
**WORK LIFE BALANCE, CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION AMONG
INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN KAMPALA**

1 Alex Irumba, 2 Victor Mugabi

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

ABSTRACT

Employee retention is core for all organizations. Organizations which retain employees are able to keep old-cadres who are highly talented, experienced, knowledgeable and exceptional performers. However, employee retention remains a serious threat among international non-governmental organizations. This study examined the relationship between work life balance, career development and employee retention among international non-governmental organizations in Kampala. The study was a cross sectional design along with a quantitative research approach. A sample size of 113 international non-governmental organizations was used, from which lower staff/operational staff were selected to participate. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. SPSS v. 25 was used to analyse data, obtaining frequency tables, correlation and regression analyses to interpret results. The study found that work life balance is positively associated with employee retention. It was found that career development is positively associated with employee retention. The study found that jointly work life balance and career development significantly predict variations in employee retention. Both work life balance and career development were found to significantly predict employee retention, with career development being the better predictor. The study concludes that work-life balance and career development serve as key ingredients for promoting employee retention. This research recommends: enhancing career development; and improving work-life balance to improve employee retention. Identified areas for further research include; Investigate the relationship between work-life balance, career development and employee retention targeting various types of NGOs; Examine the relationship between work-life balance, career

development and employee retention in NGOs focusing on employees across different managerial levels; and carryout mixed research investigating the relationship between work-life balance, career development and employee retention in NGOs.

Key words: work life balance, career development, employee retention and international non-governmental organizations

Background to the study

Employee retention is a basic requirement for all organizations; regardless of their size and nature (Kundu & Lata, 2017). When organizations retain employees, they are able to retain old cadres who are highly talented, experienced, knowledgeable and exceptional (Ronet et al., 2023). Against this background, Ssali, Onen and Gyaviira (2019) highlight that employees have emerged as one of the key resources enabling the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage; the reason why employee retention is inevitable. Likewise, employee retention protects organizations from costs associated with recruiting, selecting and replacing employees each time they leave (Matongolo, Kasekende & Mafabi, 2018). For this reason, employee retention has become a major issue among HR scholars and practitioners (Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

A Work Institute survey (2019) shows that more than 32% of employees leave their careers annually for career development. The number of promotional opportunities offered to employees has steadily decreased by 45% since 2013, and the number of organizations offering training has decreased by 170% (Moses, 2023). On the other hand, the survey shows that the number of employees who leave for reasons of working life since 2013 is an average of 20%. Most employers put employees on tight work schedules and do not adhere to vacation programs (Jackline et al., 2023).

In the same context, the rate of staff termination in Uganda is increasing among International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), such as World Vision. As reported in the Employee Attrition Report (2018-2020), 137 employees voluntarily

resigned, of which 17.5% emphasized work-life balance, while 64.2% cited career development as the primary reason for leaving (Isaac et al. , 2023). In 2019, a total of 141 employees, of which 92.7% were operational employees, quit, citing family and career opportunities as the main reasons (Employee Exit Report, 2019). A similar scenario emerged in 2020, where 28.9% and 39.1% indicated work-life balance and career development as primary for their decision to voluntarily resign (Oromo et al., 2023). In 2019, Save the Children also saw voluntary redundancy of about 122 employees, according to the same report. Similarly, 23.4% of them also attributed their voluntary resignations to unfair work life and career development policies. If staff retention is not addressed, INGOs will face a steady brain drain and experience unprecedented costs in recruiting, selecting and placing staff (Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

Statement of the problem

Employee retention is inevitable because employees actively participate in the fulfillment of tasks and responsibilities. In addition, organizations minimize unprecedented costs incurred during the recruitment process (Jackline et al., 2023). However, many international NGOs in Kampala continue to report increasing numbers of voluntary resignations and an increase in staff with high intentions to leave (Moses, 2023). At World Vision, the number of employees who voluntarily resigned increased from 137 in 2018 to 141 in 2019 (Employee Exit Report, 2019). In 2019, the Employee Attrition Report also documented an increase in voluntary staff resignations from 122 in 2019 to 130 in 2020 among Save the children staff, where their voluntary resignation was highly consequential for unclear work life and career development. With the above evidence, this must be minimized, if not thoroughly controlled, INGOs will permanently lose highly skilled and exceptional performers. It could be likely that the low staff retention in INGOs can be attributed to a lack of work-life balance and career development (Nicholas et al., 2023).

Research Objectives

- *To establish the relationship between work life balance and employee retention among international non-governmental organizations in Kampala.*
- *To assess the relationship between career development and employee retention among international non-governmental organizations in Kampala.*
- *To examine the joint effect of work life balance and career development on employee retention among international non-governmental organizations in Kampala.*

Research Questions

- *What is the relationship between work life balance and employee retention among international non-governmental organizations in Kampala?*
- *What is the relationship between career development and employee retention among international non-governmental organizations in Kampala?*
- *What is the joint effect of work life balance and career development on employee retention among international non-governmental organizations in Kampala?*

Methodology

Research Design

This study was a cross-sectional research design along with a quantitative research approach. The design was used because it facilitates obtainment of solutions to the research phenomenon under investigation within a short period of time. Moreover, the design is suitable for studies whose timeframe is short, as it was the case with this study. It allows the researcher to obtain data which is based on to make conclusions and recommendations within a snapshot (Creswell, 2014).

Study Population

This study population comprised of 157 International Non-Government Organizations in Kampala (National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organizations, 2021). These organizations also served as the unit of analysis in the study.

Sample size and sampling technique

A sample size of 113 International Non-Government Organizations in Kampala was selected, based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size selection. The study applied sample random sampling to select the INGOs which actually participated in this research. The researcher wrote each organization on a separate piece of paper before they were pulled together in one sampling frame. The researcher fully mixed the sampling frame before picking one single item after another without replacing to determine the INGOs to participate. This technique was used because it ensures that every element stands equal chance of being selected, hence reducing bias in sampling (Creswell, 2014).

Data analysis

Data obtained from the field was edited, cleaned, classified and coded, after which it was captured in SPSS (v. 25) for analysis (Nelson et al., 2022). The researcher obtained a frequency table, correlation and regression analyses to interpret results. The frequency table was used to present results in regards to demographic characteristics, interpreted based on the percent values. Correlation analysis was used to examine the nature of the relationship, positive or negative between the between variables using E-views (Nelson et al., 2023). The study used Pearson correlation analysis because it is the most accurate model for exploring statistical relationship given the fact that it is based on the method of covariance. Regression analysis was used to examine the predictability of studied variables towards the dependent variable.

RESULTS

Correlation Analysis

This study used Pearson Correlation Analysis along with narrative statements to determine the nature of the relationship between studied variables. Under the Pearson correlation, the study used “positive” or “negative” relationship to indicate the nature of the statistical result obtained regarding a particular objective. Key

narratives corresponding to each objective were also identified and presented, interpreted, and compared with the statistical results before a final conclusive remark regarding the association or relationship between studied variables was made for each objective. These results are presented in table 4.3.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable/Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Work Life balance (1)	1								
<i>Flexible working schedule (2)</i>	.313**	1							
<i>Leave Policy (3)</i>	.463**	.383**	1						
<i>Dependent care Arrangement (4)</i>	.206**	.574*	.305**	1					
Career Development (5)	.404*	.279*	.431*	.234*	1				
<i>Training (6)</i>	.264**	.607**	.339**	.648**	.253**	1			
<i>Promotion (7)</i>	.422**	0.138	.291**	.179*	.567**	.160*	1		
<i>Coaching and Mentoring (8)</i>	.206**	.202**	.206**	0.101	.319**	.175*	0.101	1	
Employee Retention (9)	.514*	.391*	.475*	.315*	.631*	.420*	.294*	.487*	1

Notes: n=180, * $p < .05$ level (2-tailed), ** $p < .01$ level (2-tailed)

Source; Primary Data

Work life balance and Employee Retention

Table 1 indicated a significant and positive association between work life balance and employee retention ($r = .514$, $p < .01$). In this case, the results meant that enhancing work life balance would enhance employee retention. The results further revealed a

significant and positive relationship between flexible working schedule and employee retention ($r=.391$, $p<.01$). In this case, these results meant that ensuring a flexible working schedule would increase the propensity of employee retention. Furthermore, the results established that there is a significant and positive relationship between leave policy and employee retention ($r=.475$, $p<.01$). This meant that improving leave policy is more likely to translate in employee retention. Moreover, the results obtained a significant and positive relationship between dependent care arrangements and employee retention ($r=.315$, $p<.01$). This meant that boosting dependent care arrangement would enhance the propensity of employee retention. Overall, these results implied that work life balance is crucial in employee retention among international non-governmental organizations in Kampala.

Career Development and Employee Retention

Correlation results in table 1 indicated significant and positive relationship between career development and employee retention ($r=.631$, $p<.01$). The results meant that improving career development programs would improve employee retention. Moreover, the results indicated that there exists a significant and positive relationship between training and employee retention ($r=.420$, $p<.01$), a significant and positive relationship between promotion and employee retention ($r=.294$, $p<.01$) as well as a significant and positive relationship between coaching and mentoring as well as employee retention ($r=.487$, $p<.01$). From these results, it is implied that training, promotion, coaching and mentoring are more likely to enhance employee retention among international non-government organizations in Kampala.

Regression Analysis

The study used multiple regression analysis to examine the predictability of the independent variables (work life balance, career development) towards the dependent variable (Employee retention). These results are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
<i>(Constant)</i>	0.587	0.257		2.289	0.023
<i>Work life Balance</i>	0.328	0.063	0.309	5.210	0.000
<i>Career Development</i>	0.614	0.072	0.506	8.534	0.000
	<i>r</i>	<i>r²</i>	<i>Adj. r²</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	.692 ^a	0.479	0.473	81.216	.000 ^b
<i>a. Dependent Variable: Employee Retention</i>					
<i>b. Predictors: (Constant), Work life Balance, Career Development</i>					

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 obtained Adj. $r^2=.479$; Sig. =.000 which implied that jointly work life balance and career development significantly predict 47.9% of the variations in employee retention among workers across international NGOs in Kampala. Furthermore, the results indicate standardized coefficients ($B=.309$, $t=5.210$, $p<.05$) in relation to work life balance, ($B=.506$, $t=8.534$, $p<.05$) in relation to career development. Based on the p-values, the results signify that work life balance and career development are both significant predictors of employee retention among international NGOs in Kampala. That said, the comparative analysis of the Beta-values ($B=.309$ and $B=.506$) reveal that career development is the best predictor of employee retention among international NGOs in Kampala

Conclusion

From the practical perspective, it is conclusive that enhancing work-life balance will raise employees' desire to remain within an organization for a reasonable period. Work-life balance is an ingredient which an organization can adopt to make sure that employees can balance between work-related responsibilities and non-work-related

demands (Mark et al., 2023). Thus, policy makers and managers need to adopt a working framework that grants employees this kind of freedom. Whereas, organizations can exhibit work-life balance in a couple of ways, herein, the study demonstrates that emphasis should be directed towards working on the leave policy, providing favorable working schedule, as well as dependent care arrangements as far as employee retention is concerned.

Recommendations

International non-governmental organizations should enhance career development to improve employee retention. In this program, they should focus on providing promotion opportunities, training, as well as coaching and mentoring. These initiatives will increase hope, confidence, and expectations among employees so that their desire to commit to the organization is increased.

Work-life balance should be improved in international non-governmental organizations to improve employee retention. These organizations must make sure that employees are subjected to favorable working schedules, institute an attractive leave policy and dependent care arrangement. Employees create a perfect environment for staff where they balance between work-related and non-work-related demands.

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