

Self-efficacy and Performance of Academic staff in Ugandan Public Universities: Does Job Satisfaction Matter?

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Abstract

In a bid to raise performance and academic standards of academic staff of Ugandan public universities the government took initiatives geared towards capacity building and better working conditions, such as; scholarships for further studies, research funds and enhanced salaries. However, their performance still falls below stakeholder expectations. This study therefore sought to establish both; the direct effect of self-efficacy on performance and the effect conditional on job satisfaction. A cross sectional research design with quantitative research methods was employed. A two-stage sample of 320 academic staff from four public universities was selected; firstly; one university from each geographical stratum and later a proportionate simple random sample of academic staff. Primary data were collected using electronic and hard copy questionnaires. Statistical data analyses including; descriptive statistics, correlation and regression were performed. The results revealed that self-efficacy has a positive relationship with Job satisfaction and performance. Job satisfaction was found to have a negative moderation effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and performance. The study contextualizes self-efficacy, job satisfaction and employee performance to academics in public universities in Uganda. As such; Uganda's public universities need to take deliberate measures to raise the self-efficacy of academic staff. On top of providing a conducive working environment and formulating policies targeting improved job satisfaction such as; recognizing excellent performance and delegating leadership roles to academic staff that are not part of management, regular monitoring of academic staff performance should be undertaken for timely corrective action to mitigate any counterproductive behaviour due to complacency or familiarity.

Keywords:

Self-efficacy, job satisfaction, performance, moderation, academic staff and public universities.

Introduction

According to Cosenz and Bianchi (2013), performance management has become an area of concern in today's management and employee motivation literature. The concept of performance management has its roots in the industrial revolution, during which time there was demand for

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high levels of employee productivity and efficiency in the manufacturing sector (Williams, 2014). According to Vignieri (2018) the concept has over the past 20 years, trickled to the service sector and in particular, the public sector, as such it is being applied across the board as public institutions world over try to improve efficiency and accountability in service delivery. Authors such as Pollit and Bouckaert, (2011) and Voets et al. (2008) have defined performance in various ways in respect to production, public value and other measures of output or outcomes of a goal. de Waal (2003) also presents a task perspective defining performance as the measure in terms of size, scale, value of the extent to which a given task has been executed to completion as per the set standards. This paper defines performance of academic staff as the extent to which they deliver on their mandate which includes; teaching, assessment, conducting research, community service, supervision of students' research projects, field work, internships, field attachment or school practice and industrial training among others to completion (Bunoti, 2017). The performance management of academic staff involves evaluation of staff strengths and weaknesses, assignment of appropriate tasks in-line with the relevant skills-set, supervision, monitoring and conducting periodic evaluation of academic staff performance as well as coaching and mentoring them to improve on their skills for better performance (Government of Uganda-Ministry of Public service, 2007).

A 2016 report by the Visitation Committee of Makerere University indicated that the performance of academic staff in public universities still falls below the required standard, even after efforts by government of capacity building and enhanced remuneration. Consequently, Ugandan public universities have been lowly ranked in the research arena by Web Metrics. For instance, only Makerere University appears in the top 1000 universities (Webmetrics, 2019). This paper therefore serves to analyze the performance of academic staff in public universities in Uganda owing to their self-efficacy and job satisfaction which were some of the expected outcomes of the government initiatives.

Literature review

Self-efficacy, job satisfaction, gender and performance of academic staff in Ugandan public universities

According to Crothers, et al. (2008) Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory presents motivation and behavior as outcomes of the interplay of cognitive, behavioral, personal, and environmental factors. Bandura (1986) presents self-efficacy as an important cognitive factor leading to the learning of new behavior. Self-efficacy refers to the beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. According to Danili and Reid (2006) the cognitive attributes that underscore one's self-efficacy are in turn responsible for an individual's job satisfaction, which leads to better performance. These attributes include enactive mastery, verbal persuasion, vicarious experience, physiological arousal (Bandura, 1986). Maddux (2005) argues that higher cognitive factors enhance ones' ability to perform a given set of activities. For example, enactive mastery and vicarious experience espouse a skill base learned over a period of time which some one can use to execute tasks at hand. Further, Doménech-Betoret, et al. (2017) argued that individuals with a higher self-efficacy are likely to perform since they possess the required abilities for the tasks. An individual with higher self-efficacy has the confidence to confront complex and challenging tasks. For example, an academic staff with high self-efficacy can take on new teaching areas in a department and or elsewhere. They can also take on new and challenging research topics. Such academic staff are key drivers of innovation and

change, given their mastery and confidence in what they do. In this study therefore, we hypothesize that self-efficacy has a positive influence on performance. Frederick Herzberg's Two-factor theory of motivation of 1964, posits that motivation to perform a task is manifested in dual set of factors that cause either job satisfaction (motivational factors) and job dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) (Herzberg, 1964). Dartey-Baah and Amoako, (2011) argued that the motivational factors such as; achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth enhance performance. On the other hand, hygiene factors, namely; company policies, salary, supervision, relationship with supervisors and peers, work conditions, job security and insurance do not necessarily lead to motivation, but should be addressed for the motivation factors to impact performance (Herzberg, 1968).

Hence:

H₁: *Self-efficacy has a positive effect on performance of academic staff in Ugandan public universities.*

H₂: *Job satisfaction enhances the effect of self-efficacy on performance of academic staff in Ugandan public universities.*

Methodology

The paper employed a cross sectional research design. The study population included all the members of the academic staff in public universities of Uganda, totalling to 3,335 according to the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (2018). A sample size of 384 academic staff was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970)' sample size determination table. However, 240 academic staff provided usable questionnaires, which accounts for 62.5% response rate. The study employed a two stage sampling method. At the first stage, one university was purposively selected from each of the four geographical regions of Uganda, namely; North-Eastern, Western, Southern and Central. In the second stage a simple random sample was selected from each of the selected universities. Primary data was collected from the sample using both electronic and hard copy questionnaires. These questionnaires were sent by email or delivered to the academic staff physically. This was presumed to yield reliable and relevant responses since the targeted population are highly educated. The collected data was entered and processed in SPSS version 24 software. The data was analyzed using percentage frequency distributions, correlation and regression analyses.

Measurement of variables

The study adopted the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) version 0.1 to measure the performance of academic staff. The IWPQ consists of four dimensions: Task Performance, Contextual Performance, Adaptive Performance, and Counter Productive Performance (Koopmans et al., 2013), however this study focused on the task performance and contextual dimensions and modified the scales to suit the duties of academic staff at University level. According to Campbell et al (1990), task performance refers to the adeptness with which an employee performs the activities that are core to his or her job. Contextual performance refers to the behaviors that support the organizational, social and psychological environment in which the employees' core activities are undertaken (Borman & Motowildo, 2007). The measurement items for self-efficacy were adopted from the self-efficacy survey (SES). The SES tool was designed to assess ten functional areas of life, including; intellectual, family, education, professional, social,

religious, erotic, moral, life standard and health (Teofil et al., 2012). The study focused on three dimensions; educational, intellectual and professional self-efficacy since they are critical for academic motivation and achievement (Artino, 2012). Teofil et al. (2012), defines educational self-efficacy as the subject's satisfaction with the achieved education; intellectual self-efficacy as the subject's satisfaction with his/her intellectual capacity and level of difficulty of tasks that he/she undertakes and professional self-efficacy as the subject's satisfaction with his/her professional position and recognition of colleagues of his/her professional abilities. Job satisfaction was measured using the Job satisfaction scale developed by Singh and Sharma (1999) which is in line with the view of Markovits et al. (2007) of Job satisfaction as the favorableness and unfavorableness with which an employee views his/her job in relation to the intrinsic and extrinsic characteristics of the job.

Findings

Respondents' Length of service and job position

The length of service and job position were of interest to the study for purposes of capturing the experience and proficiency of the academic staff. Results in Table 1 indicate that most of the academic staff had served for 6 to 10 years (44.2%), followed by those with 11 to 15 years' experience. This level of experience was long enough to warrant informed response from the academic staff. Results about job position was such that; majority of the academic staff of public universities in Uganda who took part in the study (42.5%) were at the level of lecturer, followed by Assistant lecturers (25.8%), Senior lecturer (17.5%) and notably the least percentages (2.9%) and (3.8%) were professors and associate professors respectively. The education distribution depicts the typical education qualifications of most public universities in Uganda in the country. However, the education distribution highlights the challenge of stagnation of the academics at lower academic ranks and having few academic staffs moving to higher ranks of Associate Professor and Professor.

Table 1: Length of service and job position

| | | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| Length of service of university | 1 - 5 | 10 | 4.2 |
| | 6 - 10 | 106 | 44.2 |
| | 11 - 15 | 82 | 34.2 |
| | 16 - 20 | 24 | 10.0 |
| | About 20 | 18 | 7.5 |
| | Total | 240 | 100.0 |
| Job position | Teaching Assistant | 18 | 7.5 |
| | Assistant Lecturer | 62 | 25.8 |
| | Lecturer | 102 | 42.5 |
| | Senior Lecturer | 42 | 17.5 |
| | Associate Professor | 9 | 3.8 |
| | Professor | 7 | 2.9 |
| | Total | 240 | 100 |

Correlation and Regression Analyses

The correlation results as summarized in Table 2 show that Self-efficacy has a positive significant relationship with performance ($r=.365^{**}$); Self-efficacy has a positive significant relationship with Job satisfaction ($r=.352^{**}$); and Job satisfaction has a positive significant relationship with performance ($r=.323^{**}$). The results imply that academic staff with a high level of self-efficacy and or job satisfaction most likely had high levels of performance.

Table 2: Bivariate correlation analysis

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| Self-efficacy (1) | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | |
| Job satisfaction (2) | Pearson Correlation | .352 ^{**} | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.000 | | |
| Performance (3) | Pearson Correlation | .365 [*] | .323 ^{**} | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.037 | 0.000 | |

Multiple regression analysis

Results in Table 3 show that self-efficacy has a significant positive effect on performance (beta = 2.602, $p<.001$), implying that the higher the level of self-efficacy of academic staff, the higher their level of performance. The finding supports the H_1 : *Self-efficacy has a positive effect on performance of academic staff in Ugandan public universities*. The results in table 3 also revealed that the interaction term for self-efficacy and Job satisfaction has a significant negative effect on performance (beta = -4.300, $p>.050$) an indication that job satisfaction dampens the effect of self-efficacy on performance in a way that the effect of self-efficacy on performance is higher at low levels of job satisfaction and lower at high levels of job satisfaction. The finding does not support H_2 : *Job satisfaction enhances the effect of self-efficacy on performance of academic staff in Ugandan public universities*.

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis of Performance

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | -7.040 | 1.738 | | -4.051 | .000 |
| Self-efficacy | 2.438 | .405 | 2.602 | 6.016 | .000 |
| Job satisfaction | 2.759 | .477 | 3.109 | 5.785 | .000 |
| Interaction term | -.595 | .110 | -4.300 | -5.404 | .000 |
| R Square | 0.267 | | | | |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.258 | | | | |
| F Statistic | 28.693 | | | | |
| Sig. (F Statistic) | 0.000 | | | | |

Test for Moderation effect

Results in table 4 shows that the effect of self-efficacy on performance is significant at both two levels of job satisfaction, that is; at low level (beta = .606, $p < .001$) and medium level (beta = .321, $p < .001$) and not significant at the high level of job satisfaction (beta = -.084, $p > .05$). This further confirms the results on the F-test on the interaction term that there is a difference in the main effects at the different levels of the moderator. The results in Table 4 also show that the F test for the interaction term is significant at the 0.001 level. In line with the findings in table 3, this implies further that there is a significant difference in the effect of self-efficacy on performance at the different levels of the moderator (job satisfaction).

Table 4: Conditional effect of self-efficacy on performance at different levels of job satisfaction

| Level of Job satisfaction | | Effect | se | t | p |
|---------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| Low | 3.080 | 0.606 | 0.084 | 7.24 | 0.000 |
| Medium | 3.560 | 0.321 | 0.057 | 5.665 | 0.000 |
| High | 4.240 | -0.084 | 0.086 | -0.977 | 0.329 |

F-Test on interaction term

| | |
|-----------|--------|
| R2 Change | 0.091 |
| F | 29.207 |
| df1 | 1 |
| df2 | 236 |
| p | 0.000 |

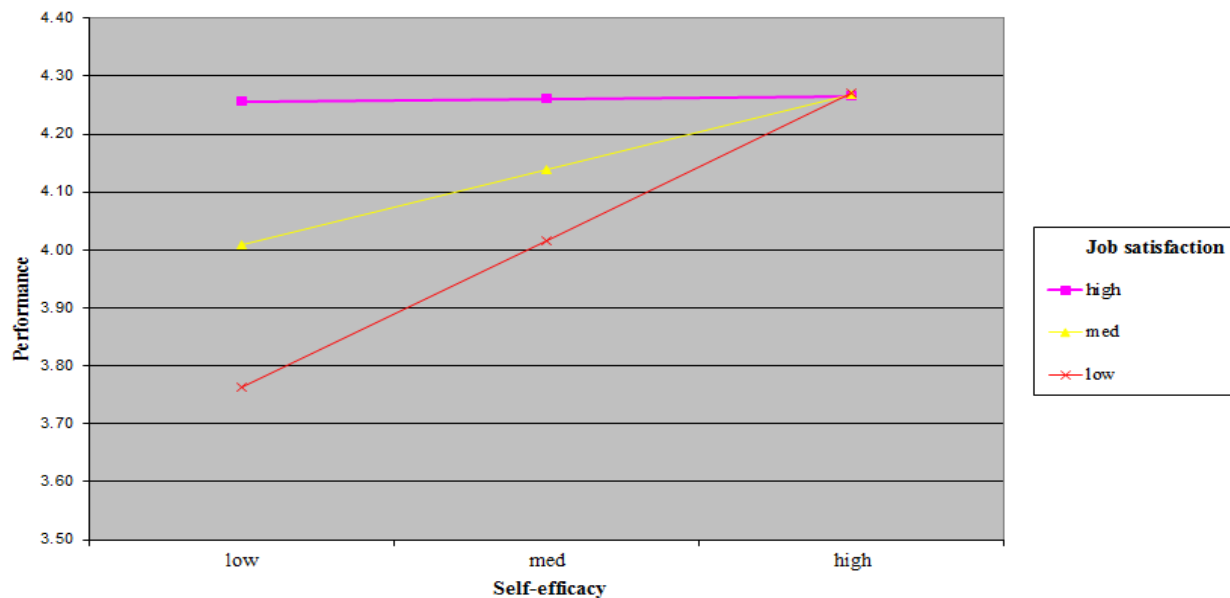


Figure 1: Moderation effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between self-efficacy and performance.

Figure 1 shows that the regression lines for the regression of performance on self-efficacy is upward sloping at both the low and medium levels of job satisfaction, implying positive relationships. Noteworthy is that the slope is steeper at the low level of job satisfaction indicating a higher effect of self-efficacy on performance. On the other hand the regression line for the regression of performance on self-efficacy is flat at the high level of job satisfaction, suggesting a non-significant effect of self-efficacy on performance.

Discussion of findings

Self-efficacy and performance of academic staff in Ugandan public universities

The findings of the study revealed that the self-efficacy of academic staff in Ugandan public universities has a significant positive effect on their performance. The finding is in agreement with scholars such as Bandura, (1986), Danili and Reid (2006) and Maddux (2005) who argue that self-efficacy positively affects an individual's performance. Therefore, possession of attributes such as knowledge, experience (Bandura, 1986) helps to improve performance of academic staff of public universities in Uganda. The finding also agree with Doménech-Betoret, et al. (2017) who argue that individuals with a higher self-efficacy are likely to perform better than those with low self-efficacy since they possess the required abilities for the tasks. According to Doménech-Betoret, et al. (2017), an individual with higher self-efficacy has the confidence to confront complex and challenging tasks. The above finding reveals that an academic staff with high self-efficacy will be able to take on new teaching areas in a department and or elsewhere. Academic staff with high self-efficacy in terms of enactive mastery will effectively execute their job tasks of teaching courses in their areas of specialization; conducting good research in their area of specialization; supervising research students; supervising students on internship; mentoring colleagues on teaching in their departments; supporting colleagues on research projects.

Moderating role of job satisfaction on the effect of self-efficacy on performance of academic staff in Ugandan public universities.

The effect of self-efficacy on job performance and productivity is expected to be higher among employees that are highly satisfied with their jobs (Murphy et al. 2002). However a study among nurses by Sinaga et al. (2020) revealed that the effect self-efficacy on task performance was not influenced by the level of satisfaction of the employees with their jobs. Emphasizing that nurses who were very confident of being able to handle tasks following the level of competence could remain calm and performed their duties even when facing difficulties at work. Czarnota-Bojarska, (2015), in a study involving cluster analysis of the satisfied and withdrawn clusters, revealed that a cluster comprising of members who exhibited high job satisfaction also showed tendencies of counterproductive work behaviors and consequently poor performance even among employees with high levels of self-confidence. Conversely, the withdrawn category (lowly satisfied) were found to exhibit less counterproductive behavior, high performance.

Conclusion and recommendations

Owing to the findings that self-efficacy has a positive relationship with performance of academic staff in Ugandan public universities and that job satisfaction has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and performance, it suffices to mention that as university management endeavors to set strategies geared towards enhancing the self-efficacy of the academic staff, as well as creating a work environment that fosters high levels of job satisfaction, it is vital that they regularly monitor and evaluate to be instituted in order to rid them of

counterproductive work behaviors that may arise from complacency and a sense of gratification, which undermines the importance of self-efficacy in the execution tasks.

Recommendations

Fetching from the finding that high levels of self-efficacy are associated to high levels of job performance, it is imperative that universities invest in initiatives of capacity building, mentoring and holding refresher seminars, geared at raising for the academic staff in a bid to improve their abilities to perform their core duties thereby enhancing their performance. In the same vein the university management ought to subject academic staff to periodic interviews structured to evaluate their self-efficacy for each of their core activities, including; teaching, research and community service. In line with the finding that job satisfaction dampens the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy and job performance, universities, need not regard job satisfaction as an inhibitor to the performance of academic staff with high self-efficacy but rather as variable probably harboring effects of a lurking variable that can be identified with regular monitoring and evaluation. University management therefore needs to closely monitor the academic staff so as to identify the likely counterproductive work behaviors that may be associated with high levels of job satisfaction. These may probably arise from failure to balance their personal inclinations with work obligations.

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