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Accepted: January 5, 2025

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.61426/sjbcm.v12i1.3166>

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**ABSTRACT**

*The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of strategic work-life balance practice on external labor mobility in public level five hospitals in Kenya. The study adopted the mixed research design method involved a variety of analytical methods. The Spillover Theory of work-life balance was used to explain the relationship between the variables under study. The study targeted a population of 4,388 medical officers and nurses in the fourteen public level five hospitals in Kenya, from which a sample of 353 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling methods while purposive sampling technique was used to select the eight (8) public level five hospitals representing the former provinces in Kenya. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential methods. The descriptive statistical tools include the frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The findings of this research indicated that strategic work-life balance practice was a significant predictor of external labour mobility. The study recommended that the County Executive Committee Members in the department of health to develop a policy framework to ensure that there are flexi-work programs in place, childcare policies/facilities and holding rooms (nap pods) in the health care facilities. Future researchers should focus on other strategic human resource management practices influencing external labour mobility especially on generational groups such as strategic recruitment and selection, strategic orientation/induction programs, strategic voice, strategic involvement and participation, strategic employee relations, strategic human resource planning and strategic reward management practice.*

**Key Words:** *Employee assistance programs, Leave programs, Child-care policies/ facilities, Flexi-work programs*

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**CITATION:** Kamau, J. K., Jamleck, D. M, & Mutiso, A. (2025). Strategic work-life balance practice and external labor mobility in public level five hospitals in Kenya. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 11 (1), 1 – 14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.61426/sjbcm.v12i1.3166>

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## INTRODUCTION

Human resources for health (HRH) are a strategic asset in the accomplishment of the Universal Health care coverage as envisioned in the Kenya Vision 2030 and their motivation, attraction and retention is paramount for attainment of goals and objectives both at the national and county level (Kenya Kwanza Manifesto on health, County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) and as per the Governors' health manifesto) (Makhamara et al., 2017)

The health sector in Kenya was devolved from the National government to the county government in March, 2013 and this robust sector which is quite critical for the development of the nation, has been worst hit by increased turnover rates of its human resources for health (medical officers/consultants and nurses), labor unrest led by health union bodies and brain drain metrics where the human resources for health leave the country in search of greener pastures in European countries (USA, Britain, Netherlands, Holland, New Zealand) where they are paid an hourly rate for services offered as opposed to the monthly rates they receive in Kenya. (Ndikumana, 2018).

Health professionals are very critical in service delivery and they ought to be protected from any form of workplace violence such as verbal abuse, threats, bullying, harm and sexual harassment which might be occasioned by family members, patients and colleagues is a primal factor resulting to turnover intentions since they cannot work in toxic environments that lowers their self-esteem, psychological and emotional well-being to deliver expeditiously on the job (Soto-rubio & Gasco, 2020).

K'osuri, Eggesa, and Onyango (2020) assert that health professionals perceive that the management of the respective county government hospital does not support them in the realization of their personal goals and objectives such as: fairness in promotional opportunities, disciplinary proceedings as per the discipline manual, 2022, poor supervisor-subordinate relations, lack of trust, inadequate capacity building programs, work-life imbalance

programs, lack of employee assistance programs to aid employees when facing personal problems, lack of reagents in the hospital, machines and equipment's, inadequate organizational rewards and access to information are reasons necessitating high turnover intentions of the human resources for health in Kenya.

Millennials and Generation Z are highly susceptible to quit their jobs if they feel that the working environment is toxic, newly married and have been deployed/transferred to hardship areas/regions, poor organizational justice metrics (distributive, procedural, informative) poor leadership style (autocratic), sexual harassment and workplace violence, inadequate work-life balance practices, lack of capacity building programs (training, study leave, scholarships), lack of involvement in the decision making process, inadequate organizational rewards and lack of management support which results to breach of the psychological contract and the employees physiological, social, self-esteem and self-actualization needs as opined in the Maslow hierarchy of needs theory, 1943 as cited by (Ylitormanen & Mikonnen, 2019).

Strategic Human Resource Management practices is the linkage between the human resource management practices, policies, procedures and strategies to the organizations business strategy in order to attain a strategic fit (Armstrong, 2014). Organizations adopt a strategy, road map, declaration of intent in order to ensure that the set goals and objectives is attained in a seamless mechanism by linking the human resource management practices to the organizations strategy in order to ensure that there is congruency (Al-haroon & Al-qahhtani., 2020).

Kinyili et al. (2015) examined human resource management practices (reward, promotional opportunities, work-environment practices and work-life balance practices) influencing staff retention in public health institutions in Machakos County Kenya. The findings indicated that remuneration practice and career advancement practices contributed significantly to employee

retention whereas work-life balance and working environment showed a weak relationship with employee retention. The recommendations were that the management of county hospitals should come up with work-life flexibility programs such as employee assistance programs, compressed work weeks and shift programs and incorporate better working environment practices such as supervisor-subordinate relations, provision of equipment's and machines and incorporation of health and safety practices.

The Health sector in Kenya was devolved from the National Government to the 47 county governments in March, 2013 and the Health structures include community Health Services that comprise community units (level 1). These provide primary health care services at the sub-county level by facilitating individuals, households and communities to embrace appropriate healthy behavior's and recognizing signs and symptoms of conditions requiring referrals.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

The Health sector performs a pivotal role in the social welfare of the Kenyan population since the onset of devolution in March 2013 (KMPG, 2013). However, the sector has been experiencing high exit of human resources for health (HRH-medical officers and nurses) as per the respective county government integrated payroll personnel records (IPPD) through resignations, inter-county transfer requests, request for unpaid leave to various state departments and agencies (Kenya Medical training College, Ministry of defense and Health respectively) private institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGO'S), request for secondment and transfer of service to various government institutions. This high labor turnover of qualified and experienced human resources for health (Medical officers and nurses) has negatively affected health service delivery (Alkarabesh, O.H.M; Alkarabesh, Z.H.M, 2022). The Kenya National Bureau of statistics report (KNBS, 2022), portray that Kenya has the highest level of brain drain in the African Continent at the rate of 51% where human

resources for health (HRH-medical officers and nurses) are migrating to European and Asian countries in search of better career prospects.

During the financial year 2021/2022, 2022/23 and 2023/2024 Coast General Hospital, Embu Teaching and Referral Hospital, Kakamega Level Five Hospital, Mama Lucy Kibaki Hospital, Garissa Level Five Hospital, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Hospital , Naivasha Level Five Hospital and Nyeri Level Five Hospital have reported that 45% is the average turnover rate of medical officers and nurses exiting the public service in search for better career opportunities and this has negatively affected service delivery and the aesthetic factor (image) in the county health facilities (County HR Records, 2022& 2023).

Inadequate human resources for health (HRH) in public Hospitals in Kenya is a major challenge in the dispensation of quality health care services as envisioned in Kenya's Vision 2030. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends ratio of doctor to patient is 1:1,000 as opposed to Kenyan standards of 1: 17,000 whereas ratio of nurses to population is 25:10,000 which indicates that the country has acute shortage which hampers service delivery, quality of healthcare provided and results to increased workloads to staff which makes them unable to effectively and efficiently take care of the patients in the wards (Odebiyi, 2021).

#### **Research Objective**

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of strategic work-life balance on external labor mobility in Public Level Five hospitals in Kenya.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

##### **Bersky Spill-Over Theory of Work Life Balance- Bersky (1985)**

Spill-over as a process whereby experiences in one role affects experiences in another, rendering the roles more alike (Auka & Nyanga'u, 2020). Mungania (2017), states that the spill-over theory of work-life balance traced its roots from the

findings of (Bersky, 1985) who asserts that workers carry their feelings, emotions, attitudes, skills and behavior's that they establish at work into their family life and vice-versa. The spill-over theory has two dimensions: positive spill-over theory and negative spill-over theory, it considers the multi-dimensional aspects of work and family relationship. Prasad and Mishra (2021) define work to family positive spill-over as satisfaction and achievement in one domain may bring along satisfaction and achievement in another domain. Organizations have to integrate an array of work-life balance practices such as compressed workweek, flextime, family leave, employee assistance programs, job sharing, job splitting and compressed work hours as antecedents of work-life balance that results to employee satisfaction and increased organizational productivity (Begail et al., 2020).

The management of an organization should treat its employees with utmost care as human resources are an organization's greatest asset. The firm should incorporate work-life flexibility programs in order to satisfy the employees' psychological contract and through that it results to a satisfied and committed employee group (Abidemi & Ahmad, 2018). Firms that create an enabling a conducive environment for their employees end up becoming an employer of choice as employees and potential job applicants would prefer to be associated with such reputable brands (Amarneh et al., 2021). Organizations that need to be branded as an employer of choice ought to introduce work-life balance policies most especially on child care policies and facilities where breastfeeding mothers can come to the work place with their young ones and take time to feed the toddlers and most importantly the firm has hired the best nannies to take care of the young children as their parents are working. This concept of child-care policies results to high employee satisfaction rates and a committed employee group (Chungo & Anyieni, 2019).

Kurnia and Widigo (2021) assert that through the integration of work-life flexibility programs by the

management of organizations, had the following positive benefits to the employee group, life satisfaction, improves employer-employee relations, a happy and satisfied employee group, reduces tension in the firm, promotes psychological well-being, promotes physical health and greater job satisfaction have been benefits positively correlated to positive spill-over effect. The authors further asserts that through integration of work-life flexibility programs, the organization can attain the following advantages, attract new talent in the firm, improves both employee and organizational productivity, acts as a retention strategy, improves employee commitment to the firm, reduction of absenteeism rates, recruit and retain the best talent, reduce employee turnover intentions, promotion of ethical behavior among employees and also attain organizational citizenship behavior, better organizational performance and helps in improved recruiting and selection processes ( Odengo & Kiiru, 2019).

Onuorah (2020) defines the work-family negative spillover as the problems and despair in one domain may bring along the same emotion into another domain. If employees working in an organization feel that their needs and wants are satisfied, it results to a strained relationship in the workplace and increased employer-employee conflicts and this can trickle down to the family domain, because an unhappy employee will be unproductive both at work and at home.

Work-family role conflict can have detrimental effects on the employee such as a strained marital life, where the employee fails to provide basic needs (physiological needs) such as food, clothing, shelter and sexual needs due to depression, anxiety disorders, stress and the employee may up getting occupational diseases (coronary diseases) due to high stress levels in the firm. This negative spill-over from work-family domain or vice-versa can have detrimental effects to both the employee and the organization in that the employee absents him/herself from work due to health complications lowering productivity and increased costs to the

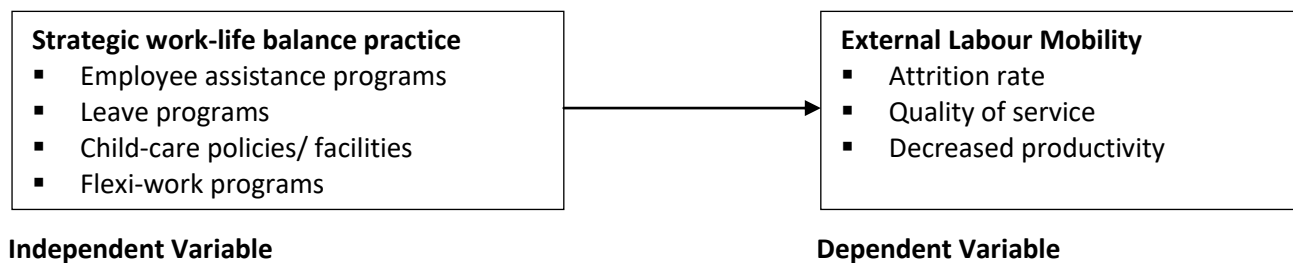
firm in form of training and time for orientation if the employee quits his/her position (Cao et al., 2020)

Negative work to family spillover has the following negative effects, alcohol and drug substance abuse, withdrawal from family interaction, increased family conflict in marriage, less knowledge of the children’s experiences, less involvement in housework chores. The spillover of work into family showed that both men and women did not have enough time to spend with their families and

moreover work pressure affected the quality of their family life (Mungania, 2017).

Linking the spill-over theory to the healthcare sector in Kenya, county hospitals should design better work-life flexibility programs and design an amicable employee assistance program to cater for the employees personal problems in the work place such as long term illness, financial management, retirement or lay- offs, parenting issues, relationship issues and elder and child care programs and carry out a sensitization program on effects of drug and alcohol abuse (Kinya, 2018).

**Conceptual framework**



**Fig 1: Conceptual Framework**

According to data from the Kenya Medical Practitioners Pharmacists and Dentist Union (KMPDU) and Kenya National Union of Nurses (KNUN), the two union bodies report that their members have been greatly affected by mental health issues which is critically attributed to loss of lives of patients under their care and also lack of implementation of strategic work life balance programs in the specific hospital which has resulted to suicidal ideation, chronic depression, post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), Obsessive compulsive dissonance (OCD), severe job burnout and drug and substance abuse which can be alleviated by implementation of mental health programs/employee assistance program in the respective county hospital in order to protect loss of lives of the human resource for health and continuity of health related services (Chebet & Awino, 2023)

The management of the public level five hospitals should ensure that they allocate efficient and

realistic duties and responsibilities to their employee group to create better cohesion and employer-employee relations in the workplace. When employees are aware of their set expectations and targets which are realistic, they work hard to attain the organizational productivity whereas if the targets are unrealistic and excessive long hours are required for the employee to accomplish the task, it results to work related stress and work-role conflict which can have negative effects on the quality of life of the employee ( Losarati &Hasanati, 2019)

**METHODOLOGY**

The researcher adopted the concurrent mixed methods research design. The target population of this study comprised of 4,388 (four thousand, three hundred and eighty eight) human resources for health (HRH-Medical Officers and Nurses) in public level five hospitals in Kenya.

Purposive sampling was used by the researcher to select the eight (8) public level five hospitals in Kenya. The scope of this research was limited to the influence of strategic human resource management practices on external labor mobility in Eight (8) Public Level Five Hospitals in Kenya namely Embu Teaching & Referral Hospital (Eastern province), Naivasha Level Five Hospital (Rift-Valley province), Kakamega Level Five Hospital (Western province), Coast General Hospital (Coast province), Mama Lucy Kibaki Level Five Hospital (Nairobi province), Nyeri Level Five Hospital (Central province), Garissa Level Five Hospital (North eastern province) and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching & Referral Hospital (Nyanza province) to represent the former eight (8) provinces in (KNBS, 2023).

Primary data was collected with the aid of a questionnaire. Secondary data was obtained from existing literature in Human resources for health (HRH) Strategic work-plan 2014-2018, County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), books, organization policy and procedure manual, stakeholders reports from (NITA, DOSH), dissertations and from the internet to acquire in-depth data pertaining the current study.

A pilot study was conducted on 35 employees (15 medical officers (general doctors and consultants) and 20 nurses (enrolled, registered or nursing officers) from Kiambu Level Five hospital to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Kiambu Level five was not part of the study sample and it represented other public level five hospitals under review.

Reliability was tested on thirty -five (35) questionnaires that were tested with randomly selected employees who were included in the final study sample. The thirty -five (35) questionnaires were coded and input into SPSS version 22 for running the Cronbach Alpha reliability test (Sekaran, 2010).

Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Descriptive methods include percentages, quartiles, measures of central tendency, deviation or measures of deviation. Inferential statistics include Pearson's correlation co-efficient, regression models Chi-square and Anova. Information was sorted, coded and input into the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 22) for production of graphs, tables, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

## **FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Response Rate**

In this study, 353 questionnaires were distributed to the sampled respondents, 331 questionnaires' were filled and returned.

### **Descriptive Findings**

#### **Strategic Work-Life Balance Practice**

The Study sought to determine the influence of strategic work-life balance practice on external labour mobility in public level five hospitals in Kenya. Respondents' opinions on the influence of strategic work-life balance by their respective health facilities based on the Likert scale items are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Results for Strategic Work-Life Balance Practice on External Labor Mobility**  
 The study used the parameters where the: 1=strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=

STATEMENTS	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	S.A (%)	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION
The management of this hospital has implemented an employee assistance program policy to assist staff.	41 (12.5)	25 (7.6)	82 (24.9)	103 (31.3)	78 (23.7)	3.56	1.276
Work-life balance programs in this hospital motivate me to work hard and increase my loyalty to this hospital	30 (9.1)	30 (9.1)	104 (31.6)	90 (27.4)	75 (22.8)	3.89	1.199
This hospital provides leave programs to its employees (maternity, paternity, annual, unpaid, compassionate, child adoption, sick leave and leave for sportsman/women) as per existing Government procedures	19 (5.8)	60 (18.3)	107 (32.6)	92 (28.0)	50 (15.2)	3.29	1.107
My work schedule allows me to strike a balance between work and personal responsibilities	30 (9.1)	36 (11.0)	92 (28.0)	87 (26.5)	83 (25.3)	3.48	1.236
The management of this hospital has implemented child care policies and facilities (Breastfeeding rooms and hired nannies) for members of staff within the organization	54 (16.4)	35 (10.6)	60 (18.2)	76 (23.0)	105 (31.8)	3.43	1.443
Childcare facilities provided in this hospital motivate me to perform my services diligently and in an expeditious manner	61 (18.5)	21 (6.4)	60 (18.2)	104 (31.5)	84 (25.5)	3.48	1.411
Employee assistance programs provided in this hospital are meant to improve on employee well-being and reduce turnover intentions	27 (8.4)	24 (7.5)	85 (26.5)	115 (35.8)	70 (21.8)	3.55	1.158
The employee assistance program in this hospital comprises of counseling programs, Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) groups, rehabilitation centers and employee welfare programs	36 (10.9)	28 (8.5)	85 (25.8)	102 (30.9)	79 (23.9)	3.50	1.248
Approval of leave programs in this hospital is done in a timely manner by both the immediate supervisor and authorized officer	34 (10.4)	26 (7.9)	88 (26.8)	83 (25.3)	97 (29.6)	4.23	1.224

**Strongly Agree**

According to study findings in Table 1; on average the respondents agreed that the management of the hospital had implemented an employee assistance program policy to assist staff when facing

personal related problems that might affect productivity with a mean of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 1.276; a majority of the respondents agreed that work-life balance programs in the



hospital motivate them to work hard and increase their loyalty to the hospital as shown by a mean of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 1.199; on average the respondents were neutral on whether the hospital provides leave programs to its employees (maternity, paternity, annual, unpaid, compassionate, child adoption, sick leave and leave for sportsmen/women) as per existing Government procedures as shown by a mean of 3.29 and standard deviation of 1.107; a majority of the respondents agreed that their work schedule allows them to strike a balance between work and personal responsibilities as indicated by a mean of 3.48 and standard deviation of 1.236.

On average the respondents were neutral on whether the management of the hospital has implemented childcare policies and facilities (Breastfeeding rooms and hired nannies) for members of staff within the organization as indicated by a mean of 4.43 and a standard deviation of 1.443; the respondents were neutral on whether the childcare facilities provided in the hospital motivate them to perform their services diligently and expeditiously as indicated by a mean of 3.68 and standard deviation of 1.411.

Further, majority of the respondents agreed that employee assistance programs provided in the hospital are meant to improve employee well-being and reduce turnover intentions as indicated by a mean of 3.55 and standard deviation of 1.158; a majority of the respondents agreed that the employee assistance program in the hospital comprises of counseling programs, alcoholic anonymous(AA) groups, rehabilitation centers and employee welfare programs as indicated by a mean of 3.50 and standard deviation of 1.248; the majority of respondents agreed that the approval of leave programs in the hospital is done in a timely manner by both the immediate supervisor and authorized officer as indicated by a mean of 4.23 and standard deviation of 1.224.

The findings in table 1 imply that a majority of the respondents agreed with the indicators that were used to operationalize strategic work life balance

practices that means that the respective public level five hospitals were putting up measures to curb turnover rates.

The qualitative findings reveal that the respondents stated that implementation of strategic work-life balance practices in their respective county hospitals played a major role in fostering a teamwork culture between the management and the human resources for health thereby reducing industrial strikes that results to paralysis in the dispensation of health care services. The respondents cited that through strategic work life balance programs such as employee assistance programs, they felt a sense of belonging in the organization, fulfilment of their psychological contract and fosters organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The respondents cited that there is need of a clear work-load analysis to ensure that the human resources for health have an adequate balance between their work and personal activities.

In addition, the respondents stated that implementation of strategic worklife balance programs in the county hospital were quite instrumental in the following ways: motivation tool, retention and attraction tool, well satisfied employee group, improves customer satisfaction levels and communicates a culture of value proposition in the organization.

The respondents mentioned that employee assistance programs, childcare policies, flexi-work programs and leave programs were types of work life balance practices that played a pivotal role in intent to leave or intent to stay. However, there was a challenge on approval of leave programs in some public level five hospitals due to acute staff shortage (inadequate human resource planning) and approval of leave programs for medical officers and nurses who were hired on short term and fixed contracts which contravened the provisions of the Employment Act, 2007 (section. 28)

The findings of this study relate with studies done by Znidarsic and Maric (2021) conducted a research on the relationship between work family balance,

job satisfaction and work engagement are consistent with the current research findings where respondents assert that implementation and introduction of work life balance programs such as mental health programs, employee assistance program, paid vacations, time off to take care of sick child or family member are closely related with employee motivation thus an employee becomes motivated to work in an environment where he/she is treated like an asset and this has positive ripple effect on performance and decrease in employee turnover intentions.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of strategic work life balance practice on external labour mobility in public level five hospital in Kenya. Analysis of the data through descriptive methods revealed that a significant proportion of the respondents agreed that strategic work life balance practices indeed influenced external labour mobility of human resource for health in the public health sector. The correlation analysis revealed a meaningful and statistically significant relationship between strategic work life balance practice and external labour mobility. The study results underscored that within the context of Kenya's Public Health Sector, strategic work life balance practice had a substantial influence on external labour mobility implying that an improved strategic work life balance practice results in decrease of External labour mobility.

The findings of this research correlate with the research findings of Gragano, Simbula and Miglioretti (2020) who investigated the importance of work-life balance practices on work family and work health balance. The findings implied that implementation of strategic work life balance practices is instrumental in cultivating a culture of trust in the organization and thus the employees feel a sense of belonging in working for the organization.

Strategic work life balance practices are specifically aimed at ensuring that there is a balance between work and life demands so that the employee's

motivation and commitment levels can be enhanced in such a conducive environment. It is imperative for the management of organizations and most especially in the public health sector to implement strategic work life balance practices which are ideally aligned to the organizations vision and mission in order to attain congruence and business excellence.

The findings of this study are significantly aligned with the spill over theory of work life balance as espoused by Bersky, 1985 where the author asserts that it is important for employees to have a positive work life balance domain in order to avert a negative spill in any of the two domains which may be as a result of inter role conflict in the domains which can have negative consequences such as marital strife, low libido, divorce, less time of handling family / personal affairs, poor hygiene, poor dietary habits and can result to drug and substance abuse.

The management of health institutions in Kenya should ensure that there are flexi-work programs aimed at ensuring that the human resources for health have rested adequately in order to boost their energy and mental health, speedy approval of leave programs by the immediate and authorized officers, an employee assistance program to assist staff who are suffering from personal problems which can directly and indirectly affect both individual and organizational productivity and friendly child care policies/facilities ( child care centers and approval of child adoption leave)

According to Kurmar and Sharma (2022) who investigated the effectiveness of flexible working arrangement on employees productivity in the information technology sector the findings of their study strongly correlate with the current study on the premise that introducing flexi-work programs in the organization has pivotal benefits on both the organization and the employee group in the following ways: reduces absenteeism rates , foster a culture of collaborative climate, improves employees quality of life and mental health, reduction of stress and burnout, improves

organizational productivity, employees can freely utilize their talents for overall organizational success and fosters diversity and inclusion.

The study findings also portray limitations in the implementation of strategic work life balance practices in the public health sector which include: increased costs of managing strategic work life balance practices such as construction of child care facilities and flexi-work schedule, lack of control system, unrealistic demands from staff, lack of top management support in the implementation of strategic work life balance practices and lack of a comprehensive employee assistance program component inclusive of rehabilitation programs, cross intervention measures, substance abuse, mental health services, stress management health and wellness programs grief therapy, marital and family counselling services.

The results / findings of Zulu and Mthembu (2023) who conducted an empirical research on Job satisfaction and retention rates of employee in various sectors in South Africa, idealized that organizations who implement a strategic work life balance practice / program will reap maximum positive effects in the long run mostly on reduction of employee turnover intentions and overall organizational productivity. Employees sense of belonging will be nurtured by organizations that implement strategic human resource management practices are aimed to motivate, attract and retain staff in the enterprise.

The findings of this study also correlate with the expectancy theory by Victor Vroom as espoused by Vroom (1964) where the author asserts that employee's behaviors is motivated by anticipated results of consequences. The theory is guided by three components namely valence, instrumentality and expectancy. To accelerate employee's performance, it is vital for the management in the health sector to implement strategic human resource management practices such as strategic work life balance practices and programs to motivate, attract and retain staff thus averting

turnover intentions and labour unrest in the public health sectors.

The findings also significantly correlate with the results of Bruck and Allen (2022) who assert that work family conflict can have negative ramifications on the employees work domain in instances where employees don't report to work on time, increased absenteeism rates, highly irritable change of mood swings and negative attitude towards work and life. The authors assert that it is prudent to ensure that there is minimal strain on the employees part during the implementation of strategic work life balance practices. Negative family conflict can result to marital strife, less time spending with the children and family and family members, intoxication and can also result to domestic violence in case the situation is not mitigated upon.

The findings also strongly correlate with Mukulu and Olaleye (2021) who conducted a research on maternity leave provisions and maternity protection in Kenya. The study findings indicated that employee's approval of their leave was not done in a fastidious manner and some employees became disgruntled when they were called off from their leave without adequate prior notice which is a contravention of the employment Act, 2003. Some public hospitals contravened existing government procedures when denying employees maternity leave or refusal to allocate lighter duties to the expectant employees to protect them from any occupational hazards which are detrimental to their health.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to the study findings, it was concluded that strategic work life balance practice was a significant predictor of external labour mobility. Strategic work life balance practice plays a pivotal role in employee motivation, attraction and retention and its critical for the management of public level five hospitals in Kenya to institute work-life balance practices such as an employee assistance program, flexi-work programs, child care policies/facilities and leave programs.

According to the study findings, the respondents (medical officers and nurses) asserted that implementation of strategic work life balance practices have a direct positive effect/ influence on the employees in the following ways: fulfills the psychological contract, enhances organizational image, improves employees job satisfaction, boosts the employees mental health, the employees likelihood of being associated with the health facility becomes more positive, the employee group feels a sense of belonging, the employees affective commitment to the organization is accelerated by the implementation of child care policies, speedy approval of leave and facilitation through nap pods or resting rooms,.

Strategic work life balance practices have proved quite effective in health facilities especially in instances where there is top management support and budgetary allocation on the same. The management of the organizations ought to develop employee assistance programs to assist employees who are facing personal problems that can negatively affect the organizations productivity and employee well-being.

Human resources for health are a strategic asset in the attainment of the universal health care coverage (UHC) and so their retention is imperative in order for the fulfilment of the health agenda/manifesto in various county governments. There ought to be a clear balance between their work and life domain to avoid inter-role conflict, which has negative consequences to both the organization and the employee group.

The management of the public level hospitals in Kenya should evaluate the benefits of implementation of strategic work life balance practices versus the costs incurred in order for the facility to attain a competitive advantage over its competitors and a strategic fit.

The County Executive Committee Members in the department of health who are tasked with policy formulation as per section 46 (1 a,b,c,d) of the County Government Act, 2012 should develop a

policy framework to ensure that there are flexi-work programs in place, childcare policies/facilities and holding rooms (nap pods) in the health care facilities to motivate, attract and retain the human resources for health.

The County Executive should develop an employee assistance program ( counselling programs, rehabilitation programs, mental health assessment and breaks, formation of A.A groups) to assist county staff who are facing personal problems, which might spillover to the organization thus affecting organizational productivity.

The immediate supervisors and the authorized officers in the health department should approve employees leave in a timely manner (annual, maternity, child adoption leave, exams leave, and leave for sportsmen/women) as per the prevailing regulatory frameworks in order to cultivate a culture of trust and cordial relations between the employer and the employees group.

#### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Future researchers should focus on other strategic human resource management practices influencing external labour mobility especially on generational groups (Baby boomers, generational X, millennials, generation Z & Alpha) such as strategic recruitment and selection, strategic orientation/induction programs, strategic voice, strategic involvement and participation, strategic employee relations, strategic human resource planning and strategic reward management practice.

Future scholars should also conduct a similar study in private hospitals in Kenya for comparative analysis and incorporate other cadres in the health sector during the research such as mortuary attendants, health administrators, medical laboratory technologist/technician, pharmacists/pharmaceutical technologists; health records management officers, radiologists/radiographers, public health officers/assistants, nutrition and dietetics officers etc.

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