

The Influence of Personal Responsibilities on the Performance of the Staff of University Libraries in Meru County

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Abstract

Job performance of university library staff is based on skills and knowledge in librarianship which can be affected by internal and external factors such as personal responsibilities. For librarians to carry out their duties effectively there is a need for minimal interference of work from personal responsibilities. To achieve expected performance, library staff need to prioritize their work obligations and balance personal duties outside the workplace. The study's objective was to assess the influence of personal responsibilities on the performance of university library staff. The study was anchored on border theory. It adopted a descriptive research design. The study's target population was thirty-eight university library staff from four universities in Meru County. Census sampling method was adopted with the use of a questionnaire as the main research instrument. The pretest of the research instrument was conducted at Chuka University Library to check validity and reliability. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. SPSS was used to analyze quantitative data. The findings from the normality test showed normality since all the probability values of all variables was more than 0.05. The test statistic value was 2.182 denoting no violation of auto-correlation assumption. Pearson Product Moment Correlation technique was conducted to establish correlation coefficient. There was a positive correlation between the work performance and personal responsibilities. The multiple linear regression indicated the model was statistically significant in forecasting the influence of personal responsibilities on work performance. This study concluded that there is a relationship between personal responsibilities and the performance of staff at University Libraries in Meru County. The study will add knowledge to existing scholarly work to benefit students, scholars and researchers. Further research can be done to shed light to university library management on how to balance personal responsibilities with work performance for optimal work productivity.

Keywords: Personal responsibilities, performance, staff, university libraries

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1. Introduction

A University library is a system set up, managed by information professionals, financed by the parent institution to keep books and non-books information materials for scholarly work (Nkamnebe et al., 2014). The role of the university library can be summed up as the transfer of information, support of education and scholarly research, and safeguarding of academic records, besides university library mainly serves the information needs of teaching staff and students (Dale et al., 2011). Thus, a university library is a structure built to carry out library functions such as providing access to a variety of selected information sources proposed by teaching staff to ensure learning takes place (Tonring, 2009).

Globally, university libraries, like other organizations, are facing competition due to the proliferation of information, scarce resources, and wide use of technologies. Technology is forcing university libraries to adopt different information communication technologies, such as providing online outreach services to their patrons to improve overall job performance at the workplace and other domains of life such as personal responsibilities (Okpe, 2012).

Library staff working in university libraries are expected to perform their duties to the best of their ability; thus, this section explored job performance aspects of university library staff. Okpe (2012) defines job performance as a set of employees' activities that can be examined and gauged to be accomplished as per the universities' goals. Library staff job performance is referred to as job behavior relevant to the library's success (Amusa et al., 2013). According to Nwokike and Unegbu (2019), library staff manage university learning resources, besides training library users on how to access information materials, thus promoting a conducive learning and instruction environment.

Library staff performance refers to job behavior relevant to the library's success (Amusa et al., 2013). According to Nwokike and Unegbu (2019), library staff manage university learning resources on a daily besides training library users on how to access information materials, thus promoting a conducive learning and instruction environment. Saka and Haruna (2013) considered library staff job classification and cataloguing information materials, offering referral services, and lending information materials to library patrons.

1.1 Problem Statement

To achieve the expected performance, library staff are expected to prioritize their work obligations and balance personal responsibilities outside the workplace (Durodolu & Mamudu, 2020). However, many library staff are blamed for poor performance in their job. Studies on the relationship between work-life balance and work performance among university library staff is scanty, hence the research gap that this study seeks to fill. The existing research on personal responsibilities and work performance of librarians is limited in scope. For instance, Townsend and Bugg (2020) focused on perceptions of work-life balance for urban academic librarians in the United States of America (USA), while Mwangi et al., (2017) examined the effects of work-life balance on workforce performance at Kabarak University, Kenya. The study aimed to look at the influence of personal responsibilities on the performance of the staff of university libraries in Meru County.



1.2 Objectives of the study

To assess the influence of personal responsibilities on the performance of the staff of university libraries in Meru County.

2. Literature Review

Work is essential in our day-to-day lives since it puts food on the table and keeps the rainy-day pot full. In the current fast-paced business world, achieving a personal life is proving difficult as technology makes life and work easier; employees find themselves engaged in work activities at the expense of personal time. Nowadays, it's widespread for university library staff to check email more often outside working hours, answer work calls in the middle of a family meeting or dinner and always use their laptops working on office work. Employers expect more from their employees in the current competitive world, thus more pressure to achieve great results, leading to longer working hours and less time for personal life (Wedgwood, 2019).

Employees spend most of their time at work, making coworkers' friends seem natural; companies like Google and Zappos in the USA promote community cultures and programs for workers to be more friends than colleagues. Office work is becoming social and service-based knowledge where the younger workers in the workplace are used to integrating career and personal life. Scholars like Pillemer and Rothbard (2018) noted that friendship is central to work since companies encourage their workers to be fully present at work (D'hont et al., 2016). The downside of work friendship is that employees may have emotional work distractions leading to conflict of work and friendship, which ultimately affects work performance. Friendship conflicts affect teamwork, leading to communication breakdown among coworkers, which contributes to low work productivity. On the flip side, friendship at work can be a remarkable aspect since it gets the job done with ease; it further promotes informal connections among employees whose paths may not have crossed (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018).

Wedgwood (2019) further stated that friendship is an essential element in life. Thus, university librarians make their colleagues friends who fill the void left by external friends. Work friendship leads to a pleasant working environment defined within the job context. When coworkers become friends, the benefits are immense since teamwork is achieved, leading to improved employee performance (Burkus, 2017). Librarians who are not married but with a complete job may have difficulty finding a life partner, thus feeling frustrated, leading to an imbalance in work and personal life (Blankenship & Hollingsworth, 2009). Friends are suitable for employees' health since friends help an employee celebrate and offer support in good and bad times. Friends prevent employees from being lonely, thus giving a sense of belonging and purpose, boosting happiness, reducing stress, and promoting self-confidence.

Every employee intends to achieve a work-life balance that promotes physical and mental wellness; work and family take up a more significant part of employee life; however, hobbies are forgotten and at times seen as a luxury (Murthy & Guthrie, 2012). Employees who have hobbies have reduced stress. Thus, the risk of burnout is minimal; hobbies promote social life and good communication. Hobbies boost creativity which in turn improves knowledge and development of new skills, which impacts work performance. Creating time to indulge in personal activity allows the mind to reset from work activities (Mareque et al., 2019). Personnel



hobbies can be reading, riding a bike, painting knitting, and any activity that an employee enjoys and is not work-related. Hobbies enable an employee to have an open mind and rejuvenate due to an activity an employee likes leading to creativity and competition. Hobbies bring enjoyment to employees, leading to a sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction, which spills over to other activities (Cox et al., 2017). Hobbies enable employees to grow in many ways, such as developing good management skills, and a good balance between work and personal responsibilities, ultimately leading to a happy life. Although finding time to engage in a hobby is complicated, employees can schedule a time to carry out a task they share a hobby with workmates, enhancing togetherness.

Health is the state of free physical, social, and mental well-being (World Health Organization [WHO], 2007). Employee health is a critical issue in the workplace since it directly relates to human labor, which is the most expensive asset in an organization. Employee health comprises physical comfort and nourishment, a stable mental state, social well-being, and a conducive environment. Employees currently are faced with chronic diseases due to changes from the labor-intensive in the industrial age to the current knowledge-based economy coupled with technology-controlled lifestyle, which promotes physical inactivity and unhealthy eating habits. Therefore, employee's health status affects organizations directly, especially those who are sickly and tend to be away from work seeking medical attention (Lee, 2019).

Current contemporary society, workplaces are the key sources of health issues for employees due to sedentary work style, work-life imbalance, and job demands. Employees spend a significant time at work in a passive position, leading to health issues such as being overweight and obese, leading to poor physical health, making employees not perform optimally (Adisa et al., 2019). In addition, employees may face mental issues while at work, leading to stress, anxiety, and depression, making an employee absent seeking medical attention or on sick off or perform poorly at work. Thus, the workplace can be a significant source of health problems for employees (Jayasingam et al., 2021). The general external work and non-work environment should be free from harmful and irritant toxins. The internal environment at work and home requires good air quality, suitable temperature, and good artificial and natural lighting, which promotes the four main senses of employees ranging from sight, aural, thermal, and smell, and the entire body system.

Vacation is the time spent away from work, business or at home for business or pleasure travel. Taking time off from the stresses of office work and daily routines to improve on health, motivate one, enhance personal relationships, and improve job performance. Vacation time enables employees to return to work and other personal activities refreshed with positive energy to handle what is ahead of them. Although USA residents have vacation time recognized by their government, developing countries lack such mandated vacation time and instead utilize annual leave for vacation activities. European nations enjoy 20 days of mandated leave plus 38 days of paid time off. Collica-Cox and Schulze (2023) stated that European nations are among the happiest countries globally (Harrington, 2021). Employees on vacation have a healthy body and heart; being away from work enables the employee to feel recharged and relaxed. A calm and peaceful mind leads to better decision-making, thus promoting better performance



(Thomas & Lucas, 2019). Employees who go on vacation have a healthy lifestyle, more relaxed and receptive to work duties (Bloom, 2012).

Burnout is stress-related to work, mainly emotional exhaustion that pertains to reduced work accomplishment and personal identity (WHO, 2007). Employees spend much time at work thus the work they concentrate on so much defines their existence, leading to a lack of separation between personal life and professional life (Moss, 2019). In modern society, people least participate in religious and social activities; instead, people turn to the workplace as a source of purpose in their lives which may pose health issues for employees and organizations (Carlson et al., 2019). The long-term effect of employee burnout leads to insomnia, sadness, irritability, heart disease, hypertension, and fatigue. Work is a source of burnout which further leads to health problems and ultimately poor performance by employees. A well-designed vacation policy is ideal for enabling employees to take a vacation to avoid employee burnout. The holiday allows an employee to feel less stress and fewer instances of depression. The general impact of an employee taking a break has long-lasting effects on employee well-being which promotes the perception of a well-lived life. Studies show happy and healthy employee leads to excellent performance (Leornard, 2013). Employees, while on vacation, have the temptation to check work emails and think of work; thus, employees may not fully have personal time. Vacationing employees have a healthy life, besides being away from work makes employees feel recharged. They are thus more receptive towards work and show more focus. A calm and peaceful mind is better at decision-making and can do more work in a shorter time (Thomas & Lucas, 2019).

3. Methodology

This research adopted descriptive survey design. The target population was thirty-eight (38) university library staff from four (4) university libraries in Meru County, the only universities located in the region. The research utilized questionnaires as the main tool of data collection. This population was small, hence all library staff participated in the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted with the use of the census method to collect data from the respondents. The research tools were pre-tested to ensure validity and reliability were achieved. Data collected was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Descriptive statistics (median and percentages) and regression analysis were used to analyze data. Tables were used to present the findings of the study. Informed consent was sought from the sampled respondents, and confidentiality and anonymity were observed. Further, the inviolability of data was maintained.

4. Results and Discussion

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value of the constructs was above 0.621. Which implied the data collection instruments used were reliable. Cronbach alpha (α) coefficient of 0.5 and above is described as dependable and satisfactory as recommended by Abbot and McKinney (2013) who stated that Cronbach's alpha value of 0.5 and above implies an acceptable measure of internal consistency.



4.1 Findings of Personal Responsibilities on Work Performance

The respondents were asked to rate the influence of personal responsibilities on work performance. The respondents were asked to rate the items on a scale where Very Small Extent (1), Small Extent (2), Moderate extent (3), large extent (4), and very large extent (5). The descriptive findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal Responsibilities on Work Performance

Measurement items (N=27)	Very Small Extent	Small Extent	Moder ate Extent	Large Extent	Very Large Extent	Total	Mean	Std Dev.
Spending time with friends from the office enables me to work better in teamwork activities due to the excellent rapport build	(5) 19%	(5) 19%	(4) 15%	(4)15%	(9)33%	27	2.74	2.66
Spending time with work friends promotes positive peer relations hence improved performance	(4) 15%	(3) 11%	(8) 30%	(7)26%	(5) 9%	27	2.78	2.56
Spending time with friends from outside the work environment affects my punctuality to work and performance at work	(18) 67%	(5) 19%	(2) 11%	(1) 4%	0%	27	4.48	4.03
I spend time away from the office pursuing personal hobbies	(18) 67%	(4) 15%	(4) 15%	0%	(1) 4 %	27	4.40	4
When I fall sick, I take time off work which has an effect on performance at work	(8) 33%	(8) 30%	(5) 19%	0%	(5) 19%	27	3.59	3.36
I engage on business activities	(18)59%	(18) 31%	0%	0%	0%	26	4.69	4.18
My personal hobbies conflict with what is expected of me at the workplace	(20)77%	(4) 15%	0%	(1) 4%	(1)4%	26	4.57	4.16
I spend office hours doing personal, professional development	(14) 54%	(5) 19%	(5) 19%	(1)4%	(1)4%	26	4.15	3.78
When I fall sick, I don't perform all my work assigned duties	(9) 35%	(4) 15%	(4) 15%	(6) 23%	(3) 12%	26	3.38	3.18
Taking a vacation/holiday/leave make me improve on my performance at work	(3) 12%	(3) 12%	(5) 19%	(7) 27%	(8) 31%	26	2.46	2.32
My personal hobbies conflict with what is expected of me at the workplace	(20) 77%	(4) 15%	0%	(1) 4%	(2) 4%	26	4.57	4.16
Total							3.79	0.672



The result in Table 1 showed an aggregate mean value of 3.79 and standard deviation of 0.672 on personal responsibilities and work performance. This is an indication of low variations in the respondent's measurement scores therefore homogeneity of the target population. The findings indicate university library staff who engaged in business activities such as farming, part-time jobs, and personal hobbies perform well in their workplace since the stated activities affect their performance to a very small extent at 65%. The findings are in agreement with Mareque et al. (2019) who stated that creating time to indulge in personal activity allows the mind to reset from work activities thus improving work performance. Staffs who take vacation and leave improve on work performance to a very large extent; the findings are in line with studies conducted by (Thomas & Lucas, 2019) which indicated that a calm and peaceful mind leads to better decision-making, thus promoting better performance.

University library staff who spend time with friends from the office work better in teamwork activities due to the excellent rapport built, thus improving job performance. Further spending time with work friends promotes positive peer relations hence improved performance this is in agreement with (Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018) who noted that friendship is central to work since companies encourage their workers to be fully present at work. The downside of work friendship is that employees may have emotional work distractions leading to conflict of work and friendship, which ultimately affects work performance. Friendship conflicts affect teamwork, leading to communication breakdown among coworkers, which contributes to low work productivity. On the flipside, friendship at work can be a remarkable aspect since it gets the job done with ease; it further promotes informal connections among employees whose paths may not have crossed (Rothbard, 2018).

University library staff opinion on how to balance work and personal responsibilities, the majority stated they have a high ability to balance the two domains while few exhibited a low ability. This relates to reactive compensation theory which means bad work experience is compensated for in positive personal life, family, and positive activities that bring pleasure and satisfaction which leads to improved performance in the workplace (Guest, 2002). The study further sought to establish suggestions of how library staff can carry out personal responsibilities without compromising on work performance and the results showed that the majority of the respondents suggested time management, work planning, carrying out work duties at work, taking leave, and off days. According to Wadsworth et al. (2016), leave policies provided in universities for employees, including librarians can be utilized to run personal errands, and library staff can utilize such leave for vacation and other personal hobbies by ensuring there is proper planning for personal activities and development.



Measurement Items (N=27)	Very Small Extent	Small Extent	Medium Extent	Large Extent	Very Large Extent	Count	Mean	STD Dev
Communications boost my job performance	(1) 4%	0%	(2)7%	7(22%	(18)67%	27	1.518	1.277
Most of the time, I'm absent from work attending to personal obligations	(10)70%	(8)30%	0%	0%	0%	27	4.737	4.198
Most of the time, I'm absent from work attending to family obligations	(17)63%	(9)33%	0%	(1) 4%	0%	27	4.556	4.082
I'm always at work. Thus, I perform well	(4)15%	(2)7%	(5)19%	(9)37%	(7)22%	27	2.556	2.389
I hold no disciplinary record	(3)11%	(2)7%	(3)11%	(6)26%	44%	27	2.148	2.072
I hold few disciplinary records	(19)73%	(2)8%	(1) 4%	(1) 4%	(3)12%	26	4.269	3.981
I participate well in communal activities which call for teamwork.	(1)4%	(5)22%	(7)26%	(5)19%	(8)30%	27	2.518	2.309
I'm not too fond of teamwork activities when performing communal activities	(15)59%	(4)15%	(2)7%	(3)11%	(1)7%	27	4.074	3.781
I relate well with my peers at work which makes me work well	(1)4%	0%	(4)15%	(8)33%	(12)48%	27	1.778	1.515
I lead well junior officers in my unit.	(4)15%	(4)15%	(5)22%	(5)22%	(7)26%	27	2.703	2.553
I don't have any leadership position	(15)58%	(3)12%	(4)15%	(1) 4%	(3)12%	26	4.00	3.731
I have liberty to plan how to do my job	(5)19%	(3)11%	(4)15%	(8)33%	(5)22%	27	2.703	2.567
My annual performance appraisal score is always high	(1) 4%	(2)7%	(5)19%	(8)33%	(9)37%	27	2.074	1.845
My job is very stressful	(21)78%	(3)11%	(3)11%	0%	0%	27	4.667	4.189
I find myself doing some job-related tasks while at home	(12)48%	(5)19%	(5)19%	(1)4%	(2)11%	27	3.889	3.610
Total							3.225	1.051

Table 2: Performance of University Library Staff



The respondents were asked to rate the items on a scale where very small extent (1), small extent (2), moderate extent (3), large extent (4) and very large extent (5). The descriptive findings are shown in Table 2.

The results from the analysis showed an aggregate mean value of 3.225 and a standard deviation of 1.051 on the performance of University Library Staff. This indicates a high variation in the participant's response and this could perhaps be due to disparities in the staff's opinions of how the different work factors affected each library staff. The main areas that affected most of the university library staff's work performance to a very large extent include aspects such as good communication in the workplace, maintenance of good discipline, taking part in communal activities, positive interpersonal skills among workmates, meeting stated work targets and annual performance score improved work performance of university library staff.

The work performance of the university library to a very small extent is affected by library staff being away from work attending to personal activities, being a poor teamwork player, holding no leadership position, work not being stressful, and not carry office work to the house. These findings were supported by Dixon and Sagas (2007) their study found that work-life balance and employee performances have a strong positive relationship. Tiwari (2018) further on his research stated that employees need to always have the ability to balance their personal life responsibilities with work responsibilities. This is crucial in ensuring that the employees do not forget their personal lives and focus on work or focus on their personal lives forgetting their work.

University library staff were further asked to rate their ability to balance work and life with reference to job performance. Majority stated they would highly balance work and life responsibilities by utilizing measures provided by their universities such as utilizing off days, annual leave, and time management. Further university library stated they would work in shifts and utilize health cover benefits as provided by their employer. Study by Wadsworth et al. (2016) states that family, medical, and leave policies provided in universities for employees, including librarians can be utilized to run their personal errands, and library staff can utilize such leave for vacation and other personal hobbies by ensuring there is proper planning for personal activities and development. The study also sought to identify suggestions on how library staff can handle work-life issues to improve the way they perform at the workplace. Majority suggested time management. Others suggested attending training, workshops, and seminars and developing work plans. Few suggested taking time off duty to relax.

4.2 Normality Test

Normality testing was conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk statistic. A significant result (Sig. value of less than 0.05) indicates the data is not normally distributed on the dependent variable and when the sig value is greater than 0.05, is not significant, hence normality as indicated in Table 3.



Table 3: Normality Test

	Shapiro-Wilk statistic					
Variables	Statistic	df	Sig.			
Work Performance(Y)	.993	27	.999			
Family Responsibilities	.918	27	.35			

The findings from the normality test showed normality since all the probability values of all variables were more than 0.05.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of personal responsibilities on the performance of the staff of University Libraries in Meru County.

Table 4: Model Summary

Change Statistics

				Std. Error	R					
		R	Adjusted	of the	Square				Sig.	F
Model	R	Square	R Square	Estimate	Change	F Change	df1	df2	Change	
1	.608 ^a	.369	.255	.369	.369	3.223	4	22	.032	

The variance was assessed as explained in the model, which also sought to find if the model was a good fit. From the analysis, The *P* value was less than the conventional value (P < .05); the proposed model was statistically significant (good fit) in predicting the work performance (Sig. value = .032, F Change=3.223, df1=4, and df2=22). The R Square statistics tell how much of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the model. From the analysis, the model explains a variance of 36.9 % (R Square=.369) of the dependent variable (work performance). This showed that apart from the four independent variables studied in this research, there are other independent factors that influence the work performance of university library staff in Meru County. Therefore, further studies should be carried out to assess these factors that explain 63.1% of the work performance of the university library staff as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.756	4	.439	3.223	.032 ^b
	Residual	2.996	22	.136		
	Total	4.752	26			

The significant value of the model is .032 which is less than .05. This, therefore indicates the model is statistically significant in forecasting the effects of the four factors on work performance in the study. The model F critical is 3.223 which is greater than the recommended



acceptable value of 2.31 at F critical at a confidence level of 95% and a 5% level of significance. This, therefore, supports that the whole model is statistically significant.

Further, the regression weights of each variable in the model are presented in Table 6. Unstandardized coefficients were applied in constructing the regression model while standardized coefficients were used in comparing the contribution of each independent variable in the total variance.

Table 6: Model Coefficients Table

	Unstanc	lardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		
Model	В	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.823	.337		5.404	.000
PersonalResp_WP	.278	.151 .	.343	1.838	.008

From the findings of the analysis, personal responsibilities predicted the strongest influence on work performance (0.278) where for every one-unit increase in personal responsibilities, there is 0.278 increase in work performance.

5. Conclusion

The study found that personal responsibilities such as spending time with friends, enjoying personal hobbies, and vacations had a positive correlation with the work performance of university library staff but it wasn't statistically significant. Personal responsibilities influence staff's ability to perform excellently in the workplace.

6. Recommendation

University library staff take time off to engage in personal activities outside the work environment. It's evident that library staff who engage in personal hobbies and take vacations work better and perform well in the workplace.

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