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**Flexible Work Schedules and Employee Performance among Public Universities in  
Kenya**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study examined the influence of flexible work schedules on employee performance in Kenya public sector, focusing on the public universities in the coastal region of Kenya.

**Methodology:** A descriptive research design was employed, using qualitative data from structured questionnaires distributed among university academic staffs. Descriptive and analytical research design was applied. The census sampling methods was used due to few number of respondents.

**Findings:** The findings revealed that employees highly value flexible working hours with majority of respondents indicating it is a strong motivator. Flexible working schedules boost employee performance in Kenya universities through reduction of stress, work-family conflicts, reduced turnover, and improvement of organizational commitments, boost morale, and improve overall job satisfaction. The study concludes that flexible works schedule in universities is essential in enhancing performance.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The study affirms the spillover Theory which suggest for a balance between work-related and family related factors to enhance productivity. For practice the study recommends that employers to give employees more control over working schedules to raise their performance at work. Policymakers need to prioritize sustainable, non-monetary motivators in human resource strategies to improve service delivery and employee engagement.

**Keywords:** *Flexible Work Schedule, Staff Performance, Public Universities*

**JEL Classification:** *J21, M12, I23*

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## INTRODUCTION

Organizations continually seek strategies to achieve sustained high levels of performance through their workforce. This involves focusing on how individuals can be effectively motivated through various means, including incentives, rewards, provision of meals, flexible working hours, modern working tools, safe and conducive work environment and the nature of their work within the organizational context (Menezes & Kelliher, 2019)

The objective is to develop motivation processes and a work environment that ensure individuals deliver results aligning with management expectations. Non-financial rewards include flexible working hours.

Globally, employee motivation is widely acknowledged as a critical component of human resource management due to its significant impact on both individual and organizational performance. Since its establishment in 1919, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has consistently championed employee motivation. The organization's core mission is to promote the development of fair and decent economic and working conditions (Raja & Suaidi, 2022). Its founding principles highlight concerns over labor conditions marked by injustice, hardship, widespread deprivation, and the failure of nations to adopt humane labor standards. The ILO seeks to enhance employee motivation by advocating for improved and regulated working hours, protection of workers' rights (, 2023). While 60% of European companies still rely on annual employee performance appraisals, 39% have transitioned to more frequent evaluations, such as quarterly or monthly reviews (ILO, 2023). In contrast, performance management in the Asia-Pacific region tends to focus more on salary adjustments rather than the work schedule on employee performance.

The public service has played a crucial role in China's development, with ongoing reforms over the past two decades aimed at strengthening the country's human resource systems. A formal civil service system was introduced in 1993 and strategic initiatives have since focused on revitalizing organizational culture and promoting ethical standards (Liu et al., 2023). The 2012 Report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the need to enhance government agencies as part of efforts to drive economic and social progress. As a result, public sector wages have been raised, with an expectation for improved responsiveness to working hours and schedules and performance from civil servants (Liu et al., 2023).

In Nigeria, Anthonia, Okeke and Ikechukwu (2019) noted that the public sector faces several challenges, including low productivity, poor coordination, high employee turnover, and inadequate staffing due to low morale, negative attitudes toward work, and reduced productivity. In Tanzania, Eliakim, Matiku and Kisawike (2023) reports that public sector employees are largely dissatisfied with the internal organizational environment, which has led to a decline in poor performance. While financial incentives are often considered primary motivators, they are not always sustainable or available in the public sector. There is growing recognition that non-monetary forms motivation including flexible working schedule and satisfying work (Hamzah & Matkhairuddin, 2023).

In Kenya, the performance of public sector employees has been under scrutiny. However, empirical research examining the effectiveness of non-monetary motivators within Kenya's public universities institutions remains limited. Employee performance in the public universities sector is influenced by more than just salary but a need non-monetary rewards

including flexible working schedule. Apuko and Jeremiah, (2022) found that non-monetary rewards explained 62.7% of the variation in employee performance in Homa Bay County. Similarly, These findings underscore the importance of non-monetary motivators in enhancing employee performance within Kenya's public sector.

The Kenyan public universities job market exhibits variations in reward practices, particularly in terms of non-monetary incentives including flexible work schedule, as reported by the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA, 2020). According to KIPPRA, there are significant wage disparities between the public and private sectors, with the public sector generally offering a wage premium. This suggests that state corporations including public universities in Kenya employ a diverse range of reward strategies, including work-life balance initiatives like flexible work schedule. According to the report, the unique challenges unique to Kenyan public universities include staff workload, performance contracts and job rigidity.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the growing recognition of the benefits of non-monetary motivators, many public universities in Kenya continue to underutilize non-monetary incentives like flexible working hours (Tumkou & Ng'eno, 2023). Existing research shows that most public universities still prioritize monetary rewards such as salary increments, bonuses, and allowances while paying limited attention to cost-effective non-financial motivators including flexible working hours (Kinyanjui et al., 202).

In the context of fiscal austerity, this knowledge gap presented a significant challenge: without empirical insights into the performance effects of flexible work hours. Public universities management in Kenya lack the evidence needed to implement flexible working schedule as sustainable motivation strategy. Addressing this gap is essential for designing human resource policies that enhance productivity, engagement and service delivery in the public universities and the general public sector in Kenya. This study therefore investigates the extent to which flexible working schedule influence employee performance among public universities in Kenya.

### **Research Objectives**

The objective of the study is to evaluate the influence of flexible working hours on employee performance in the public sector in Kenya

### **Justification of the Study**

In recent years, employee motivation has emerged as a critical driver of organizational performance, especially in the public sector where traditional monetary incentives are often constrained by limited budgets. In Kenya, the public service continues to grapple with challenges such as low employee morale, poor service delivery, and high turnover intentions many of which are directly linked to ineffective motivation mechanisms (Public Service Commission, 2022). Although monetary rewards have historically been emphasized, growing empirical evidence supports the significance of non-monetary motivators including flexible working conditions. However, implementation of structured non-financial motivation strategies including flexible working schedule in Kenyan public universities institutions remains minimal, inconsistent, and often reactive. The public universities in Kenya are key institution responsible advancing knowledge and research in Kenya. Therefore, understanding the flexible working schedule in enhancing employee performance is essential for sustaining

innovation and operational excellence within such an institution hence the reason this study was undertaken.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study findings are important to the management of government ministries and other institutions especially those in formulating better non-monetary motivation strategies aimed at increasing overall employee performance. The results and recommendations of this study will help policy makers design appropriate flexible working schedules environment.

For the Academia genera, the study will generate appropriate information on understand how flexible working schedule as non-monetary motivation influences performance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Spillover Theory**

In 1979, Piotrkowski introduced the spillover concept. Indeed, the philosophy addresses issues of employment and family life. The author suggested that work-related and family-related factors should be balanced to ensure employees are productive, satisfied with their jobs and have a low turnover rate. The theorem assert for effective management of family-related stress in such a way that it does not spill over into work or family life (Zhou et al., 2019)). Cheng et al., (2019) substantiated the theory by including other factors affecting employee performance. They emphasized attitude, stress and emotions, emphasizing that the latter should be handled while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. This indicates that social disparity has an impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of a person at work. This concept is crucial because it addresses the issue of work-life balance, which is exacerbated by restrictive work schedules.

This theory supports the variable on flexible work schedules which states that employees' performance improves when there is balance between work and family life. A study by Allen et al. (2021) found that employees with flexible work schedules in public healthcare systems across Europe experienced greater work-life balance and fewer burnout symptoms. In Kenya, Gacheri (2022) observed that flexible scheduling among public officers reduced family-work conflict and enhanced work engagement, particularly for working mothers in devolved units. The theory is limited since it assumes positive spillover, ignores structural constraints in public universities.

#### **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg distinguished between hygiene factors (which prevent dissatisfaction) and motivators (which actively enhance satisfaction). Herzberg (1971) identified that "...the factors which make persons happy all are associated to what people did: the work content... what made persons unhappy was related to the condition in which they did their job: job setting, job situation..." According to him, workers are satisfied with a work that is exciting and challenging and they will be driven to do work that they classify to be significant. Consequently, it is possible to motivate workforces with the work itself. In fact, Herzberg stresses that true motivation originates from within an individual, that is, intrinsically, not extrinsically. In line with this opinion, he advocated that jobs can be reformed and developed to incorporate "promoters" to the job, so that workforces will be willing to apply more effort in their work. He reasoned that jobs should have ample challenge to wholly utilize employees' capabilities and employees who demonstrate to have growing levels of capacity should be given increasing



levels of accountability Flexible schedules are classified as motivators, offering autonomy, recognition, and job enrichment—boosting intrinsic satisfaction and performance.

In a study of municipal workers in South Africa, Nkatini and Mofokeng, (2023) found that employees with control over work schedules experienced greater job satisfaction and improved service delivery. In Kenya, Mugove et al. (2024) showed that academic and administrative staff at public universities performed better when allowed flexible reporting hours, citing increased autonomy and reduced burnout.

### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

American psychologist Abraham Maslow in the 1940s and 1950s placed forward the notion that there happened a ladder of wants comprising of five levels in the hierarchy. These wants preceded from lower order wants through to higher level wants, The basic basis of the concept is that we all have these five stages of needs and that beginning at the bottom level we are driven to fulfill each level in ascending order. As each level is adequately satisfied we are then moved to fulfill the next level in the ladder. The five diverse stages were additional sub-categorized into two key groups, these being: Deficiency wants - Maslow reflected these as very basic desires required for survival and safety. These wants include: physiological wants, safety wants and social wants. Growing needs- These are wants allied to personal growth and fulfillment of individual potential and include honor needs and self-actualization wants (Maslow, 1943).

In Maslow's philosophy at no time can we run out of inspiration since the very highest level, self-actualization, which relays to the accomplishment of our complete potential, can by no means be fully met. Maslow's model has been extensively incorporated and imparted within the business realm and limited people who have joined a corporation supervision or basic management coaching course are likely to be conversant with this model. This theory is relevant in this study as Maslow's dispute that workforces pursue to fulfill their wants in a categorized order, beginning from the bottom discontented want. It is acknowledged that most of the public workforces in Kenya are not content with their earnings. Hence, it can be reasoned that this unsatisfied want may drive the staffs to state that sufficient levels of pay is the first aspect that encourage them to apply more energy in their works. The foundational basics of this theory are key in trying to understand employees and how non-financial incentives motivate them to perform better in the workplace. The main critique of the model is that it is outdated, lacks cultural validity in African contexts, and assumes linear satisfaction

### **Empirical Review**

#### **Flexible Work Schedules on Employee Performance**

Theoretically, flexible schedules are supported by models such as Spillover Theory (Staines, 1980) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which argue that when employees experience improved work-life balance, they reciprocate with increased productivity and commitment. These theories propose that flexibility enhances intrinsic motivation, reduces stress, and fosters positive attitudes toward work.

Globally, studies show a consistent and strong positive relationship between flexible work arrangements (FWAs)—such as flextime, telecommuting, and compressed workweeks—and employee performance. A recent meta-analysis by Çivilidağ and Durmaz (2024) found a significant correlation between flexible work and performance, with additional benefits such as improved job satisfaction, reduced stress, and greater organizational commitment. These

findings are echoed in North America and Europe, where flexible schedules have become standard in enhancing productivity and reducing turnover.

In the African context, empirical evidence also supports the effectiveness of Flexible Work Schedules. Atiku et al., (2020) found that African organizations that supported flexible schedules during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced sustained employee productivity, provided that technological and managerial support were adequate. Similarly, Ochieng and Kamau (2021) noted that flexible schedules in African institutions helped reduce work-family conflict, boosted job satisfaction, and improved overall performance. However, these studies emphasize that without supporting infrastructure and policies, the benefits of flexible working schedule may not fully materialize.

Regionally, in East Africa, research on flexible schedules is still in its early stages. However, the limited studies available align with broader findings. For instance, Bett et al., (2022) demonstrated that flexible work arrangements in agricultural cooperatives in Kenya led to notable increases in employee engagement and productivity. Despite this, cross-national studies within the region are scarce, highlighting a need for comparative research that examines the nuances across countries like Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda.

In Kenya, empirical studies in the public sector consistently affirm the positive impact of flexible scheduling on employee performance. Mugove et al., (2024) reported a significant positive effect of flexible schedules on the performance of non-academic staff in public universities in Western Kenya. Gacheri and Kiiru, (2022), examining a public training department in Nairobi, found that flextime, telecommuting, job sharing, and compressed workweeks were all significantly associated with improved productivity and job satisfaction. Similar outcomes were observed by Gufu, Muturi, and Nzulwa (2024) in Isiolo County Government, where a strong correlation was found between flexible hours and employee output. Most recently, Ngayai and Ndeto (2024) documented that hybrid and remote work policies significantly enhanced performance at Kenya's Public Service Commission.

Despite these encouraging findings, significant gaps persist. First, most Kenyan studies focused on specific sectors or county governments, leaving out critical areas of the civil service such as ministries, parastatal, and public hospitals. Additionally, the majority of research is cross-sectional, limiting causal inference. Little attention was paid to contextual factors such as institutional culture, labor laws, or technological infrastructure, which could mediate the effectiveness of Flexible work arrangements. There is also a lack of research linking flexible scheduling to external service outcomes such as citizen satisfaction and public trust. Addressing these gaps through broader, context-sensitive, and longitudinal research could provide robust evidence for policy reforms that institutionalize flexible schedules as a non-monetary motivator in the Kenyan public sector which necessitated the need for this current study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study used a descriptive and analytical research design in collecting the data from respondents so as to identify the effects of non-monetary rewards as a motivational tool. The analytical research design was preferred because it help researchers to understand complex phenomena by examining available data and drawing meaningful conclusions. Descriptive was concerned with answering questions such as how, what, when and how much. The descriptive

study was carefully designed to ensure complete description of the effects of flexible working schedules as motivational tool and to reduce errors in interpreting the data collected.

### **Target Population and Sample Size**

The target population of the study were the employees of public universities at the coastal region of Kenya. Given the small number of the target population (60), the study adopted a census method where all the employees of the organization filled the online questionnaires. This enabled the researcher to achieve valid and reliable results worth for generalization. Table 1 shows the staff distribution.

**Table 1: Staff Distribution**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Senior Managers	6	10%
Managers	10	17%
Academic	40	66%
Supervisors	4	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Research Instruments**

This study used qualitative methods of data collection to assess the relationship between flexible work schedule and employee performance. Questionnaire and observation were used. These tools assisted in the identification of motivational stimuli and performance improvement.

#### **Questionnaire**

This tool assessed the non-monetary incentives for productivity and the degree of influence in the views of the employees. The items were scaled from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. The areas looked out by the study was flexible working hours and schedule within public sector.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected through questionnaires which were sent online via google forms. Participants consent was sought and all participants responded by filling in the online questionnaire. Data was collected for a period of two (2) months which ensured maximum participation.

### **Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments**

To ensure validity and reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample to identify any ambiguous and unclear items and then refine the instrument where necessary. This helped to ensure that the questionnaire and observation check list covered all the relevant items in the objectives.

### **Data Analysis Presentation and Interpretation**

After data collection, the raw data was edited, coded and entered into Microsoft Excel which helped to generate tables for easy analysis. Measures of central tendency and distribution were used. After analysis, the results were presented in Simple APA percentage tables.



## Ethical Consideration

The study's objective, procedures, risks, and rewards were clearly explained to participants indicating that their participation is optional and they may leave the study at any moment without any consequences. The privacy of participants was protected throughout the study. Only approved research team members had access to secure data. Results were also aggregated to protect participant privacy.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographics

#### Age Distribution

The age range indicates that most respondents fall into the mid-career segments, which is typical for public sector organizations as indicated in Table 2

**Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Age Distribution		
Age in Years	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25	4	7%
25-30	13	22%
31-40	20	33%
41-50	18	30%
Above 50	5	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100%</b>

The results in Table 2 suggest a predominantly mid-aged workforce may imply stability and experience, but it may also benefit from non-monetary incentives that enhance work-life balance and professional development.

#### Level of Management

The respondents for this study were drawn from across all cadres within the academic staff and supervisors within the university. Majority of the respondents were from the academic staff and representation from supervisory and management levels as indicated in Table 3

**Table 3: Level of Management of respondents**

Level	Percentage
Senior Managers	10%
Managers	15%
Academic Staff	65%
Supervisors	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The results in Table 3 suggest that majority of the respondent were academic staff. In a public sector institution like university, this distribution is common as many service delivery functions are executed by the broader staff.

### **Influence of Flexible Work Schedules on Employee Performance**

Respondents were asked on their level agreement on how motivated they were when given flexible working hours by their supervisors. The results are tabulated in Table 4.

**Table 4: Flexible Work Hours and Employee Performance**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
I feel motivated when I am given flexible working hours by my supervisor.	60	4.37	0.507
A good work-life balance helps me stay focused and efficient at work.	60	4.03	0.505
Workers feel productive when in control over there working schedule.	60	4.54	0.203
Flexible hours reduce lateness among public servants	60	4.05	0.550
Quality of public service delivery improves with flexible working arrangements	60	3.57	0.558
Flexible working hours are compatible with the demands of my specific role in public service.	60	3.00	0.528
flexible working hours provided by supervisors was a strong motivator	60	3.56	0.577

The Results in Table 4 indicates that the respondents agreed that they feel motivated when given flexible working hours by the supervisors (Mean=4.37; Std Dev=0.507). In addition, the respondent asserted that good work-life balance helps then stay focused and efficient at the work (Mean=4.03: Std Dev=0.505). This affirms the works of Çivilidağ and Durmaz (2024) who noted a significant improvement in staff performance with flexible working hours. The study established that workers feel productive when they are left to control working schedule. This finding aligns with Atiku, Gabriel, and Anaze (2020), who emphasized the importance of management support while implementing flexible working schedule to improve productivity. The output is increased when satisfaction is boosted, work-family conflict.

When asked about quality of public service delivery with flexible working schedule, majority agreed public service improve with flexible working arrangement in Kenya (Mean=3.57; Std Dev=0.558). Similarly majority of the respondent were in agreement that flexible working hours are compatible with the growing demands of personal roles in the public service. This affirms the work of Ochieng and Kamau (2021) which highlighted that promoting flexible schedules reduces conflicts only when supported by infrastructure and policies. These results underscore the need for continued investment in good infrastructure and enacting good policies on flexible working schedule.

Majority of respondents (Mean=3.56; Std Dev=0.577) indicated that flexible working hours provided by supervisors was a strong motivator. In the context of a public institution this becomes a practical substitute for direct financial incentives. This underscores flexibility as a key non-monetary incentive that can improve morale and potentially reduce work-related stress. Most of the respondents specifically noted that flexibility in work hours helps them manage personal and professional demands, resulting in higher energy, improved concentration, and better overall efficiency. These findings indicate that supervisors should allow employees to have flexible working hours to improve on their productivity. This results are in line with the

works of Bett et al., (2022) who noted that flexible working hours increases employee engagement and productivity.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusion**

The results from the study indicate that flexible working schedules boost employee performance and productivity in Kenya universities. The effects mostly work through reduction of stress, work-family conflicts, reduced turnover and improvement of organizational commitment factors play a vital role in influencing employee performance in the public university and the general public sector. It is evident that flexible working schedule as non-monetary motivators not only address immediate employee needs but also contribute to long-term organizational goals. Flexible working hours fosters a culture of trust and autonomy, which are essential for innovation and adaptability in a dynamic work environment.

### **Recommendations**

This study found out that flexible work hours positively influence employee performance and this study concludes that giving staff more control over schedules can raise their productivity. For practice; the study recommends that public sector employers should advocate for flexible working schedule to give employees more control over working schedules to raise their performance at work. In the policy dimension the study recommends that the ministry of public service and human capital development should develop a flexible working schedule policy to guide operationalization of the process. The policy should develop appropriate conditions and system for applying the system in Kenya.

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