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The Influence of Work Flexibility on Performance of Academic Staff in Public Universities Kenya

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Abstract: The increase in enrolling students in Kenyan public universities has constrained most institutions to concoct methods of guaranteeing that academic staff has adequate contact hours with the students. However, it is noted that the number of enrolments does not emphatically match the quantity of academic staff in Kenyan state-funded universities. The most proficient proportion is 1:30 at the undergraduate level for students doing sociologies. Government organizations and guidelines demand great standards in universities and subsequently, it is critical to guarantee that academic staff is exceptionally motivated to improve their job execution. Past research has demonstrated that work design affects the execution of duties by academic staff. Then again, work configuration is significantly described by work flexibility. The particularity of work flexibility as a variable that impacts the work performance provoked the research herein in which the author attempts to find the impact of workplace flexibility on the job performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The examination utilized an exploratory research design that aimed to acquire data on scholarly staff. A multistage analysis was utilized to pick respondents who partook in the examination. Vide simple random sampling, 10 state-funded universities, and 206 scholarly staff were picked, and the scholastic staff was categorized based on state-funded universities in Kenya. Closed-ended questionnaires which included Likert-type scale questions were utilized to gather information. Information was broken down using descriptive statistics; mean, standard deviation, and inferential measurements; which included correlation, simple, and multiple regression analysis. The above analysis was utilized to test the hypotheses of the investigation. The research found out that the relationship between workplace flexibility and performance of academic staff was positively correlated and significant.

Keywords: Work Flexibility, Job Design, Academic Performance

I. Introduction

On the premise of various research works from the University of Warwick, happiness tends to be a better motivator for staff. The studies illustrated that happiness within an employee force grows productive capacity by over 12%. On the other hand 10% productive capacity was observed amongst staff who were unhappy with their prevailing work status (Mohr & Puck, 2007). In light of the above, happiness is deemed to be a factor that impacts satisfaction while executing work duties and enhances the productive capacities of employees (Ellinger, Ellinger, Yang, & Howton, 2002). An instance as denoted by the research herein is the case of google which invests in employee satisfaction and grows the support for them to be pleased with their work. Productivity is thus increased.

Staff requirements in a firm fluctuate and similarly, the necessities are to be met in a varied way. Swarwar & Muhammad (2020) noted that staff performance is among the main factors that impact a firms' prosperity. performance improvement relies upon HR procedures as well as having a well-working framework which is compelling in guaranteeing effective enrollment and holding a labor force that is submitted and profoundly energetic to do their duties (Al-Ahmadi, 2009). A few research works have shown that job designs and execution of duties by staff in firms are connected. One of the vital factors of the job design in a firm is work flexibility.

Work flexibility refers to the capacity to control when, how, and where one works on a given task and effectively accomplishes it. The higher education sector has experienced immense progress with the student populace in public universities exponentially changing over the years. Since 2013, the rise of enrolments has risen to approximately 31% (Kosgey, Anyieni, Lagat & Gakobo, 2014). Despite the above-mentioned increase in the number of university entrants, there has been no commensurate increase in the number of staff within public universities to effectively cater to the needs of every student. The consequence of the trend in university intake means that there exists a strain on the academic staff. There have been various attempts driven at resolving the impasse as mentioned above. Some of the attempts were to hire part-time lecturers and to increase the roles assigned per a lecturer. The given solutions have not fully satiated the ever-increasing number of university students and the overall productivity of the lecturers who are tasked with their learning. The chronology of events as above indicates the problem that is the need to establish other factors that may enhance the performance of academic staff in public universities on whose premise the success of students majorly lies. One of the key factors considered as a solution to the aforementioned challenges is work flexibility on which basis the research herein seeks to establish the respective influence on the performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

The research took into account the Open Systems theory in the investigation of the impact of workplace flexibility on the performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The Open Systems Theory was poised by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1950). It states that every operational system contains a combination or assembly of various sections whose links are interlinked and the alterations in one section automatically impact all other sections. In this regard, the work flexibility attribute within public universities in Kenya is assumed to have an automatic impact on the performance of staff. The challenge thus is to establish the nature and strength of the given impact. In seeking to establish the nature of the above impact, the research took into account the constructs of work flexibility which include flexi-time, job sharing, and telecommuting. The constructs of performance concerning work flexibility were assumed to be teaching outcomes; supervision of students; and research work.

II. Methods

The section herein entails the research methodology applied in the research. The subsections detailed include research design, target population, sampling procedure, sample size, and data analysis.

1.1 Research Design

The paper adopted an exploratory research design. The principal motivation behind research design was to achieve more prominent control of the research and to grow the legitimacy of the examination by exploring deeper the problem statement (Burns & Grove, 2003). The study sought to find self-reported and descriptive data from the academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The research further applied the cross-sectional survey, because the data was gathered in an event and not a period.

The target populace of the research involved all academic staff from all public universities in Kenya. The populace was chosen because it had unique qualities as far as work flexibility is concerned. First lecturers' promotions are pegged on prescribed paths by the commission of university education (CUE. Consequently, homogeneity can be traced across promotions in state-funded universities. Also, the upward mobility of scholarly staff at university is generally because of individual performance to meet the given targets. Hence, personal motivation emerging from work flexibility may have a bearing on their performance. The population was also picked at the university since the academic staff is engaged in a range of tasks that can adequately represent multi-skilling concepts and work flexibility.

Work flexibility opens scholarly staff to a scope of tasks that require various skills to perform. They are engaged with organization function as dignitaries, course facilitators, and assessment officials among others which require a scope of ability procurement. Academic staff is expected to educate, lead investigate and do distributions, oversee understudies, draw in awards and accomplish augmentation work requiring work flexibility. The total population for scholarly staff in Kenyan state-funded universities remained at 8294 as per UASU (2018). The available populace was scholastic staff in chartered universities. The study populace incorporated all scholarly staff regardless of their scholastic capability, university and obligations. University scholarly staff are constantly entrusted with the duty of conveying courses offered by institutions and as such form the best target populace for the study.

1.2 Sample Frame

A sampling frame indicates the distribution of the populace from which a sample is picked. Sampling frames have the sampling units in a populace. Usually, a physical list is not commonly available. Instead, researchers often compile an alternative list (Nachmias & Nachmias, 2003). The research integrated a sampling frame of all academic staff in all the 31 chartered public universities as of December 2016. An alternative list of staff on the university's payroll was the key document to use in availing a sample frame for the process.

2.3. Sampling Technique

The research applied a Multi-stage sampling procedure which used simple random sampling at each stage. Specifically, a Two-stage sampling procedure was applied due to the primary sample units existing in the secondary sample unit. The primary sample units entailed members of the academic staff of public universities in Kenya and the secondary unit was the public university in Kenya). The sample sizes were determined using sampling techniques as discussed subsequently.

3.4.1 Sample Size Determination

The multi-stage sampling procedure was applied. The initial stage had a sample of universities whose academic staff was to participate in the research determined using Nassiuma's (2000), formula. The equation is below.

(1)

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where: n = sample size ; N = Population size.

The size thus is;

c = co-variance (21% ≤ c ≤ 30%)

e = standard error (2% ≤ e ≤ 5%)

$$n = \frac{31(0.21)^2}{0.21^2 + (31-1)0.05^2} = 11$$

The derived size of the sample for use is thus 11 Universities for the secondary unit. Selecting a single university for pretesting, the questionnaire was applied and this was excluded from the final sample as guided by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). To find out the total academic staff from the 10 institutions meant to participate in the research, the same formula by Naissuma (2000) was applied. The coefficient of variation was raised to 30% and the standard error decreased to 2% to make sure that the sample range was sufficiently wide to enhance better generalization. Lesser standard errors are perceived as better due to their capability to enable greater representation of the sample in the whole population. The above ensures accuracy in the testing of the hypothesis. The number of academic staff from the select universities was equally determined on the premise of the formula by Naissuma (2000). The margin of error of 0.02 was derived and the total staff picked was, the number of staff selected to participate in the study was 206.

(2)

$$n = \frac{2491(0.30)^2}{0.30^2 + (2491-1)0.02^2} = \quad 206$$

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

Simple random sampling was used in the first stage. Each chartered public university in Kenya stood an equal chance of being picked. In the second sampling phase, the number of respondents from the 10 picked universities was derived based on the size of the total staff in each university as compared to the sum of staff in all the ten public universities. Respondents were later picked using a simple random sampling technique.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The research utilized primary data collected using a questionnaire. The closed-ended questionnaire was s distributed to all academic staff randomly regardless of department and ranking. Questionnaires were preferred as they enable the acquisition of more feedback from the existing large set of respondents within a very short period (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The structure of the questionnaire was created based on a 5 point Likert scale. The range applied was: 1-strongly agree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral neither agree nor disagree,4-agree, 5-strongly agree to measure the variables under study.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaires were administered using a drop and pick procedure and research assistants were handy in ensuring the same was done accurately. The researcher sought relevant permits from various authorities to carry out the research.

3.7 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics in the form of its means, standard deviation (SD), and frequencies were utilized to describe the research variables. Correlation analysis, Simple and Multiple linear regression models were used to establish the relative importance of work flexibility on the performance of academic staff in universities in Kenya. The Stepwise Moderated Multiple Regression analysis was employed to establish the moderating impact of moderating variables.

Multiple linear regression was applied to analyze the impact of all the constructs of the job design on the performance of academic staff in universities, and this entailed the impact of work flexibility as depicted in the Multiple Linear Regression Model below.

(3)

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon \qquad (1)$$

Where:

Y = composite score performance of academic staff

X_1= composite score for job enrichment

X_2 = composite score job enlargement

X_3 = composite score job multi-skilling

X_4 = composite work flexibility

$\beta_1 \beta_2, \beta_3$ and β_4 are the regression coefficients indicating the influence of each of the independent variables (X_1 $i = 1,2,3,4$) to Y.

β_0 =the constant (intercept)

ε = error term with a mean zero and constant variance of σ^2.

III. Results

The raw data from the study questionnaires were coded, analyzed and results interpreted subsequently. The results regarding work flexibility and its impacting influence on the performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya are discussed below.

3.1 Work flexibility

Regarding Work flexibility, respondents were requested to specify the degree to which they agreed that the statements of aspects of work flexibility described their performance. The feedback was analyzed using mean scores, SDs, and

coefficient of variation. Higher mean scores illustrated strong agreement on the item and a lower mean score meant strong disagreement. Table 1 shows the results.

1) *Table 1: Work flexibility*

Item	N	Mean	SD	*CV* (%)
Flexitime		**3.57**		
1. I have the freedom in my work to schedule my tasks	163	3.80	0.933	24.59%
2. I have the opportunity to make arrangement and compress (Expedite) my week to have time off My work	163	3.67	1.105	30.07%
3. As an academic staff, I am allowed to do my tasks away from the university premises	163	3.25	1.138	34.99%
Job Sharing		**3.59**		
1. My work can be broken down and can be shared among different team members	163	3.45	1.145	33.15%
2. The university allows academic staff to share part of the whole job including workloads and assigned duties	163	3.43	1.102	32.17%
3. I can share part of my task and duties effectively	163	3.90	0.953	24.47%
Telecommuting		**3.57**		
4. The university IT infrastructure allows me to perform a substantial part of my academic duties outside the university premises	163	3.41	1.153	33.81%
5. I can effectively utilize the available telecommuting facilities offered by the university	163	3.44	1.166	33.87%
6. I occasionally have the opportunity to interact with my co-workers and receive feedback concerning their work.	163	3.85	0.931	24.17%
Overall	**3.58**			

The mean for the flexi-time 3.72. The item with the highest score was 'as academic staff, I am allowed to do my tasks away from the university premises (M = 3.78, SD = 0.964); the item with the lowest score was 'I have the opportunity to make arrangement and compress (Expedite) my week to have time off My work '(M = 3.88, SD = 1.122). This item also had the highest variability (CV = 30.70%) and the item with the lowest variability was 'I have the freedom in my work to schedule my tasks' (CV = 25.46%).

The mean score for job sharing is 3.8. The item 'The university allows academic staff to share part of the whole job including workloads and assigned duties' had a higher mean score (M = 3.46, SD = 1.143) and the item ` My work can be broken down and can be shared among different team members 'had the low mean score (M = 3.27, SD = 3.27). This item had a slightly higher variability (CV = 34.32%) than the item 'I can share part of my task and duties effectively' (CV = 31. 95%).

The mean score for telecommuting was 3.64. The item 'As an academic staff, I am allowed to do my tasks away from the university premises' had a higher mean score (M = 3.88, SD = 0.964), and the item 'The university IT infrastructure allows me to perform a substantial part of my academic duties outside the university premises' had a slightly low mean score (M = 3.41, SD = 1.151). The item 'The university IT infrastructure allows me to perform a substantial part of my academic duties outside the university premises' had a slightly higher variability (CV = 33.72%) than the item 'As an academic staff, I am allowed to do my tasks away from the university premises' (CV = 24.86%).

The overall mean for work flexibility is 3.58. The above findings showed that flexi-time, job sharing, and telecommuting are practiced in public universities. It is noted that the means score of flexi-time (*M* = 3.72) and telecommuting (*M*=3.64) were far above the overall mean score of work flexibility (*M*=3.58).

The results as above show that academic staff agrees that flexi-time and telecommuting influence their performance level. The implication of the results reveals that flexitime is a critical attribute for academic staff to have control over their workloads that enables them to time effectively manage their time and work. The above accords autonomy and needs discipline by the staff members to fulfill their duties The factor does not only indicate the vitality of flexibility but the essence for autonomy.

Job sharing had a mean score (*M*=3.38) which is less than the overall mean score (*M*=3.58) showing that the academic staff disagrees that job sharing influenced performance. The job-sharing suffers the demerit of the technicalities that arise in academic work where departmental fields are incompatible.

IV. Discussion

The discussion for the research entails a review of the results, relating the independent and dependent variables against the available findings. The discussion is undertaken subsequently.

5.1 Work Flexibility and Academic Staff Performance

Simple regression analysis was undertaken to define the linear relationship between Work flexibility and performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The simple regression model applied is $y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_i + e_i$ where y_i is the performance of academic staff and x_i is work flexibility. The results of the regression analysis were presented in tables. Model adequacy results were presented in Table 2, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) in Table 3, and Coefficients results in Table 4.

2) *Table 2: Work flexibility Model Adequacy Test Results*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.527[a]	.278	.273	.55877	1.844

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work Flexibility

b. Dependent Variable: Performance of academic staff

The regression results demonstrated that the coefficient of determination R-squared was 0.278 which implies that 27.8% of the variation in performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya was explained by the model whereas the remaining 72.2% of the variation of performance of academic staff was due to unknown factors not captured in the model. The model was found to be averagely sufficient in predicting the performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

3) *Table 3: Model ANOVA Test Results*

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19.324	1	19.324	61.890	.000[b]
Residual	50.269	161	.312		
Total	**69.592**	**162**			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of academic

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work Flexibility

The F-test value result was $F\,(1,161) = 61.890$ with a $p < 0.05$ level of significance an indication that the model was useful (Global Test of model usefulness). Thus Work flexibility was a good predictor of the performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya.

4) *Table 4: Work Flexibility and performance of Academic Staff*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients		
Constant	1.798	.243		7.391	.000
Work flexibility	.526	.067	.527	7.867	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of academic staff

The results indicated a statistically significant positive linear relationship between work flexibility and performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya, ($\beta = 0.526, t = 7.867, p < 0.05$). A unit increase in work flexibility score leads to an increase of 0.526 units in the performance of academic staff. Thus, it shows that work flexibility greatly impacted the performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. Based on the above findings, work flexibility fits into a predictive model, $y = 1.798 + 0.526x$

5.2 The Influence of Work Flexibility on Performance of Academic Staff in Public Universities in Kenya

The results indicate that majority of the academic staff are in agreement that universities allowed them to work while away from the school premises. Flexible time had the highest score followed by telecommuting and lastly job sharing, amongst the three constructs in the study. The results further illustrated that most of the respondents strongly agreed with the statements regarding flexible time in their institutions. Correlation analysis showed that there is a key positive linear relation between work flexibility and performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The work flexibility construct indicates the autonomy given to the academic staff to manage their time in fulfilling their duties while flexible time enables the academic staff to fulfill their duties through self-discipline.

The multiple regression model results indicated a strong correlation between Work flexibility and performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The above is such that factors such as Job enrichment Job enlargement and Multi skilling are held constant. Work flexibility was found to be a key predictor of the Performance of Academic staff in Kenya when other critical factors were excluded from the model. The results were in tandem with those of Hashim, Ulla, and Khan (2017) who studied the effect of time flexibility on the performance of teachers in government institutions in Peshawar. The above research established that time flexibility played a critical role in the performance of teaching faculties. The research is further detailed that time flexibility depicted a very strong correlation with staff performance. Among the critical recommendations for Peshawar was the advice to adopt a flexible time system that enables enhance staff performance. It is thus critical that the results above be the basis upon which universities in Kenya adopt a flexible approach to academic staff management.

V. Conclusion

The research herein sought to review and analyze the influence of work flexibility on the performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The study found that there is a strong correlation between work flexibility constructs and the performance of academic staff in public universities in Kenya. The merits of the research lie strongly in the fact that its results are essential in enhancing human resource management within universities in Kenya and beyond. If perceived from a government perspective, the findings herein are key informants to the creation and implementation of effective policies regarding learning and teaching in the country. The major limitation of the study relates to the fact that it does not take into account human behavior and this gives room for critique. Human behavior with regards to discipline is not an exploited attribute of the paper and as such, there may be flexibility in institutions but if the same is abused, job performance for academic staff will not strongly correlate with the variable under study.

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