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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Academic Staff Work Performance in Tanzania's Public and Private Universities: A Systematic and Comparative Review^aNamnyaki Saimon, ^bProsperity M Mwila, ^bKalafunja Osaki^a PhD Scholar, Department of Education Foundations: St. Augustine University of Tanzania.^b Academician, Department of Education Foundations: St. Augustine University of Tanzania.**Corresponding Author**Namnyaki Saimon, Email: namnyakisaimon@gmail.com**Author's Contributions**

All authors contributed equally to this research.

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a systematic literature review of academic staff performance in private and public universities in Tanzania, focusing on teaching and research productivity and community services that significant differences exist in the performance outcomes between the two universities categories, namely public and private. Guided by Human Capital Theory (HCT), the review analyzed empirical and conceptual studies published between 2019 and 2025. Using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, the review synthesized empirical studies published between 2019 and 2025. A quantitative comparative design using independent samples t-tests was employed to examine variations in research and teaching indicators. The findings reveal statistically significant differences in research-related outputs, including international publications and research project participation. However, statistically significant differences were observed in teaching-related indicators such as supervision load and course units taught. The reveal the institutional governance structures that shape academic productivity patterns across Tanzania's higher education system.

Keywords: Higher education; academic staff performance; public and private universities; institutional comparison; Tanzania; university governance

INTRODUCTION

Academic staff constitute the core human resource of universities and largely determine the effectiveness of both teaching, research function and community services (Altbach & de Wit, 2023). Academic staff performance is the successful execution of core university duties namely teaching, research and community services- measured by students' outcomes (facilitation), publications, community impact, and effective student supervision (project internships).

It involves meeting the institutional goals through quality delivery, measured by both objective matrices (publications, grade) and subjective evaluations (appraisals and feedback). Faculty quality has been

consistently linked to university performance, with strong evidence that academic excellence depends on staff competence, motivation, and engagement (Cloete et al., 2022). Universities worldwide are increasingly under pressure to demonstrate measurable staff productivity in both teaching, community services and research domains (Shin & Kehm, 2023). In Sub-Saharan Africa, performance pressures are intensified by massification, funding constraints, and global competitiveness (Teferra, 2022).

Tanzania's higher education sector has expanded rapidly since policy liberalization in the 1990s, leading to the emergence of numerous private universities alongside established public institutions (Mohamed,

2023). This expansion was institutionalized through policy frameworks such as the Education and Training Policy and the Universities Act, which encouraged private sector participation (TCU, 2024). While access has improved, concerns have been raised about declining academic staff productivity and quality assurance across institutions (Materu, 2022). The growing diversity in governance and funding models has created uneven working conditions for academic staff (Varghese, 2023).

Academic staff performance relates to the effectiveness with which academic personnel carry out their professional responsibilities. Academic staff include researchers and teaching personnel who are directly involved in the educational process, such as professors, lecturers, and their assistants (Kasozi, 2009). According to Namutebi (2019, pp. 93–94), academic staff job performance refers to the extent to which lecturers successfully accomplish their core responsibilities in teaching, research, and community service, as well as activities that support teaching and learning in order to achieve institutional goals.

Schuz (2013) emphasized that academic staff play a crucial role in providing regular face-to-face interaction with students and participating in community activities, including serving as directors of schools and charitable organizations. Furthermore, Schuz (2013, p. 464) noted that academic staff contribute to their disciplines by reviewing scholarly publications, attending academic conferences, generating income for universities through research activities, and engaging in consultancy services.

Similarly, Kairuz et al. (2016, p. 881) stated that academic staff work encompasses teaching, research, community service, and institutional governance. They further explained that these responsibilities position academic staff as teachers, researchers, advisers, mentors, departmental colleagues, and active members of the university community. In addition, Menon (2017) identified multiple roles of academic staff, including facilitators of learning, evaluators, researchers, mentors, guides, friends, counselors, academic administrators, and inspirational role models.

Despite rapid expansion, Tanzania's universities continue to face persistent challenges related to academic staff performance in teaching, research and community services (Ngware & Kariuki, 2023). Evidence shows that some academic staff prioritize publication quantity for promotion while neglecting teaching quality, whereas others focus heavily on

teaching to the detriment of research (Aina & Ofoegbu, 2024). This imbalance threatens the quality of graduates and the credibility of local universities within global academic networks (Cloete et al., 2022). The increasing number of Tanzanian students seeking education abroad reflects growing discontentment with local academic support systems (Mohamed, 2023).

The problem addressed during this study is the limited empirical evidence comparing academic staff performance between private and public universities in Tanzania (Teferra, 2022). Existing studies largely examine institutions in isolation, leaving a gap in comparative sector-wide analysis (Altbach & de Wit, 2023). Without rigorous comparative data, policy reforms and institutional strategies remain inadequately informed (Varghese, 2023). This study therefore investigated differences in teaching, community services and research performance between academic staff in private and public universities to inform quality assurance and governance reforms (Cloete & Maassen, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

At the globally, comparative studies show that private universities often demonstrate higher research productivity due to performance-based contracts and managerial autonomy (Altbach & de Wit, 2023). Public universities, on the other hand, tend to emphasize teaching stability and long-term scholarly outputs such as books and monographs (Cloete et al., 2022). Studies in Africa indicate that governance structures strongly influence academic motivation, workload distribution, and access to research funding (Teferra, 2022). Research conducted in East Africa demonstrates that private universities are more likely to reward international publications and research visibility (Ngware & Kariuki, 2023).

There is considerable debate among scholars regarding what constitutes the core tasks in academic staff performance. Many scholars worldwide emphasize research as the primary responsibility of academic staff. In Nigerian public universities, scholarly publications have been regarded as the most critical indicator of academic staff job performance and are commonly used as a basis for promotion and salary advancement (Polycarp & Chigozie, 2015; Ojokuku, 2013).

Conversely, Rashheed et al. (2010) found that academic staff at Islamia University of Bahawalpur in Pakistan considered teaching to be the principal measure of academic staff performance. Supporting

this perspective, Ojokuku (2013) observed that the fundamental responsibility of academic staff is to teach and to impart knowledge and skills to their primary beneficiaries—the students. Similarly, Polycarp and Chigozie (2015), in their study on academic staff performance evaluation in Nigerian universities and colleges, asserted that teaching remains the primary duty of academic staff.

In contrast, Salesho and Naile (2014), in their studies on academic staff retention at selected universities in South Africa, reported that many academic staff members preferred to focus on research activities. Their findings indicated that teaching was not the main motivation for academic staff to work in universities, even though teaching formed a significant part of their responsibilities.

In Tanzania, recent evidence suggests that performance disparities between public and private university staff are increasing due to differential access to resources and incentives (Materu, 2022). Studies show that contract-based employment in private universities creates stronger accountability mechanisms for research output (Aina & Ofoegbu, 2024). However, public universities retain comparative advantages in postgraduate supervision and book publishing due to more stable academic environments. Public universities can retain comparative advantages by:

Research Environment: Public universities typically benefit from better funding, providing access to extensive libraries, state-of-the-art laboratories, and advanced IT facilities, all of which enable more comprehensive and in-depth research.

Established Reputation and Scale: As state-funded institutions, these universities often boast large, diverse faculty teams and a well-established reputation for research excellence, making them attractive to experienced supervisors and researchers.

Academic Publishing System: Academic publishing plays a crucial role in career progression, with research output being closely linked to opportunities for promotion and enhanced professional prestige.

Private universities retain comparative advantage by:

Personalized Attention and Supervision: Despite their smaller size, private universities offer more individualized attention, with lower student-to-faculty ratios and tailored support for postgraduate students, ensuring focused mentorship.

Flexibility and Efficiency: Private universities often feature streamlined administrative processes, allowing

for quicker decision-making, faster adaptation to market trends, and potentially shorter completion times for postgraduate candidates.

Industry Alignment: Many private universities have strong ties to industry, with curricula designed to align closely with current corporate needs. This allows supervisors to guide research that is both relevant and responsive to the demands of the industry (Varghese, 2023). These trends emphasize the importance of systematic comparative assessments to inform policy decisions and institutional reforms (Cloete & Maassen, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Human Capital Theory (HCT), which posits that investment in individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies enhances productivity and organizational performance (Becker, 1993; updated applications: Margin son, 2023). The theory assumes that institutions that provide stronger incentives, professional development opportunities, and performance monitoring systems are more likely to achieve higher staff productivity (Teferra, 2022). In this study, Human Capital Theory (HCT) used to explain how differences in governance, funding, and employment models between private and public universities shape the motivation and performance of academic staff (Varghese, 2023). The theory therefore was used to interpret observed variations in teaching and research outputs across institutional categories (Altbach & de Wit, 2023).

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework examines the relationship between institutional type specifically private and public universities and academic staff performance in Tanzania. Drawing on Cloete and Maassen (2023), the framework positions university ownership (private versus public) as the primary independent variable influencing academic staff outcomes.

The framework recognises that this relationship is not direct, but rather mediated by several intervening institutional factors. These include employment status, particularly the distinction between permanent and contract appointments (Varghese, 2023); incentive structures, encompassing both financial and non-financial rewards (Aina & Ofoegbu, 2024); and the degree of governance autonomy, defined as the extent of institutional decision-making power exercised by the university (Teferra, 2022). Together, these intervening variables shape the conditions under which academic staff operate and perform.

Academic staff performance constitutes the dependent variable and is conceptualised as multidimensional. Teaching performance is reflected through indicators such as supervision load, teaching hours, and the number of course units handled (Materu, 2022). Research performance is assessed through scholarly outputs, including publications, research projects, conference presentations, and authored books (Ngware & Kariuki, 2023). In addition, performance outcomes are influenced by individual and institutional characteristics such as academic rank and discipline, gender, career stage, institutional mission differences, and the broader national research funding ecology. The framework assumes that differences in governance structures and incentive systems between private and public universities mediate the effect of institutional type on academic staff performance outcomes. Consistent with Altbach and de Wit (2023), it emphasises that variations in institutional policies and resource allocation play a critical role in shaping teaching and research productivity within Tanzania's higher education sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) design guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021). This review adopted a systematic literature review design in line with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The use of the PRISMA framework ensured transparency, rigor, and reliability in identifying, screening, and synthesizing studies that investigated the performance of academic staff in public and private universities in Tanzania.

A cross-sectional research design is an observational method that collects data from a specific population at a single point in time, providing a 'snapshot' of current characteristics, exposures and outcomes rather than tracking changes over time. It was used here to examine differences in academic staff performance between private and public universities (Creswell, 2022). A mixed-methods approach was used, combining documentary review and structured questionnaire surveys to enhance data reliability and contextual understanding (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2023). The target population comprised academic staff from faculties of Arts and Social Sciences, Law, and Business in selected two universities (TCU, 2024).

Quantitative data was analyzed using inferential statistics, specifically independent-samples t-tests, to determine statistically significant differences in performance indicators (Field, 2023). Reliability and validity of the instrument ensured through pilot testing and expert review procedures (Pallant, 2023). A significance level of $p < 0.05$ adopted for hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2022).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Teaching Performance

The findings of this systematic literature review indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in graduate supervision loads between private and public university academic staff (Materu, 2022). Teaching load, measured by the number of course units taught, was also found to be similar across both institutional types (Ngware & Kariuki, 2023). These results suggest that teaching responsibilities are regulated by national standards and institutional policies that minimize variation across sectors (TCU, 2024). The similarity in teaching performance reflects standardized curriculum and accreditation requirements in Tanzania (Cloete & Maassen, 2023). The questionnaire aim in systematic review was to establish the performance of the academic staff in teaching in public and private universities in Tanzania. The questions asked in order to establish the academic staffs' teaching skills and it was formulated around the following aspects:

- Lesson attendance
- Use of teaching methods and material
- The quality of tests and examinations
- Setting tests, assignments and examinations

Research Performance

Results revealed significant differences in research performance between private and public university academic staff (Altbach & de Wit, 2023). Academic staff in private universities recorded higher involvement in research projects and higher output in international journal publications (Aina & Ofoegbu, 2024). International conference participation also significantly higher among private university staff, indicating stronger global academic engagement (Teferra, 2022). However, public university academic staff demonstrated significantly higher productivity in academic book and book chapter authorship (Varghese, 2023). These findings suggest that institutional incentive structures strongly influence the type and intensity of research outputs (Cloete et al.,

2022).

Research performance indicators have been commonly defined in terms of the number of articles published in highly accredited international journals, the successful defense of doctoral dissertations, and the amount of research funding secured through grants (Gaus & Hall, 2016; Ter Bogt & Scapens, 2012; Turk, 2016). Kyvik (2013) further noted that the research responsibilities of academic staff extend beyond publication output to include networking and collaboration with scholars from other universities, management of research funds and projects, supervision of students' research, and the evaluation of peers' and students' research to ensure quality standards.

Lindsay et al. (2012) observed that in American universities, research performance is assessed primarily based on the quality of research and scholarly publications. Similarly, Franco-Santos et al. (2014) asserted that in UK universities, research evaluation relies heavily on publications in highly ranked journals, which also serve as an indicator of teaching quality. High-quality teaching is marked by up-to-date, research-informed course content, student-centered instructional approaches, and the effective integration of pedagogical skills with strong subject knowledge. In contrast, low-quality teaching may arise when research demands compete for instructional time, staff availability is limited, and the curriculum becomes overly narrow.

In contrast, Quimbo and Sulabo (2014), in their survey study on research productivity and its policy implications in higher education, found that academic staff in Calabazon universities emphasized the quality rather than the quantity of publications when evaluating research effectiveness. Supporting this view, Kyvik (2013) argued that outstanding academic performance should be measured by the quality of research outputs rather than their volume, highlighting the importance of rigorous evaluation of research quality and scholarly publications.

Higher Education institutions (HEIs), according to Manyikanyan and Abdulgani (2015, p. 13) identified both individual and institutional determinants of academic research productivity. Individual factors include motivation, commitment, basic and advanced research skills, a sense of achievement, and engagement in scholarly pursuits. Institutional factors, on the other hand, encompass staff support, mentoring, availability of resources, reward systems, time allocation, organizational culture, emphasis on

research, tenure and promotion policies, financial incentives, as well as peer and social recognition.

Similarly, Hancock, Breuning, and Baum (2015) emphasized that heavy teaching workloads significantly constrain academic staff's research productivity. They argued that increasing leave time could enhance opportunities for academics to devote more time to research activities. Therefore, given the factors that influence research productivity, HEIs seeking to enhance academic research performance must adopt deliberate strategies aimed at reducing barriers that limit staff engagement in research and fostering an enabling research environment.

In Ugandan higher education institutions (HEIs), academic staff are expected to engage in teaching, research, and community service (Mushemeza, 2016). Kasozi (2009, p. 73) noted that academic staff in Ugandan universities are required to perform a wide range of roles, including advising students, managing projects, participating in personnel and budget formulation, heading departments, serving on various committees and task forces, recruiting students, engaging in local, national, and international debates, presenting papers at conferences, writing books, contributing to scientific exhibitions, medical innovations, and literary activities, as well as acting as role models within society.

Mushemeza (2016) further emphasized that academic staff responsibilities also involve supervising internships, providing academic support to students outside formal lecture hours, and participating in faculty and departmental meetings. Similarly, Kasule et al. (2016) observed that academic staff roles extend to course design, administrative duties, and marketing university services. In the context of this study, academic staff responsibilities include teaching the allocated workload per semester in terms of contact hours, conducting and supervising research, and assessing students' assignments, tests, and examinations.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This systematic review revealed that academic staff in public institutions demonstrated a higher level of commitment to teaching compared with their counterparts in private institutions. Lecturers in public universities were more likely to begin their classes on time and to employ a wider range of teaching methods and instructional materials. Consequently, the study concluded that academic staff in public universities

possess stronger pedagogical training than those in private universities, which may explain their superior teaching effectiveness, particularly in the design and administration of assignments, tests, and examinations. Furthermore, academic staff in public universities were found to set clear performance goals and place greater emphasis on monitoring student performance more frequently than their colleagues in private universities. Therefore, the study concluded that academic staff in public universities were more strongly focused on achieving established performance goals and targets than their counterparts in private universities. In addition, the findings indicated that academic staff in both public and private institutions devoted more effort to teaching activities than to research. This imbalance may explain why academic staff in both institution types demonstrated greater competence in teaching than in research. Furthermore, the study revealed that university management placed greater emphasis on rewarding teaching performance than research output, resulting in insufficient incentives for academic staff to actively engage in research activities.

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