Investigating the Factors Influencing Academic Staff Performance: A Conceptual Approach

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Abstract: This paper intends to explore the factors that influence academic staff performance. The preliminary framework insight an understanding of the specific role played by the individual and work environmental factors influencing job performance. A range of relevant literature is explored and a preliminary framework is proposed and discussed. A review of extant literature suggests various factors affect academic job performance. This framework is set to help the academicians and decision makers in the university to understand the requirements of employees for increasing their job performance and suitable individual and environmental aspects to that effect. The paper can help the university to ensure all academic staff has academic competence. To produce such a competent employee, the university needs to ensure that the academic staff members are consistently motivated. The proposed preliminary framework is both original and unique that will hopefully contribute towards the enrichment of the relevant literature.

Keywords: job performance, academic competence, work environmental factors.

INTRODUCTION

Academic staff members are the key resource in higher education institutions [1] and play a vital role in achieving the institutions goals. The nature of academic work in Libyan universities is likely to be traditional academy where the emphasized on disciplinary teaching and supervision of students projects as well as doing a publication. Government of Libya is spending huge budget every year to upgrade the universities infrastructure and to train the academic staff.

For instance, in 2015, the total expenditure for higher education sector is approximately 801,547,869 million Libyan dinars. However, in general, members of academic staff in Libya are still underperforming. Previous studies have provided substantial evidence concerning the relationship between motivation and the performance of academic staff [2-5, 1].

Conducting research related to the issue of motivation and academic staff performance in this context can assist in identifying factors contribute to the problem of low performance among the academic staff faced by the universities in Libya. This study intends to examine the influence of motivation on academic staff performance in the context of universities in Libya.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the literature has identified various factors that influence the motivation of academic staff. These factors include: job satisfaction, training, rewards, promotion, salary, work stress, policy of the university and work environment (e.g.,

relationship with colleagues, relationship with supervisor, facilities of the university, working conditions). Studies have investigated the influence of the factors among academic staff in various settings such as Africa, Asia, and western countries. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence to show how these factors influence motivation among academic staff at universities in Libya.

Teaching Performance

Hasan and colleagues [6] defined the performance as the level of target achievement for both the institution and the individual (employee). While, Hillriegel and colleagues [7] considered employee performance as individual's work achievement after making a great effort. According to Ahmad and colleagues [4], evaluating employees' performance is a significant issue. Hence, the management must first define the aim of using a performance appraisal system and then determine the process to conduct the system. This view is supported by Waal and Kourtit [8] who revealed from their study that the performance

measurement in an organization will lead employees in the organization to become more active and more committed to the organization, which help to achieve organizational goals as well as aligns all members at all levels in the organization towards attaining the strategy.

According to Su and Wood [9], there are three criteria of a good academic staff at the university. First, the good academic staff at the university are those who reflects on what they do to develop a greater awareness of themselves and their students. Second, a good academic staff at the university are those involve students in dialogue motivated by a desire to know and understand them and their own practice better. Third, a good academic staff at the university are expected highly qualified for the position and have the specialist knowledge in the subject area which they teach, as well as, the necessary skills to pass on this knowledge to students.

Evaluating the academic staff job performance is very important to enhance their commitment to learning activities, to build quality relationship with students and able to create an environment that challenging and nurturing for students [10]. According to Bain [11], a good academic staff are those who are able to make a natural critical learning environment in the way that the conditions are both intellectually challenging and at the same time as support.

Factors affecting employee performance

There are various factors that can influence employee performance. These factors are including low incentives, over workload, unconducive class environment, lack of library facility, lack of modern technological aspects, socio economic status, respect in society, professional attitude, mental health, moral standards, responsibilities at home, distance of residing area, examination stress, political interference, student power, discriminatory practices, lack of co-operation, and working relations with colleagues and heads, employment security, recruit the right people, effectiveness of teams, compensation on organizational performance, training, commitment, and sharing of information [12,13].

There are various factors that can influence employee satisfaction in organization. In general, the factors can be divided into three groups of factors, namely, internal, external and personal. Internal factors involve the principal features of the job. These include diversity of skills required for the job, job identification, implication of the job, self-government awarded to the employee when the job is done and feedback on performance. External factors are related with conditions such as pay, physical working conditions, promotion conditions, relations with superiors and peers, creativity, occupational safety, organizational culture and organization structure. In addition to five features of internal factors, the content of external factors will ensure stronger job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to attitudes adopted towards the job based on meeting the requirements of wage-earners [14]. Job satisfaction is very significant to both employee and organization. In addition, employee job satisfaction also can leads to motivation. A study by Evans [15] among employees of a research-based university has found that as the employee job satisfaction increased, their level of motivation also has increased. Job satisfaction is a relevant variable in any study related to higher education. It is due to the level of job satisfaction remains higher in educational sector, including in the higher education institutions [16, 17].

Work stress

Work stress is an issue happen that related to academic staff at the higher education institution [18]. A study by Sarwar and colleagues [19] have found that lecturers were overstressed due to the excessive workload imposed on them. Specifically, the majority of lecturers complained about unclear description of their job. The lecturers have been assigned with academic and administrative duties at the same time without any guidance or training, which lead to increase the workload, which subsequently resulted in performance decline. Similarly, Su and wood [9] concluded from their study that academic staff at university are under increasing pressure, to undertake a broader variety of tasks at the same time, for instance, beside taking on more teaching, they are also expected to take on more administrative tasks as well as more publishing to meet the research excellence targets. There are many factors that lead to work stress. For example, absence of work life balance, lack advancement opportunities, work environment, lack of encouragement, lack of recognition, and unable to balance between teaching and research activities [20,21].

Salary

Salary is very important to employee, including the academic staff [22]. According to Zhou and Volkwein [23] quoted by Shaheen and colleagues [24]. The differences in salary have an impact on satisfaction level of academic staff, which in turn affect their intentions to do the work with sincere efforts. Idogho [25] reported a study of academic staff perception, with special emphasis on the reasons why people in the universities of Edo State, Nigeria lack motivation. The study linked the lack of motivation in the universities to the desire of academic staff to work in universities overseas, due to differences in remuneration. Some of the academic staff also sought opportunities to join the private sector.

University Policy

The policy of a particular university can affect the employee work attitude and behavior [26]. Al-Naqbi [27] stated that in an organization policies and procedures are multi-faceted, and they have an influence on employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Ukko and colleagues [28] also have argue that the increased interactivity between management and workers will lead to higher performance. In another study, Mualuko and colleagues [29] claimed that when the university policy allow the academic staff to involve in the process of decision making, the academic staff show positive improvement in their performance (i.e teaching, publications, and research). As Razak [26] said the process of decision making and way of decisions implementation will have an impact on motivational level of employees. Shaeen and colleagues [24] also concluded that the majority of the academic staff they studied were not satisfied with the administrative policies of their university and this was responsible for their low level of motivation. Also, Danish and Usman [30] revealed from their study that there is significant relationship between work rules and procedures and an individual's motivation. Higher learning institutions need to be encouraged to adopt information system in the management practices in order to increase interaction between students and administration [31].

Rewards

Providing rewards to employees is one of the mechanism to encourage employee to achieve the organizational goals [32]. This effort also enable organization to create positive work attitude and behavior among the employee. According to Ryan and Sagas [33], employee may feel satisfaction if the reward they received from organization is in line with their contribution. However, if they feel that their efforts and contributions exceed the rewards particularly in pay, the dissatisfaction consider to occur. In addition, rewards have the role in improving the employee motivation. Asim [34] has stated that employees' motivation can be increased through reward, particularly the financial rewards. Similarly, Bergmann and Grahn [35] and Ojkuku [36] have found relation between benefit packages and motivation. In other words, they revealed that a well-designed employees benefit packages are effective tools for attracting, and motivating employees.

Promotion

Promotion has a significant impact to employees, particularly to their motivation. This notion has been justify by a number of previous studies. For example, Farroque and colleagues [37] have found that the promotional factor has direct impacts on the level of employee motivation in the organization. Similarly, Islam and Ismail [38] also found a positive relationship between promotion and employees motivation. In another study, Kongala [39] suggested a method to motivate employees through fair opportunity of promotion to all eligible employees, which will lead the staff to be more interested in doing their work because they feel that they will be rewarded. Besides, training facilities should be provided so that employees can make themselves eligible for promotion.

Training

Training has been recognized as one of the mechanism to improve employees and organization. As Anyamele [40] argue that training have effects that go beyond upgrading an employee skills to include an overall impact on the organization. Similarly Castrogiovanni and Kidwell [41], affirmed that training will heighten employees' capacities as well as enhancing their skills in the long term. The reason for the investment by institutions in training their employees is to obtain higher benefits from their enhanced knowledge and skills [42].

In regard to organization, previous studies have found significant relationship between training and organizational improvement such as service quality [43, 44], productivity [45] and image [46]. However, when considering employee development and its importance to institutions, training has impact in developing positive work attitude and behavior among the employees such as job satisfaction [47,45] and work performance [48,34].

Work conditions

Poor working conditions can impact negatively on academic staff, result in resulting in absenteeism, lower levels of effort, less effectiveness in the classroom, low morale, lower job satisfaction and low motivation. Mawoli and Babandako [5] found from study conducted at Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Nigeria, that working conditions there are very encouraging and boost levels of academic staff contentment on the job. The impressive working conditions and outstanding employee motivation have benefited the university in the form of high academic staff performance and productivity. Conversely, Shakeel *et al.*, [49] argued that different sort of fears and anxiety, for instance an unfamiliar office environment, face academic staff when they join a university. Such issues, if not dealt with appropriately by the university management, could lead to demotivation and may result in high staff turnover.

University facilities

Brailsford [50] felt that multi-media aids to lecturing should be incorporated into university teaching, along with more guidance from heads of departments on teaching matters and some recognised way of training university staff members in teaching procedures to motivate lecturers to improve their

productivity. This view is supported by the results of Shakeel *et al.*, [49] study, which showed that one of the most significant factors that hindering lecturers' motivation and consequently their performance is insufficient material and supplies in the university. These include a fully equipped library with the latest books and online contents, advanced computerized labs, high speed Internet, teaching aids and subscriptions to international journals. The proposed framework does

not simply intends to examine the relationship between individual and work environment factors. This relationship has been examined very thoroughly in the past. This study highlights the best factors for long term relationship between managers and colleagues in the universities. Leaders need to be equipped with the right set of values and behaviours to be successful in a specific context.
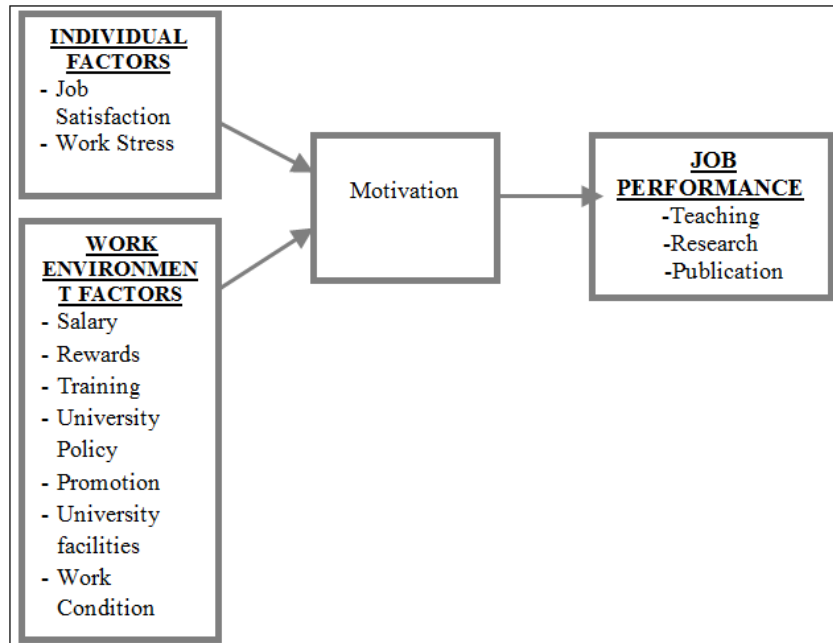

Figure-1: Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework of this study runs along two paths, each path incorporating one main idea. The first path involves the factors that influence motivation; and the second path concerns the impact of motivation on job performance. The relationships between these factors and motivation has been established in the findings of previous studies [51,34,52,15,53,54]. Relationship with colleagues it is about the quality of relationship amongst academic staff in term of the occurrence of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, role conflict, and role overload, working as team, tension [55]. There is also a need for managerial support for teaching, including didactic encouragement to improve innovative teaching techniques.

Implications

To enhance the performance of academic staff, the university management must focus their attention on the issue of motivation. A higher educational institution, such as a university, is unique because it is a platform to produce the future professional workforce of a nation. To ensure this aim can be achieved successfully, the university needs to ensure all academic staff has academic competence. To produce such a

competent employee, the university needs to ensure that the academic staff members are consistently motivated. Exploring the role of motivation in the university context also is very significant to the university and to the broader society of Libya because the motivation of academic staff has important implications for the motivation of students [56] and the university performance [57]. On the other hand, if the academic staff lack of motivation or are demotivated, there will be negative impact on their performance which may consequently affect the quality and performance of the university's graduates and the university's reputation.

CONCLUSION

Employees in academic institutions, companies, and organisations need to be motivated by the senior management. The organisations can be more successful if they apply motivational techniques. Employees' motivation is significantly linked with the individual, organizational and work environment factors. These issues can be addressed by a variety of methods that the present study seeks to uncover.

Generally, the main aim of an evaluation system for many organizations is to improve individual

and organizational performance. This makes it clear that the importance of utilizing a performance measurement system is to match individual contribution and performance against organizational goals and this will make it possible to recognize employee strengths and opportunities for future improvements and evaluate whether organizational objectives are attained or helps as basis for the planning and future development of the organization.

Finally, the preliminary framework presents a clear picture of some important constructs that can influence managers to think about best HR practices. The relationship between manager and colleague commitment play a unique role in their own in realizing that the main focus is on managing people. This paper adds to the view that there is substantial evidence concerning the relationship between motivation and the performance of academic staffs that offers the much needed window of opportunity that can connect employees and help the universities capitalize on their ideas. In addition, employee performance measures the efforts and behaviour of employees in the context of outcomes that meet the objectives of the organization. Evaluating the academic staff teaching performance will to enhance their commitment to learning activities, to build quality relationship with students and able to create an environment that challenging and nurturing for students

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