Influence of Remuneration on Academic Staff Performance in Public Universities in Machakos and Kitui Counties, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance in public universities in Machakos and Kitui Counties, Kenya. Specifically, it sought to establish the influence of remuneration on academic staff performance at Machakos University (MksU) and South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU). The study adopted a descriptive-correlational research design. The target population comprised 343 academic staff, including 144 from MksU and 199 from SEKU. Using Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample of 185 academic staff was obtained, comprising 78 respondents from MksU and 107 from SEKU. Stratified random sampling was used to select respondents according to academic designation. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and 168 usable responses were obtained representing a response rate of 90.8%. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.882. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression analysis. Remuneration recorded a composite mean of 3.26, SD = 1.09, indicating moderate agreement regarding the adequacy and motivational value of remuneration. Timely payment of salary had the highest rating (M=3.85, SD= 0.92), fair rewards for employee contributions had the lowest rating (M=3.05, SD=1.14). Pearson correlation analysis indicated a positive and statistically significant relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance. In the multiple regression model incorporating perceived equity, training and development and work environment, remuneration had a positive and statistically significant association with academic staff performance (B=0.268, SE=0.058, β=0.281, p<.001) controlling for perceived equity, training and development and work environment. The model indicated that the four predictors jointly explained 47% of the variance in academic staff performance (R^2 = .470) and adjusted (R^2 = .457). These findings indicate that remuneration is an important correlate of self-reported academic staff performance in the two universities. Although timely salary payment was rated relatively favourably, concerns remained regarding the fairness of rewards, salary adequacy, allowances for additional responsibilities and financial incentives for research and publication. The study recommends transparent remuneration and recognition arrangements that are consistent with collective bargaining agreements, public-sector regulations and institutional financial capacity. Given the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, the findings demonstrate statistical associations rather than causal effects.

Keywords: academic staff; employee performance; public universities; remuneration; rewards; Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Academic staff performance is central to the capacity of universities to provide quality teaching, research, postgraduate supervision, innovation and community engagement. Contemporary academic work involves multiple responsibilities extending beyond classroom teaching to include research and publication, postgraduate supervision, grant acquisition, institutional service and community engagement. Naidoo-Chetty and du Plessis (2021) identified publication pressure, excessive workload and competing time demands as

major demands experienced by academics. These responsibilities have increased the importance of human resource practices that support academic staff motivation and sustained performance.

Remuneration is a significant element of the employment relationship since it represents the financial rewards provided in exchange for employees' contributions. Remuneration refers to the financial rewards and other forms of compensation provided to employees in exchange for their work and services (Kinyamu et al., 2021); Mitalo, 2019).

In Kenya, the Universities Act provides for public university funding and establishes mechanisms for determining discipline-differentiated remuneration for academic staff. The Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC) is mandated to set and regularly review remuneration and benefits for State officers (Universities Act, 2012; SRC, 2022). Remuneration may include salaries, allowances, benefits and research-related incentives. Employees' perception of the adequacy, timeliness and fairness of these rewards may be associated with their motivation and reported performance. Conversely, the relationship may differ across institutional settings due to variations in remuneration systems, availability of resources, workload and opportunities for training and development.

In Kenyan public universities, remuneration constitutes an important component of the employment relationship and operates within the public-sector environment shaped by government policies, available resources and collective bargaining agreements. These conditions may influence the ability of the public universities to provide compensation and recognition of academic staff output appropriately. The study examined the relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance at Machakos University and South Eastern Kenya University located in Machakos and Kitui Counties respectively. The study focused on academic staff perceptions of salary payment, adequacy of remuneration (allowances and financial incentives) and fairness of rewards. Their statistical association with reported academic staff performance was assessed.

Background of the Study

Remuneration may be associated with academic staff performance by shaping their perceptions of effort and rewards. It includes salaries, wages, bonuses, allowances and other financial and non-financial benefits provided in exchange for employees' contributions to organizational goals. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2023) reward management is an important human resource function as organizational reward programmes communicate institutional priorities and may affect employees' attitudes and behavior. Recognition, remuneration and opportunities for professional development can contribute to academic staff motivation and performance (Zhao, 2024).

Expectancy Theory posits that employees' motivation is shaped by their belief that increased effort will lead to improved performance and that good performance will result in valued rewards (Vroom, 1964; Robbins & Judge, 2022). In this context, remuneration may be relevant to academic staff perceptions of whether their professional contributions receive adequate reward. Academic staff undertake multiple responsibilities that may not be equally reflected in salary structures, including teaching, research, postgraduate supervision, administrative duties and community engagement (Universities Act, 2012). Allowances for administrative responsibilities and research incentives may therefore be relevant to how academic staff evaluate the remuneration system. Over the years, the relationship between remuneration and employee performance has received considerable attention in human resource management research. Evidence indicates that compensation and reward practices are associated with employee attitudes, motivation and performance, however, the strength of these relationships varies across institutional and national contexts. In higher education, remuneration assumes particular importance because academic work combines teaching, research, supervision, service and administrative responsibilities within an increasingly demanding institutional environment (OECD, 2020; Naidoo-Chetty & du Plessis, 2021).

In Kenya, public universities remuneration operates within the public sector environment shaped by government policies and regulations, institutional financial resources and collective bargaining arrangements. These conditions may influence the ability of universities to provide compensation packages that academic staff consider appropriate in relation to their responsibilities.

Although previous studies have examined compensation and academic staff performance in Kenyan public universities, institution-specific evidence remains important because remuneration arrangements and staff perceptions may vary across university settings. This study therefore examined the association between remuneration and self-reported academic staff performance at Machakos University and South Eastern Kenya University. It considered six dimensions of remuneration: timely salary payment, the motivational value of the remuneration package, allowances, salary commensurateness, research incentives and fairness of rewards.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Expectancy Theory

The study was anchored on Expectancy Theory, developed by Vroom (1964). The theory is based on three components: Valence, Instrumentality and Expectancy (VIE) which collectively determine the level of employee motivation (Munialo, 2019). According to the theory, expectancy refers to an employee's belief that increased effort will lead to improved performance. Instrumentality refers to the belief that achieving the required level of performance will result in valued rewards such as promotions, recognition, salary increments and or other benefits (Pham & Nguyen, 2024). Valence represents the value or attractiveness that employees attach to the expected rewards.

Expectancy Theory provides a useful framework for examining remuneration for academic staff because they evaluate whether their efforts and contributions are appropriately compensated. Employees are more likely to perform effectively when they believe that their effort will lead to good performance, that good performance will result in rewards and that the rewards provided are meaningful to them (Cheruiyot & Onsiro, 2020). Consequently, the theory emphasizes the importance of aligning organizational reward systems with employees' expectations and individual needs in order to enhance motivation and performance.

Remuneration becomes particularly relevant to instrumentality and valence because employees evaluate whether their performance is appropriately recognized through salary, allowances, incentives or other rewards (Mitalo & Wanyama, 2024). Evidence from Kenyan chartered public universities indicates that employee compensation is significantly associated with employee performance through employee motivation, supporting the relevance of compensation and motivational mechanisms in the academic work environment (Mitalo & Wanyama, 2024).

Expectancy Theory is relevant in this study as it provides a framework for examining the relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance by clarifying how the adequacy and perceived value of remuneration may influence their performance. When employees perceive that effort and performance are not meaningfully connected to rewards the motivational effect of remuneration may be weakened thereby affecting performance.

The theory supports the remuneration variable by explaining that employees are more likely to be motivated and perform effectively when they perceive a clear link between their performance and the rewards they receive. The theory does not, however, imply that remuneration is the sole determinant of performance as academic staff may also be influenced by equity perception, training and development, work environment, other intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Academic staff in Kenyan public universities undertake multiple and demanding responsibilities in teaching, research, postgraduate supervision and institutional administration and community service. Remuneration is an important aspect of employment relationship since it provides financial rewards for their contribution which may shape their perceptions of rewards.

However, despite the importance of remuneration, the adequacy and motivational value may differ across its various components. Timely salary payment does not necessarily mean that employees consider their

compensation adequate or that additional responsibilities and research contributions are fairly recognized. The differences in these perceptions may be associated with variations in academic staff performance.

Previous studies have examined compensation and academic staff performance in Kenyan public universities, including Mitalo et al. (2018) and Mitalo & Wanyama (2024). These studies were conducted at a broader national level, evidence specific to academic staff in Machakos University and South Eastern Kenya University remains limited within the scope of the literature reviewed for this study. This study addresses the contextual gap by examining the association between remuneration and academic staff performance in the two institutions using evidence on salary payment, remuneration packages, allowances, salary commensurateness, research incentives and perceived fairness of rewards.

Research objective

The objective of the study was to establish the relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance in public universities in Machakos and Kitui counties.

Significance of The Study

The findings of the study provide evidence relevant to university management, university councils and policymakers. For university management, the findings provide evidence concerning aspects of remuneration that academic staff perceive as satisfactory. The findings may assist institutions in reviewing remuneration mechanisms within applicable public-sector policies and collective bargaining arrangements. The findings also provide institution-level evidence concerning the relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance for policy makers. It also provides empirical evidence from the two Kenyan public universities and provides a basis for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Remuneration and academic staff performance

Remuneration comprises the financial and associated rewards provided to employees in exchange for their contribution towards achievement of organizational objectives. It may include salary, allowances, incentives, benefits and other rewards. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) stress that reward management is an important human resource function because reward systems communicate organisational priorities and influence employee attitudes and behaviour. In higher education, remuneration may be viewed through both economic and motivational perspectives (Mitalo & Wanyama, 2024). Salary provides economic security whereas allowances and incentives may recognise additional responsibilities and performance.

Remuneration assumes particular importance within the higher education sector. Academic staff perform multiple and sometimes competing responsibilities and therefore salaries provide financial security and while allowances may recognize additional responsibilities. In addition to teaching, academic staff are also expected to conduct research, publish scholarly work, supervise postgraduate students, participate in institutional activities and contribute to community engagement activities that may not be reflected in salary structures.

The relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance may therefore depend not only on the compensation package but also on how employees perceive its adequacy, timeliness and its relationship to their contributions. Consequently, the adequacy and perceived fairness of remuneration may be relevant to how academic staff evaluate their employment relationship. Clear understanding of the remuneration system can have a stronger motivational value to the employees.

Research incentives may also encourage academic staff to participate in activities that contribute to institutional research and innovation objectives. However, the effectiveness of financial incentives can depend on how academic staff perceive and respond to such reward systems (Bak & Kim, 2023). The effectiveness of remuneration depends not only on the amount paid but also on timeliness, adequacy, transparency and

perceived fairness. Consequently, remuneration systems that provide regular salary payments but offer limited recognition for additional responsibilities may not fully address employees' motivational needs.

Academic staff performance is multidimensional and may include teaching effectiveness, research and publication, postgraduate supervision, institutional participation, innovation and community engagement. Remuneration and other forms of reward may be associated with academic staff performance by shaping how employees perceive the value and recognition attached to their contributions (Injikuru et al., 2024; Mitalo & Wanyama, 2024). Remuneration may therefore be associated with academic staff performance if they perceive rewards as adequate and fair when connected to their contributions. Nevertheless, compensation is only one potential correlate of performance. Other relevant factors include work environment, professional development and perceived equity.

Empirical Studies

Several studies have evaluated the relationship between remuneration and employee performance across sectors and contexts. The literature demonstrates that remuneration and employee performance are related across different organisational contexts, however, the strength and mechanism of the relationship vary. Sardjana et al. (2018) investigated remuneration, work discipline and motivation among employees at Universitas Sebelas Maret. The study found a statistically significant effect of remuneration on employee performance, although the institutional and national contexts differ from Kenya.

In Kenya, Mitalo et al. (2018) examined employee compensation and academic staff performance in chartered public universities, while Mitalo and Wanyama (2024) investigated the mediating role of motivation in the relationship between compensation and employee performance. These studies provide relevant evidence on compensation with the Kenya public university sector. However, the differences in institutional coverage and research limit the extent to which their findings explain remuneration perceptions among academic staff in all university settings. The present study contributes additional evidence by examining remuneration perceptions and self-reported academic performance at Machakos University and South Eastern Kenya University. It also describes specific dimensions, including salary payment, allowances, research incentives and perceived fairness of rewards.

Mugo and Makhamara (2022) examined remuneration and recognition practices in relation to performance of middle level managers at Kenyatta University. The study concluded that remuneration and recognition practices positively influence the performance of middle-level managers at Kenyatta University. Their findings provide relevant evidence on reward practices within a public university setting however, the occupational group differs from the academic staff examined in the present study. Academic staff undertake responsibilities such as teaching, research, postgraduate supervision and community engagement which may create different expectations concerning compensation and recognition. The present study therefore extends the discussion to academic staff in the two public universities in Machakos and Kitui Counties.

Kinyamu et al. (2021) concluded effective human resource practices are associated with improved employee performance in public universities. Muhati (2023) found that promotion moderately improved employee performance through increased responsibility, higher pay and opportunities for skill development in six public universities in Mt. Kenya Region. The studies are relevant to the broader relationship between career- related employment practices and performance, however they cannot be treated as direct evidence of effect of compensation.

Collectively, the existing literature demonstrate the relevance of compensation and reward practices of employee performance across institutions of higher education and related contexts. However, differences in study populations, institutional setting, geographical coverage and research variables mean that their findings should not be assumed to apply uniformly across all universities. The current study therefore contributes additional evidence by examining remuneration perceptions among academic staff at Machakos University and South Eastern Kenya University. The study considers specific dimensions of remuneration including timely payment of salary, allowances, salary adequacy, research incentives and fairness and transparency of the rewards.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework presents remuneration as the independent variable and academic staff performance as the dependent variable. Remuneration was operationalized through six dimensions: timely payment of salary, the motivational value of remuneration package, allowances for additional responsibilities, salary commensurate with responsibilities, financial incentives for research and publication and fairness of rewards for employee contributions. Academic staff performance was assessed using selected indicators relating to teaching effectiveness, research, participation in institutional activities and community engagement. The framework proposes an association between remuneration perceptions and self-reported academic staff performance. Higher favourable perceptions of remuneration are expected to be associated with higher reported performance however, the relationship may also reflect other institutional and individual factors.

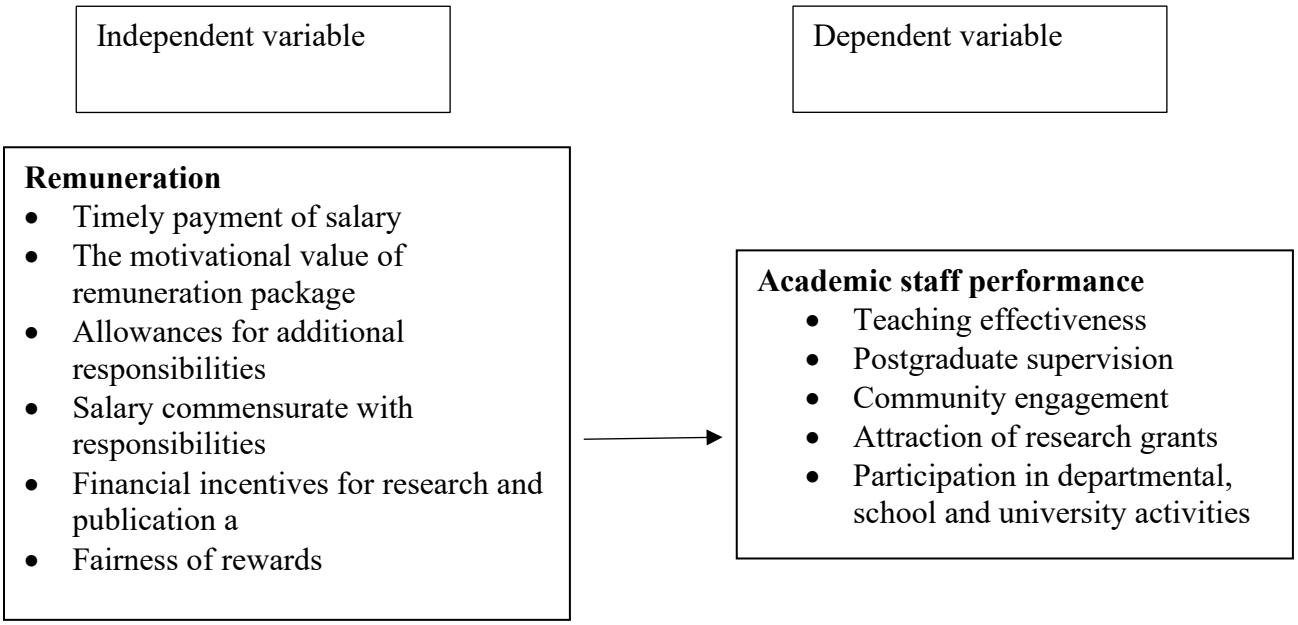


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component enabled the study to establish respondents' perceptions of remuneration and academic staff performance. The correlational component examined the statistical relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance. The design was appropriate because the study examined naturally occurring perceptions and behaviours without manipulating the independent variable. Consequently, the findings were interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in public universities in Machakos and Kitui Counties specifically Machakos University and South Eastern Kenya University. The target population consisted of 343 academic staff, including 144 from Machakos University and 199 from South Eastern Kenya University. Using Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 185 academic staff was obtained. The sample consisted of 78 respondents from Machakos University and 107 from South Eastern Kenya University. Stratified random sampling was used to select respondents according to their relevant academic designations.

Out of the 185 sampled academic staff, 168 returned their questionnaire giving a response rate of 90.8%

Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing Likert-scale statements and open-ended questions on remuneration and academic staff performance. Remuneration was assessed using six aspects, including timely salary payment, motivational value of remuneration package, allowances for additional responsibilities, salary commensurate with employees' responsibilities, financial incentives for research and publication and perceived fairness of rewards for employee output. The respondents rated the statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (Strongly agree).

Remuneration was measured using the six questionnaire items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For each respondent, the six item responses were averaged to obtain a composite remuneration score. Higher scores indicated more favourable perceptions of remuneration. The item-level means and standard deviations summarised responses to individual statements, whereas the composite mean and standard deviation described the distribution of respondent-level composite scores. The reported composite remuneration mean was 3.26 (SD = 1.09).

The academic staff performance measure on the other hand had six questionnaire items covering teaching, research, institutional participation and community engagement. Responses to these items were combined to obtain a composite performance score, with higher scores indicating higher self-reported performance. The scoring procedure for academic staff performance followed the method used in the original data analysis. Supplementary questions collected information on publications, postgraduate supervision, research grants and respondents' overall self-rated performance. These supplementary questions were distinguished from the six principal performance indicators when interpreting the results.

The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.882 indicating high internal consistency for the set of questionnaire included in the reliability assessment

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple regression analysis. Means and standard deviations were used to summarize remuneration perceptions. Pearson correlation was used to examine the bivariate relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance.

The general regression model was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- Y = Academic staff performance
- X_1 = Perceived equity
- X_2 = Remuneration
- X_3 = Training and development
- X_4 = Work environment
- ε = Error term

Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% significance level. The reported regression coefficients were interpreted as conditional associations, holding other included predictors constant.

RESULTS

The study obtained a response rate of 90.8% (168 respondents) from 185 sampled academic staff. The response rate provided a substantial proportion of the intended sample for the descriptive and inferential analyses.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Remuneration

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Timely payment of salary increases my commitment to work.	3.85	0.92
The remuneration package offered by the university motivates me to perform my duties effectively.	3.22	1.08
The allowances provided by the university motivate me to take on additional responsibilities.	3.15	1.10
My salary is commensurate with my responsibilities as an academic staff member.	3.18	1.15
Financial incentives encourage me to engage in research and publication activities.	3.10	1.18
The university's compensation system fairly rewards employee contributions.	3.05	1.14
Composite Mean	**3.26**	**1.09**

Table 1 presents the item-level means and standard deviations for the six remuneration statements, together with the overall composite score. Item-level standard deviations indicate the variation in respondents' ratings for each statement, while the composite standard deviation represents the variation in respondent-level composite remuneration scores. The composite remuneration mean was 3.26 (SD = 1.09), indicating moderate agreement with the remuneration statements overall.

These results indicate that respondents evaluated different components of remuneration differently. Timely payment of salaries was rated favourably contrasting the lower ratings for perceived fairness and research incentives. The findings suggest that staff perception for remuneration go beyond timely salary payment to include adequacy and recognition associated with their contributions.

Correlation Between Remuneration and Academic Staff Performance

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perceived Equity	1				
2. Remuneration	.512**	1			
3. Training & Development	.545**	.578**	1		
4. Work Environment	.592**	.510**	.634**	1	
5. Academic Staff Performance	.512**	.584**	.603**	.556**	1

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis indicated a positive and statistically significant association between remuneration and academic staff performance ($r = .584$, $p < .01$). The findings suggest that respondents with more favourable perceptions of remuneration reported higher levels of academic staff performance. Training and development had the highest bivariate correlation with academic staff performance ($r = .603$, $p < .01$) followed by remuneration ($r = .584$, $p < .01$), work environment ($r = .556$, $p <$

.01) and perceived equity (r = .512, p < .01). These correlations indicate associations among the study variables but do not establish causal relationships.

The intercorrelations among the four variables ranged between r= .510 and r= .634. The correlations indicate that the variables were positively associated with one another. Because the predictors were included simultaneously in the multiple regression model, multicollinearity diagnostics should also be examined to assess whether the intercorrelations affected the estimation of individual regression coefficients.

The findings are in agreement with Mitalo et al. (2018), who found that employee compensation positively influenced the performance of academic staff in Kenyan chartered public universities. The present research highlights the importance of remuneration as a motivational condition associated with academic staff performance. Similarly, the present study found that remuneration was a significant predictor of academic staff performance.

Overall Regression Model

Table 3: Analysis of variance for the multiple regression model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	28.451	4	7.113	36.11	.001^b
Residual	32.104	163	.197		
Total	**60.555**	**167**			

Dependent Variable: Academic Staff Performance

The reported multiple regression analysis assessed whether the four variables jointly accounted for variation in academic staff performance. The ANOVA results in Table 3 indicated that the overall multiple regression model was statistically significant, F(4, 163) = 36.11, p < .001. This suggests that the regression model containing perceived equity, remuneration, training and development and work environment considered jointly, was statistically significantly associated with academic staff performance. The result does not establish that these predictors caused changes in performance.

Multiple Regression Coefficients

Table 4: Multiple Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.842	0.185		4.551	.001
Perceived Equity	0.184	0.062	0.195	2.968	.003
Remuneration	0.268	0.058	0.281	4.621	.001
Training & Development	0.245	0.061	0.253	4.016	.001
Work Environment	0.172	0.059	0.188	2.915	.004

In the multiple regression model estimates, remuneration had a positive and statistically significant association with academic staff performance (B=.268, SE=.058, β = .281, t=4.621, p < .001) holding perceived equity,

training and development and work environment constant. The approximate 95% confidence intervals for the regression coefficients indicated positive associations between all four predictors and academic staff performance. Perceived equity had an estimated coefficient of (B = 0.184), with a 95% confidence interval of (0.062, 0.306). Remuneration had a coefficient of (B = 0.268), with a 95% confidence interval of (0.153, 0.383). Training and development had a coefficient of (B = 0.245), with a 95% confidence interval of (0.125, 0.365), while work environment had a coefficient of (B = 0.172), with a 95% confidence interval of (0.055, 0.289). Remuneration had the largest standardized coefficient among the four predictors indicating a unique statistical contribution, however it should not be interpreted as a proof that remuneration causes improved performance.

Table 5: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.685^a	.470	.457	0.444

Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Equity, Remuneration, Training & Development, Work Environment

The model summary indicated a Multiple correlation coefficient of R=.685, an R^2 of .470 and adjusted R^2 of .457. The model showed that the four predictors jointly accounted for approximately 47% of the observed variance in academic staff performance. After adjustment for the number of predictors and sample size, the model accounted for approximately 45.7% of the variance. The remaining variance was not explained by the four predictors included in the model.

DISCUSSION

Remuneration and Academic Staff Performance

The results of the analysis show a positive and statistically significant relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance ($r = .584$, $p < .01$). This suggests that the respondents with more favourable perceptions of remuneration also reported higher levels of performance. The regression results further indicated that remuneration remained positively associated with performance after accounting for perceived equity, training and development and work environment. The results support the relevance of remuneration within the wider motivation context of academic staff performance.

The positive association between remuneration and academic staff performance is consistent with the research by Mitalo et al. (2018) and Mitalo and Wanyama (2024), who examined compensation and performance related relationships in Kenyan chartered public universities. Their studies concluded that perceived unfairness in compensation negatively influenced employee motivation and overall performance and recommended transparent and equitable compensation systems. The present study adds institution specific evidence from Machakos University and South Eastern Kenya University by examining distinct dimensions of remuneration, including salary payment, allowances, research incentives and perceived fairness of rewards.

The descriptive findings are particularly informative because timely salary payment received a higher rating (M=3.85) than fairness (M=3.05) and research incentives (M=3.10). The difference suggests that regular salary payment and perceived adequacy of fairness of the wider reward system should be considered separately when assessing academic staff remuneration perceptions. Nevertheless, differences in study populations, institutional coverage and research variables limit direct comparisons between the studies. The present findings establish a statistical association within the two public universities rather than demonstrating that changes in remuneration would necessarily produce changes in performance.

Further, these findings also provide a point of comparison with Sardjana et al. (2018) who examined remuneration, work discipline and motivation in Indonesia University setting and concluded that

remuneration, work discipline and motivation significantly affect employee performance in an Indonesian university. Their study provides evidence from a different national and institutional context, hence its findings should not be assumed to apply directly to Kenyan Public universities. Considered alongside the current results, the study reinforces the relevance of investigating remuneration with the specific employment and resource conditions of each university system.

This distinction is relevant to Expectancy Theory (Vroom 1964) which emphasizes that employee's perceptions of the relationship between effort, performance and valued rewards. In a university setting, academic staff may perform duties including teaching, research postgraduate supervision and administrative duties. If they perceive that additional effort is not adequately recognized the perceived value of the reward system may be weakened. The present findings are consistent with this theoretical interpretation, however, the study did not test the individual psychological mechanisms proposed by the theory.

The multiple regression model explained 47.0% of the observed variance in academic staff performance (R^2 =.470, adjusted R^2 =.457). This indicates that the four motivational dimensions jointly accounted for a substantial proportion of the variation in reported performance while the remaining variation was not explained by the model.

Overall, the findings suggest that remuneration management should be considered alongside other institutional conditions rather than in isolation. The relatively low ratings for perceived fairness in rewards and research incentives identify areas which university management may wish to review putting into consideration collective bargaining agreements, government regulations and institutional capacity and transparent criteria for recognizing additional responsibilities.

Limitations of the study

The study had several limitations. The remuneration and academic staff performance were measured using self-reported questionnaire data. The responses therefore may have been affected by social desirability bias, recall errors or common method bias thereby influencing the observed association.

The cross-sectional design captured respondent's perceptions at a single point in time. It did not establish historical order and hence cannot determine whether remuneration perceptions preceded differences in performance or whether other factors contributed to the observed relationship.

The study was conducted at only two public universities in Machakos and Kitui Counties therefore the findings provide evidence from these two institutions. It cannot be automatically generalized to all Kenyan Public Universities. Finally, the performance measure covered selected self-reported indicators of teaching, research, institutional participation and community engagement. It should not therefore be interpreted as a comprehensive or independently verified assessment of every aspect of academic performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study examined the relationship between remuneration and academic staff performance at Machakos University and South Eastern Kenya University. The finding indicated a positive association between remuneration and the self-reported academic staff performance. Remuneration also had a positive and statistically significant coefficient of the reported multiple regression model after accounting for perceived equity, training and development and work environment.

The descriptive results showed that respondents rated the assessment components differently. Timely salary payment was rated more favourably than fair rewards for employee contributions and incentives for research and publication. The findings therefore suggest that academic staff perceptions of remuneration go beyond the regularity of salary payments to include the adequacy, fairness and recognition associated the employee contributions.

The study concludes that remuneration is an important correlate of academic staff performance in the two universities examined. However, the study used cross–sectional design and self-reported measures do not establish causation and therefore the findings should not automatically be generalized to all public universities.

Recommendations

University management and policymakers should periodically review remuneration system and recognition agreements within the applicable policies and regulations and periodically assess academic staff perceptions on remuneration. Where necessary any proposed changes should be consistent with collective bargaining agreements, applicable public sector policies and government regulations and institutions financial capacity.

In addition to basic remuneration, institutions should strengthen clear and transparent non-financial recognition and appropriate research-related incentives where resources allow. Any proposed changes should be done in consultation with stakeholders and within the public-sector regulatory requirements. Transparent systems can help employees understand how additional contributions are evaluated and rewarded.

Future research could examine remuneration and academic staff performance across a larger number of Kenyan public universities. Longitudinal studies could further investigate whether changes in remuneration policies, collective bargaining arrangements and institutional reward systems correspond with changes in academic staff performance over an extended period of time. Future studies could also examine whether remuneration and academic staff performance relationship differs across academic designations.

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