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EFFECTIVENESS OF DECISION-MAKING APPROACHES BY ACADEMIC UNIT MANAGERS ON ACADEMICS PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of decision-making approaches (DMA) of academic unit managers on the work performance (WP) of academic staff in public universities in Uganda. The study was prompted by the persistent complaints and reports from key stakeholders about the deteriorating quality of teaching, research, and community engagements, despite management efforts to improve the working conditions of the staff in these institutions. This was a mixed-methods study that leaned more towards the quantitative research paradigm. Data were collected from a sample of 287 respondents using survey and interview methods. The collected data were analyzed with the use of appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics as well as the thematic content analysis method. The key study findings revealed, among others, that the use of the democratic decision-making approach had a more significant positive effect on the WP of the academic staff than the delegated and autocratic decision-making approaches. Specifically, the results showed that a unit increase in the use of democratic and delegated DMA yields 19.1% and 5% increases in the WP of academic staff respectively. It was concluded that the use of different DMA has varying effects on the WP of academic staff. Therefore, it was recommended that academic unit managers should be trained and equipped with skills in the use of decision-making approaches that are more inclusive, consultative, collective, and participatory in nature.

INTRODUCTION

Ideally, the success of any organization depends on the way its employees perform their duties. However, the work performance (WP) of any group of employees depends on several factors. The case of the decision-making approaches (DMA) that are

used by academic unit managers in higher learning institutions is not an exception. In this study, the researchers investigated the effects of DMA of academic unit managers on the work performance of academic staff in public universities in Uganda. It was prompted by the persistent complaints and reports from key stakeholders about the

deteriorating quality of teaching, research, and community engagements, despite the management efforts to improve the working conditions of the staff in these institutions.

Historically, the practice of measuring work performance of employees is an old phenomenon that has been debated over the years up to recently when people started advocating for rational scientific management principles designed to improve work (Taylor, 1911; Fayol, 1916; March 1945 & Weber 1947). To that end, the employee work performance can be traced back in the period of three well-established classical management theories like scientific management (time and motion study) by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911); administrative management by Henri Fayol (1916); and bureaucratic theory of management by Max Weber (1947). The scientific management theory was formulated by Frederick Taylor in 1911 in the USA to increase performance by raising the efficiency and effectiveness of employees.

Theoretically, this study was anchored on the theory of work performance by Blumberg and Pringle (1982). This theory focuses on individual employee performance and its coherent argument that an organization's excellence depends on its ability to optimize resources such as manpower (the academic staff). Therefore, the interaction between the ability to perform tasks, willingness to perform tasks, and the opportunity was recommended by Blumberg and Pringle (1982) as a theory for prediction of individual work performance. This theory was used in this study because even if the academic staff had the ability and willingness to perform their work, there were factors that might affect the excellence of the work done like the DMA used by the academic unit managers. This is because the ability to perform effectively is a product of the physiological, psychological, and cognitive decisions made by the authorities and powers that be, other factors are held constant.

Conceptually, this study was affixed on two key concepts, namely; decision-making approaches and work performance. Different scholars have conceptualized these variables differently because they are understood and applied in different contexts differently. For example, according to Ullman (2006), decision-making is the outcome of

a mental process that leads to the selection of a course of action among several alternatives. Scholars like Anwar, Yousuf, and Sarwar (2008) refer to decision-making approaches as styles, methods, types, practices or ways used in arriving at decisions. To them, such approaches are autocratic, democratic, delegated, laissez-faire, paternalistic, bureaucratic and patriarchal. In this study, decision making was looked at as the power to take a step that could be positive or negative or to go forward with a task or back off from a task in the process of making choices in the right direction.

On the other hand, work performance refers to job-related activities that are expected from the staff and how well those activities are accomplished against preset standards of accuracy, completeness, costs, and speed (Gomathi, 2014). Guo, Liao, Liao, and Zhang (2014) argued that performance is how well or bad work is done by individuals in the organization following the performance levels that have been set. In this study, the work performance of the academic staff was used to refer to how innovative the academic staffs are in terms of their level of teaching, research, supervision, publication, paper presentation, and effectiveness in community engagements using their knowledge and skills. WP was thus characterized by how well or poorly the academic staff taught, researched and carried out community engagement.

The unit managers are the academic deans and heads of departments representing middle-level managers in leadership positions in public universities. According to the UOTIA (2006), the dean's work is to provide academic and collegial leadership, plan and coordinate the day-to-day running of the academic, institute quality performance and direct the academic tasks of the faculty in constitution with members of the faculty. The departmental heads are responsible for the academic and non-academic staff in the department. The departmental heads provide academic and departmental leadership, plans, organizes, controls, and coordinate the day-to-day running of the department and ensure quality performance (UOTIA, 2006). To that end, the researcher anticipated a public university to have quality teaching, conduct research, offer community service and serve as a store-house of knowledge and center for excellence.

Contextually, the corresponding author's connection to the decision-making approaches of the academic unit managers and the work performance of academic staff in public universities in Uganda arose from his twenty-year working experiences in a university. This is why the study was conducted in three selected public universities in Uganda, namely: Makerere, Kyambogo and Mbarara. Makerere University is the oldest higher learning institution in Uganda with a mission to "provide innovative teaching-learning, research and community engagement services responsive to national and global needs" (Makerere University, 2016b pp. 2). In a university, there are ranges of decision-making approaches used to facilitate a better working performance, which is critical for unit managers in this context. However, according to NCHE (2017), the challenge is that there were little indications that the unit managers of public universities in Uganda carefully selected any approach for making decisions with regard to the roles performed by their staff (NCHE, 2017). The researcher found this interesting and anticipated that it could be the source of failure in soliciting best work performances of the academic staff in public universities; thus, prompting this investigation. The inadequacy of coherent decision-making approaches normally breeds problems because the academic unit managers seem not to satisfactorily know what decision-making approaches affect the cardinal roles of the academic staff without compromising the quality of their performance in a university (McGregor, 2007). Therefore, this study was conducted to find out how the DMA used by academic unit managers affect the work performance of academic staff in public universities in Uganda and come out with measures to mitigate them.

Although it is the government's policy to ensure the effective delivery of quality education in public universities in Uganda, the work performance (WP) of the academic staff of these universities requires more effort. According to the National Council of Higher Education [NCHE] (2015; 2017), the body responsible for overseeing the operations of higher education institutions in the country and other regional bodies like the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA, 2010), the academic staff of universities in Uganda hardly perform as expected. First, they hardly engage in research

(NCHE, 2017), thus, leading to low publication outputs. Secondly, a large number of them work in several universities at the same time; thus, limiting their concentration in teaching. Third, the academic staff also hardly engage in providing community services (Kasozi, 2009), yet it is one of their cardinal roles. If this scenario persists, universities may produce 'half-baked' graduates who will make the institutions fail to contribute to Uganda's national development, yet universities are expected to contribute to the realization of the country's national development goals, including the Agenda 2040.

Several factors could be responsible for the low work performance of the academic staff in public universities in the country, including the way the staff is managed. This mixed-methods study was intended to explore the effect of the decision-making approaches (DMA) used by academic unit managers on the WP of the academic staff in their respective academic units or departments. The data obtained from the study are expected to help university policy-makers and managers to reflect on the way decisions concerning academic staff can best be made in order to stimulate their productivity as well as performance.

The study focused on establishing the effects of three decision-making approaches (autocratic, democratic, and delegated) used by academic unit managers on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda. Specifically, the study aimed at establishing the effect of autocratic DMA as used by academic unit managers on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda; finding out the effect of democratic DMA as used by academic unit managers on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda and investigating the effect of delegated DMA as used by academic unit managers on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the superfluity of literature on decision-making and the persuasive arguments establishing its link to performance, few studies hitherto have explored its effects on the work performance of the

academic staff of Ugandan public universities. Tinofirei (2011) argued that work performance is the core construct of the 21st century's workplace. Besides, low levels of work performance are often associated with lower productivity and impair the organization's efficiency and effectiveness (Rajhans, 2012; Okoyo & Ezejiolor, 2013; Jayaweera, 2015). Work performance is perceived as activities that are performed towards achieving the organization's (university) goals, missions, and visions (Muchhal, 2014). Jayaweera (2015) argued that it is incontestable that good work performance is paramount for the organization (university) and the individual employee (the academic staff) because it leads to organizational success.

In today's competitive higher education environment, Ugandan public universities can no longer afford to waste the potential of its workforce, especially the academic staff. This is why Jayaweera (2015) argued that key DMA should considerably and positively affect the academic staff's morale, productivity, and engagement positively and not negatively.

In the Ugandan context, academic staff research work performance capacity, as explained by Volmink, McLean, Graham, and Tetroe (2018) and Volmink (2017), is limited because of insufficiently skilled people to conduct research, publish and disseminate its findings. According to Mamdani (2007), research outputs are limited because of the few academic staff with doctoral degrees in Ugandan universities. Mamdani added that most universities in Uganda have long been facing funding difficulties due to limited state resources to provide doctoral scholarships for students, yet this is where research emerges from.

Kiruja and Karanja (2013), observed that the ability of the employees within an organization to share knowledge depends on the DMA used. In light of this, there is no doubt that the academic staff's work performance can be explained or predicted by the DMA used. This is supported by cited literature, which indicates that employees are satisfied with reference to specific DMA used (Nakafero 2002, Maicibi 2007, Facione & Facione 2007 & Boselie, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a pragmatist research paradigm was adopted, which according to Feilzer (2010), advocates for the use of the mixed-methods approach. Based on these values, the researchers approached the issue of decision-making approaches (DMA) of academic unit managers and its effects on the work performance (WP) of academic staff in public universities in Uganda as a matter of both objective and subjective reality. A mixed-method research approach was adopted to provide a deeper understanding of the DMA as a predictor of WP (Morse & Niehaus, 2009). By undertaking this integration, this study provided a better understanding of the DMA as an explanatory factor of WP in order to give more detailed answers to the research questions, identify new research questions and suggest changes to subsequent research designs. A sequential explanatory research design was used and supported up by a cross-sectional survey because of the large number of respondents that were involved.

The target population comprised of academic deans, heads of department, and academic staff (professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, lecturers, assistant lecturers, teaching assistants, and graduate fellows) of the selected public universities totaling to 1744 according to NCHE (2017). A sample size of 325 participants was determined using the Yamane's (1967) method. This sample size was meant for the quantitative part of the study; and therefore, it excluded the five purposively sampled academic unit managers who were interviewed to get the in-depth information to supplement data from the questionnaires plus the ten academic staff. These were sampled using stratified but convenience sampling technique where - stratification was according to their schools/faculties, departments, and ranks and later sampled based on their convenience, availability, and willingness to participate in the study.

Three data collection methods and tools were used to collect the required data, namely: surveys, interviews, and documentation. Respectively, the tools employed were: questionnaire, interview guide, and document checklist. In order to get secondary data about the concepts investigated in this study, different documents were checked using

the document review checklist as a tool to collect data. Among the checked documents for this particular study were: annual reports, human resources manual and work attendance records, faculty and departmental minutes.

To establish if there existed any significant effect of the decision-making approaches on the work performance, the academic staff scores on work performance were then correlated to each of the three dimensions of decision-making approaches using simple linear regression analysis. A multi-linear regression analysis was run to determine the aggregate effect of decision-making approaches on the work performance of academic staff. The univariate descriptive analysis involved the computation of relative frequencies from frequency tables, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The bi-variate inferential data analysis involved the use of the Student 'T' test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare means of the DV (WP) on the categories of the background variables. The aspect of correlation also came in at the bi-variate inferential data analysis level because hypotheses were tested using Pearson's linear correlation coefficient method. Lastly, at the multi-variate inferential level, regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The dependent variable (WP) was regressed on the IVs, namely: autocratic, democratic, and delegated decision-making approaches.

The recorded interviews were repeatedly listened to and then transcribed. The data were analyzed using the thematic content analysis technique. To arrive at the themes, the researcher captured participants' voices as they shared experiences. From the voices, the researcher developed codes that he merged to form themes based on the similarity of the ideas. The researcher eventually compared the outcomes with the dimensions in the conceptual framework of this study. To ease the interpretation in this study, the major themes were presented alongside the results from quantitative analysis and documentary evidence following the study objectives.

Results and Discussions

In order to establish whether there were any effects of the democratic decision-making approaches used

by the academic unit managers on the work performance of the academic staff, correlation and regression analyses were carried out. All the nine constructs were considered, namely; consultation, accepted participation, joint efforts, the manager consults, involvement, collaborations, seeking advice, sharing information, and an open-door policy. The results showed that the 9 constructs of the democratic decision-making approach explained 29.9% of the variation in the work performance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.299$). This meant that 70.1% of the variation was accounted for by other factors not considered in this study. The regression model was significant ($F = 8.934, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). While all the nine constructs of the democratic decision-making approach were positively correlated to the WP, two of them, namely; consultations before a decision is taken ($\beta = -0.242, p = 0.000$) and participation in discussions ($\beta = -0.184, p = 0.013$) negatively correlated with WP.

To find out if the autocratic decision-making approach predicted the academic staff's work performance, the study regressed WP against the indicators of autocratic decision-making. The results reflected that four indicators of the autocratic decision-making approach explained 46.6% of the effects in the WP (adjusted $R^2 = 0.466$). This implies that 53.4% of the other effects were explained by other approaches not considered in this study. The regression model was significant ($F = 6.743, p = 0.000 < 0.5$). While all the 4 indicators of the autocratic decision-making approach positively affected WP, only three of them, namely: lack of free expression ($\beta = -0.017, p = 0.608$), lack of teamwork ($\beta = -0.006, p = 0.799$), and lack of free sharing ($\beta = -0.033, p = 0.246$) were found to be statistically negative significant constructs of autocratic decision-making approaches as used by the academic unit managers.

To establish whether the delegated decision-making approach affected academic staff work performance, the study regressed the constructs of delegated decision-making (IV) against the dependent variable (work performance). The constructs of the delegated decision-making approaches regressed were namely: transfer of authority, transfer of power, transfer of leadership roles, entrusting others with authority, passing on

authority, and assigning tasks to others. The results showed that five components of the delegated decision-making approach explained 10.6% of the variations in the work performance (adjusted R² = 0.106). This meant that 89.4% of the effects were accounted for by extraneous variables; that is, other approaches not considered in this study. The regression model was significant (F = 6.633, p = 0.000 < 0.5). While all the five indicators of the delegated decision-making approach were positively correlated to the work performance of academic staff, only one namely: transfer of authority to staff ($\beta = -0.003$, $p = -0.009$) proved to be a statistically negative significant construct of the delegated decision-making approach.

The independent variables (IVs), namely: democratic, autocratic, and delegated decision-making approaches, were regressed on the dependent variable (DV) work performance with the help of SPSS (version 23). A mathematical model was then formed as shown below.

$$WP = C + \beta_1 Demo.DMA + \beta_2 Auto.DMA + \beta_3 Del.DMA$$

Where *WP* denoted the dependent variable, which is Work Performance; *C* denoted the constant value, i.e. the extent to which the DV is independent of the IV; β denoted the unstandardized coefficient; *Demo.DMA* denoted the First IV which is a democratic decision-making approach; *Auto.DMA* denoted the Second IV which is an autocratic decision-making approach; *Del.DMA* denotes the Third IV which is a delegated decision-making approach.

In instances where the beta is positive, the implication is that the corresponding IV is a positive correlate of the DV. Conversely, if the beta assumed a negative sign, the implication is that the corresponding IV is a negative correlate of the DV. Then, each of the betas was accompanied by a Sig. (p) value to be used in establishing whether it was significant. The relevant statistics together with the betas and their respective p values were arrived at with the help of SPSS, as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Multiple Regression Model Summaries

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.435 ^a	0.189	0.180	0.43758

a. Predictors: (Constant), Delegated Approach, Autocratic Approach, and Democratic Approach
b. Dependent Variable: Work Performance

Table 1 illustrates that the R square value was 0.189, which is 18.9%; this meant that the three independent variables can explain 81.1% of the dependent variable (work performance): democratic, autocratic, and delegated decision-

making approaches. It suggests that other potential independent variables explain the remaining 18.9% of the dependent variable not in the scope of this study.

Table 2: ANOVA Results on Autocratic, Democratic and Delegated DMA on WP

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.614	3	4.205	21.960	0.000 ^b
	Residual	54.188	283	0.191		
	Total	66.802	286			

a. Dependent Variable: Work Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Delegated Approach, Autocratic Approach, Democratic Approach

According to Table 2 above, the observed Fisher's (F) statistics were 21.960. Since the Sig. (p-value), 0.000 was smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$ at the 5% level of

significance; it was deduced that the observed F statistics were large; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. It hypothesized that there was no effect of

the decision-making approaches used by the academic deans and departmental heads on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda. To that end, it was inferred that the scores on WP could be predicted using the scores on the decision-making approaches used by the academic unit managers. In other words, the DMA was a significant predictor of academic staff WP.

To establish if the decision-making approaches predicted the academic staff's work performance, the dependent variable (work performance) was regressed against the independent variables (decision-making approaches), as shown in *Table 3* below, which shows the respective betas and their corresponding Sig. (p) values.

Table 3: Regression Results of Autocratic, Democratic and Delegated DMA on WP

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1(Constant)	2.518	0.092		27.336	0.000
Autocratic Approach	-0.031	0.029	-0.065	-1.085	0.279
Democratic Approach	0.191	0.038	0.375	5.056	0.000
Delegated Approach	0.050	0.032	0.116	1.598	0.111

a. Dependent Variable: Work Performance

Table 3 illustrates that the first independent variable (autocratic decision-making approach) possessed a negative beta (-0.065). This suggests a negative correlation between the autocratic decision-making approach and work performance. Since the significance or p-value, (0.279) was larger than $\alpha = 0.05$, then at the 5% level of significance, we deduce that the computed or observed t statistic is insignificant or small enough ($t = -1.085$) in which case we reject the null hypothesis. Hence, using the regression analysis, the second null hypothesis, which stated that; there is no significant effect of the autocratic decision-making approach relationship on the work performance of the academic staff in the public universities, was rejected.

Table 3 further illustrates that the second independent variable democratic decision-making approach possessed a positive beta (0.375). This suggests the existence of a positive correlation between the democratic decision-making approach and the work performance of academic staff. Since the observed significance or p-value, (0.000) was smaller than $\alpha = 0.05$ at the 5% level of significance, we deduce that the computed or observed t statistic is significant or large enough ($t = 5.056$) in which case we do not reject the null hypothesis suggesting a significant effect. Hence, using regression analysis, the first null hypothesis,

which was stated that: There was no significant effect of the democratic decision-making approach used by the academic deans and departmental heads in public universities on the work performance of the academic staff was rejected.

Table 3 also revealed that the third independent variable, delegated decision-making approach possessed a positive beta (0.116). This suggests the existence of a significant positive effect of delegated decision-making approach on academic staff work performance. The observed Sig. (p) value (0.111) was larger than the popular Sig. (p) value of 0.05, ($p > 0.05$) suggests an insignificant effect at the 5% level. Hence, using the regression analysis, the third hypothesis, which stated that, there was no significant effect of the delegated decision-making approach of the academic unit managers on the work performance of the academic staff was rejected.

Finally, the following model was generated;

$$WP = 2.518 + 0.191 (\text{Democratic}) + -0.031 (\text{Autocratic}) + 0.050 (\text{Delegated})$$

The interpretation of this model is such that, increase in the use of the democratic decision-making approach by the academic deans and departmental heads by one unit is associated with a corresponding increase in academic staff work

performance by 0.191. An increase in the use of an autocratic decision-making approach by the academic deans and departmental heads by one unit is associated with a corresponding decrease in academic staff work performance by -0.031. An increase in the use of delegated decision-making approaches by the academic deans and departmental heads by one unit is associated with a corresponding increase in academic staff work performance by 0.050. Conclusively, therefore, the most significant independent variable towards the dependent variable was the democratic decision-making approach because it had the highest positive beta of 0.191. The discussion of key findings is communication between the results of this study and the previous researches on decision-making and work performances of staff. This was done according to the study objectives.

The first objective of the study was to establish the effect of autocratic decision-making approaches (DMA) as used by academic deans and

departmental heads on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda. To provide a holistic understanding of the phenomena while at the same time providing for the generalization of the findings, a two-phase mixed-methods approach was used as advocated for by Creswell and Clark (2011). This helped to obtain a broad and deep understanding of the phenomena. Besides, to ascertain the effect of autocratic DMA on the work performance of the academic staff, it was necessary for the researcher to first establish whether academic unit managers used autocratic DMA at all. The results showed that they used autocratic decision-making approaches.

In the same vein, the researchers established the status of work performance levels of academic staff in relation to teaching and the results showed that the academic staff were frequently involved in teaching as one of their cardinal work performance. This is shown in *table 4*.

Table 4: Summary Statistics on Teaching

Descriptive		Statistic	Std. Error
Teaching	Mean	3.81	0.03
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	3.74
		Upper Bound	3.88
	5% Trimmed Mean	3.84	
	Median	3.86	
	Variance	0.34	
	Std. Deviation	0.58	
	Minimum	1.43	
	Maximum	4.95	
	Range	3.52	
	Interquartile Range	0.67	
	Skewness	-0.99	0.14
	Kurtosis	1.82	0.29

The results in *Table 4* showed that the trimmed mean of 3.81 was close to the median of 3.86. Therefore, despite the negative skew (skew -0.99), the results were normally distributed. The mean and median scores that were close to code 4 suggested that the performance of academic staff in relation to their teaching was good. This is because they had high levels of teaching performance since they frequently executed their teaching roles.

However, in establishing the work performance levels of academic staff in relation to research, it was noticeable that the academic staff rarely conducted research as one of their cardinal work performance; thus, the low levels of research performance revealed by this study findings. This is shown in table 5 below:

Table 5: Summary Statistics on Research

Descriptive		Statistic		Std. Error
Research	Mean		2.32	0.05612
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.21	
		Upper Bound	2.43	
	5% Trimmed Mean		2.26	
	Median		2.07	
	Variance		0.90	
	Std. Deviation		0.95	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		5.00	
	Range		4.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.46	
	Skewness		0.80	0.14
	Kurtosis		-0.11	0.28

From *table 5* above, the results indicated that, the mean = 2.32, median = 2.07, and standard deviation = 0.95. The results showed that the mean and the median were almost equal, implying normality and this is supported by the positive skewness (skew 0.80), which implied that the results were normally distributed. However, the mean, and median was close to code 2 suggesting that the work performance of the academic staff in relation to

research was low based on code 2 used which represented rarely.

Similarly, in finding the status of work performance levels of academic staff in relation to community engagement, the results showed that the academic staff rarely engaged in community engagement as one of their cardinal work performance. This is supported by the results shown in *table 6*.

Table 6: Summary Statistics for Community Engagement

Descriptive		Statistic		Std. Error
Community engagements	Mean		2.02	0.04
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	1.77	
		Upper Bound	1.91	
	5% Trimmed Mean		1.87	
	Median		1.88	
	Variance		0.29	
	Std. Deviation		1.026	
	Minimum		1.38	
	Maximum		1.88	
	Range		1.50	
	Interquartile Range		0.63	
	Skewness		-0.93	0.17
	Kurtosis		1.83	0.33

From the summary of statistics in the *Table 6*, the mean was = 2.02, median = 1.88, and standard deviation = 1.026. Since the mean and the median were close, they suggested a normal distribution of results, and the low standard deviation (1.026), suggested limited dispersion in the responses. However, the mean and median were close to 2, suggesting that the work performance of the academic staff in relation to their community engagements was low, based on the Likert scale used.

Emanating from the findings above, it meant that work performance levels of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda were generally low. Contextually, the study findings supported the premise on which the study was designed: public universities in Uganda were faced with a challenge of low work performance levels. Accordingly, the low work performance was beefed up with numerous responses from the interviewees, which clearly manifested that too much time was spent on teaching than research, thus explaining the poor work performance in research and community engagements. Finally, the participants seemed to point accusing fingers on the leadership traits of the academic unit managers for exhibiting dictatorial tendencies when it came to making decisions regarding teaching workloads and research funding. This, therefore, suggests that the autocratic decision-making approach, especially on research resources, was the major factor that affected the current low research work performance among the academic staff in public universities in Uganda.

Beyond the significant effect of decision-making approaches on the work performance of academic staff, the qualitative phase of the study gave more insights. For example, participants shared that if there were no research work performance requirements in their appraisal system, they would not do any research work. At the same time, they also shared how the monetary incentives in doing community engagement are very limited, and this does not motivate them at all. These call for future studies to investigate how to enhance the work performance levels of the academic staff in all the public universities in the country.

The above findings were confirmed when this study regressed the dependent variable against the independent variable to establish whether the autocratic decision-making approach predicted the academic staff's work performance. A significant positive effect was revealed which confirmed the hypothesis statement of the study that, the autocratic decision-making approach significantly affected the work performance of the academic staff in the public universities. This study finding was agreeable with several studies by researchers like Nakafero (2002) who studied decision-making and the environment of professional nuns in the management of women religious institutions in Uganda and found that the workers preferred to participate in solving problematic issues in an institution. Nakafero (2002) suggested that participation in decision-making enhanced enthusiasm to perform better and brought about good workplace relationships in terms of supervisor-subordinate relationships.

The second objective of the study aimed at establishing the effect of democratic DMA as used by academic deans and departmental heads on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda. Following this objective, the researcher used a two-phase mixed-methods approach in order to understand the above phenomena holistically. This way, the researcher was able to establish meaningful relationships, and this experience gave a broad and deep understanding of this study. In order to ascertain the effect of democratic DMA on the work performance of the academic staff, it was necessary for the researcher to again first establish whether academic deans and departmental heads used democratic DMA at all. The results showed that the academic unit managers used democratic decision-making approaches.

The findings above were confirmed when this study regressed the dependent variable against the independent variable to establish whether the democratic decision-making approach significantly predicted the academic staff work performance. A significant positive effect was revealed that the democratic decision-making approach significantly affected the work performance of the academic

staff in public universities. This is why hypothesis two statement that ‘the democratic decision-making approach used by the academic deans and departmental heads significantly affected the work performance of the academic staff in public universities’ was accepted. This study finding concurred with the results of several other studies such as the ones of Appelbaum (2013), Sukirno and Siengthai (2011), Elele and Fields (2010), and Janudin et al. (2015). For instance, Appelbaum (2013) established that participation in decision-making positively affected workers’ performance. Sukirno and Siengthai (2011) found out that at the individual level, 91% of lecturers were affected by participation in the decision-making process which had a direct bearing on their teaching and research efficiency. Elele and Fields (2010) meanwhile established that employee participation in decision-making had a significant positive effect on employee performance which view was also shared by Janudin et al. (2015) who established that a significant positive relationship exists between participation in decision-making by lecturers in matters that affect them and their work performance.

The third objective of the study investigated the effect of delegated DMA as used by academic deans and departmental heads on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda. To find out the effect of delegated DMA on the work performance of the academic staff, it was necessary for the researcher to first establish whether academic deans and departmental heads used delegated DMA at all. The results showed that the overall mean for all the six items that measured delegated DMA was 2.7 close to code 3 on the Likert Scale. Code 3 on the stated scale corresponded to the word “sometimes.” With these results, it was clear that academic deans and departmental heads used delegated decision-making approach.

To establish if the delegated decision-making approach affected academic staff work performance, work performance was regressed against the delegated decision-making and the results revealed that five components of the delegated decision-making approach explained 10.6% of the variations in the work performance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.106$). This meant that 89.4% of the

variations were accounted for by other variables. The regression model was significant ($F = 6.633$, $p = 0.000 < 0.5$). While all the five indicators of the delegated decision-making approach were positively correlated to the work performance of academic staff, only one construct, namely: transfer of authority to staff ($\beta = -0.003$, $p = -0.009$) proved to have a statistically significant negative effect on staff work performance. To that end, this study finding established that delegated DMA, as used by academic unit managers, had a significant effect on the work performance of the academic staff in public universities in Uganda. Therefore, the third hypothesis stated as “the use of delegated decision-making approach by academic unit managers significantly affected the work performance of the academic staff” was accordingly upheld.

The finding of the study that delegated decision-making approach significantly affected the work performance of the academic staff was consistent with those of Sullivan and Glanz (2005), who indicated that to be effective, university managers need to delegate some tasks to academic staff they are managing. In agreement with the above, the studies by Chandan (1995) also reported that delegation was a motivational factor because the academic staff was given authority, making them feel recognized and boosting their morale to work with dedication.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of data and the discussion that ensued, the following conclusions were drawn regarding the effects of decision-making approaches used by the academic unit managers on the work performance of academic staff in public universities in Uganda. Individual academic unit managers employed different decision-making approaches. However, the use of a democratic decision-making approach was found to be more dominant than the use of autocratic and delegated decision-making approaches by academic unit managers. This implied that using the democratic decision-making approach by the academic unit managers was found to be more effective in enhancing the work performance of the academic staff.

Different decision-making approaches used by academic unit managers have different effects on the work performance of academic staff. For instance, the autocratic decision-making approach had a significant negative effect on the work performance of academic staff whereas the democratic and delegated decision-making approaches had a significant positive effect on the work performance of academic staff. This implied that the autocratic decision-making approach was less effective in enhancing academic staff work performance.

The knowledge on the effect of decision-making approaches, as used by academic unit managers on the work performance of academic staff in public universities in Uganda is not conclusive. Therefore, further studies need to be carried out in different contexts of higher education in order to establish the benefits and shortcomings of the various decision-making approaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the conclusions drawn from the previous discussion of the findings, the study makes the following recommendations: academic unit managers of public universities should engage more in clear and purposeful democratic decision-making approaches because it has a positive impact on the work performance of the academic staff. This is because an increase in the use of a democratic decision-making approach by one unit is associated with a corresponding increase in academic staff work performance by 19.1%. This means that democratic DMA is a tool that can be used to align the vision and mission of public universities as well as the objectives of the academic staff. Therefore, special emphasis should be positioned on enhancing the democratic decision-making approach. For example, workshops and training courses should be organized, and conducted for academic deans and departmental heads on how to intensify, articulate, communicate, and implement the benefits of using the democratic approach. Such sensitization programs are likely to re-awaken the interest and participation of all the key stakeholders. This is because of the higher the level of the academic staff participation in decision-making, the higher the devotion to the university's vision and mission, and

the higher the academic staff's work performance will be.

To enhance the work performance of the academic staff, the autocratic decision-making approaches, if applied, should not be given priority in all instances. This is because the study found that an increase in the use of an autocratic decision-making approach by the academic deans and departmental heads by one unit is associated with a corresponding decrease in academic staff work performance by -3.1% (refer to results section). Therefore, the autocratic decision-making approach should not be over-emphasized.

Academic unit managers in the public universities should foster the use of delegated decision-making approach in order to enhance the work performance of the academic staff. This is because this study found that an increase in the use of delegated decision-making approach by the academic deans and departmental heads by one unit is associated with a corresponding increase in academic staff work performance by 5%. This calls for interventions that encourage collegial relationships to discourage adversarial relations among the academic staff based on the spirit of sharing power and authority.

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