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Hrm Practices For Academic Staff In Private Higher Education Institutions In Namibia.

Fiina Shimaneni
Namibia University Of Science And Technology
13 Jackson Kaujeuja Street
Windhoek West
Namibia

Abstract
Academic staff play a critical role in driving institutional performance through teaching, research and professional services; and as such Human resource management practices (HRM) for academic staff are essential factors that impact various organisational outcomes. However, there is a lack of comprehensive quantitative research examining these practices specifically within private higher education institutions (PHEIs) within the context of Namibia. This study addressed this gap by investigating the current state of recruitment, compensation and workload practices and their impact on academic staff job performance. The data were collected by a questionnaire from a population of 120 academic staff of two private higher education institutions. Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, a multiple regression analysis was performed to analyse the data. The results reveal that while the academic staff are satisfied with the recruitment practices and how workload is maintained, compensation practices were found to be poorly practiced at the institutions.

Keywords: *Academic staff, compensation, recruitment, workload, employee performance*

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I. Introduction

Private higher education institutions (PHEs) play a key role in the higher education sector of any country (Qureshi & Khawaja, 2021; Kajawo, 2020; Nukunah, Bezuidenhout & Furtak, 2019) and academic staff are key in achieving this mission. In the dynamic landscape of private higher education (Joarder, Ashraf & Ratan, 2020) recruitment, compensation and workload practices for academic staff are pivotal in shaping the academic environment. This paper delves into these critical aspects, examining their significance and implication for academic staff job performance while presenting the interplay between recruitment, compensation and workload management within PHEIs.

Understanding the interplay between recruitment, compensation and workload practices within PHEIs is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, effective recruitment practices ensure finding quality employees (Aboramadan, Albashiti, Alharazin & Dahleez, 2020, Singh, 2019) who do not only fit into the organisation (Aboramadan et al., 2020) but ultimately enhance organisational performance. Secondly, compensation practices are instrumental in meeting the financial needs of academic staff, fostering a conducive work environment and eventually enhancing job satisfaction and performance (Permana, Aima, Ariyanto, Nurmahdi, Stutawidjaya & Endri, 2021). Thirdly, equitable workload practices result into effective management of people, resources and time. Thus, examining these aspects not only improves academic staff performance, but also contribute to the broader discourse of institution reputation and educational quality.

Although considerable studies exist on HRM practices in higher education, the focus on PHEIs warrants specific attention. Private institutions operate within unique contexts characterised by self-funding, reliance on tuition fees (Kajawo, 2020) and distinct organisational structures. Existing literature provides general insights but fails to address adequately the unique challenges and opportunities specific to PHE sector in Namibia. Additionally, the existing studies often lack an analysis of the interrelationship between recruitment, compensation and workload practices, leaving a gap in understanding their collective influence on academic staff job performance.

This paper advances the above discourse by first, asserting that effective recruitment practices tailored to the needs of PHEIs is essential in enhancing academic staff job performance. It further contends that fair and transparent compensation practices motivate academic staff to work hard. Lastly, the study posits that workload allocation should be designed carefully to optimise academic staff job performance. The primary objective of this paper is therefore, to examine recruitment, compensation and workload practices for academic staff in PHEIs to enhance academic staff job performance. By pursuing these objectives, this study contributes to a deep understanding of the complex dynamics shaping academic staff performance in the PHE sector.

II. Literature Review

Recruitment practices

It is generally agreed that employees are the greatest assets of any organisation, thus the recruitment process is vital in ensuring that organisations are staffed with the best employees. Recruitment is a process of seeking and selecting applicants whom the employer foresees can be a fit for the company and can give the maximum performance to the organisation (Obeidat, Tawalbeh, Masa'deh & Akour, 2019). To Grobler, Grobler and Mathafena (2019), the importance of recruiting and selecting the right people enhances the entry point for skills, knowledge and abilities into the organisation to ultimately determine its performance and sustainability.

One of the most important components of creating a successful academic institution is the recruitment of its academic staff. The hiring of effective faculty (Ahmed, Khan, Thitivesa, Siraphatthada & Phumdara, 2020) determines the success of developing and maintaining academic programs ultimately influencing student success. For academic staff who serve as the face of institutions, it is important that they are sourced in the best possible manner. The emergence of digital technologies and social media (Ahmed et al., 2020) should, therefore be leverage to attract and select high quality academic staff.

Compensation practices

Compensation has been recognised as a fundamental factor in attracting and retaining academic staff (Permana et al., 2021) as well as strengthening employee motivation (Naeem, Mirza, Ayyub & Lodhi, 2019). Compensation is organisational practices, which can be performance- based or salary- based rewards used to recruit, motivate and retain employees in order to realise the intended organisational objectives (Shehata et al., 2020). In this respect, compensation practices must encompass various elements such as salary, incentives and benefits.

It is important to note that appropriate and equitable compensation practices need to be provided to employees (Ashraf, 2020). Compensation must be perceived to be of value and match with employees' skills, abilities and contributions to the organisation. Thus, implementing effective compensation to attract, retain and motivate employees ensures overall satisfaction and well-being of academic staff (Permana et al., 2021). Several scholars confirmed an effective compensation strategy as a robust contributor towards employee performance (Aboramadan et al., 2019; Alfagira & Zumrah, 2019; Khan, Yosuff, Hussain & Ismail, 2019). Therefore, it is imperative for organisation to implement innovative compensation strategies to not only improve organisational performance but recognise the contribution of academic staff.

Workload practices

The well-being of academic staff constitutes one of the major components that promotes a healthy working environment. Therefore, managing workload for academic staff could be an initiative that improves staff well-being (Boncori, Bizjak & Sicca, 2020; Ahmed, 2019) and enhances job performance (Israel & Abimbola, 2020). Administratively flawed workload arrangements can have a demoralising effect on employees and has potential of producing negative organisational outcomes (Yousefi & Abdullah, 2019).

Academic institutions in negotiating academics' responsibilities use workload distribution model. Although academic workload is central to effective operation of academic departments, it is difficult to include all teaching workload parameters. Nevertheless, workload describes lecturer's teaching hours as well as other tasks assigned to them (Boncori et al., 2020; Israel & Abimbola, 2020).

Some empirical studies were done in the context of workload management in academic institutions. A study by Boncori et al. (2020) identified that the main issues with regard to workload is the establishment of what really constitutes academic work and how to measure it. The study further indicates that it is a challenge to determine what an appropriate or fair academic workload is. However, having an excessive workload exhaust staff and reduce job satisfaction (Israel & Abimbola, 2020), which in turn threaten the quality of teaching. Amini-Philips and Okonmah (2020), add that excessive workload seems to be a contributor to many quality issues found in higher learning institutions today. This underscores the need for effective workload management in academic institutions as they navigate the growing complexities found in higher education landscape.

Academic staff job performance

The concept of academic staff job performance is a multifaceted construct, encompassing teaching, research activities and professional services. Aboramandan et al. (2019) observed that creating a successful organisation depends on the commitment and performance of people who work there. In fact, academic staff job performance is considered a critical component of organisational success (Joarder et al., 2020) and student outcomes in higher education institutions (Alfagira & Zumrah,2019). Consequently, effective job performance not only influences student learning experiences, but also impact institutional reputation (Kaushal, Jaiswal, Kant & Ali, 2021). Similarly, Otoo (2019) postulates that higher education institutions should strive to align job performance to institutional goals and values as well as providing support and resources necessarily to perform.

HRM practices and employee performance

HRM practices have been widely acknowledged in literatures due to their crucial role in shaping employee behaviour and organizational effectiveness (Aydogan & Arslan, 2020; Oloruntoyin, Damiloa & Gbenga, 2020; Sweiss, Ogla, Abdallat, Sweis, Suifan & Saleh, 2020). HRM practices encompasses various dimensions, including recruitment and selection, training, compensation, performance appraisal and employee relations (Aydogan & Arslan, 2020; Shehata et al., 2020; Naeem et al., 2019). It is necessary to indicate that HRM practices consist of a broad array of dimensions and the predominant arguments stress that through a bundle of HRM practices, organisations are able to get important human resources to yield organisational performance (Oloruntoyin, et al, 2020). This stands as a rationale for the current investigation. Although previous research have explored the concept of HRM practices and employee performance in general, there are some gaps considering that private institutions face unique challenges in attracting, rewarding and retaining talent. It is therefore essential to examine the private higher education sector since the results will add value to the distinct institutional dynamics and the context of the academic environment. The aim of this article is therefore to investigate, specifically the extent to which recruitment, compensation and workload practices affect academic staff job performance. The following hypothesis were proposed:

H1. Recruitment practices significantly influence academic staff job performance.
H2. Compensation practices significantly influence academic staff job performance.
H3. Workload practices significantly influence academic staff job performance.

III. Methodology

Participants

To test the relationship between recruitment, compensation and workload practices and academic staff performance, participants were recruited from two PHEIs that granted permission to conduct the study. Sample constituted of 120 academic staff (65% female, 35% male) and stratified random sampling was utilised to ensure representation across various academic discipline, departments and ranks. Most participants were holders of Master's degree (68.82%), followed by Doctoral degree holders (11.11%), Bachelor degrees (11.11%), Honours degrees (5.56%). It was also observed that some participants had other qualification (3.70%). Out of 120 questionnaires distributed, 56 were returned, giving a response rate of 47%.

Data collection

Data was collected through an online survey platform, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality for participants. Since the study intended to assess the extent to which HRM practices influence the academic performance for staffs at PHEI, the questionnaire consisted of three HRM practices and the dependent variable, academic staff job performance. The HRM practices were measured in terms of recruitment practices (RP), compensation practices (CP), and workload practices (WLP). However, RP, CP and WLP are all latent variables that could not be measured directly. Therefore, the study measured RP with 5 items, CP with 6 items and WLP with 5 items. Similarly, the academic staff job performance (ASJP) which is the dependent variable is also latent and it was measured with 8 items.

Table 1: Reliability test

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
RP	0.888	17
CP	0.908	21
WLP	0.782	15
ASJP	0.906	31
Overall	**0.911**	**84**

Following the illustration above, this study applied Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire used to collect data. Taherdoost (2016) suggests that the appropriate measure of reliability when Likert scales are employed to gather data, which was the case in this study is a Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.70. This indicates the presence of internal consistence (Gaskin, 2016). In so doing, this study examined reliability of individual independent variables as HR practices in terms of the recruitment practices (RP), compensation practices (CP), and workload practices (WLP), the dependent variable as the academic staff job performance (ASJP), as well as cumulatively for all the factors. Notwithstanding that, the Cronbach's alpha values for all the factors surpassed the minimum allowable value of 0.70 as illustrated in table 1 above.

The study employed a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 as the minimum, implying Strongly Disagree, 2 as Disagree, 3 being Neutral, 4 implying Agree and 5 as the maximum, signifying Strongly Agree. To conduct the study, permission was sought and granted by research coordinators of institutions. The instrument was self-administered to assess academic staff perceptions. Data was screened to measure if there were missing values, unengaged responses, and outliers that need to be addressed to avoid undesired results and wrong conclusions. Following that is the in-depth data analysis that was conducted using various analytical tools for quantitative data such as descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, independent sample test, correlation analysis and regression analysis. In so doing, the study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

IV. Results

Results relating to HRM practices and job performance of academic staff have been analysed and presented in table 1. Regarding the dimensions of HRM practices, RP (M=3.69; SD=.528) recorded the highest followed by WP (M=3.48; SD=.389). CP received the lowest score (M=2.922, SD=.712). This implies that academic staff view their institutions' recruitment and workload practices more favourably than their compensation practices. Lastly, ASJP scored a mean value of 4.10 and standard deviation of .486. This shows that respondents perceived that job performance was positively influenced by recruitment and workload practices, despite the lower score attributed to compensation practices.

Table 2: Descriptive for HRM practices and academic staff job performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RP	54	2.06	4.71	3.6928	0.52894
CP	54	1.10	4.90	2.9224	0.71295
WLP	54	2.60	4.60	3.4802	0.38924
ASJP	54	3.00	5.00	4.1016	0.48650
Valid N (listwise)	54				

Source: Author's construction from the analysis (2022)

Further investigations were carried out to provide a robust conclusion of the findings. Hence, the study's core components of HRM practices were computed to determine their inter-relationships and findings are presented in table 3 and 4 below.

Table 3 : Independent sample test of gender and the dimensions of HRM practices

Factors	Female		Male		t-value	p-value
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev		
RP	3.7311	0.51148	3.6223	0.56704	0.719	0.476
CP	2.9510	0.66310	2.8697	0.81338	0.397	0.693
WLP	3.5029	0.42174	3.4386	0.32759	0.576	0.567
THRP	10.1850	1.41194	9.9306	1.55113	0.611	0.544
ASJS	4.1779	0.49248	3.9610	0.45449	1.587	0.119

Source: Author's extraction from the independent sample test (2022)

The study sought to assess whether there is statistically significant difference between gender and the dimensions of HRM practices in terms of RP, CP, and WLP, as well as on the overall HR practices (THRP) and ASJP.

Following the findings from the independent sample test of gender and the factors of HR practices (RP, CP, WLP, and THRP), as well as the ASJP, the study found all the p-values to be greater than 5% level of significance as depicted in table 6.4. That is, 0.476 for RP, 0.693 for CP, 0.567 for WLP, 0.544 for THRP, and 0.119 for ASJP. This proves that there is significant difference between gender and each of the factors. Regarding the mean scores, the results reveal that female participants have better perception of the HRM practices than the male participants, given the mean values for females all greater than those for males. This could be a result of more representation of female than the male gender in the study as shown earlier.

Table 4 : Independent sample test of institutions and the dimensions of HRM practices

Factors	Institution 1		Institution 2		t-value	p-value
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev		
RP	3.7913	0.39718	3.5601	0.65332	-1.503	0.142
CP	2.9140	0.58907	2.9337	0.86668	0.100	0.921

WLP	3.4839	0.33064	3.4754	0.46463	-0.079	0.938
THRP	10.1891	1.12514	9.9692	1.82496	-0.546	0.587
ASJS	4.1072	0.46660	4.0940	0.52268	-0.098	0.923

Source: Author's extraction from the independent sample test (2022)

According to table 4, the results show that all the p-values are greater than 5% level of significance at 0.142 for RP, 0.921 for CP, 0.938 for WLP, 0.587 for THRP, and 0.923 for ASJP . This indicates that there is significant difference between the institutions and each of the dimensions. In terms of the mean scores, the results reveal that the Institution 1 has better perception of RP, WLP, the overall HR practices (THRP) and ASJP while Institution 2 is only better off in terms of CP. This implies that, on overall, Institution 1 has better HRM practices than Institution 2.

The relationship between the dependent and independent variables was estimated using multiple regression analysis. In the model, ASJP was considered as the dependent variable, while HRM practices (RP, CP, and WLP) were handled as the independent variables. The coefficient's sign specifies the direction of the link between the variables, with a positive sign (+) indicating a direct relationship, a negative sign (-) indicating an inverse relationship while a coefficient of zero (0) implies no relationship between the variables (Nautwima & Asa, 2021). Table 5 portrays the findings from the regression analysis.

Table 5 : Regression coefficients summary

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	0.180	0.616		2.728	0.009		
	RP	0.288	0.171	0.313	2.189	0.037	0.819	1.237
	CP	-0.238	0.137	-0.348	-2.235	0.019	0.881	1.042
	WLP	0.590	0.213	0.472	2.767	0.008	0.905	1.019
a. Dependent Variable: ASJP								

Given the results presented in table 6.8 above, the study specified the regression equation in the model as follows: $Y = \alpha_0 + \beta_1(X_1) + \beta_2(X_2) + \beta_3(X_3) + \varepsilon$, where Y is the dependent variable, α_0 is the constant, β_1 , β_2, and β_3 are the coefficients, X_1, X_2, and X_3 represent the independent variables, while ε in the equation is the error term.

That is:

$ASJP = \alpha_0 + \beta_1(RP) + \beta_2(CP) + \beta_3(WLP) + \varepsilon$

Where, ASJP is the academic staff job performance, RP is the recruitment practices, CP is the compensation practices while WLP is the workload practices.

Therefore:

$ASJP = 0.180 + 0.288(RP) – 0.238(CP) + 0.590(WLP) + \varepsilon$

Based on the findings from the regression analysis, the constant is 0.180. This shows that in the absence of RP, CP, and WLP, ASJP stands at 18%.

The coefficient sign of RP is positive, indicating a direct relationship between the RP and ASJP. This implies effective recruitment practices enhances the academic staff job performance. Precisely, when RP improves by 1%, ASJP will also improve by 28.8%. This relationship was also proven to be statistically significant at p-value of 0.037 that is less than 5% and can also be confirmed with the t-value of 2.189 that is greater than +/- 1.96 in absolute value, according to the rule of thumb with respect to the statistical significance (Nautwima & Asa, 2021).

CP has a negative sign of the coefficient, indicating an inverse relationship between the CP and ASJP. This signifies poor HRM practices in terms of compensation practices that reduces the academic staff job performance. Particularly, when CP becomes poorer by 1%, ASJP will reduce by 23.8%. Lastly, this relationship was also proven to be statistically significant at p-value of 0.019 that is less than 5% and can also be confirmed with the t-value of -2.235 that is greater than +/-1.96 in absolute value, according to the rule of thumb with respect to the statistical significance (Nautwima & Asa, 2021). Concisely, this relationship demonstrates that the academic staff at the surveyed institutions are not satisfied with the compensations that institutions offer them, which is a sign for a room for improvement.

WLP has a positive sign of the coefficient, showing a direct relationship between the WLP and ASJP. This implies good HR practices in terms of workload practices, which reduce the academic staff job performance. Particularly, when maintaining the workload improves by 1%, ASJP will enhance by 59%. Finally, this relationship was found to be statistically significant at p-value of 0.008 that is less than 5% and can be confirmed

with the t-value of 2.767 that is greater than +/-1.96 in absolute value, following the rule of thumb with respect to the statistical significance as illustrated by Nautwima and Asa (2021).

V. Discussion

The present study was designed to examine the extent to which HRM practices in terms of RP, CP and WLP among the academic staff affect job performance at PHEIs. In that essence, the evidence from the analysis reveal that academic staff are satisfied with recruitment practices, indicating that institutions are effectively attracting suitable personnel for various academic positions. These findings suggest that the recruitment drives might be transparent, and merit-based. This conforms to Aboramadan et al. (2019) on effective recruitment practices, highlighting the importance of fair and transparent recruitment in promoting job performance. When academic institutions employ diverse recruitment strategies, they are more likely to attract high quality academics, thereby increasing their chances of high productivity. However, it is essential to adapt appropriate recruitment practices as only certain strategies may be more effective in attracting high quality academic staff. Hence, HR departments should employ online recruitment (Ahmed et al., 2020) and social media to reach a wider audience.

Analysis confirmed that compensation practices were poorly implemented, suggesting that there may be a lack of diverse compensation structure. This can be attributed to limited financial funding for educational institutions, resulting into inappropriate compensation and rewards (Naeem et al., 2019). This, according to Naeem et al. (2019) reduces trustworthiness among academic staff. In the same light (Permana et al., 2021) explained that poor compensation practices can lead to low job satisfaction and performance among employees. It is essential for PHEIs to address compensation issues to boost academic staff job performance.

Workload management significantly predicted academic staff job performance. This implies effective workload management among academic staff. This corroborates with Muramalla and Alotaibi (2019) on balancing workload critical for managing work-life balance. This means that academic staff are likely to experience low level of stress if workload practices are perceived positively (Muramalla & Alotaibi, 2019). In the same light, it is essential for PHEIs to provide adequate support, professional development opportunities and resources to assist academic staff to cope effectively with their workload.

VI. Implication And Conclusion

The study investigated HRM practices for academic staff within PHEIs, specifically recruitment, compensation and workload practices. While recruitment and workload practices exhibited relative sound approaches, compensation practices lag behind. This could be attributed to the fact that PHEIs are self-funded and rely on tuition fees for their operations.

The findings have several theoretical and practical implication on management of academic staff. The SET has been evidenced as a theory capable of explaining reciprocal relationship between employers and employees (Sibian & Ispas, 2021). This stems from the perceptions that effective HRM practices are central to the reciprocation of employee behaviour, such as higher performance. This is also built on the premises that HRM practices signal an organisation's intentions to its employees. If those HRM practices signal an employer's generosity, they should induce positive employee reactions (Jahan & Kim, 2021).

Recruitment practices are perceived to be adequately structured, facilitating an environment for attracting and selecting high quality academic staff. This is equally the case with workload practices, with the findings asserting effective workload management. Balanced workloads promote a conducive environment for performance among academic staff.

However, compensation practices seem to fall short of academic staff's expectations. This shortfall may affect their job performance. It is however essential to address the disparity between workload and compensation expectation to foster a performing and supportive work environment within private institutions. This can be done by aligning compensation policies with workload through salary reviews and implementation of diverse compensation structures.

Despite effort to realise the study, some limitations are recorded that might have moderated the study's results. The sample was limited to academic staff only and to two PHEIs in Namibia; and this may affect wider application of the results. Therefore, the extension of the study to other university's staff and institutions is essential. Furthermore, a quantitative approach was adopted, using a structured questionnaire. This might have limited some participants to express their sentiments extensively about the HRM practices implementation in their institutions. This expresses the need for a qualitative study to explore deep the perceptions of the academic staff in order to have a more balanced information about the state of HRM practices in PHEIs. Lastly, the study exclusively focused on three specific HRM practices, namely recruitment, compensation and workload within a broader array of HRM practices that may impact academic staff job performance. Despite these limitations, the paper's overall quality has not been affected considering that the study has employed a robust data collection procedure coupled with the thorough analysis of data. In all, the study has provided an insightful understanding of recruitment, compensation and workload practices within PHEIs.

Disclosure statement
The author declares no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement
Data is available upon request.

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