jobs which require the use of multiple talents and experiences as more meaningful, and therefore more intrinsically motivating, than jobs that require the use of only one or two types of skills. Pinder (1984) pointed out that the inclusion of task variety as an element of job design is consistent with the concept of growth need satisfaction, as well as with more psychological approach taken by activation theory. The second job characteristic used to generate experienced meaningfulness as described by Hackman and Oldham is referred to as task identity. Task identity is "the degree to which a job requires completion of a "whole" and identifiable piece of work...doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome" (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Work is experienced as more meaningful, according to Hackman & Oldham, when employees are capable of gaining a greater understanding of how their jobs fit in with those of other employees, and with the completion of an integral unit of product or services. Hackman & Oldham (1980) defined the third factor, task significance, as "the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives of other people, whether those people are in the immediate organization or in the world at large." This is where the employee may perceive her/his work as significant and thus may contribute to the satisfaction of esteem needs. In addition to the three job factors contributing to feelings of meaningfulness, autonomy is required for



an employee to experience the psychological feelings of responsibility and feedback is needed to understand how one is performing on the job.

Autonomy is “the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out” (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). This suggestion that autonomy is motivating is consistent with other perspectives and approaches to job design. Porter (1962, 1963) treated autonomy as a separate category of higher-order need in his adaptation of Maslow’s need hierarchy for studying managerial job attitudes. McClelland (1962) also recognized autonomy in his theory of achievement.

Lastly, the third critical psychological factor in this model is called knowledge of results. This feedback includes information from other people and the job itself. Hackman & Oldham (1979) in the model suggested that feedback is a critical factor in reducing absenteeism and employee turnover. In general, one finds strong relationship between job characteristics, and behavioral outcomes (Alera, 1990). Further, feedback is effective in delivering the personal and behavioral outcome variables (Fried, 1986).

This theory is appropriate for developing and implementing employee retention practices as is the case in this study because employees have multiple needs based on their individual, family, and cultural values. In addition, these needs depend on the current and desired economic, political, and social status, career aspiration; and the need to balance career, family, education, community, religion, and other factors; and a general feeling of one’s satisfaction with the current and desired state of being. Employees tend to leave if an organization does not allow and promote flexible work schedules. Indeed some of the push factors for turnover include a lack of respect for an employee trying to balance work, career, education, and community and organization not making short term investments to meet the needs of the employees as far as tele-commuting and job-sharing.

### **3.2 Literature on Work–Life Balance Practices and staff Retention.**

The challenges of integrating work and family life (work life balance) is a part of everyday reality for majority of workforce (Cleveland, 2007). Work–life balance refers to perceiving a satisfactory balance between one’s personal life and work schedule, and minimal conflict between the multiple roles one has to fulfill in terms of one’s personal and work lives (Döckel, 2003). Parkes and Langford (2008) describe work–life balance as an individual’s



ability to meet his or her work and family commitments, as well as other non-work responsibilities and activities. According to Clark (2000), work/family balance is “the satisfaction and good function at work and home with minimum of role conflict.” Shrotriya (2009) concurs with Clark (2000) when he said that work life balance entails attaining equilibrium between professional work and other activities, so that it reduces friction between official and domestic/personal life and thus enhances efficiency and productivity of employees with increase in commitment and contentment. Work-life balance practices are thus those institutionalized structural and procedural arrangements as well as formal and informal practices that enable individuals to easily manage the conflicting worlds of work and family, (Osterman,1995).

Munsamy and Bosch-Venter (2009) state that, the focus of work–life balance is on the notion of a flexible and stress-free work environment by making provision for childcare facilities and access to families. Employees work hard to strike a balance to fulfill the demands of the working life and meeting the commitments of family life. Those who fail to do so either quit the organization thereby increasing the rate of attrition or become less productive. In the personal front also they feel unhappy. At this cross road organizational culture plays a crucial role to support the employees; high culture has a mediating effect to link the Work Life Policies and practices with talent retention. (Kar and Misra, 2013)

Increasing flexibility around work has therefore become more important to dual-income families. As a result, organizations that provide for this may be perceived as concerned employers, which positively influence employees and a positive attitude towards the organization (Döckel, 2003). Pasewark and Viator (2006) places flexible work arrangement as a very important part of work family support that plays pivotal rule in the retention of employees.

Work-life balance programmes have the potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism and retain organizational knowledge, particularly during the difficult economic times (Lockwood, 2003; Landaur, 1997). Indeed Rahman and Nas (2013) assert that obtaining a balance between work and life has a great role in employee’s decision to remain with the organization. They assert that the conflict between these dimensions of human activity can cause both job dissatisfaction and hence an intention to leave the organization as well as causing conflict with family members and family activities. Thompson



and Prottas (2005) and Yanadoria and Katob (2010) examined the relationship between employee turnover intention and organization support such as supervisor support, flex time work family culture and co-worker support etc, and they conclude that organization support reduced the employee turnover intention.

Studies have shown that there are several work-life balance practices that organizations may adopt in order to increase employee commitment and hence retain them (Estes & Michael, 2005). These practices include flexible scheduling (Perry-Smith *et al.*, 2000) such as flextime, which permits workers to vary their start and finish times provided a certain number of hours is worked. Flexi time allows employees, to determine (or be involved in determining) the start and end times of their working day, provided a certain number of hours is worked. This can allow them to meet family or personal commitments/emergencies (enable employees to respond to both predictable and unpredictable circumstances), during the day or to reduce their commuting time by starting and ending work before or after the rush hour.

Another practice is compressed or condensed work week ( Byars & Rue, 2008). A compressed or condensed work week is an arrangement whereby employees work longer shifts in exchange for a reduction in the number of working days in their work cycle for instance on a weekly or biweekly basis. This can be beneficial for employees in terms of additional days off work (e.g. longer weekends allowing “mini vacations”) and reduced commuting time, whereas employers can extend their daily operating hours, with less need to resort to overtime. Compressed work week arrangements may be particularly useful for employees who wish to reduce the number of days per week spent at work, but who cannot financially afford to decrease their working hours. Compressed work weeks are often initiated by the employee, but sometimes the employer may initiate the option to improve operational efficiency, to maximize production (reduced daily startup costs) or to establish longer business hours which can enhance customer service. Common arrangements for a forty hours work week are working ten hours per day, four days a week; working an extra hour a day with one day off every two weeks; or working an extra half hour a day and having one day every three or four weeks off.( Byars & Rue, 2008; Lazar, Osolan, & Ratiu, 2010 )



Teleworking also called telecommuting (Kathy, 2006; Byars & Rue, 2008) is another work life balance practice. This type of arrangement is often called 'telework' or 'telecommuting'. It is the practice of working at home or while travelling and being able to interact with the office (Byars & Rue, 2008). It can be advantageous for employees by allowing them to organize their work day around their personal and family needs, to decrease work-related expenses, to reduce commuting time, and to work in a less stressful and disruptive environment. It may also help to accommodate employees who because of particular disabilities, are unable to leave home (Kathy, 2006; Byars & Rue, 2008). The fact that employees who telework can use this added flexibility to capitalize on their personal peak productivity periods can also favorable influence a company's bottom line (Lazar *et al.*, 2010).

Despite these benefits and the attention that telecommuting has attracted in the media, very few collective agreements contain telework provisions. The paucity of telework clauses is partly due to the fact that not all occupations are amenable to such an arrangement. Moreover, employers may be concerned by the initial implementation costs, potential legal liabilities, and difficulties in supervising and appraising the performance of teleworkers. Trade-Unions may disapprove of work-at-home clauses if they perceive them as leading to greater isolation of employees, reduced job security and promotion opportunities, and diminished health and safety protection (Lazar *et al.*, 2010). Other Potential disadvantages of telecommuting are insurance concerns relating to health and safety of employees working at home and lack of the professional and social environment of the workplace. Another drawback is that some state and local laws restrict what kind of work can just be done at home. (Byars & Rue, 2008).

Part-time arrangements, (Lazar *et al.*, 2010) is another work-life practice that can also allow people with health problems, disabilities or limited disposable time (like students) to participate in the labour force, develop their skills and obtain work experience. Finally, they can facilitate re-entry into the workforce for those who have had career breaks — particularly mothers (or fathers) who have stayed at home to raise their children or provide a gradual exit for employees nearing retirement. From the employer's point of view, the use of part-time workers, where feasible, can help maximize the use of human resources and increase operational flexibility, by providing additional coverage during peak periods. Part-time employment can also be considered unsatisfactory for those employees who would



prefer working longer hours to increase their income, thereby ensuring a higher standard of living for their families. (Lazar *et al.*, 2010). The European Working Conditions Survey found that 85% of those working less than 30 hours per week were satisfied with their work–life balance. Furthermore, part-time workers and those working less than 35 hours a week reported the lowest levels of both physical and psychological health problems. Part-time work is one strategy frequently used by workers who wish to better balance their work and family life. Part-time work should be promoted in more, higher-level occupations, for instance, Daimler Chrysler in Germany promotes part-time work in leading positions in the company (Clarke, 2001).

Job sharing is an arrangement which allows two (or sometimes more) employees to jointly fill one fulltime job, with responsibilities and working time shared or divided between them. It can be in the form of shared responsibilities, split duties, or a combination of both. (Byars & Rue 2008). Job sharing may be appropriate where opportunities for part-time jobs or other arrangements are limited. Apart from the obvious advantage of allowing employees more time for other commitments, including family responsibilities, job sharing also facilitates the development of partnerships, where job sharers can learn from each other while providing mutual support. It can benefit employers as well by improving staff retention, increasing productivity and combining a wider range of skills and experience in a single job. In some cases, such an arrangement can also provide additional coverage during busy periods, while ensuring continuity of coverage when one partner is on sick leave or holidays. (Byars & Rue, 2008 & Lazar *et al.*, 2010).

Other practices may support children’s education, employees’ participation in volunteer work, or facilitate phased retirement (Lazar *et al.*, 2010). In addition, employers may provide a range of benefits related to employees’ health and well-being, including extended health insurance for the employee and dependents, personal days, and access to programs or services to encourage fitness and physical and mental health,(Shrotriya,2009). Employees who had access to family-friendly policies showed significantly greater organizational commitment and expressed significantly lower intention to quit their jobs (Grover & Crooker, 1995), whereas the problem of work life balance is clearly linked with withdrawal behavior ,including turnover and non-genuine sick absence (Hughes &Bozionelos, 2007). Indeed research by Kenexa Research Institute in 2007 shows that those employees who



were more favorable toward their organization's efforts to support work-life balance also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization, greater pride in their organization, a willingness to recommend it as a place to work and higher overall job satisfaction.

#### 4.0 METHODOLOGY

Mixed research design was employed and questionnaires and interviews were used to collect primary data. The target population was all technical staff in all the public health care institutions in the county and the respondents were doctors, dentists, clinical officers, physiotherapists, nurses, pharmacists, radiographers and laboratory technicians. Simple random sampling was used to select the medical doctors, clinical officers, nurses and laboratory technicians while convenience and purposive sampling methods were used to identify the dentists, pharmacist's radiographers, physiotherapists and orthopedic technologists. 251 questionnaires were distributed out of which 227 were duly filled and returned giving a response rate of about 90%. 12 interviews were also conducted. Data was analyzed with the help of the SPSS programme.

#### 5.0 FINDINGS

##### 5.1 Hypothesis

In order to achieve the objective for this study, the null hypothesis, there is no significant relationship between work-life balance practices and retention of health care staff in Machakos County Kenya was formulated and tested. The statistical test results (ANOVA, regression and correlation analyses) of the hypothesis at 95% confidence level were as follows

**Table 1: ANOVA Results on influence of Work Life Balance Practices on Retention of Health Care Staff**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	692.244	1	692.244	18.224	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	8546.831	225	37.986		
Total	9239.075	226			

a. Dependent Variable: Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work\_life\_balance



Since  $P(0.00)$  is far much less than  $\alpha (.05)$ , the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative adopted hence concluded that with the data obtained, there is evidence of significant relationship between work-life balance practices and the retention of health care staff in Machakos County in Kenya (  $F (18.224, df=1, and P<0.05)$ ). Thus work-life balance practices play a significant role in the retention of health care staff in public health care institutions in the county.

These observations are in line with the findings of Thompson and Prottas (2005) and Yanadoria and Katob (2010) who examined the relationship between employee turnover intention and organization support such as supervisor support, flex time, work family culture and co-worker support and concluded that organization support reduced the employee turnover intention. A correlation analysis show a statistically significant weak but positive relationship between retention and work-life balance practices ( $r=0.211, \alpha =0.05$ )

A linear regression analysis shows that the relationship is very weak with Karl Pearson's product moment coefficient of linear correlation  $r= 0.274$  as shown in table 2 below. The adjusted  $r$  squared=  $0.071$  indicates that only 7.1% of the change in retention can be explained by change in work-life balance practices. Other factors therefore account for the rest of the retention.

**Table 2: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.274 <sup>a</sup>	.075	.071	6.163

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work\_life\_balance

As shown on table 3 below, testing the simple regression model  $R= \alpha+ \beta WL$  where  $\alpha=53.553$  and  $\beta=0.253$  shows that the beta value is significantly higher than 0 and so the model holds hence  $R=53.553+0.253WL$ .



**Table 3: Simple regression analysis correlation Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	53.553	3.545		15.106	.000
	Work_life_balance	.253	.059	.274	4.269	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Retention

These findings indicate that although the work-life balance practices enhance retention, various parameters that enhance their attractiveness should be looked into to make them better so that the correlation coefficient can improve.

### 5.2 Analysis based on Research Objective

The objective was to analyze the role of work life balance practices on the retention of staff in public health care institutions in Machakos county; Kenya. To meet this objective, four research questions were formulated. The first question sought to find out if in the respondents' opinion, work-life practices affected staff retention. The respondents were required to tick against Yes if they thought they affected or against No if they thought they never affected staff retention.

**Table 4: Work Life Balance Practices and Employee Retention**

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	185	88.5
No	24	11.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100.0</b>

185 (85.5%) of the respondents said that work life balance practices affected staff retention while the rest 24 (11.5%) felt that it did not affect the staff retention.

In the second question the researcher sought to get the respondents' views about work life balance practices in their institutions. The respondents were requested to react to various statements on this issue by ticking whichever was applicable at their workplace on a five



point likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UN), and Disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SDA). The closer the responses were to five, the higher their dissatisfaction with the work environment management practices. A score of 3 would indicate indecisiveness while scores significantly below 3 shows dissatisfaction with work life balance practices. The responses obtained were quantified using frequencies and percentages and tabulated as follows:-

**Table 5: Role of Work-life Balance Practices on Retentio of Health Care Staff**

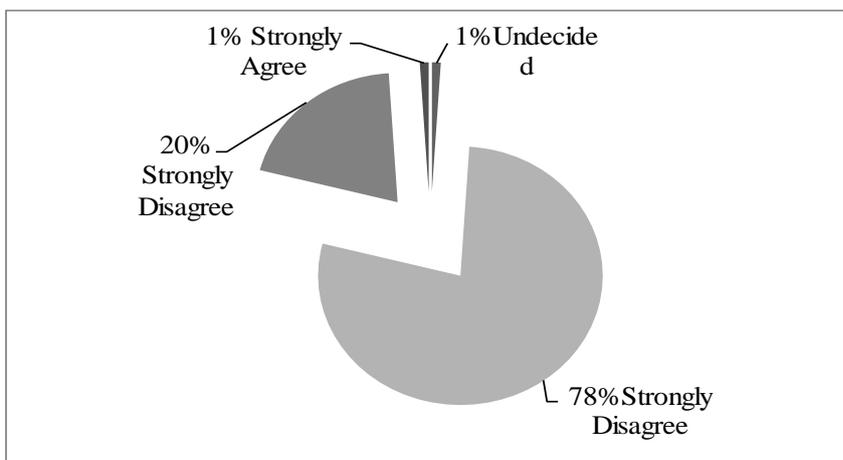
Statement	Responses											
	SDA		A		UD		DA		SDA		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Retention is enhanced because annual leave is given	96	42	106	47	4	2	11	5	10	4	227	100
Retention is enhanced because there is provision of sick leave	75	33	112	50	13	6	12	5	13	6	225	100
Retention is enhanced because compassionate leave is granted_	53	24	82	37	34	15	30	14	24	11	223	100
Retention is enhanced because sabbatical leave is granted	42	19	48	21	0	0	95	42	39	18	224	100
Retention is enhanced because study leave are given to employees	52	23	91	41	24	11	30	14	26	12	223	100
Retention is enhanced because staffs are given their off days as required	52	23	102	46	0	0	49	22	20	9	223	100
Retention is enhanced because employees are given time away whenever they have issues to attend to	57	25	95	42	0	0	53	23	22	10	227	100
Retention is enhanced because there is part time working	31	14	47	21	0	0	98	44	48	21	224	100
Retention is enhanced because there is provision of onsite child care services	0	0	0	0	0	0	96	43	129	57	225	100
Retention is enhanced because work schedule are flexible	0	0	0	0	0	0	124	55	102	45	226	100
Retention is enhanced because of provision of social and family events	0	0	0	0	0	0	109	48	117	52	226	100
Retention is enhanced because there is gym and mental relaxation programmes	0	0	0	0	0	0	81	36	143	64	224	100
Retention is enhanced because there provision for children education schemes	0	0	0	0	0	0	88	39	136	61	224	100
Retention is enhanced because there is availability of health and well-being programmes like health insurance for self and dependents	48	21	47	21	14	6	45	20	71	32	225	100

The table shows that all the respondents in each case either strongly disagreed or disagreed that retention was enhanced because there was provision of onsite childcare services, because work schedules were flexible, because there was provision of social and



family events, there were gym and mental relaxation programme and because there was provision of child education schemes another 146 (65%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that retention was because there was part-time working arrangement. However 202 (89%), 189 (88%), 154 (69%), 154(67%) and 143(64%) respectively either strongly agreed or agreed that annual leave, sick leave, off days, time away and study leave were granted to the staff accordingly and this could have enhanced retention of staff in the institutions. Generally the responses indicate that despite the high value attached to work environment and there being in place some work-life balance practices in place the staff was still dissatisfied because some of the work- life balance practices such as flexible schedules, provision of social and family events, mental relaxation programmes and child education schemes were not in place.

In general 98 % out of the 227 respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that retention was enhanced due to existence of good work-life balance practices while only 1% were undecided and another 1% strongly agreed with the work-life balance practices in place the mean response was 4.17 with a standard deviation of 0.479. The total score on the responses was thus 58.38 which is significantly higher than half of 70 (the expected maximum score). The work-life balance practices index obtained by dividing the total score by the maximum possible score is 0.834 which is significantly higher than 0.5. These responses and values signify a high level of dissatisfaction with the work life balance practices in place. Figure 1 below shows a summary of responses on the work –life balance practices.



**Figure 1: Level of Agreement with Work Life Balance Practices**



In the third research question, the researcher sought to find out other work life balance practices that affected staff retention. The respondents cited provision of means of transport, comfortable housing, and availability of loans, emergency loan schemes, and insurance schemes such as life insurance for self and family, health insurance schemes and friendly working hours as other factors that play a significant role in staff retention in health care institutions.

When asked the work life balance practices that needed to be put in place to enhance staff retention in their institutions the respondents said that staff should be provided with comprehensive medical covers or access to free treatment and child care services (onsite child care services). They also suggested that length of maternity leave should be increased to 6 months so that the breastfeeding mothers can do so for at least 6 months as is recommended. They said that paternity leave days should also be increased because often the fathers reported back for duty when the mothers still needed their assistant most. Others suggested that all employees should be given time to proceed for annual leave as required and that the number of off days should be increased. Related to these some felt that they should be granted off days during public holidays and the management should source for part-timers to step in during such days. The interviewees also concurred when they said that many times staff are usually recalled to duty even when on leave or off-day and this makes it difficult for them to plan for their free time.

They also suggested that there should be flexi working arrangements such as compressed week, flexible hours and part-time working to enable employees attend to personal issues and have time to do locums which would enhance their financial well-being. Others suggested that they should be deployed near their families for a number felt that family bonds were seriously strained due to distances. They also said that there should be family support in the event of death of staff member or a member of their nuclear family that they should be provided with paid holidays, that there should be provisions for retreats and group recreational opportunities and facilities such as social clubs which will provide avenues for relaxation and also team building. The respondents felt that if these practices were embraced, the staffs' morale would improve; their commitment to the organization increased hence increased tendency stay.



## **6.0 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Summary of Findings**

The study revealed that most respondents felt that work-life balance practices affect staff motivation hence their retention in the public health care institutions. These practices include among others provision of onsite childcare services, flexible work schedules, social and family events, gym and mental relaxation programmes, children education schemes, leave (maternity, compassionate, maternity, study, paternity, annual etc.), off days and time away when necessary. Indeed there was a significant positive relationship between these work-life balance practices and retention of staff in the public health care institutions in the county ( $F(18.224, df = 1, \text{ and } P < 0.05)$ ). This is in line with the findings of Lockwood, 2003 and Landaur, 1997 who asserted that work-life balance programmes have the potential to significantly improve employee morale, reduce absenteeism and retain organizational knowledge, particularly during difficult economic times. Indeed Rahman and Nas (2013) assert that obtaining a balance between work and life has a great role in employee's decision to remain with the organization.

The high value attached to work life balance practices notwithstanding the staff was dissatisfied because some of the work- life balance practices such as onsite childcare services, flexible schedules (e.g. compressed week and flexi hours), provision of social and family events, mental relaxation programmes and child education schemes were not in place. The low  $r^2 = 0.071$  meaning that only 7.1% of the change in retention can be explained by change in work-life balance practices index confirms these observation. However some of the work life balance practices such off day, sick leave, annual leave, maternity and paternity leave and compassionate leaves were said to be in place and were partly attributed to the observed retention level.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made which the county government of Machakos, other county governments and even the national government should put in place to address work-life balance issues in the health sector if Kenya is to achieve its vision 2030 plans on the health sector.



To provide work-life balance, provide staff with comprehensive medical covers or access to free treatment and child care services (onsite child care services). Flexi working arrangements such as compressed week, flexible hours and part-time working be introduced to enable employees attend to personal issues. There should be family support in the event of death of staff member or a member of their nuclear family. Occasionally the staff should be taken for retreats and group recreation to provide avenues for relaxation and also bonding.

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