Enhancing proactive work behaviour amongst lecturers in public universities in Uganda

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Abstract: *This study was carried out with an intention of establishing the possibility of enhancing proactive work behavior amongst lecturers in public universities in Uganda. The aspects of job autonomy, organizational management support and self-efficacy were investigated as possible explanations of existence of proactive work behavior in an organization. In this research, the organization was composed of public universities in Uganda. Because of their prominence in the tertiary education in Uganda, Makerere University, Makerere University Business School and Kyambogo University were selected to represent the other public universities in Uganda. These three had a population of 2505 lecturers at different levels. Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, 333 respondents were considered to form the sample of the study from all the three universities. Cross-sectional research design was followed when carrying out the study. Correlation and regression analyses were carried out to be able to respond to the research inquiries in relation to this study. The analyses conducted indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between job autonomy and self-efficacy, organizational support and self-efficacy, self-efficacy and proactive work behavior, job autonomy and proactive work behavior as well as organizational support and proactive wok behavior amongst lecturers of public universities in Uganda. Basing on these findings, it is recommended that lecturers in public universities in Uganda need to be given considerable degree of job autonomy as well as organizational support. These in turn shall boost the self-efficacy of the staff members leading to them behaving in a proactive manner while executing their duties at the different public universities in Uganda.*

Key words: Proactive work behaviour; Proactivity; Organizational support; Job autonomy; Self-efficacy; Public universities in Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Proactivity at the work place is one of the concepts that affects both the human resources as well as the entire organizational performance. Employees tend to become proactive by taking charge of the situation they are in and providing necessary solutions to the situation they are in even when they are not ordered to do so as long as it falls within their jurisdiction as employees. This is an important behavior at work place. To some extent, this could be brought about by the job autonomy levels at work place (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). However, it is further argued that the work environment merely gives the confidence to the employee to work harder rather than imparting on the proactive nature of employees (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

The scenarios of proactivity at work place can exist in both service and non-service entities (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011). This research was carried with a focus on service entities. Specifically, the research centered on university lecturers working in public universities in Uganda. These lecturers come into contact with students and proactively make them understand what is being taught (Devonport, Biscomb, & Lane, 2010; Sheard & Carbone, 2008).

Focusing on public universities in Uganda, it is evident that the performance of lecturers is very important since the major activity determining their existence as universities is lecturing. Being a service, lecturing process requires high level of proactivity amongst the lecturers to ensure that the students being taught get the necessary knowledge even when it seems to be impossible for the lecturers to deliver to the students (Bigabwenkya, 2013).

Though proactive work behavior is desired (Grant & Ashford, 2008), it is hardly existent in public universities in Uganda (Liang, 2004). For instance, there are some academic staff who go to class without being fully prepared to lecture making it hard for them to deliver appropriately to students. This lack of preparation breeds tendencies of students failing to understand lecturers due to the little effort on the side of a lecturer to devise means to enable all students understand (Bigabwenkya, 2013). At one incidence, a lecturer in one of the public universities in Uganda was forced to move out of class for 'lack of competence' (Campus-bee, 2013).

Research geared towards improving the learning of students is hardly conducted in most public universities in Uganda (Kyaligonza, 2010) yet it is an important aspect in the lecturing profession. Such lecturers end up developing low self confidence in what they deliver to the students because

of lack of enough facts about the subject matter (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, &Hofman, 2012) consequently affecting their belief in their ability to deliver.

The research challenge is further coupled with little research funds available which are also disbursed late to the lecturers (Karemire, 2013). This brings about a financial challenge on the side of lecturers which has made majority of the lecturers focus on accumulating payable lecture hours and part-time jobs outside the universities (Bagire, 2005). Such a situation has limited the chances of these lecturers being creative in designing solutions that can make them work better (Karemire, 2013).

Considering the situation that the lecturers have been facing and their reaction to it, there is a high chance that the desired proactivity may not be easily realized. This is coupled with low job autonomy as well as organizational support amongst lecturers. The level of self-efficacy is also challenging. This status has not been good for both the students and the lecturers.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Proactivity at work place is something that every employer would like to hear and see. Every person engaged in recruitment also looks for this attribute in employees in order to create value in a work place (Fuller, Marler, Hester, & Otondo, 2015). There is a general view that employees need to do only what they are supposed to do. This is right. Employee are however expected to be valuable to an entity to the extent they it is so hard to do without them. This can only be realized if the attribute of proactivity is properly entrenched in the activities of employees in an organization. This attribute further reveals the extent of commitment of employees towards the work they do in an organization (Wu & Parker, 2014).

Theoretical underpinning

This study was carried out with the guidance from three important theories; self-determination theory, attachment theory and job characteristic theory. These theories helped to provide a theoretical backing of the possible existence of the relationships that were set to be investigated (Bowlby, 1958; Dollard & Miller, 1950; Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Self-determination theory mainly highlights the fact that human beings are most times proactive in all that they do as long as they are motivated to do so. This motivation is based on intrinsic values of human beings of competence, relatedness and autonomy that have to be satisfied from the environment for one to feel the anxiety to act proactively (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). This therefore means that there is a possibility of one ending up acting proactively or not depending on the extent to which the intrinsic needs are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The aspect of autonomy clearly comes out here as an important intrinsic need that has to be realized in the environment where one operates

from (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003). The aspect of competence derived from the environment clearly indicates tendencies of self-efficacy. This means that one tends to believe that he or she is competent depending on what the environment thinks of him or her.

Related to the self-determination theory is the attachment theory by Bowlby (1958). Before that the ideas of attachment theory were documented by Dollard & Miller (1950). The theory mainly points out the behavioral aspects of adult attachment to their source of confidence. Developed from child attachment to their parents, the theory suggests that even adults behave in the same way once they feel and believe to have an attachment to their leaders at work place. This needs not to be a blood attachment. It merely means to be in the good books of the supervisor or a leader at work. In such a scenario, an employee tends to have the courage to act proactively as he or she goes an extra mile to find out how to make their places of work more productive as well as making them more beneficial to them and the overall organization at large (Bowlby, 1958; Dollard & Miller, 1950; Wu & Parker, 2014). This theory clearly indicates the possible existence of the association between organizational support, self-efficacy and proactive work behavior at work place. The attachment aspect clearly brings this out.

Job characteristic theory also highlights the same line of thinking as the previous theories in relation to this study. The theory highlights five core job characteristics of skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback as important components to trigger five related work outcomes of motivation, satisfaction, performance, absenteeism and turnover at work place. This theory points out one key issue in this study in relation to possible association between autonomy and proactive work behavior as represented by the performance, absenteeism and turnover (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). This theory therefore provides a backing to the suggested possible relationship for investigation.

Job Autonomy, self-efficacy, organizational support and proactive work behavior

Job autonomy mainly refers to that scenario where an employee is given freedom to decide how to perform his or her duties at work place. This is however considered to be a blanket view of what job autonomy really is (Saragih, 2011). Literature indicates that different experts can look at job autonomy differently. There are those who limit the autonomy to the aspects of making decisions at work and deciding which tools to consider while carrying out an assignment while others look at autonomy in the sense of determining the work schedule in terms of the number of days to work as long as an assignment is accomplished. These are two distinct views of autonomy though there are those who look at autonomy in terms of scheduling of assignments at work (Mayhew, 2015; Nguyen, Taylor, & Bradley, 2003; Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger, & Hemingway, 2005).

Basing on the different views that there can be in relation to job autonomy, it is evident that different experts as well as organizations look at it depending on how befitting it can be in that particular study or entity. This therefore makes it improbable to have a distinct clear meaning and may be example to refer to job autonomy. A comprehensive meaning could however be considered in the sense of combining all the other differing but complementing meanings of job autonomy (Mayhew, 2015).

Though lecturers indicate that they have job autonomy, recent literature quotes lecturers stating that their levels of autonomy have been going down with the increasing levels of streamlining of the lecturing profession. Though this is good, it is highlighted as being an agent to reduced levels of creativity and morale at work especially when the once autonomous assignment like this becomes more of a routine assignment (Berry & Cassidy, 2013).

In relation to job autonomy, the aspect of self-efficacy comes into existence. This mainly refers to a scenario where an employee has a feeling that he or she is in position to accomplish something. This is mainly based on the beliefs of a person and hence considered to be more of a mental effect but based on some levels of self awareness as far as personal competence is concerned (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005).

Self-efficacy can be developed at different levels of one's life. There is that efficacy developed when one is young and there is also that efficacy that is developed when someone is old. At a young age, self-efficacy is mainly in response to needs of accomplishing studies as well as indicating how important one is in a family of groups of friends (Lane, Lane, & Cockerton, 2003). At old age however, most times a person is at work. Because of this, the self-efficacy is based on the situations experienced at work place. These are however generalist views which may change depending on circumstances that one is found in (Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, & Rich, 2007).

One of the many circumstances in which one could be found in is in an organization. Once a person is employed, the employer and hence employing organization becomes the master of the employee. The employee in turn expects some degree of support from this employer to be in position to exercise his or her duties as an employee. This support or help is what is hereby referred to as organizational support (Karatepe, 2012).

Organizational support is generally another terminology which refers to those things that an entity does or puts in place to ensure that the employees are enabled to perform their duties. Employees are technically referred to as the human resources. These are the most important and yet the most expensive resources an organization can ever have. These resources need to be supported so that the work they intend to accomplish is accomplished as required (Guan, Sun, Hou, Zhao, Luan, & Fan, 2014).

Organizational support as a concept is derived from the advancement of the organizational support theory which is the development from the social exchange theory. Basing on the combination of these theories, managers of today are placed in position to manage all kinds of employees. There are those who are traditional employees and those who are non-traditional. Today, there are also those who are referred to as contract workers and those who generally international employees. All these need to be supported though the level of support differs depending on their original orientation (Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2011).

From a general point of view therefore, there can be many forms of organizational support since organizations operate in a diversity of industries and countries. There are some forms of support that can apply in one country and may not apply in another. There may also be some forms of disparities in relation with the amount of support and the items that are considered to be support. This therefore draws to a conclusion that organizational support as a concept involves that support that an entity provides to its employees to ensure that they execute their duties to the best of their ability (Li, Crant, & Liang, 2010). The composition of this support is however very subjective depending on the type of organization, where it operates and the kinds of laws of land that are applicable. This is very important when determining what to include as organizational support (Pazy & Ganzach, 2006).

Proactive work behavior also has an element of human resources like for the case of organizational support. This is because, the work behavior indicates how one conducts himself or herself at work place (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Though most times ignored, behavior of employees forms an important psychological issue that must be considered by management in order to realize good results from employees (Wu & Parker, 2014).

Employees behave in different ways depending on the environment as well as depending on their inert behavior (inborn behavioral traits) that one has. Though behavior is a product of training as well as environment, the environment seems to take the biggest percentage over time. These aspects are important to consider at work place because managing employee behavior is one of the difficult things that management faces most of the time (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

Job Autonomy, self-efficacy, organizational support and proactive work behavior - Relationships

The relationships were reviewed following a piece-meal approach: two at a time before all being considered at once. The first two relations reviewed were between job autonomy and self-efficacy. Job autonomy mainly refers to the way an employee can be given freedom to decide how to work (Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger, & Hemingway, 2005), what kinds of decisions to make as well as the time to take to carry out a certain task. All these indicate some level of autonomy on the side of an employee. Self-efficacy on the

other hand refers to the belief that one can be able to accomplish a certain assignment or task. This belief is considered to be an inner-self belief (Saragih, 2011).

The link between job autonomy and self-efficacy is suggested here basing on the literature reviewed. However, it is not obvious that every time there is job autonomy then self-efficacy will result. This therefore leaves a gap as to whether the relationship between job autonomy and self-efficacy could also be possible in cases of University lecturers which is the centre of this study (Berry & Cassidy, 2013).

Despite a possible link between job autonomy and self-efficacy, there could still be a link between organizational support and self-efficacy. Organizational support is generally considered to be that assistance that management of an organization provides to ensure that an organization realizes good results through the efforts of the employees. This means that the employees get supported and in turn they work hard to give good results as expected of them by the management (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007).

Organizations carry out tasks which are the same all the time. The challenge is always the dynamics of the business environment which are most times volatile. However, the volatility has ranges through which they oscillate. The extremes could also happen though they are most times rare. This makes the learning curve fairly short ranging from a few weeks to a number of months (Arthur & Huntley, 2005). A year is considered to be enough for one to be able to learn what takes place at work. All this reflect the aspect of experience that employees get by being committed at work which breeds from the presence of organizational support. The experience developed makes an employee have self-efficacy eventually (Mitchell, Gagné, Beaudry, & Dyer, 2012). Though this could be true, there is need for further tests to be conducted to establish whether the same scenario also happens in public universities and especially amongst the lecturers.

Development of self-efficacy amongst employees is an indication that employees have developed a good level of experience in what they do. They further believe that they are the ones who can carry out the assignments better than any other person. This therefore brings about a behavior or a feeling that they are special as employees (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). This is most times associated with the aspect of expert employees in an organization. These develop organically through ranks in an entity or could be recruited to join the existing team of employees.

Different organizations get different reactions from expert employees depending on the resource envelop they are ready to provide to the expert employee. Though remuneration is important here the other factors such as environment (internal and external) cannot be ignored (Ahmed, Ismail, Amin, Ramzan, & Khan, 2012). There is therefore a need for a specific study to be conducted to establish this depending on an organization of choice. In this

study, the public universities need to be checked to establish whether such scenarios also exist there.

Proactive work behavior, resulting from high levels of self-efficacy, could also result from the presence of job autonomy in an organization. This is however not evident though literature reveals that it could be possible (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

Autonomy of an employee generally makes him or her, a master of that job though that employee still needs to report to the supervisor or the manager. Though a master, an employee still has a duty to indicate how well a job has been done both in filing reports and real work in the field or work place (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). Therefore, an employee is given freedom of deciding how to work but he is not stopped from working. The results of his efforts need to be seen before a monthly cheque is prepared as remuneration (Li, Crant, & Liang, 2010). This is a good measure of how proactive an employee can be.

Development into proactivity at work place from employee freedom needs to be investigated on a case by case basis. This means that there are cases when it indeed results into employees being proactive while in other cases employees may not become proactive. The support from management and organization in question need to be considered at this point (Mitchell, Gagné, Beaudry, & Dyer, 2012).

Organizational management has been at a limelight as having the ultimate key to organizational success specifically by managing how employees behave in an organization. One of the ways this is done is through the support that management provides to employees (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). There are cases in which this support is needed and there are cases in which the support is not needed. One thing that this support brings about is the commitment of employees to work hard.

Employee commitment enables an employee to become more and more cautious and develop tendencies of proactivity. Though it is sometimes hard to make an employee get committed to work, once an employee finally gets committed, he or she becomes a big asset to an organization (Fuller, Marler, Hester, & Otondo, 2015). This mainly results into management guarding such an employee to a point of promoting him or her to a position which will make him or her feel that the commitment shown has been repaid. Such an employee tends to be very proactive suggesting solutions and implementing them to ensure that organizational success is eventually realized (Wu & Parker, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The review of literature conducted indicates that there exists a number of relationships between the concepts considered for the study. There is possible relationship between job autonomy and self-efficacy, organizational support and self-

efficacy, self-efficacy and proactive work behavior, job autonomy and proactive work behavior, organizational support and proactive work behavior. All these relationships are suggested to be in existence as postulated in literature. This however may or may not apply to the case of lecturers working in public universities in Uganda. To be able to reach a conclusion of the possible existence of these relationships in public universities in Uganda, a detailed research was conducted.

METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out following a cross-sectional research design. This was selected because the study was expected to be carried out over a short period of time focusing on the public universities in Uganda. This justified the use of cross-sectional design in the study (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). The population of the study included the academic staff in the selected public universities in central Uganda; that is, Makerere University, Makerere University Business School and Kyambogo University. Kyambogo University has a total of 607 lecturers (www.kyu.ac.ug); Makerere University has 1400 lecturers (www.mak.ac.ug) and Makerere University Business School has a total of 498 lecturers (Chairman MUBS Council report, 2013). Combination of all these universities therefore brings the total population to 2505 lecturers.

Considering that the population size, a sample size of 333 respondents was considered appropriate. This was by using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table. The results from this table could also be obtained from an online page www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html.

The different groups of respondents were thereafter included in the sample using a proportionate approach as a sub-component of stratified sampling design. Stratified sampling design was used to accommodate the different public universities considered in this study. Basing on this approach, 81 Kyambogo lecturers, 186 Makerere University lecturers and 66 Makerere University Business School lecturers were considered. From each university, a simple random approach was used to select respondents to augment the stratified sampling approach.

Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire method. The questionnaires were designed to use a 5 point Likert Scale. After collecting all the questionnaires from the respondents, data processing and analysis phase was carried out. Here the questionnaires were checked for completion as well as checking whether there was any error in the process of filling in the questionnaires. After this, the data was input into the analysis tool. For this study, the analysis tool was SPSS.

After inputting the data into SPSS, analysis was conducted. A combination of correlation and regression analyses were conducted to be able to respond to the research inquiries (*and gaps*) in relation to this study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis was carried out with focus being use of correlation and regression analyses. These two were selected since the main focus of this research was in relation to the possible association and eventual influence of job autonomy, organizational support and self-efficacy onto proactive work behavior in public universities in Uganda. Correlation results are presented first followed by the regression results.

The analysis was carried out after streamlining the responses obtained to the variables of study. Pearson correlation coefficients as well as regression coefficients were obtained from the SPSS analysis software. These coefficients and their explanations are provided in the subsections that follow.

Correlation analysis results

Results from correlation analysis are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Correlation results

	1	2	3	4
Job Autonomy (1)	1			
Organizational Support (2)	.424**	1		
Self-efficacy (3)	.262**	.151*	1	
Proactive Work Behavior (4)	.441**	.449**	.467**	1

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Source: Primary data

The findings in Table 1 indicate that all the variables considered for the study have positive, strong and significant association. This therefore reflects existence of the said relationships. To begin with, there is a relationship between job autonomy and self-efficacy in the selected public universities. This relationship is very significant and positive. This therefore means that improvements in job autonomy are associated with improvements in self-efficacy (r=0.262, p<0.01). This implies that a change in one standard deviation in job autonomy is associated with a change of 0.262 standard deviations in self-efficacy.

Association between organizational support and self-efficacy was investigated. The findings indicated that this relationship is however weak though significant. Additionally, the relationship is positive in nature. This therefore means that improvements in organizational

support are associated with improvements in self-efficacy (r=0.151, p<0.05). This implies that a change in one standard deviation in organizational support is associated with a change of 0.151 standard deviations in self-efficacy.

Correlation results in Table 1 also show that there is strong positive and significant relationship between self-efficacy and proactive work behavior. This means that improvements in self-efficacy are associated with improvements in proactive work behavior in these selected public universities (r=0.467, p<0.01). This implies that a variation in one standard deviation in self-efficacy is associated with a variation of 0.467 standard deviations in proactive work behavior.

The relationship between job autonomy and proactive work behavior was also found to be good (r = 0.441). This is however statistically weaker than the relationship between self-efficacy and proactive work behavior (r = 0.467). The association between job autonomy and proactive work behavior is further portrayed to be very significant and positive. This means that improvements in job autonomy are associated with improvements in proactive work behavior (r=0.441, p<0.01). This implies that variation in one standard deviation in job autonomy is associated with a variation of 0.441 standard deviations in proactive work behavior.

Investigation of the relationship between organizational support and proactive work behavior was also found to be statistically significant (r = 0.449, p<0.01). This implies that a change in one standard deviation in organizational support is associated with a change of 0.449 standard deviations in proactive work behavior.

Regression analysis results

The regression analysis was carried out following a model

$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + e$

Where;

   Y_i = *Existence of proactive work behavior in a public university in Uganda*

   X_1 = *Job autonomy in a public university in Uganda*

   X_2 = *Organizational support in a public university in Uganda*

   X_3 = *Self-efficacy levels in a public university in Uganda*

   e = *Error term in the model*

The beta values (β_i) represent the regression coefficients that were to be computed to reflect the degree of influence of the independent variables (X_i) onto the dependent variable (Y_i). The results in relation to this model are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression results

	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)		1.372	0.172
Job Autonomy	0.218	3.217	0.002
Organizational Support	0.302	4.569	0.000
Self-efficacy	0.364	5.877	0.000
Dependent Variable:	Existence of Proactive Work Behavior		
R:	0.633		
R squared:	0.401		
Adjusted R squared:	0.390		
F - statistics:	37.496		
Model Significance:	0.000		

Source: Primary data

The regression analysis results indicate that job autonomy, organizational support and self-efficacy together explain up to 39.0% of the variance in proactive work behavior in the selected public universities in Uganda.

Table 2 further indicates that all the three independent variables have significant influence onto proactive work behavior (Sig = 0.002; 0.000; 0.000). Self-efficacy is portrayed to have the highest influence onto proactive work behavior (Beta = 0.364, p<0.01). This is followed by Organizational Support (Beta = 0.302, p<0.01) and lastly Job autonomy (Beta = 0.218, p<0.01).

These findings mean that if management members of public universities in Uganda want to improve proactive work behavior in these universities, they need to first encourage the staff to have self-efficacy. The management members need to go ahead and ensure that there is necessary support from the university management to have this proactive work behavior. This needs to be expressed by encouraging and implementing the new ideas of academic staff as long as the overall objective of a university is not distorted. This needs to further be culminated into increasing the freedom of the academic staff to think outside the box whenever carrying out their duties to properly display the image of fountain of knowledge being a University.

All the three variables were found to be significant predictors of proactive work behavior. The results further show that the modal is significant (F=37.496, p< 0.05).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Basing on the findings obtained and their interpretation, it is clear that the ideas raised in the theoretical review were supported in the research study concluded. Existence of proactive work behavior in Ugandan public universities amongst lecturers is significantly influenced by the provision of job autonomy, organizational support as well as self-efficacy levels in these public universities. Though this influence is less than 50%, it is something that must be considered by management of public universities in Uganda. Management bodies of public universities in Uganda need to therefore ensure that the lecturers at these universities are supported directly or through provision of job autonomy. This is expected to enhance development of self-efficacy amongst these lecturers. This will eventually encourage them to develop proactive behavior in their work of lecturing students.

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