

Literature Review of Work-Balance Practices, Psychological Wellbeing, and Employee Engagement. A Study of Academic Staff at Private Universities in Uganda's Central Region

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Abstract: *This paper explores the relationship between work-life balance practices, psychological well-being, and employee engagement among academic staff at private universities in Uganda's Central Region. Literature shows that supportive work-life balance practices such as flexible work arrangements, leave arrangements, and wellness programmes play a critical role in enhancing employees' psychological well-being, which strengthens their engagement, motivation, and overall performance. Guided by Spillover Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Psychological Contract Theory, the review underscores how institutional support influences staff experiences by shaping work pressures, personal demands, and perceptions of organizational fairness. Despite potential benefits of work-life balance practices, academic staff in Ugandan private universities continue to face challenges including heavy workloads, job insecurity, and limited resources, which negatively impact well-being and engagement. The review recommends further empirical research to validate conceptual relationships, examine gendered and contextual differences, assess roles of digitalization, and evaluate targeted interventions aimed at improving staff well-being and engagement*

Keywords - Work-life balance Practices; Psychological well-being; Employee engagement; Private universities; Academic staff; Uganda

1. INTRODUCTION

The literature review in this chapter constitutes the intellectual foundation upon which the study is anchored. It systematically guides the reader through the current body of scholarly work, critically mapping the existing knowledge landscape and elucidating the specific contributions this study seeks to make. The review provides a comprehensive account of what has been previously investigated, while identifying notable gaps and unresolved questions within the literature. Conceptually, it situates the research within the broader academic discourse by synthesizing relevant studies on work-life balance practices, psychological well-being, and their relationship to academic staff's employee engagement.

Emphasis is placed on the study's key variables, with focused attention on the independent variable. Furthermore, the review offers a theoretical and empirical basis for the study's hypotheses, thereby justifying its relevance and significance in contributing to the existing body of knowledge. This study also integrates a critical appraisal of relevant theories and research gaps identified in related studies, providing a coherent framework that supports the study's direction and scholarly merit.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

The relationship between work-life balance practices, psychological well-being, and employee engagement has been of growing interest in organizational research. It has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly within

the academic sector. This literature survey comprehensively reviews the available literature, focusing on academic staff's work-life balance practices, psychological well-being, and employee engagement. Existing studies have consistently shown that when organizations prioritize their employees' well-being by providing adequate work-life balance practices, it shapes employee engagement (Wood et al., 2020; Yawe, 2022; Mugizi et al., 2021; Ntirandekura et al., 2022; Nachonga et al., 2021).

In the case of academic institutions, the unique demands and responsibilities faced by faculty members, such as teaching, research, community service, and administrative duties, create considerable challenges in achieving healthy employee engagement (Yawe, 2022). Nachonga et al. (2021) posited that work-life balance practices incorporate psychological well-being tools to increase employee engagement within any organization. The authors of the paper proposed a realistic presentation deck and discussion points for management to use while establishing work-life balance concerns to deal with employee engagement as an approach. A related study conducted on academic staff determined that implementing work-life balance practices led to enhanced psychological wellness and increased stability in employment (Ndagire et al., 2023). Furthermore, according to Ntirandekura et al. (2022), organizations benefited from ideal work-life balance practices, including positive employee attitudes and perceptions such as increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and reduced work stress and turnover intention. Besides, adopting work-life balance practices influenced employee engagement and reduced direct

or indirect costs associated with absenteeism, continuous recruitment or replacement, and organizational productivity (Sari & Seniati, 2020).

The experience of academic staff at private universities differed from that of their counterparts in the public sector (Nachonga et al., 2021; Rwothumio et al., 2021). These challenges were reinforced by the work-life balance practices adopted by private universities. Reports suggested that private universities in Uganda often struggled with issues of poor lecturer performance, including ineffective teaching, low research output, and limited ability to attract funding, among others (Yawe, 2022; Ndagire et al., 2023; Arinaitwe et al., 2021; Amir, 2020). Another study on compensation management and employee well-being among private universities in Uganda found that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards were positively related to employee engagement (Mugizi et al., 2020). This highlighted the importance of considering a holistic approach to employee psychological well-being to achieve employee engagement, encompassing financial and non-financial factors such as proper work-life balance practices. A similar study investigated the influence of performance appraisals on the teaching and research output of academic staff in Ugandan public universities, highlighting the need to address issues of poor lecturer performance (Rwothumio et al., 2021). A study on human resource management practices and job performance of academic staff in southwestern Uganda found that some lecturers lacked dedication to teaching, resulting in inadequate instruction and supervision. Students also overstayed their courses due to limited attention from lecturers. The study found that academic staff at the university had lower research and publication levels, with only 2% of permanent staff achieving their set target of five publications. This same study concluded that academic staff at the university prioritized teaching and learning over research and publication because they were not fully engaged in this area (Arinaitwe et al., 2021).

In short, the available literature on work-life balance practices, psychological well-being, and employee engagement of academic staff at private universities in Uganda remained limited, as several studies provided valuable insights mainly into the public university context. The existing research suggested the need for further investigation into academic staff's unique challenges and experiences in the private university context. This study, therefore, examined specific work-life balance practices, adopting the mediating effect of psychological well-being in enhancing academic staff's employee engagement at private universities in Uganda.

3. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The theoretical review of literature examined the fundamental theories that informed the researcher's understanding of work-life balance practices, psychological well-being, and employee engagement, highlighting their strengths, weaknesses, and practical implications. Several

theories were adopted in response to various authors' definitions of work-life balance practices (WLBP) and associated outcomes such as employee engagement. According to a study by Adekunle (2018), life at work and life away from work are interdependent domains with porous borders rather than separate spheres. This theoretical review, therefore, highlighted the reality that people frequently crossed borders between work and home, which could distress them (psychological well-being) and consequently influence their employee engagement at the workplace. Work-life balance practices generated considerable attention and debate throughout history, and several theories, such as conflict, boundary, psychological contract, spillover, and social exchange theories, influenced their comprehension and application. To explain the dynamics of WLBP, researchers developed a variety of topics based on the illustrations of these theories.

By understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the theories, managers and researchers are better positioned to apply them in ways that enhance work-life balance practices and address potential margins that compromise psychological well-being and, consequently, the level of employee engagement in the workplace, particularly among academic staff in private universities. Researchers are also able to adopt a structured framework for designing their studies, formulating hypotheses, selecting variables, and identifying relationships to investigate, contributing to evidence-based policies and practices that promote work-life balance.

These theories clarify complex concepts and relationships related to work and life and support the recognition of patterns and trends in work-life balance practices. Moreover, the strengths and limitations of these theories point out the gaps in existing literature, guiding researchers toward areas that warrant further investigation. This process enhances the quality, relevance, and impact of academic studies, ultimately contributing to improved work-life balance practices and psychological well-being, which could lead to more highly engaged employees.

TABLE 1: THEORIES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE PRACTICES

No.	Theory, Name of Author & Year	Assumptions	Strengths	Weaknesses
1.	Conflict Theory: (Karl Marx, 1848; Max Weber, 1922; Ralf Dahrendorf, 1959; Lewis Coser, 1956; Immanuel Wallerstein, 1974; Randall Collins, 1975)	Work and life compete. Achieving fulfillment at either necessitates making sacrifices in another.	Recognizes challenges employees face in balancing work and personal tasks.	Ignores psychological abilities such as coping mechanisms. Amplifies stress by assuming that conflict is expected for everyone.
2.	Boundary Theory: (Greenhaus et al., 1989; Nippert-Eng (1996); Kossek & Lautsch, 2012)	Employees establish, maintain, and modify boundaries to categorize and simplify their lives.	Recognizes the dynamic nature of work-life borders.	Failure to fully account for the interplay between individual and organizational factors.
3.	Psychological Contract Theory: (Denise Rousseau, 1960)	Based on the perceptions and expectations of employees and employers about mutual obligations.	Emphasizes the importance of employees' work-life balance expectations, which can enhance.	Expectations vary across contexts, making it challenging to implement a one-size-fits-all approach.
4.	Spillover Theory: (Kenneth Arrow, 1962; Paul Romer, 1986; Pleck, 1995)	Experiences at either work or away from work are "extended" from one realm to the other, influencing both domains.	It provides a framework for employees to adopt practices that consider the impact of work on personal life and vice versa.	Ignores factors that can mediate work and life domains such as psychological well-being.
5.	Social Exchange Theory: (George Homans, 1958; Peter Blau, 1964; Karen Cook)	Behaviour is a consequence of an exchange process.	Emphasizes mutual benefits to employees and employers.	Assumes that employees will automatically reciprocate employer support.

Adapted from Arrow (1962), Bello and Tanko (2020), Blau (1964), Cook et al. (1983), Desrochers and Sargent (2004), Homans (1958), Khateeb (2021), Pleck (1995), Romer (1986), Rousseau (1960), Scholar and Murthy (2021), Syed et al. (2015). Compiled by the researcher.

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the theories discussed in Table 2.1 enables both managers and researchers to apply them more effectively. Doing so helps improve work-life balance practices and address challenges that may negatively impact on employees' psychological well-being and, in turn, their engagement at work, especially among academic staff in private universities.

These theories offer a helpful framework for structuring studies by guiding the development of hypotheses, the selection of key variables, and the identification of relationships worth investigating. This kind of structure leads to more evidence-based policies and practices that promote healthier and more balanced work-life experiences. The theories also help explain complex ideas and patterns related to work-life balance, allowing researchers to identify gaps in existing knowledge and contribute more relevant, high-quality research. Ultimately, this contributes to more effective work-life balance practices, better psychological well-being, and more engaged employees.

Conflict Theory

Greenhaus and Beutell (1989) developed the conflict theory of work-life balance to explain the tension between work and personal life. The theory suggests that the two areas are often in conflict because they both demand time, energy, and commitment. When one area takes up more attention, the other tends to suffer, creating conflict. The authors outline three types of conflict: (i) time-based; where people simply don't have enough time for both work and personal life; (ii)

stress-based; where emotional pressure and burnout spill over from one area to the other; and (iii) behaviour-based; where the way someone behaves at work may not fit well with what's expected at home. Khateeb (2021) points out that focusing too much on one side usually leads to gaps in the other, making balance difficult. Dex and Smith (2012) also found that people who work long hours are more likely to experience this kind of conflict.

The key message of conflict theory is that work and life don't always blend smoothly. When they clash, it can result in health problems like depression and anxiety, which affects how well employees can engage with their work (Khateeb, 2021). Despite its influence on workplace policy, the theory is sometimes seen as too simplistic. Scholars like Singh (2020) and Wood et al. (2020) argue that it overlooks the fact that work and life can sometimes support each other, not just clash. Kalliath and Brough (2008) also question whether striving for balance is always the right goal for everyone. Still, the theory has encouraged many organizations to introduce supportive practices like flexible schedules and wellness programmes.

Boundary Theory

Boundary theory, introduced by Nippert-Eng in the 1990s and later expanded by Desrochers and Sargent (2004), suggests that people manage their lives by creating and adjusting boundaries between work and personal roles. If these boundaries are poorly managed, it can lead to stress, poor retention, absenteeism, and lower engagement (Syed et al., 2015). Earlier scholars like Kanter (1977) and Pleck (1977) described work and family as connected, not separate, with boundaries that people can move between. Bailyn et al. (2001) supported this idea and encouraged organizations to help employees blend work and family life. However, others warn that too much blending, especially with the help of technology, can make work feel constant and overwhelming (Clark, 2000). Bulger et al. (2007) explain that people create either strong or weak boundaries based on what works best for them.

This theory is useful because it recognizes that everyone manages their work-life boundaries differently. It also values individual choice and acknowledges the growing complexity of work in today's world (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012; Field & Chan, 2018). Still, the theory doesn't fully explore how personal, organizational, and cultural factors interact. It also tends to focus only on work and family, ignoring other areas like community and personal growth. And while it's gaining attention, the research supporting it is still relatively limited (Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015; Cousins & Robey, 2015).

Psychological Contract Theory

Psychological contract theory, introduced by Rousseau (1960), focuses on what employees believe they are owed by their employers, and vice versa. These beliefs are not written down like formal contracts, but they shape how people feel about their work. McDermott et al. (2013) explain that

these perceptions influence attitudes and motivation. Employees expect their organizations to support work-life balance, such as by offering flexible schedules (Mayes et al., 2018), which in turn helps them maintain psychological well-being and stay engaged at work. When employees feel that their employer is meeting their expectations, they tend to feel more loyal, committed, and satisfied. On the other hand, when those expectations are not met, employees may feel frustrated or disengaged (Liu et al., 2010). Syed et al. (2015) distinguish between two types of psychological contracts: transactional (focused on basic exchanges like pay) and relational (focused on trust and emotional support). Relational contracts tend to have a greater impact on engagement and well-being.

This theory is valuable because it captures the personal and evolving nature of the employer-employee relationship. However, it doesn't always take broader structural and cultural factors into account. It can also be difficult to measure these expectations consistently across different workplaces. Khateeb (2021) adds that sometimes employers may be more focused on meeting perceived contractual obligations than on employees' overall well-being.

Spillover Theory

Spillover theory looks at how experiences, behaviours, and emotions from one part of life affect another, such as how work stress can affect home life and vice versa (Akanji et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Schnettler et al., 2021). Positive spillovers can lead to satisfaction and strong engagement, while negative spillovers may result in stress and withdrawal (Khateeb, 2021). Sundaresan (1923) suggested that both good and bad feelings can be carried over between work and home.

This theory is particularly useful for this study because it explains how work-life balance practices (the independent variable) can influence psychological well-being (the mediating variable), which in turn affects employee engagement (the dependent variable). While the theory is helpful, it doesn't always address other influences like personality, social support, or coping strategies that might affect how spillover plays out.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), proposed by Homans (1958) and later expanded by Blau (1964) and Cook et al. (2005), views relationships in the workplace as give-and-take. When employees receive support from their employer, such as recognition or work-life balance, they're more likely to give back through hard work and loyalty (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gould-Williams & Davies, 2005). In the context of Uganda's private universities, this theory helps explain how academic staff respond to support and how this affects their engagement (Rwothumio et al., 2020; Mugizi et al., 2021).

However, some scholars argue that the theory lacks precision (Cook et al., 2013), and that assuming people always give back when supported may be an

oversimplification (Socio & Gregory, 1986). Still, the theory remains a powerful tool for understanding how support at work can lead to increased engagement and psychological well-being.

Each of these theories sheds light on different aspects of how work-life balance practices relate to employee engagement and psychological well-being. However, no single theory explains the whole picture.

Therefore, this study used an integrated theoretical approach: Spillover Theory is used to explain work-life balance practices; Social Exchange Theory helps understand employee engagement; and Psychological Contract Theory provides the basis for considering psychological well-being as a mediator between the two. This combination of theories offered a richer, more complete framework for examining relationships at the heart of this research.

4. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section reviewed literature related to the key concepts of the study; work-life balance practices (WLBP), psychological well-being, and employee engagement. The aim was to understand how WLBP were defined globally and to explore the factors that influenced their application in different contexts. To provide a consistent background, this review included well-known studies that discussed the development, challenges, and successes related to WLBP over time.

The reviewed literature also highlighted the benefits of adopting WLBP for employees, and how these practices were implemented in previous research settings. Through this, the study aimed to explain why employees became engaged at work depending on the conditions they were exposed to, particularly in relation to the work-life balance practices offered by their institutions.

Organizations across sectors, including public and private, have increasingly shown interest in understanding what motivates employees to perform at their best (Marzec & Szczudlińska-Kanoś, 2023). Universities were no exception. In the past, higher education researchers had mainly focused on how academic staff engagement related to students (Echoru et al., 2020; Wollscheid et al., 2021; Alani, 2021; Sukirno, 2020). This focus made sense, given that universities existed to educate, prepare students for the workforce, and help them become productive members of society (Kabeera, 2019).

However, leaders in private universities could no longer afford to overlook the growing number and importance of academic staff. To support staff better and increase their engagement, universities needed to implement effective WLBP such as flexible work options, leave policies, and wellness programmes. This literature review, therefore, explored previous studies that examined how work-life balance practices influenced the engagement of academic staff in private universities, with a focus on institutions in Central Uganda.

Work-Life Balance Practices

Work-life balance practices are deliberate organizational changes made to administrative strategies to reduce work-life conflict and encourage employees to be more involved in their personal and professional lives (Adekunle, 2018). Work-life balance practices may also refer to organizational initiatives designed to create an equilibrium between the time, energy, and attention individuals allocate to their professional commitments and personal lives, including family, social activities, hobbies, and personal welfare (Malik, 2023).

The concept of work-life balance practices has gained significant prominence in recent years as organizations strive to foster an environment that supports the overall well-being of their employees. Applying satisfactory work-life balance practices is crucial, as it is generally linked to employees' motivation, satisfaction, and engagement at the individual level, as well as higher productivity and organizational competitiveness at the organizational level (Hernández *et al.*, 2022). However, the inability to reconcile professional and personal lives can be a source of suffering for employees, leading to problems for the organization. To address this challenge, organizations implemented various work-life balance practices, including flexible work arrangements, leave policies, wellness programs, and employee assistance programs (Venkateshwara & Suganya, 2020; Khateeb, 2021; Kirby *et al.*, 2022; Saraswati & Lie, 2020; Derouet-Gérault & Bertrais, 2022; Ssali *et al.*, 2020).

Flexible work arrangements in work-life balance practices include telecommuting, flexible work arrangements, and compressed work weeks, which allow employees to manage their time more effectively and better integrate their work and personal responsibilities (Hernández *et al.*, 2022; Benito-Osorio *et al.*, 2014). These arrangements can improve employee satisfaction, reduce stress, and increase productivity. Leave policies, including paid time off, parental leave, and family medical leave, provide employees with the necessary time to attend to personal and family matters, contributing to a more robust work-life balance. Wellness programs, which focus on physical, mental, and emotional health, can help employees manage stress, improve their overall health, and maintain healthier work-life integration (Dev & Raj, 2018). On the other hand, employee assistance programs offer confidential counselling and support services to help employees navigate personal and professional challenges, further enhancing their work-life balance.

According to Obuobisa-Darko (2020), the successful implementation of these work-life balance practices is contingent on organizational standards that relate to work, family, and personal life and have strong management support. Employees must feel empowered to take advantage of these programs without fear of negative consequences for their work or possible hostility from colleagues and superiors. This results in engaged employees who are dedicated, vigorous and fully absorbed in their work.

Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) referred to changeable work schedules that included a core period during which all employees had to be accessible, and a planned schedule requested in advance by the organization (Venkateshwaran, 2020). The FWA era, sometimes referred to as telework, was characterized by the expansion of work-hour flexibility and the delocalization of the workplace over the previous decade (Metselaar *et al.*, 2023), supporting employees in maintaining a healthy work-life balance. According to Wilkens *et al.* (2017), flextime and other FWAs that attempted to give employees more control positively affected their health. Kirby *et al.* (2022) demonstrated that individuals who believed their employers offered flexible work hours expressed greater job satisfaction and professional commitment.

According to formal or informal organizational norms, FWAs were adopted by different organizations to help employees balance their work and life outside of work (Wong, 2017). Rigorous and inflexible routines negatively impacted individuals, their families, and their quality of life. Work needed to be structured to support employees' healthy physical and mental well-being, as working environments could have both positive and negative effects (Venkateshwaran *et al.*, 2020). Kirby *et al.* (2022) found that flexible and autonomous work styles increased employee productivity and engagement and supported a healthy balance between work and personal life. Shiri *et al.* (2022) also showed that fixed term working arrangements harmed employees' well-being, causing burnout, occupational injuries, mental health issues, and increased sick days.

In the United States, during the Great Depression in December 1930, the Kellogg Company faced economic hardship and sought to accommodate laid-off workers. In response, the company introduced four 6-hour shifts instead of the traditional three 8-hour shifts. This innovative approach to work scheduling was well received by the government, businesses, and workers alike. Kellogg's initiative laid the foundation for what later became known as flexible work practices (FWPs), which gradually gained traction and were adopted globally as a work-life balance practice (Grover & Crooker, 1995). Over time, organizations increasingly recognized the value of FWPs as part of their efforts to implement "family-responsive human resource policies." These policies addressed the evolving needs of employees and their families, promoting a more balanced approach to work and personal responsibilities (Grover & Crooker, 1995).

Flexible work schedules differed from the conventional working day and week. Employees could adopt varied work schedules to meet personal or family obligations, while employers could develop different timetables to meet client needs (Abdulkadir, 2018). Numerous studies highlighted various benefits. Common findings included improved recruitment, retention, and motivation of high-performing and experienced employees; reduced absenteeism and presenteeism; better management of personal obligations; enhanced job satisfaction, energy, creativity, and stress

management; increased diversity and inclusivity; reduced office overhead costs; and positive environmental impacts. Regardless of the program or options offered, supervisors were expected to clearly define duties, expectations, and deadlines and secure mutual agreements from both employer and employee. The success of such initiatives depended on a supportive organizational culture, open communication, teamwork, and mutual support between management and staff (Wong, 2017).

Telework / Working Remotely / Telecommuting

Suganya (2020) defined telework as performing at least a portion of one's regular work from home rather than an office or other location. It was essential to provide information like working hours and how coworkers and customers communicated with remote workers. According to Chang, McDonald, and Burton (2010), flexible work schedules gave employees valuable tools for estimating their workload, which increased productivity. Therefore, it was summed up as the ability of employees to take control of their work environments and schedules to fully take advantage of chances for work-life balance while also benefiting the company. Time-based contracts were agreed upon by both employees and their employers, according to Hayman (2010). With fewer job interferences, employees had more control over how they performed within the organization, which resulted in a happier workforce and better performance. Over 70% of workers expected to experience higher productivity when they accepted flexible work arrangements, according to a study on 16,000 specialists across 80 countries (Regus, 2017). Work-life balance and flexible work schedules were correlated, according to Baral and Bhargava (2010). Additionally, it raised an employee's multitasking capacity, enhancing performance. According to Lambert (2010), time-related work arrangements lowered expenses for hiring, training, and onboarding new employees. They claimed that achieving work-life balance enhanced worker performance. This boosted employee motivation, raised work ethics, improved competitive advantage, lowered labor turnover, and improved organizational productivity and performance. However, the study ignored the factors of work-life balancing practices, which served as the current study's guiding principles. Instead, it concentrated on staff burnout, life satisfaction, turnover intention, and job satisfaction.

Part-time Employment

Employees opted to work fewer than the typical 37.5 or 40 hours per week, according to Venkateshwaran (2020). Depending on the specific circumstances, these arrangements were temporary or permanent. In rare circumstances, it was also considered for workers with health issues or disabilities. Depending on the sort of business, work hours were negotiated or set to match periods of high workload. However, before beginning a reduced-hour or part-time arrangement, it was essential to carefully consider how it might affect employee benefits and eligibility for government programs (such as employment insurance or pension plans).

Part-time employment policies were the focus of interest for most researchers as one of the friendliest strategies for working families, according to Kim and Wiggins (2011). When a company committed to a part-time arrangement, it increased employee trust in the company, allowing for the most significant possible level of employee participation in duties. According to Mwangi (2016), part-time employment also benefited workers by promoting a healthy work-life balance. Instead of adopting a case study from a private university, the study used the Supreme Court of Nairobi as its model. According to a study by Fatima and Sahibzada (2012), when employees could work part-time, they reported fewer imbalances between work and family, little to no stress, and improved performance. It also allowed them to manage personal concerns separately from the organization, allowing them to focus entirely when on duty. As a result, performance improved, and staff productivity increased. The study, however, focused on the variables affecting the work-life balance of university lecturers working in Pakistan.

The Compressed Work Week

The workweek is compressed when an employee works more shifts or days in return for a day off. Employees could start or end their shifts earlier or later than usual. According to Wong and Saili (2017), employers occasionally implemented compressed work weeks to increase operational effectiveness, maximize production (and thus reduce daily start-up costs), or set up longer business hours that improved customer service. In today's world, institutions have a greater demand for and better ability to accommodate FWAs because of rising global competition and new information and communication technologies.

Technology, however, was perceived as both a blessing and a curse in the compressed work-week. On the positive side, it significantly increased the opportunities for employees to embrace flexible work arrangements, with telecommuting being a notable example (Ivancheva & Garvey, 2022). Realizing that work could be conducted from home or anywhere without adversely affecting business had been a significant benefit for over a decade. On the flip side, technology intruded into people's personal lives. While productivity tools empowered individuals to work at any time and from any place, they also encroached upon personal spaces, transforming homes into "satellite offices" and eroding the traditional boundaries between work and home life (Harrington, 2007).

Flexible work arrangements reduced stress and enhanced employees' mental health in private universities. However, not all private universities had the capacity to offer their employees flexible work schedules, stress management classes, or general organizational support because of continuous underfunding and understaffing (Yawe, 2022; Khateeb, 2021). Although the initial programs aimed to support working mothers, there was a growing demand for work-life programs that addressed the responsibilities of all individuals. This shift included men and women, parents and non-parents, as well as singles and couples during the 1990s

(Raja & Stein, 2014).

Leave programmes

According to Muinde (2013), who used a sample of 2010 employees from government agencies to examine the relationships among family-friendly programs, job involvement, and occupational commitment, employees are more committed to their organization when they can leave benefits and time off work. No matter how supportive the leave programs are, they may only sometimes result in success if an employee is psychologically prepared to complete a task. Few studies empirically test the relationship between leave programs and employee performance, with most studies focusing on work-life balance, intentions to stay, job satisfaction, and commitment (Lambert, 2010; Mmakwe & Ojiabo, 2018). Performance is at the center of the business-case argument, and many authors mentioned it as one of the potential benefits of offering leave programs. Considering the "business-case" reasoning that doing so somehow advances employees' organizational interests, institutions established supplemental leave programs to cover the busy schedules in today's advancing world (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Wellness Programmes

Wellness is integral to a flourishing work environment with fully engaged employees. Implementing a thorough wellness program can benefit employers and employees, as it shows a commitment to the well-being of the workforce (Berry *et al.*, 2020; Reif *et al.*, 2020). According to VNS & Murari (2025) wellness programmes are key for academic staff because they highlight the significant impact of lifestyle habits on the engagement of academic staff. This study categorized wellness programs into employee assistance programs and health programs.

Employee Assistance Programmes

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are wellness programmes under work-life balance practices created to assist employees in identifying and addressing personal issues that may negatively impact their performance (Yawe, 2022), such as family problems, emotional, financial, or marital problems or substance or alcohol misuse. Plans for employee assistance programmes are typically fully funded by the employer and offer a wide range of additional services, including nurse lines, essential legal support and referrals, help finding adoption agencies, or help locating elder care services (Heiden *et al.*, 2021).

There was a substantial body of research supporting the viability of potential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) partners in work-life balance, psychological well-being, and stress management programs for executives, which had been shown to enhance employee well-being and job performance (Essays, UK, 2018). Jackson and Fransman (2018) reported that while employers remained preoccupied with immediate costs such as insurance claims, the psychological wellness of unstable personnel was significantly compromised. EAPs as workplace wellness initiatives helped influence psychological

well-being, mitigate the negative consequences of mundane tasks, and promote employee motivation to improve engagement (Harini *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, several employers implemented EAPs as an organizational response. EAP websites became increasingly complex, providing access to supplier records, tip sheets, webinars, and self-assessment tools. Many of these resources were integrated within the organization's intranet or HR platforms. Online accessibility enabled employees to better understand the purpose of EAPs, thereby reducing their reluctance to seek support. EAPs encompassed social events, recreational activities, spiritual growth sessions, and fitness programs initiatives that aligned with organizational objectives, especially where employee well-being was understood to impact productivity (Keino & Kithae, 2016).

Evidence from Ernst and Young indicated that integrating EAPs with HR and benefits platforms resulted in increased utilization from 8% and 12%, respectively, to a combined 25% annually (Dwi *et al.*, 2018). In the United States, approximately 31% of organizations had adopted EAPs by 1985, which rose to 33% in 1995 and nearly doubled in the next seven years (Guest, 2002). According to a 2002–2003 national review, around 60% of day laborers worked in environments with EAPs, and approximately 33% of EAPs provided preventive services to individuals and organizations (El-Kassem, 2018). Teambuilding (32%) and depression screening (25%) were among the most common services offered quarterly. Edwards (2011) suggested that preventive services should be added to the core functionality of EAPs, considering the increased communication of such services and providers' positive attitudes toward them.

The growing use of the internet in developing and delivering EAPs facilitated greater integration with other wellness initiatives (De Toni & Tonchia, 2011). Universities increasingly emerged as institutions where EAPs could be promoted to enhance academic staff performance, support career transitions, and encourage lifelong healthy habits. Concerns regarding students' and staff's mental health, especially international populations had implications for academic performance (Yawe, 2022). To optimize outcomes, universities grew increasingly aware of the need to support the health and well-being of academic staff.

Lee *et al.* (2015) found that EAPs enhanced employees' psychological attachment to their organizations. Kossek and Lautsch (2018) defined psychological well-being as an individual's perception of their happiness, physical and mental health satisfaction, and its relation to other psychological components like life or job satisfaction. Organizational leaders thus increasingly value psychological well-being due to its influence on employee engagement dimensions such as absorption, dedication, and vigor (Kim & Wiggins, 2011). Mordi and Ojo (2011) emphasized the importance of integrated systems to foster employee security, cautioning against fragmented programs outsourced with limited organizational integration. Their study, though based in the Nigerian banking industry, underscored the relevance of comprehensive EAP strategies. Muindi (2013) similarly

highlighted that workplace wellness activities reduced absenteeism and turnover, though his study focused on horticultural farms in Naivasha, Kenya. Muli (2014) observed a significant relationship between financial, physical, ecological, and social wellness facilities and employee performance in commercial banks.

The economic implications of EAPs were also evident; non-fatal workplace assaults alone led to the loss of approximately two million workdays annually and substantial financial losses (Kelly et al., 2014). Kaduk et al. (2019) further affirmed the impact of EAPs on work status and psychological well-being. Morrow (2011) supported the assertion that EAPs significantly contributed to psychological well-being.

There is a misconception that academic staff primarily taught; however, university faculty engaged in research, institutional service, student mentorship, and community outreach. This complex workload introduced varied expectations and stressors impacting mental health (Allen & Kiburz, 2012). Academic staff grappled with pressures related to workload, performance, homesickness, debt, and social obligations (Beauregard, 2011). International staff, in particular, faced additional hurdles such as cultural adaptation, visa instability, and limited access to support services (Abdulkadir, 2018). EAPs could help mitigate such challenges and enhance employee engagement. Moreover, EAPs addressed workplace issues like stigma and unsafe behaviors (Fatima & Sahibzada, 2012).

Given their demanding responsibilities, academic staff required urgent attention to the impact of mental health concerns on institutional effectiveness. A renewed focus on EAPs in private universities was therefore warranted. This study examined the relationship between EAPs and psychological well-being among academic staff in private universities in Uganda and hypothesized that EAPs had no significant connection with academic staff's psychological well-being. Since its inception, the work-life field had expanded beyond dependent care and EAPs to include aspects such as recruitment, compensation, job design, leadership development, travel and leave policies, team composition, corporate social responsibility, and organizational culture (L. Berry et al., 2020). These formed part of the broader work-life programs that influenced psychological well-being (Harrington, 2007). EAPs offered counselling, assessment, and referral services to employees and their families, regardless of location (Babin et al., 2015).

Financial Assistance: The demand for income security has grown. Organizations that offered financial assistance programs retained staff more successfully, as employees valued such benefits. These initiatives also improved employee financial literacy, thereby enhancing organizational performance (Robbins, 2005).

Childcare Support: Employer-sponsored childcare represented a business investment in staff. It offered working

parents reliable options, especially for pre-school-aged children (Cabrita, 2021). Summer programs also provided relief, allowing parents quality time with their children. These benefits enhanced productivity and morale (Wilkens, 2017).

Supportive Managers: Unlike traditional task-oriented managers, supportive leaders guided employees through tasks until they attained competence (Paauwe, 2013). Effective leadership in the 21st century required balancing managerial oversight with human-centered coaching (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). Supportive managers demonstrated empathy, provided timely feedback, and addressed employee concerns as key traits that enhanced employee well-being and productivity.

Health Programmes

Employers can incorporate health activities into various routines, and it is up to the organization to choose the most effective ones for its members. Employers can offer on-site fitness facilities, host health and wellness challenges, and encourage healthy habits through educational resources and workshops. Azmi and Irfan (2017) assert that encouraging regular exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate sleep can significantly contribute to the overall physical well-being of employees. Agha (2017) notes that healthy employees are more engaged and productive. However, prioritizing mental health is critical to a holistic wellness program. In today's settings, stress, burnout, and worry are commonplace, lowering productivity and disengaging workers. Organizations can establish a supportive environment that encourages emotional well-being and resilience by providing resources like counselling services, mindfulness training, and mental health awareness campaigns.

Gym and sports facilities: Incorporating sports into employees' lives can enhance their emotional and physical health (Amrollahifar, 2023). Better balance, flexibility, strength, and concentration are advantages. More so, Dinajpur et al., (2016) asserts that yoga positions can lessen absenteeism, physical discomfort, and job stress. The fact that yoga is more affordable than other health programs should be the primary justification for implementing it in the workplace. Except for a few mats and a few eager people, yoga only takes up a little time and requires little equipment. Employees can do basic yoga poses and stretches for as little as 10 to 20 minutes while still getting all the necessary advantages. In recent years, yoga has gained popularity as a component of workplace wellness.

Counselling Service: According to Adebayo (2016), millennials altered their expectations of their employers, placing a stronger emphasis on health and stress management programs. One of the best ways to ensure employees are in the best shape to perform their best work was to focus on their wellness. Employers included wellness in various methods, and it is up to them to choose the most effective wellness programmes for their requirements.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement referred to the degree to which employees were dedicated, vigorous and absorbed in their work roles and aligned with the organization's values and goals (Shaik, 2019). The term "employee engagement" itself conveyed a positive connotation, suggesting a state where employees were enthusiastic, focused, and fully invested in their work roles (Flamholtz, 2019). Over the past two decades, employee engagement had been a growing interest for academic researchers and organizational leaders (Shahid, 2019). The concept gained popularity due to its perceived ability to drive organizational success in a highly competitive and rapidly changing business environment (Magem, 2017). However, despite widespread adoption, the concept still lacked a precise and universally accepted definition (Flamholtz, 2019). Nonetheless, the importance of employee engagement to organizations could not be underrated (Magem, 2017). Engaged employees were central to organizational success, improving performance, increasing retention, reducing absenteeism, and creating loyal customers (Magem, 2017; Shahid, 2019). Undeniably, large and small organizations actively sought to enhance employee engagement, recognizing it as a critical factor in achieving their strategic objectives (Shahid, 2019; Gupta & Sharma, 2019).

The growing emphasis on employee engagement led to a surge in academic research examining its antecedents, consequences, and mechanisms to influence organizational outcomes (Gupta & Sharma, 2019). Therefore, scholars proposed various frameworks and models to understand the drivers and outcomes of employee engagement, providing valuable insights for practitioners and researchers alike (Shahid, 2019). As the occupational landscape continued to evolve with increasing globalization and workforce diversity, the importance of maintaining a highly engaged workforce became even more pronounced. Organizations that prioritized employee engagement were viewed as well-positioned to navigate the challenges of the modern business environment and achieve sustainable success (Gupta & Sharma, 2019). Research suggested that engaged employees were more likely to be productive, exhibit organizational citizenship behaviour, and contribute to the organization's overall success (Iddagoda et al., 2015; Shaik, 2019; Magem, 2017).

According to the literature, employee engagement was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct of three key components: absorption, vigor, and dedication (Marshoudi et al., 2023; Joseph, 2016).

Absorption

Absorption was the state of being fully immersed and engrossed in one's work, where time passed quickly, and it was difficult to detach oneself from the task at hand (Marshoudi et al., 2023; Amrollahifar et al., 2023; AL-Dossary, 2022; Borst et al., 2019). This component of employee engagement was characterized by a deep level of concentration and enjoyment in one's work, indicating a strong connection between the employee and their job

(Obuobisa-Darko, 2020).

Vigor

Vigor was characterized by high energy levels, mental resilience, and a willingness to invest effort in one's work. It is related to an employee's psychological well-being. Engaged employees who exhibited vigor were proactive, persistent, and willing to go the extra mile to ensure the successful completion of their tasks (Marshoudi et al., 2023; AL-Dossary, 2022).

Dedication

Dedication, as the third component of employee engagement, involves a strong sense of identification, enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration towards one's work (Marshoudi et al., 2023; Borst et al., 2019; Al-Dossary, 2022). Dedicated employees are inspired by their work, experienced a strong sense of purpose, and were driven to contribute to the organization's goals and mission. Obuobisa-Darko (2020) remarked that senior employees should have been dedicated to their work roles to interest the junior employees in a more vigorous and absorbed work spirit.

Recent research in the field of employee engagement consistently supported the tri-dimensional nature of the construct, as evidenced by studies conducted in various contexts, such as healthcare (AL-Dossary, 2022; Yalabik et al., 2017; Marshoudi et al., 2023; Amrollahifar et al., 2023). These studies consistently found that the three components of employee engagement - absorption, vigor, and dedication were closely interrelated and related to employees' overall psychological well-being and performance at work. Since employee engagement was a multifaceted concept bounded by an individual's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral investment in their work (Marshoudi et al., 2023), it was adequate to say that psychological well-being played a mediating role in the relationship between work-life balance practices and the three critical dimensions of employee engagement, that is; vigor, dedication, and absorption (Marshoudi et al., 2023; AL-Dossary, 2022; Borst et al., 2019). Employee engagement was, hence, a critical factor in the success and sustainability of any organization. This was particularly true for private universities, where academic staff played a crucial role in shaping the learning environment and driving institutional growth.

Recent studies highlighted the importance of understanding the factors that influenced employee engagement among academic staff in the private university context (Baron & Corbin, 2012; Mugizi et al., 2020; Yawe, 2022). One key factor that was explored was the role of rewards, both extrinsic and intrinsic, in driving employee engagement (Verčič, 2021). A study on non-academic staff in a public university in Uganda found that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards were positively associated with work engagement. Furthermore, a study on factors influencing job performance and school effectiveness in the Mexican context suggested that intrinsic job satisfaction was a crucial driver of teacher self-efficacy, engagement, and job performance

(Mugizi et al., 2020; Soto-Pérez et al., 2020). Lastly, factors to do with the work-life balance practices of an institution, such as time spent on paid work, commuting, and wellness programmes, were also shown to impact the employee engagement and retention of first-year students in a large Australian university (Leveson et al., 2013). These findings suggested that private universities needed to consider a holistic approach to supporting their academic staff and addressing internal and external factors influencing employee engagement.

Therefore, the research on employee engagement of private university academic staff highlighted the multifaceted nature of this issue. By understanding the key drivers of employee engagement, such as robust work-life balance practices, private universities developed more effective strategies to support and retain their academic staff, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and driving institutional success (Leveson et al., 2013).

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being has long been recognized as an all-inclusive framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of human success (Ryff, 1995). At the core of Ryff's model were six key attributes to psychological well-being: self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, and purpose in life. These dimensions captured both the hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being, moving beyond a narrow focus on momentary happiness or life satisfaction (Wissing & Eeden, 2002). The researcher adopted these psychological well-being attributes as mediating between work-life balance practices and psychological well-being.

Self-acceptance referred to the ability to view oneself positively and to acknowledge and accept one's strengths and weaknesses. Personal growth encompassed a sense of continued development, of realizing one's potential over time (Young et al., 1995). Autonomy was characterized by self-determination, the capacity to think and act independently. Environmental mastery involved effectively managing one's surrounding circumstances and creating contexts suitable to one's needs and values (Ryff, 1995). Positive relations with others were marked by a capacity for empathy, intimacy, and mutually rewarding connections (Mustafa et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2021). Purpose in life also entailed a sense of direction, of having goals and objectives that gave meaning to one's existence (Kim et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2021).

These psychological well-being attributes were consistently linked to positive outcomes, including academic achievement (Mustafa et al., 2020). For example, academic staff highly skilled in environmental mastery and purpose tended to excel professionally, as they could effectively navigate the demands of the university environment and find meaning in their teaching, research, and community service. Psychological well-being was also identified as a critical component of resilient ageing, as maintaining purpose,

autonomy, and positive social connections could buffer against age-related health declines (Kim et al., 2021).

Maintaining a healthy balance between professional commitments and personal life, including family, social activities, and self-care, was essential for employees' psychological well-being and overall productivity. The existing literature suggested that achieving a satisfactory work-life balance could significantly impact employees' motivation, satisfaction, and engagement at the individual level, ultimately leading to higher organizational competitiveness (Hernández et al., 2022). When employees could properly prioritize their work and personal responsibilities, they were more likely to have positive relationships with their colleagues and supervisors, which could foster better teamwork, collaboration, and a more positive work environment (Malik, 2023).

On the other hand, the inability to reconcile professional and personal life could be a source of significant stress and suffering for employees, causing problems for the organization (Hernández et al., 2022). Work-life balance policies and initiatives were essential, but their effectiveness was contingent on cultivating an organizational culture that valued work, family, and personal life equally, with solid managerial support (Benito-Osorio et al., 2014). Achieving a suitable balance between work and life was a challenge for all workers, as it required personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment to be well distributed across domains (Benito-Osorio et al., 2014). However, when employees could obtain sufficient satisfaction in their work and personal lives, it enhanced psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction (Hernández et al., 2022). Organizations were encouraged to prioritize implementing work-life balance policies and programs, such as flexible work arrangements, remote work options, and generous family leave policies, to support their employees' needs and promote healthy work-life integration (Malik, 2023).

By fostering a culture that valued work-life balance, organizations improved their employees' psychological well-being and enhanced their performance and competitiveness in the long run.

Influence of Work-Life Balance Practices on Employee Engagement

Work-life balance practices and employee engagement contributed to academic staff well-being and productivity in higher education institutions. Researchers found that a healthy work-life balance incorporated with positive psychological well-being led to engaged employees, which increased job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and improved organizational performance (Nawi et al., 2016; Poalses & Bezuidenhout, 2018).

In the context of private universities in Uganda, the issue of work-life balance and employee engagement among academic staff gathered increasing attention. A study conducted in a public university in Uganda revealed a positive correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic employee rewards and work engagement among non-academic staff (Mugizi et

al., 2020). However, research on the work-life balance of academic staff in private universities in Uganda remained incomplete.

Existing literature suggested that the demands of academic work, such as research, teaching, and administrative duties, often conflicted with personal responsibilities and led to a poor work-life balance (Adebayo, 2017). This imbalance had a detrimental effect on the psychological well-being of the academic staff, which impacted employee engagement and ultimately affected the quality of education and student experience (Poalses & Bezuidenhout, 2018).

To address this issue, private universities in Uganda needed to develop and implement effective work-life balance policies and practices that prioritized the psychological well-being of their academic staff. Studies indicated that fostering a culture of work-life balance and employee engagement improved job satisfaction and retention of academic staff and enhanced the overall quality of education and research in private universities in Uganda.

Association between Flexible Working Arrangements and Employee Engagement

According to Fatima and Sahibzada (2012), many people were also interested in having more flexible work hours and helping the academy in areas where they had solid aptitudes and experience. In a survey of senior family medicine faculty, 55% said they were thinking about switching careers or pursuing other opportunities, 67% said they planned to retire by age 66, and 43% said they were at least somewhat dissatisfied with their careers. This was significantly more common among men who worked in academic settings. In addition, 66% of academic-medicine senior faculty expressed concerns about preserving their health, 67% of them sometimes had trouble juggling work and family obligations, 51% did not receive any mentoring, and 47% said they would have preferred one (Adikram & Jayatilake, 2016). As a result, senior teachers had unique professional worries and demands. Since elderly faculty members could still be valuable resources after retiring, developing specialized programs to address their needs and preserve their mental health and well-being was imperative.

Relationship between Leave Programmes and Employee Engagement

Leave referred to a period that employees took from work during what would have been regular working hours, entitled by law or by their employment contract. Leave arose in several arrangements and various levels of privilege, including annual, maternity, paternity, sick, bereavement, sabbatical, public holiday, compensatory, unpaid, extra time, emergency, childcare, marriage, religious, military, study, jury, and emergency leave. In Africa, the evolution of the leave concept in the 1980s was primarily associated with helping women balance employment and family responsibilities. Many African countries then began providing maternity leave, though only three (Mauritius, Uganda, and Tanzania) officially recognized paternity leave in their

national laws (Mokomane, 2013). In Uganda, gender advocates were at the forefront of promoting paid maternity leave, expressing concern that challenges in balancing maternal and job roles hindered women from reaching top management positions. Ajala (2013) refuted that morale would suffer if parents returning from maternity leave were not given support upon entering their workplace. High employee turnover and subpar work output followed from this. According to Fiksenbaum's (2014) results, parents working as employees at a company with lengthy working hours, anxiety, a heavier workload, and a lack of personal time displayed subpar performance. Parental leave and other leave programmes that supported homework-friendly practices were used to manage the above challenges effectively.

Impact of Wellness Programmes on Employee Engagement

Wellness programs were a strategic management tool that indirectly reduced costs. Berry et al. (2020) cited an example of the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) employees. The study reported that the proportion of smokers among J&J employees had decreased by more than two-thirds since 1995. The percentage of people with high blood pressure and those without exercise also decreased by more than half. Making a thorough, well-thought-out investment in the workforce's psychological well-being paid off. According to J&J managers, the organization saved \$250 million on healthcare costs over ten years due to wellness initiatives; from 2002 to 2008, there was a \$2.71 return for every dollar invested in health and wellness. This study indicated an association between health and wellness programmes and psychological well-being.

In the US, workplace wellness programmes have become increasingly popular among employers to lower medical expenses and enhance worker health. In 2019, 84% of major US companies that provided health benefits also had wellness programmes (Reif et al., 2020). Based on a review of the above literature, it seemed clear that health and wellness programmes were related to psychological well-being. Employers implemented employee health and wellness programs to enhance their workers' physical and mental well-being and assist individuals in resolving specific health-related issues (Abdulkadir, 2018). They focused on creating better habits that enabled teams, businesses, and employees to be their happiest, healthiest selves possible (Yawe, 2022). According to one survey, 61% of employees concurred that their employer's wellness program influenced them to make healthier lifestyle decisions.

Additionally, according to Adebayo (2016), millennials altered their expectations of their employers, placing a stronger emphasis on health and stress management programs. One of the best ways to ensure employees were in the best shape to perform their best work was to focus on their wellness.

Effect of Psychological Well-being as a Mediating Factor of the Relationship Between Work-life Balance Practices and Employee Engagement

The changing dynamics of work and family life in contemporary society long impacted men's and women's lives. Individuals' challenges balancing their professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments generate far-reaching consequences. This imbalance affected an individual's well-being and had implications for their workplace and personal performance (Subedi et al., 2023).

Employers were concerned because poor physical, psychological, and emotional well-being resulted from high work pressure and high family demands, as it affected productivity and increased absenteeism (Onu et al., 2018). Most of an employee's time was spent travelling to and from work or attending to personal or family status. For example, without domestic support, a dual-career couple in a nuclear family found it challenging to manage work and life. Elderly care was also challenging in a combined family (Mwangi, 2016). According to this study, family obligations impacted on work-life balance.

Spouse support made a better work-life balance possible (Muinde, 2013). For dual-career couples with dependent responsibilities, family assistance positively impacted work-life balance (Muli, 2014). Employees still struggled with work-life balance issues despite the organizations' extensive use of work-life balance rules in a study by Muchiti (2015). Individual coping mechanisms helped employees feel better about themselves (McDonald, 2018). Work-life balance was favorably predicted by personal factors such as age, related to stress-coping techniques, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence (Moore et al., 2018). The amount of personal time taken up by work increased (Mmakwe & Ojiabo et al., 2018). This led to the depletion, undernutrition, or neglect of several crucial parts of their lives. As a result, workers had less free time for "quality" family time. The benefits of work-family policies and work-team structures increased organizational productivity (Kossekk & Lautsch, 2018).

Due to rising work demands, the employee frequently struggled to meet the expectations of friends, family, and society. Work-life balance was strongly predicted by societal demands (Kaduk, 2019). Utilization of the work-life balance policy and work and non-work self-efficacy were significantly influenced by societal culture. Employers' use of work-life balance policies was significantly and consistently impacted by collectivism, power distance, and gendered norms (Kelly & Moen, 2019). The patriarchal traditions that were deeply ingrained in the culture usually thwarted women's attempts to attain a work-life balance. Support from neighbors, friends, and community members strongly predicted work-life balance (Jackson & Fransman, 2018). Employees occasionally require friends' opinions to gain a fresh perspective or make a difficult choice. Support from the community was a crucial sign of work-life balance.

LITERATURE GAP

In the context of this study on work-life balance and employee engagement of academic staff in private universities of Uganda, possible literature gaps were explored:

Limited Research in the Ugandan Context: There existed a need for studies explicitly focusing on the relationship between variables of work-life balance, psychological well-being, and employee engagement. Existing literature was over five years old, and the few existing ones primarily focused on other countries, leaving a gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by academic staff in private universities of Uganda (Yawe, 2022; Mugizi et al., 2021; Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

Inadequate Attention to Private University Settings: Most research on work-life balance and employee engagement concentrated on general workforce trends or public university settings. A literature gap existed in terms of explaining the specific dynamics, policies, and challenges within private universities in Uganda (Nachonga et al., 2021; Rwothumio et al., 2021; Ssali et al., 2020).

Insufficient Exploration of Psychological Well-being: While a few studies addressed work-life balance, more literature should have been on academic staff's psychological well-being and employee engagement. This included psychological factors such as those suggested by Ryff (1995): autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance, and relationships with others. These were crucial for a comprehensive psychological well-being understanding and contributed to the academic staff's overall absorption, vigor, and dedication.

Underrepresentation of Academic Staff Perspectives: The literature did not adequately represent the voices and perspectives of academic staff. Research was more focused on organizational structures, and there was a gap to be addressed regarding understanding the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and preferences of academic staff in private universities.

Lack of Intervention Studies: Existing literature lacked practical interventions or strategies to improve work-life balance and employee engagement in private university settings. Studies that evaluated the effectiveness of specific interventions or policies implemented within these institutions were needed.

Temporal Gap in Recent Studies: The available literature was outdated, and a more recent study that reflected the current landscape of private universities in Uganda was needed. Changes in technology, societal norms, and organizational practices could have contributed to a dynamic environment that required updated research. Therefore, addressing these potential literature gaps enhanced the relevance and significance of this study. Conducting a thorough literature review helped the researcher to establish the current state of knowledge, identify gaps, and articulate how this research contributed to the understanding of work-life balance and employee engagement of academic staff among private universities in Uganda. This study explored the

tangible benefits of promoting work-life balance practices at the organizational level, the case being private universities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This literature review demonstrates that work-life balance practices such as flexible work arrangements, leave programmes, and wellness programmes play a vital role in supporting the psychological well-being and engagement of academic staff at private universities in Uganda's Central Region. The review further shows that when institutions adopt supportive policies, grounded in theories such as Spillover Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Psychological Contract Theory, employees are more motivated, productive, and committed; however, persistent challenges including excessive workloads, resource constraints, and limited institutional support continue to undermine staff well-being and engagement. To strengthen the evidence base and inform policy, future research should empirically examine the specific effects of work-life balance practices on psychological well-being and engagement, compare public and private university contexts, and analyze the mediating role of psychological well-being using models such as Ryff's multidimensional framework. Further studies should also explore gendered and lived experiences of academic staff, investigate the influence of digitalization and remote work on work-life balance, and evaluate targeted interventions such as wellness programmes, flexible work policies, and leadership practices to determine the most effective strategies for enhancing staff well-being and engagement in Uganda's higher education sector.

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