THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Occupational Stress and Faculty Performance: Relationship between Resource Stressors and Faculty Performance in Selected Private Universities in Kenya

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance in selected private universities in Kenya. Resource stressors were broken down into three items; working facilities and equipment, compensation and skills. On the other hand faculty performance was evaluated as a component of three domains; research, teaching and service. The target population was 947 academic staff from six Chartered Private Universities in Kenya. A sample of 384 faculty members was used with a 64% response rate. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions. The study adopted a cross sectional survey. Descriptive and inferential statistics was applied in data analysis. ANOVA tests revealed a p-value of 0.00, therefore rejecting the null hypothesis. Thus, revealing a significant relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance. Further analysis revealed a negative linear relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance (beta coefficient -0.495). R^2 was 0.389 implying that resources stressors explained 38.9% of faculty performance. Descriptive analysis revealed that faculty members in the selected private universities in Kenya experienced low to medium levels of occupational stress. On the other hand, their level of performance was moderate. Regression analysis revealed an inverse relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance. Analysis of the faculty performance revealed that the level of performance in research was lowest while it was highest in teaching. The research findings imply that it is necessary to maintain low levels of stress for better faculty performance.

Keywords: *Occupational stress, resource stressors, performance, faculty, higher learning, University*

1. Introduction

The world of work in the 21st century has many challenges that call for continuous adjustments amongst the employers and employees. Occupational stress is one of these challenges that human resource managers, counsellors, health professionals and employers have to deal with. Human resource managers handle these complex issues that affect the welfare of the workers (Mondy, Noe & Gowan, 2005).Indeed Lambert, Lambert and Ito (2004) cite stress as a major contributing factor to corporate inefficiency, low productivity and increased health care cost for staff. This view has also been corroborated byClarke and Cooper (2004); Rossi, Meurs and Perrewé (2015) and Bowman, (2013) who observe that a lot of working days are lost due to absenteeism due to stress related illnesses.

The Higher Education (HE) in Kenya is no exemption to occupational stress. Indeed the HE has undergone sporadic changes in the recent past. The recent audit of all private and public universities in Kenya has attracted attention to the public and the various stakeholders (Commission for University Education, 2016). The audit led to closure of various satellite campuses, consequently leading to laying down of staff in some of the universities.

At the center of HE is the academic staff (faculty) who deliver the services. It is the expectation from every stakeholder for the faculty to perform very well by delivering quality services which include research, teaching and community service. Occupational stress can affect faculty performance. This study therefore, was aimed at assessing the relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance in the selected private universities in Kenya.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Employee performance and performance management is one of the key HR practices that all employers are concerned with. To remain afloat and relevant, institutions must measure and account for the performance of its employees. Currently ranking of universities is regarded very highly. The performance of its academic staff in terms of research output is one of the main parameters used in ranking Universities.

A report on the State of the university education in Kenya acknowledges that there has been increased student enrollment. Consequently, the quality of education has been affected (CUE, 2015). Results of a study in Pakistan revealed that there was low research productivity among the academic staff in HEI (Anwar, 2014). In one of the studies Odhiambo, (2014) also note that the research productivity among faculty in Kenya is low, meaning that much more could be done. Considering that research is one of the key pillars of a University and a key performance indicator for faculty members, any indication of less than optimal performance in this area raises concern on factors that may be contributing to this low performance. Further research related to HE teaching and learning also indicate that faculty performance is less than optimal (Kimani, 2015)

Conversely several studies show that occupational stress is a concern amongst employees in higher education. Studies in the UK (Tytherleigh et al., 2005), in South Africa Barkhuizen and Rothmann, (2008) and in Nigeria, Omoniyi (2013) have shown that faculty experience high levels of stress. A study on occupational stress in the private Universities in Pakistan (Warraich, Ahmed, Ahmad, & Khoso, 2014) showed that faculty were stressed mostly due to role conflict, inadequate monetary rewards and workload. In Kenya a study on stress among employees in public universities (Karihe, Namusonge & Iravo 2015) shows that some of the stress determinants include working facilities, lack of motivation and work relationships. Despite such studies there is scanty information on occupational stress among faculty in private universities in Kenya. Besides, these studies fails to show the relationship between occupational stress and faculty performance. This research therefore is aimed at assessing the relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance. Specifically it addresses faculty performance holistically in terms of the three domains namely; research, teaching and service.

1.2. Occupational Stress

Occupational stress (OS) is stress related to one's job or work. Stress is a concept that was developed by Hans Selye in 1956 to explain the physiological response of people to various environmental stimuli. It has been viewed as a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances (Hemmings & Bouras, 2016).

Occupational stress (OS) is defined as inability of employees to manage the job pressure due to job demands and/or employee's inabilities to fulfill the job needs. Occupational stress can therefore be viewed as a discrepancy between job demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfill these demands. OS is attributed to pressures in a job, perhaps because of a poor fit between someone's abilities and his/her work requirements and work conditions (Holmlund & Strandvik, 2005). Indeed, OS has also been referred to as job stress, which is manifested in the form of negative emotional states such as frustration, worry, anxiety and depression attributed to work related factors (Kyriacou, 2010)

The consequences of OS are enormous. Indeed, it has been observed that costs associated with workplace stress have escalated in the last few decades and various cases have been reported. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) estimates that 13.4 million working days were lost in Britain in 2001/02 due to stress, depression or anxiety ascribed to work-related stress (HSE, 2002). In the United States the number of stress claims increased, with fifteen percent of all workers compensation claims being for stress. Reports of high staff turn-over, increased health and workers' compensation claims and decreased productivity have also increased. Occupational stress leads to health problems like back pain, migraines and insomnia. Annually, many working days are lost (Kinman & Jones, 2003). According to data from the Labour Force Survey in the United Kingdom (UK), work-related stress, depression or anxiety affected an estimated 369,000 of its employees in 2011/12, with a total of 9,072,000 working days lost (Health and safety in HSE - Annual report 2012/13 - hsinhse1213). Within this total, teachers and educational professionals reported the highest average number of days lost per worker due to work-related stress, depression and anxiety. In a related survey in the UK, (CBI/PPP 2000) results indicated that absenteeism costs the country's businesses approximately £10.5 billion per annum and that stress was the second highest cause of absence among non-manual employees (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 2004). HSE (2014) further notes that in 2013/14, 39% of work related illness were associated with work related anxiety, depression, and stress which has remained at a similar percentage for more than a decade with each case resulting in 23 days being lost each year. Occupational stress has become one of the most serious health issues in the modern world (Tangri, 2003).

1.3. Resource Stressors

Resources are considered important in facilitating an employee to perform her/his duties. They are also important for supporting institutional programs, activities and services (Marrelli, 2010). In this study, these resources were broken down into working facilities, compensation and skills.

1.4. Working Facilities

Academic staff in HE requires resources for research, teaching and community service. A poor working environment is a main cause of stress since employees spend most of their working life at the working place (Ahsan, Abdullah, Yong, Fie, & Alam, 2008). The working facilities to a large extent contribute to one's delivery and performance. For faculty such facilities include office space that is easily accessible, well-lit and spacious. An environment that is conducive for; class preparation, consultations with students and colleagues plus other stakeholders is necessary. Besides, lecture rooms that are conducive for teaching and learning are very vital. Consequently, equipment and tools for teaching (computers, projectors, and smart boards) are necessary. Faculty members need to be empowered through some budgetary allocation to facilitate in their roles in research, teaching and community service.

1.5. Compensation

Compensation refers to all forms of pay or rewards going to employees and arising from their employment (Randhawa, 2007). A good pay enables faculty to meet their obligations both at work and at home. A summary report of the Higher education in South Africa (HESA) Statistical Study of Academic Remuneration "Remuneration of academic staff at South African Universities 2014, showed that the remuneration especially at the introductory levels of academic ranks is less than the remuneration of comparable staff in the public sector. Similarly, a Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA) 2007 report shows that the faculty remunerations in African Universities is generally poor and non-competitive, lacking the purchasing power. As a result, there is a dissatisfaction and stress. Attracting and retaining competent staff is one of the greatest and current problem in African universities (Waswa & Katana, 2008).

According to the expectancy theory, employee performance when rewarded with value adding outcomes (valence) results to employee satisfaction. The level of productivity amongst faculty members is also determined by the value one places on both the extrinsic and intrinsic rewards.

1.6. Skills

With a dynamic world and education system, new teaching methods are being developed continuously. Training in order to gain skills in HE is a key aspect for faculty who are involved in creating and disseminating knowledge and information. Apart from being a requirement by regulatory bodies and management, it is also a necessity for effective delivery in the university. Opportunities for training enables faculty members to attain higher degrees as well as adding or improving other skills such as information technology, research, pedagogical skills, presentation and leadership skills among others. Such skills are important to meet the challenges and expectations of the dynamic HE sector.

Research shows that a recent 'pandemic of enrolment explosion' has taken place in recent years without commensurate growth in faculty numbers. This has far reaching effects as cited by former Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities who noted that for the first time teaching positions in the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) were being filled by staff with only a bachelor's degree (Tettey, 2008). Ethiopia at the same time was facing similar challenges of staff shortages necessitating the use of graduates with bachelor's degrees to teach undergraduates. This was as a result of increase in the number of public universities (World Bank report, 2008). Such related challenges may lead to stress among faculty.

Brain drain syndrome has affected African universities in terms of migration of well and highly trained professionals from the continent. As a result, many African universities have been left with young, inexperienced and insufficiently trained staff (El-Khawas, 2004). The phenomenon of mass exodus of professionals from Africa to other continents is notable, Olusola (2007) quoting data from the Economic Commission for Africa.

Professional skills may be inadequate amongst the faculty members. Though they have earned various degrees, many faculty members may lack the pedagogical skills (Samble, 2008). In effect delivery to students becomes a challenge, leading to high levels of stress (Ivan, Cary & Bengt, 2015).

2. Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the occupational stress model developed by Karasek (1979). The model had great influence on the job design and occupational health literature. In this model, workplace/occupational stress is a function of how demanding a person's job is and how much control (discretion, authority or decision latitude) the worker has over their own responsibilities. According to the model, stress occurs when high job demands combine with low opportunity to influence tasks and procedures (High strain), resulting to poor employee health and low job satisfaction (Bridger, Day, & Morton, 2013). Hausser, Mojzisch, Niesel and Schulz-Hardt, (2010) notes that employees thrive where the job demand and job control is high.

Job demand is associated with workload and time pressure while job control is linked to the empowerment and autonomy to make decisions (Karasek, 1979). The JD-C model considers two psychosocial factors as important in determining employees' health; job demands and job control. It supposes that job control buffers the negative effect of job demands on health (Karasek, 1979; Sargent & Deborah, 2011).

Job demands represent the psychological, physical and emotional stressors in the work environment. According to Demerouti et al. (2010), job demands are those physical, psychological, social and organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (i.e. cognitive or emotional) effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological effects, such as burnout. These include factors such as; workload, degree of concentration required, skills and abilities, interruption rate, time pressures, conflicting demands, reaction time required, pace of work, and the slowing down of work caused by the need to wait for others, others attitudes and values and resources necessary to perform the duty (Houston, Meyer, & Paewai, 2006a).

2.1. Faculty Performance

Institutions of higher learning have two broad categories of staff; administrative and academic (faculty). Administrative staff play a supportive role to the faculty. The focus of the study was the faculty members who mostly play three major roles; teaching, research and service. In many HEI, academic performance is mostly evaluated on these three categories. Performance among the faculty in HE is very key in determining the overall performance of the institution. Faculty roles as teachers, researchers and managers determine to a large extent the quality of students' experience in a University. Consequently, students' learning has an effect on the contribution that such universities make to the society. To support this view, Karihe, Namusonge and Iravo (2015), in their study argues that the faculty is so important that its health and performance is an index of the state of higher education sector in any country.

Faculty performance is at the heart of every university due to three main reasons; first, it serves as a basis for the reputation of universities. Secondly, it can attract the most talented students and professors Franck & Schönfelder (2000) thus further improving the reputation of the university. Thirdly, university administrators and grant agencies frequently use academic performance as a basis for making their funding decisions (Wollersheim, Lenz, Welpe, & Spörrle, 2014).
Faculty performance is therefore key in achieving the objectives of their institutions (Mahiri & Orwa, 2016) and in the overall development of the society. The society to a great extent looks up to universities to solve their problems and advance development. Their performance is of great interest to all the stakeholders including students, the government, regulatory bodies, employers, parents/guardians and sponsoring organizations. Faculty performance could vary from one HE institution to another. Indeed, it may vary from public to private universities. The main focus of this research was the private universities. They differ from the public universities in a number of ways. For example, while the public universities receive funding from the exchequer, the private universities mostly rely on fees from the students and other sponsors. Some private universities have additional regulatory bodies. Moreover, most of the private universities have different value systems from the public universities.

It is critical that any factor that may affect the faculty performances be given attention. This study was therefore aimed at establishing the relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance. FP affects the bottom line in the HEI. This bottom line is performance in terms of delivery of services translating to quality of education with an outcome of the quality of graduates.

3. Methodology

A cross sectional survey was carried out across six selected private universities in Kenya. By using systematic random sampling, six private universities were selected. Each of these universities had received their charter in the last fifteen years or more by the time of conducting the research.The target population were the faculty members in the selected private universities in Kenya. Sekaran, (2006) defines a population as the entire group of people, events or items of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate**.** A sample size of 384 faculty members was generated by applying the Fisher's formula. To attain the target sample size from the six universities, the researcher calculated the proportionate faculty members per university.

Questionnaires were used to gather data that was coded and tabulated in numerical values, allowing data to be expressed by use of statistical analysis (Wetcher-Hendricks, 2014). Quantitative researches measure variables on a sample of subjects and expresses the relationship between variables using effect statistics such as correlations, regression, relative frequencies or differences between means. A non-experimental hypothesis testing design was adopted. The researcher applied a cross-sectional evaluation survey where the data was collected at one particular time across selected private universities in Kenya (Schurink, 2009). Data was collected between July and October 2018. Ethical considerations were observed before the data collection. First, the Ethics Board approved the research and National Commission of Science, Research and Innovations (NACOSTI), also granted authority to conduct research. Authorities from the six universities also granted permission to conduct collect data.By applying inferential statistics, the relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance was established.

4. Results of the Data Analysis

The resources stressors consisted of seven items. Each item was rated on a five point Likert type scale rated from 1 for "Not at all" (NAT), 2 for Little extent (LTE), 3 for moderate extent (ME), 4 for Large Extent (LE) and 5 denoting "Very large extent" (VLE).Average scale ratings for resource stressors ranged from 2.09 to 3.03. This indicated that the respondents exhibited moderate levels of stress from resources and working facilities. The highest mean rating was 3.03 for the statement "I normally feel stressed due to the salary I am paid relative to my efforts and the work." (SD= 1.329, n=248). The statement with the lowest mean rating of 2.09 was "My working environment stresses me." (SD= 1.060, n=248). The composite average resources and working facilities scale was 2.4908 (SD =.88330) which was a low rating indicating that on average, the faculty members had low levels of stress associated to resources and working facilities. Similar results were revealed in a study by Rothmann, Nell, Mostert and Mostert, (2008) where academic staff were shown to exhibit average levels of stress emanating from working resources. However different results were shown from a study related to stress in the USA where a survey carried out by Mitchell, Blix, Blix and Cruise (2006) reported that lecturers perceived severe levels of stress due to lack of resources and workload. Similarly a study in Nigeria showed that the main causes of stress for the lecturers was poor offices and lack of facilities.

Results from this analysis also showed that stress from salary had a mean weighting of 3.03 while stress emanating from prospects of a better pay had a mean weighting of was 2.91. The results reveal that most of the faculty members were stressed due to low prospects of a better pay or the current salary they were receiving. Results from a research in Nigeria, Africa, (Ominiyi 2011) showed similar results where most of the faculty reported that they were stressed due to poor incentives (87.35%), poor conditions of lecturers' offices (81.32%) and lack of facilities (78.10%). Indeed anecdote evidence shows that full time faculty are involved in part time teaching as a means of increasing their income.

5. Regression Analysis

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between resources stressors and faculty performance. The following null hypothesis was formulated.

- H_{01}**:** There is no statistically significant relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance.

Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance. Data analysis showed R-squared value of 0.389. This revealed that the resource stressors were able to explain 38.9 % variations in the faculty performance in private universities while the rest were explained by the error term. The F-statistic is 156.844 with a p-value of 0.0000 implies that the regression model was significant. Therefore, the t-statistics and p-values were reliably used to test the significance of coefficients in the model.
Results revealed a beta coefficient of -0.495, ($p< 0.05$) and the model explained 38.9% variation in faculty performance. The resultant predictive model was expressed as follows:
$FP=3.557- 0.495RS+ e$, $P < 0.05$, $R^2 =38.9\%$
Where;
FP= faculty performance
RS=Resource stressors
3.557=y intercept; constant
-0.495=an estimate of the expected decrease in faculty performance corresponding to an increase in resource stressors.
The beta coefficient for resource stressors was -0.495. This indicates that a unit increase in resource stressors would result in 49.5 % decrease in faculty performance in private universities. The t-statistic and corresponding p-value were -12.524 and 0.000 respectively. Therefore, at $P < 0.05$ level of significance the null hypothesis was rejected implying that resource stressors have a significant influence on faculty performance in private universities. On the basis of these statistics, the study concludes that there is significant negative relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance in private universities.

6. Conclusion

Results from the inferential data analysis show that there is a significant negative linear relationship between resource stressors and faculty performance. An increase in the levels of stress emanating from resource stressors would lead to decreased faculty performance. Since faculty performance was an aggregate of research output, quality in teaching and service, this translates to lower performance in these dimensions.
Analysis from the descriptive data analysis show that the main source of stress under resource stressors is compensation and prospects for better pay.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that the HE sector strategize on means of increasing income or reducing expenditures in order to improve compensation for faculty members. Though the income from tuition may not be sufficient to meet all the university expenses, institutions may look for funding from other sources. By faculty collaborating with the management of Universities, income-generating programs can boost the income. Collaborative efforts with other institutions may offer opportunities for scholarships and career advancement. Such efforts would save faculty members from spending their earnings in career advancement or related undertakings. It is also recommended for management of universities to improve working environment by providing the necessary tools and facilities for faculty to deliver on their mandate.

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