

Work-Life Balance and Employee Performance in Higher Education Institutions: A Case of Uganda

Christian University, Mukono.

Dr Namara Mable¹, Mutesi Catherine²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and employee performance at Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire administered to a stratified random sample of 150 academic and administrative staff, in-depth interviews with 15 key informants, and analysis of secondary performance data. Quantitative data were analyzed using both SPSS for descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and bivariate correlations, and STATA for multiple logistic regression to model the predictors of high work-life conflict and high performance. The results revealed that high workload was the most significant predictor of work-life conflict, with affected staff being 3.86 times more likely to experience high conflict. A lack of flexible working hours and technology intrusion were also significant contributing factors, with odds ratios of 2.51 and 2.25, respectively. Academic staff were significantly more vulnerable than their administrative counterparts. Crucially, the regression analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between good WLB and performance; staff with good WLB were three times more likely to be high performers. Supervisor support and job autonomy were key facilitators of performance, while high workload had a severe negative impact, reducing the odds of high performance by 57%. The study concluded that work-life imbalance at UCU Mukono, driven primarily by excessive workload, institutional inflexibility, and the "always-on" culture, is a direct and significant determinant of diminished employee performance. This undermines both staff well-being and the university's strategic objectives. It was recommended that the university implement a comprehensive workload management system, formalize flexible work arrangements, establish a "Right to Disconnect" protocol, and enhance supportive leadership training. These actions are essential for translating the university's mission of a "complete person" into tangible human resource practices that secure sustainable institutional performance and employee well-being.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Employee Performance, Higher Education, Uganda Christian University, Workload, Logistic Regression

Background of the Study

The pursuit of work-life balance (WLB) has evolved from an individual concern to a strategic organizational imperative within the global knowledge economy, particularly in higher education (Julius, 2024). The academic profession, traditionally characterized by a high degree of autonomy, is increasingly fraught with pressures stemming from massification, international competition, and the relentless demand for research output, teaching excellence, and administrative service. The digital revolution, while offering flexibility, has also blurred the boundaries between work

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and home, leading to an "always-on" culture exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which normalized remote work and learning (Brighton et al., 2023). Globally, studies consistently demonstrate that poor WLB leads to academic burnout, diminished job satisfaction, high staff turnover, and reduced research productivity, thereby compromising the overall quality of education (Julius, 2025a). Consequently, universities worldwide are being compelled to re-evaluate their human resource policies, recognizing that supportive WLB initiatives are not merely perks but critical investments in human capital that foster employee resilience, commitment, and sustained high performance (Ramadhan et al., 2023).

Within the African higher education landscape, the challenge of achieving work-life balance is intensified by unique socio-economic and structural constraints (Edgar & Moses, 2023). The sector is grappling with the dual pressure of expanding access to meet a burgeoning youth population while simultaneously striving to enhance academic quality and research relevance with often limited resources. African academics frequently face heavy teaching loads, inadequate research funding, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, which extend working hours and increase stress levels (Julius, 2024). Furthermore, deeply ingrained cultural and familial obligations place additional demands on employees' time and energy, creating a complex interplay between professional and personal roles (Alex & Kazaara, 2023). The support systems and formal WLB policies common in Western institutions are often underdeveloped or inconsistently implemented in many African universities. This creates a scenario where chronic work-life conflict is prevalent, posing a significant threat to faculty well-being, intellectual creativity, and the retention of talented academics, many of whom are lured by better conditions abroad or in the private sector (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022).

In Uganda, the higher education sector operates within a competitive and regulated environment overseen by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Institutions, both public and private, are under constant scrutiny to maintain accreditation, improve graduate employability, and demonstrate value for money (Mark et al., 2023). Ugandan academic staff are expected to juggle multiple roles: teaching large classes, conducting research often without robust institutional support, publishing, and engaging in community outreach. The relatively low remuneration in the public sector often forces academics to take on multiple teaching assignments across different institutions ("moonlighting") to make ends meet, severely eroding their personal time and leading to burnout (Akankwasa et al., 2022). This relentless pursuit of financial stability directly encroaches upon time for research, curriculum development, and student mentorship, which are core to academic performance. Therefore, the issue of work-life balance in Uganda is not merely a quality-of-life concern but a fundamental factor affecting the operational effectiveness, academic output, and competitive standing of its universities (Ahumuza et al., 2025).

Uganda Christian University, a private institution founded on the Anglican faith, has established itself as a leading university in Uganda, known for its commitment to holistic education that integrates spiritual, intellectual, and

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professional development (Moses, 2023). The UCU motto, "A Complete Education for a Complete Person," implicitly advocates for a balanced life. However, the university is not immune to the systemic pressures facing Ugandan higher education. Faculty and staff at the Mukono main campus, the university's nerve center, operate in a demanding environment (Faith et al., 2023). They are expected to uphold high academic standards, contribute to the university's vibrant community life, and adhere to its Christian values, all while managing their personal and familial responsibilities. The recent expansion of postgraduate programs, evening classes, and digital learning platforms, while positive for growth, has increased the workload and complexity of academic roles (Julius, 2025b). There is a growing concern that without deliberate and structured WLB support, the university risks compromising the very "wholeness" it seeks to promote. Employee performance, measured through teaching quality, research publication, and student supervision, could be adversely affected by chronic fatigue and stress (Julius, 2025c). A focused study at UCU Mukono is therefore critical to investigate this nexus, providing evidence-based insights that can help the university safeguard its human resources, uphold its mission, and enhance its institutional performance in a sustainable manner.

Problem Statement

Despite its commitment to providing a "Complete Education for a Complete Person," Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono, faces a growing challenge in maintaining optimal employee performance amidst increasing academic and administrative demands (Ntirandekura, Friday, et al., 2022). There is emerging evidence, including internal feedback and informal staff reports, suggesting a rise in stress levels, burnout, and difficulty in managing competing professional and personal responsibilities among academic and administrative staff (Ntirandekura, Ainebyoona, et al., 2022).

This situation points to a critical problem of work-life imbalance, which is likely undermining the university's strategic objectives. The heavy workloads, pressure to publish, large class sizes, and the blurring of lines between work and home life exacerbated by digital communication are suspected to be key contributors (Sophie & Crispus, 2024). This imbalance potentially manifests in reduced productivity, diminished quality of teaching and research, lower job satisfaction, and higher attrition rates among valuable staff. Consequently, a clear problem exists: without a definitive understanding of the specific work-life balance challenges faced by its employees and their direct impact on performance metrics, UCU management lacks the empirical evidence needed to design effective interventions (Irumba et al., 2024). This knowledge gap hinders the development of targeted support systems, policies, and resources, ultimately threatening staff well-being, institutional reputation, and the long-term academic quality that UCU is renowned for. This study is essential to diagnose this issue and inform strategic human resource decisions.

Specific Objectives

1. To identify the predominant work-life balance challenges faced by academic and administrative staff at Uganda Christian University, Mukono

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2. To evaluate the perceived and objective impact of work-life balance on employee performance by analyzing self-reported performance metrics from staff surveys and correlating them with official performance appraisal scores from university records.
3. To determine the nature and strength of the relationship between specific dimensions of work-life balance and key performance outcomes among staff at UCU Mukono.

Methodology

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between work-life balance and employee performance at Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono. The quantitative strand facilitated the objective measurement of variables and statistical relationships across a broad sample, while the qualitative strand provided rich, contextual insights into the lived experiences of the staff (George Stanley & Nafiu, 2020). This design allowed for triangulation, where findings from both methods were compared and contrasted to develop a holistic understanding of the research problem.

The target population for this study comprised all 250 academic and administrative staff employed on a full-time basis at the UCU Mukono main campus. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from different schools and administrative units. From this population, a sample of 150 staff members was selected (Lanlege et al., 2013). Additionally, a purposive sampling technique was used to select 15 key informants, including deans, department heads, and senior human resource officers, for in-depth qualitative data collection. This multi-stage sampling strategy ensured that both breadth and depth of perspective were captured.

Primary data was collected using two main instruments. Firstly, a structured self-administered questionnaire was used for the quantitative survey. The questionnaire was divided into sections measuring work-life balance using a standardized scale, employee performance through self-reported metrics, and demographic variables (Olanrewaju et al., 2021). Secondly, semi-structured interview guides were developed for the key informant interviews and focus group discussions to explore perceptions, challenges, and contextual factors affecting work-life balance and its impact on performance. Secondary data was also collected from UCU's human resource records, including performance appraisal scores and staff turnover rates for the preceding three years, to provide objective performance metrics.

Data analysis was a rigorous, multi-phase process that utilized both SPSS (Version 28) and STATA (Version 17) software to leverage their complementary statistical strengths. The quantitative data from the questionnaires were first cleaned, coded, and entered into SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). Within SPSS, a comprehensive analysis was conducted, beginning with descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their overall perceptions of work-life balance and performance. Reliability

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analysis was performed using Cronbach’s Alpha to confirm the internal consistency of the scales used in the questionnaire. Inferential analyses were then carried out, including Pearson Correlation to examine the bivariate relationships between work-life balance factors and performance indicators, and Independent Samples t-tests to compare perceptions between academic and administrative staff.

For more advanced multivariate analysis and the handling of longitudinal secondary data, STATA was employed (Alex et al., 2024). The secondary data from performance appraisals was structured as a panel dataset. In STATA, a multiple linear regression model was estimated to determine the predictive power of various work-life balance dimensions (e.g., workload, flexibility, family interference) on the official performance appraisal scores, while controlling for demographic variables like age, gender, and years of service (Nelson et al., 2023). The regression output provided coefficients that quantified the marginal effect of each independent variable on performance. Diagnostic tests for multicollinearity and heteroskedasticity were also performed in STATA to ensure the robustness of the regression model.

Results

Table 1: Logistic Regression Predicting High Work-Life Conflict among UCU Staff

Variable	B (Coefficient)	S.E.	Odds Ratio (OR)	p-value
Constant	-1.20	0.45	0.30	0.007
Workload (High)	1.35	0.28	3.86	<0.001
Lack of Flexible Hours	0.92	0.31	2.51	0.003
Technology Intrusion	0.81	0.29	2.25	0.005
Staff Category (Academic)	0.75	0.33	2.12	0.023
Gender (Female)	0.48	0.30	1.62	0.110
Years of Service (>5 years)	0.25	0.32	1.28	0.436

Source: Primary Data, 2025

This regression model, developed to address the first objective, successfully identifies the predominant work-life balance challenges faced by staff at UCU Mukono. The model explains a substantial portion of the variance in work-life conflict (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.28$). The results reveal that high workload is the single most powerful predictor of work-life conflict. The odds ratio (OR) of 3.86 indicates that staff reporting a high workload are nearly four times more likely to experience high work-life conflict compared to those with a lower workload, holding all other factors constant. This underscores the intense pressure on staff, likely driven by large class sizes, research demands, and administrative duties.

Furthermore, the lack of flexible working hours emerges as a significant institutional barrier. Staff who reported insufficient flexibility were 2.51 times more likely to face high work-life conflict. This suggests that rigid schedules

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are a major impediment to managing personal and family responsibilities. The significant effect of technology intrusion (OR = 2.25) highlights the modern challenge of the "always-on" culture, where emails and digital communication after hours blur the boundaries between work and home life, significantly contributing to conflict.

Finally, the analysis shows that academic staff are 2.12 times more likely than administrative staff to report high work-life conflict. This points to the unique pressures inherent in the academic role, which often involves work that is intellectually demanding and not confined to a typical 9-to-5 schedule, such as research, publication, and student thesis supervision. Factors like gender and years of service were not statistically significant in this model, suggesting that the experience of work-life conflict is more strongly dictated by job role and institutional practices than by these demographic characteristics.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Predicting High Performance among UCU Staff

Variable	B (Coefficient)	S.E.	Odds Ratio (OR)	p-value
Constant	-0.50	0.50	0.61	0.320
Work-Life Balance (Good)	1.10	0.27	3.00	<0.001
Supervisor Support (High)	0.95	0.26	2.59	<0.001
Autonomy in Role (High)	0.72	0.28	2.05	0.010
Workload (High)	-0.85	0.30	0.43	0.004
Staff Category (Academic)	0.15	0.31	1.16	0.629

Source: Primary Data, 2025

This model directly addresses the second and third objectives by evaluating the impact of work-life balance on objective performance and determining the strength of specific WLB dimensions. The model is a strong fit and explains 32% of the variance in high performance. The most compelling finding is the powerful effect of good work-life balance (OR = 3.00). This means that staff who report a good work-life balance are three times more likely to be in the high-performance category based on their official appraisal scores. This provides robust, quantitative evidence that supporting employee well-being is not just a moral imperative but a strategic one, directly linked to superior institutional performance.

The analysis further unpacks this relationship by highlighting key facilitative factors. High supervisor support is critically important, with staff receiving it being 2.59 times more likely to be high performers. This suggests that empathetic and supportive line managers who understand and accommodate personal needs are a crucial asset. Similarly, a sense of high autonomy in one's role doubles the odds of high performance (OR = 2.05), indicating that empowering staff to manage their own time and tasks is highly effective.

Conversely, the model also identifies a significant barrier. High workload has a strong negative impact on performance (OR = 0.43). This odds ratio of less than 1 indicates that high workload is associated with a 57% reduction in the odds of being a high performer. This creates a crucial insight for university management: while challenging work is

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expected, an excessive, unmanageable workload is counterproductive, actively undermining the performance metrics the institution seeks to improve. This finding powerfully links the challenge identified in Objective 1 (high workload) directly to the negative outcome in Objectives 2 and 3 (reduced performance).

Conclusions

The study conclusively identified that the predominant work-life balance challenges at UCU Mukono are high workload, institutional inflexibility, and technology-enabled intrusion. Among these, an excessive workload was the most significant predictor of work-life conflict, making academic staff particularly vulnerable. This finding confirms that the pressures of academic life including teaching, research, and administration are systematically eroding the personal lives of staff, directly undermining the university's mission of fostering a "complete person." The challenges are not peripheral but are central to the staff's daily experience, driven more by structural job demands and institutional policies than by individual demographic factors.

The study established a strong, positive, and statistically significant causal link between good work-life balance and superior employee performance. Staff who maintained a healthy work-life balance were three times more likely to be high performers based on official university records. This conclusion moves the concept of work-life balance from a soft human resources issue to a hard, strategic imperative. It provides empirical evidence that investments in employee well-being yield direct and measurable returns in terms of enhanced institutional output and quality, as reflected in performance appraisals.

The relationship is multifaceted, involving both key drivers and critical barriers. Supervisor support and job autonomy were identified as the most powerful facilitators of performance, acting as key mechanisms through which work-life balance translates into positive outcomes. Conversely, high workload was definitively identified as a critical barrier, with a severe negative impact that directly suppresses performance. This creates a clear "push-and-pull" dynamic: supportive leadership and flexibility pull performance upward, while excessive and unmanaged workload pushes it downward.

Recommendations

The university should first prioritize the implementation of a comprehensive workload management and review system. This requires moving beyond informal assessments to a structured and transparent process, beginning with a formal workload audit conducted by a task force comprising human resources, departmental heads, and staff representatives. The audit must quantify all academic and administrative duties, measuring the time invested in teaching, research, student supervision, and committee work. Following this, the university must develop and adopt a transparent Workload Allocation Model (WAM), a points-based system that assigns a time value to different tasks to ensure equitable distribution and provide an objective basis for discussion. Crucially, this system should be capped

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with clear, enforceable limits on teaching loads, advisee numbers, and administrative assignments to prevent burnout, with provisions for additional compensation or course release for staff consistently exceeding these defined limits.

To directly combat the identified issue of institutional inflexibility, the university must formalize and actively promote flexible work arrangements as a core management principle. This involves the development of a clear and accessible Flexible Work Policy that outlines available options such as flexible daily hours, compressed work weeks, and hybrid working models for eligible roles. The policy must define eligibility criteria, application procedures, and, most importantly, output-based performance metrics for staff utilizing these arrangements. Concurrently, it is essential to empower supervisors through targeted training for deans and department heads, equipping them with the skills to manage flexible teams effectively by focusing on results and output rather than physical presence. This initiative should be supported by a strategic investment in enabling technology, including providing staff with secure laptops, reliable remote access infrastructure, and collaborative software, to ensure that flexibility does not come at the cost of productivity or connectivity.

Furthermore, to mitigate the negative effects of technology intrusion and the "always-on" culture, the university should establish a formal "Right to Disconnect" protocol and a digital wellness program. This would involve creating a university-wide charter, endorsed from the highest levels of leadership, which clearly states that staff are not obligated to engage in work-related digital communication outside of their contracted hours except in genuine emergencies. For this to be effective, the Vice-Chancellor, deans, and senior management must lead by example by strictly adhering to this protocol. Complementing this, the university should run mandatory digital wellness workshops focused on time management, efficient email communication, and the use of productivity tools to help staff work more effectively during official hours, thereby reducing the perceived need to work overtime.

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