Perceived Quality of Work Life and Work Performance among University Academic Staff

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KEYWORDS	A B S T R A C T
Quality of work life, Commitment, Work performance, University academic staff.	Numerous studies in the field of Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology have revealed that Quality of Work Life (QWL) is related to work related attitudes and behaviours. QWL advocates have argued that QWL have effects on job satisfaction, job involvement, job stress and organizational citizenship behaviours. However, most of these studies have only reported a direct link between QWL and these work related outcomes, and relatively few have looked at the role that other variables play in these relationships. This study examined the mediating effect of orgnisational commitment in the relationship between university staff perceived QWL and work performance. Questionnaires were distributed to fifty (50) randomly selected academic staff of the Kumasi Campus of the University of Education. Results from mediated regression analysis and Pearson r showed that organizational commitment partially mediated the relationship between QWL and work performance. In addition QWL related positively with work performance. This study presents new information on quality of work life and work performance of university staff in a Ghanaian context.

Introduction

For modern organizations to be successful, they need to be more flexible so that they are equipped to develop their workers and enjoy their commitment. A work force that is well equipped and highly committed is more likely to be very effective which is very important for every organization. Quality of Work Life (QWL) is related to organizational conditions and practices that aim at promoting employee's mental and physical health, safety and satisfaction. A high QWL is essential for organizations to continue to attract and retain high performing employees.

The increasing complexity of today's world presents numerous challenges and demands

on academic institutions worldwide. Trends such as increased knowledge and specialization, interdisciplinary collaboration, advancement in technology, sophistication of university education have significant roles to play. All these affect the teaching profession and skill requirement as well as the commitment and performance of those engaged in this highly respected profession. These trends show that job design has significant effect on organizational performance, and thereby proper attention needs to be given to quality of work life (Taher, 2013). In view of this, university management must ensure quality of work life for teachers to enhance work performance. Determining QWL of academic staff is therefore, an important consideration for the management of academic institutions who are interested in improving the performance of their academic staff.

The importance of university education in any country, particularly developing countries cannot be overestimated. University education exerts direct influence on the productive capacities of the country which largely determines the level of economic development and its ability to compete in the global economy. Sustainable economic development is not possible without the contribution of a high performing university academic staff who serves as the bedrock of every university. It is therefore necessary to conduct studies that are intended to inform and assist decision makers in universities in identifying key workplace issues that would help in developing strategies to address and improve the performance of academic staff in universities. Researchers observed that a high quality of work life (QWL) is essential for organizations to achieve high performance and growth in profitability (e.g. Azril, Jegak, Asiah, Azman, *et al*., 2010; Deb, 2006; Rossmiller, 1992).

However, little attention has been given to the role organizational commitment plays within the broader models of QWL and work performance. Understanding and integrating organizational commitment into such models is an important step to fully provide us with new insights of the role that commitment plays in the workplace. The purpose of the current study is to determine the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationships between university academic staff, perceived QWL and work performance.

The way employees who work in academic institutions perceive their work environment influences their level of performance. Although improving the quality of work life is important to the well-being and development of employees, it has not attracted adequate attention in developing economies. This study also presents new information on quality of work life and work performance of university staff in a Ghanaian context.

Conceptual Background and Hypotheses

Meaning of Quality of Work life

Generally, QWL has been defined as the opinions and impressions regarding an employees' organization's working conditions. Majority of the literature on the nature of QWL of work life shows that the concept is latent, multidimensional in nature, and need based.

Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel and Lee (2001)conceptualise QWL as need based categorizing QWL into higher order needs and lower order needs. Lower order needs is comprised of health/safety needs, and economic /family needs. Higher order needs is comprised of social needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation needs, knowledge needs, and aesthetic needs.

Hamid, Zolfa and Karimi (2012) noted that QWL can be explained by four factors as given under: 1. Work life balance - fair working hours, opportunity for doing religious ceremonies, ergonomics, distance between workplace and home; 2. Social factors - the importance of work in the society, social integration in organization, social networks in work, respecting employees, self-esteem feeling in the organization, good colleagues; 3. Economic factors - salary, health service, insurance, retirement, job security; 4. Job content - team working, independence, meaningful work, ownership feeling in work, the need of creativity in work, growth opportunity.

Hsu and Kernohan (2006) identified 56 QWL categories and fitted them into 6 dimensions namely, socio-economic relevance, demography, organizational aspects, work aspects, human relation aspects and self-actualization. They further found that major issues emphasized by focus groups are managing shift work within the demands of family life; accommodation; support resources; and nurses' clinical ladder system and salary system. Deb (2006) argues that quality of work life components (i.e. job rotation, career development, job enrichment, and involvement in decision making) are key for human resources to achieve greater productivity, job satisfaction, higher levels of commitment and morale.

Work Performance

Whiles some definitions of work performance focus on traits and behaviours that are relevant to organizational goals (e.g. Bormanand Motowidlo, 1993; Campbell, 1994), other definitions include results (Viswesvaran and Ones, 2000).

Campbell (1994) characterized work performance as multidimensional and defines work performance as "behaviours or actions that are relevant to the goals of the organization." He argues that performance is the same as behaviour, and only includes actions or behaviours relevant to the organization's goals. Campbell, McCloy, Oppler and Sager (1993) identified eight factors that make job performance. These are: (1) job-specific task proficiency; (2)non-job-specific task proficiency; (3) written and oral communication; (4) demonstration of effort; (5) maintenance of personal discipline (6) facilitation of peer and team performance; (7) supervision/ leadership; and (8) management/ administration.

One other relevance, with regards to work performance is the suggestion made by Borman and Motowidlo (1993) to distinguish work performance as two different clusters of behaviours. They suggest that work performance includes both in-role behaviours (i.e. task performance) as well as extra-role behaviours (i.e. contextual performance). They describe task performance as behaviours that directly or indirectly contribute to the organization's technical core and service activities. Contextual performance on the other hand they argue, is related to other constructs such as prosocial organizational behaviour (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986); organizational citizenship (Munene, 1995; Organ, 1988); and social initiative (Frese, Fay, Hilburger *et al*., 1997) as the behaviours that support the organizational, social and psychological environment in which the technical core must function.

A different view of work performance is suggested by Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) who define work performance as "scalable actions, behaviour and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are linked with and contribute to organizational goals". Reviews of the framework of

individual work performance by Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) and Rotundo and Sacket (2002) concluded that three dimensions (i.e. task performance; organizational citizenship behaviour; and counterproductive work behaviour) could be used to distinguish work performance. A more recent and heuristic framework of work performance was developed by Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli *et al.* (2011). In a review on the conceptual framework of individual work performance, Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli *et al.* (2011), proposed a framework of work performance consisting of four dimensions, namely, *(1)task performance*, which refers to the proficiency (i.e., competency) with which one performs central job tasks; *(2) contextual performance* which has to do with individual behaviours that support the organizational, social, and psychological environment in which the technical core must function (i.e. behaviours that positively influence the work environment); *(3) adaptive performance*, which refers to an employee's ability to adapt to changes in work systems or work roles; and *(4) counterproductive work behaviours,* which are behaviours that harm the well-being of the organization.

QWL and Work Performance

The conclusion that can be drawn from literature on the link between quality of work life and work performance is that, QWL has an overall positive association with work performance. Rossmiller (1992) found that QWL positively influenced the respect accorded to teachers, teacher participation in decisions affecting their work, professional collaboration and interaction, use of skills and knowledge and the teaching learning environment. Madlock (2008) argued that interpersonal communication (i.e. respecting others, working together, believing others and sharing information) does have a positive impact on employees' satisfaction and work performance. A study by Azril, Jegak, Asiah, Azman, *et al.* (2010) also found that nine aspects of work life studied have significant and positive relationship with work performance where the highest relationship occurred between individual and family life with work performance. It is therefore hypotheised that:

H1: University academic staff perceived quality of work life will positively relate with work performance

Organizational Commitment

The concept of organizational commitment had its roots in the Human Relations movement in the mid-20th century. Organizational commitment is multidimensional in nature and generally refers to the psychological state that attaches an employee to an organization. Generally, organizational commitment (OC) refers to the psychological state that binds an employee to an organization. However, a variety of definitions/views and measure of organizational commitment has been proposed by various number of scholars. Mowday, Porter, and Steer (1982) viewed commitment as attachment and loyalty. They proposed a three component organizational commitment which is identification with the goals of and values of the organization, a desire to belong to the organization and a willingness to display effort on behalf of the organization. Similarly, O'Reily and Chatman (1986) emphasise that organization commitment could take three forms namely: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance reflects behaviour involvement for specific extrinsic rewards. Identification

is an attachment based on a desire for affiliation with the organization. Internalization reflects behaviour driven by internal values or goals that are consistent with those of the organization Meyer and Allen (1991) conceptualized commitment to organizations as the desire, need or obligations of employees to bind themselves to their organizations. Meyer and Allen (1991) argued that commitment might be accompanied by affective attachment to an organization (affective commitment); perceived cost of leaving (continuance commitment); and obligation to remain (normative commitment).

Studies on commitment have provided strong evidence that affective and normative commitments are positively related and continuance commitment is negatively connected with organizational outcomes such as performance and citizenship behaviour (Hackett, Bycio, and Handsdoff, 1994; Shore and Wagner, 1993).

Organizational Commitment as a Mediator

King and Sethi (1997) asserts that commitment protects employees from the negative aspects of stress, as it enables them to attach direction and meaning to their work.

Various studies have shown that committed employees are more prepared to achieve organizational goals than non-committed employees. Literature on workplace variables and performance relationship has shown that commitment plays an important mediating role in this relationship (e.g**.** Awan, Qureshi, Akramand Shahzad, 2014; Ferris, 1981, Suliman, 2002; Vandewalle, Dyne and Kostova, 1995). Ferris (1981) found that commitment played a mediating role in the relationship between work-related

characteristics and employee performance. Similarly, Vandewalle, Van Dyne, and Kostova (1995) investigated the role of commitment in the relationship between psychological ownership and extra-role behaviour. They reported commitment fully mediated the relationship between psychological ownership and extra-role behaviour. Suliman (2002) using results from mediated regression analysis from a sample of 1000 employees from 20 industrial companies found that organizational commitment (normative and continuance commitment) played different mediating roles in the relationships between perceived work climate and performance (employee and supervisors perspective). Awan, Qureshi, Akramand ,Shahzad (2014) found that organizational commitment partially mediated the relationship between organizational politics and employee job involvement and performance as well

In addition, commitment has also been found to mediate the relationship between other workplace variables and performance, satisfaction and OCB (Schaubrock and Ganster, 1991; Yousef, 2000). Schaubrock and Ganster (1991) studied the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between intrinsic satisfaction and voluntarism. The results showed that affective commitment appeared to explain the relationship between intrinsic satisfaction and voluntarism. Yousef (2000) in a study on the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationships of leadership behaviour with the work outcomes of job satisfaction and job performance among 430 respondents from diverse organizations in the United Arab Emirate (a non-western country) found that organizational commitment mediated the relationships between leadership behaviour and both job satisfaction and performance. It is hypotheised that:

H2: Organizational commitment will mediate the relationship between university academic staff perceived quality of work life and work performance.

Method

Characteristics of Sample and Procedure

Sampling in this study was in two stages, the first involved identifying academic staff who had spent at least 2 years with the University of Education, and the second stage involved selecting the study participants. Probability sampling specifically stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting study participants. These methods were utilized to ensure that the required number of responses across the various demographic variables such as age, gender, and tenure and work experience was achieved. Using the list from the Human Resources Department of the Kumasi campus of the University of Education, Winneba, respondents were stratified along the various demographics and then randomly selected using simple random sampling Out of the 50 respondents 43were males whiles seven were females. Twenty (20%) percent of the respondents had PhD's whilst 80% had MPhil/MSc/MBA. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the respondents were senior lecturers whilst 74%were lecturers. Questionnaires were used to gather data on perceived quality of work life, organizational commitment and work performance. Additionally, data were collected on the following demographic variable; age, gender, tenure, and work experience. These demographic characteristics were controlled for as they have been found in previous studies (e.g. Almalki, FitzGerald and Clark, 2012; Huang, 2005) to influence perceived quality of work life, commitment and work performance.

A total of 55 questionnaires were hand delivered to the study participants. This number was administered to ensure that the required sample size for this study would be achieved. In addition this was to help take care of some questionnaires that might be lost through missing data. Out of the 55 questionnaires administered, 50 (N = 50) representing 91% response rate were completed and returned. All 50 questionnaires were adequately filled. Therefore, there were no issues with missing data.

The sample size (N= 50) is adequate for regression analysis because as recommended by Stevens (1996, p. 72) recommends that 'for social science research, about 15 subjects per predictor are needed for a reliable equation.' In this study there are two (2) predictors, thus the sample size based on Stevens (1996) is 30. The sample size of 50 was therefore appropriate for this study.

Instruments

Quality of Work life

The 16-item questionnaire developed by Elizur and Shye (1990) was used in measuring QWL in the study. Samples items on the questionnaire are "to what extent does your work enable you to balance and match your unique qualities with existing conditions?" Items were scored using a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Davidson-Arad and Kaznelson (2010) reported this scale has an adequate internal consistency.

Work Performance

Work performance was measured based on the heuristic framework of individual performance proposed by Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli *et al*. (2011). The scale consisted of 20 items with

four dimensions/subscales which include: task performance; contextual performance; adaptive performance; and counterproductive work behaviour.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) was used to measure organizational commitment. The sub-scales on the OCQ includes: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. It consisted of 18 items (6 items for each sub-scale).

Results and Discussion

In accordance with the assumptions underlying multivariate analysis (e.g. regression analysis), some preliminary analyses were conducted to assess the fit between variable distributions and their acceptability in this kind of statistical analysis. To determine the fit of these variables, test of normality of the main variables (i.e. perceived quality of work life; organistional commitment; and work performance) was conducted. According toTabacknick and Fidell (2002), normality of a variable is established when skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable values for psychometric purposes such as ±2. Test of normality in this study revealed that all the variables of interest were normally distributed. In addition descriptive statistics and reliability analysis of the variables in this study were conducted. According to Nunally and Bernstein (1994)scales with reliability values within the threshold of 0.6 are acceptable for statistical analysis. All the scales used in this analysis yielded acceptable reliability coefficients (i.e. alpha values) (.66 to .88). Table 1 shows a summary of means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and alpha values of the variables in the study.

Test of hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted a significant positive correlation between university academic staff perceived quality of work life and work performance. This hypothesis was formulated as a precondition for testing hypothesis 2. Results from Pearson r shows that perceived QWL related positively with work performance (r = .868, n = 50, p = .000). Thus academic staff who perceive their work life to be of higher quality are more likely to exhibit greater performance, engage in behaviours that positively influence the work environment, and easily adapt to changes in work systems or work roles. Perceived QWL contributed 75% (R^2 = .753) of the variance in work performance.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 predicted that organizational commitment will mediatethe relationship between university academic staff perceived quality of work life and work performance. The procedure by Baron and Kenny (1986) was followed in testing this hypothesis. According to this procedure three separate equations should be estimated:

1. the mediating variable is regressed on the independent variable;
2. the dependent variable is regressed on the independent variable;
3. the dependent variable is simultaneously regressed on independent and mediating variable.

Moreover, the Sobel test was used to test for the indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable via the mediator variable (Preacher and Leonardelli, 2001).

The mediator (organizational commitment) was first regressed on the independent variable (QWL) at the same time controlling for the effects of age, gender, tenure, and work experience. The regression result was significant (β = 535, *p* = .000). Subsequently, the dependent variable (work performance) was regressed on the independent variable while controlling for the same variables as done in the preceding step. Again the result was significant (β = .855, *p* = .000). Finally, the dependent variable was regressed on both the independent variable and the mediator variables whiles controlling for age, gender,

tenure, and work experience. The result was significant (β = .674, *p* = .000). The beta value of QWL reduced by .18 (.855 - .674). This indicates that organizational commitment partially mediates the relationship between QWL and work performance.

In addition, the Sobel test for significance was used to test whether the mediator carried the influence of the independent variable to the dependent variable. The result of the Sobel test was also significant (z = 3.296, *p* = 001). These results indicate that Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Table.1 Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Alpha Values

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Alpha
Quality of Work life	83.980	19.234	-.353	-.369	.875
Organizational Commitment	64.280	12.076	.863	-.211	.660
Work Performance	78.280	12.316	-.483	.335	.749
Total Number of Respondents (N = 50)					

Figure.1 Summary of Hypothesized Relationships between QWL, Orgnaisational Commitment and Work Performance
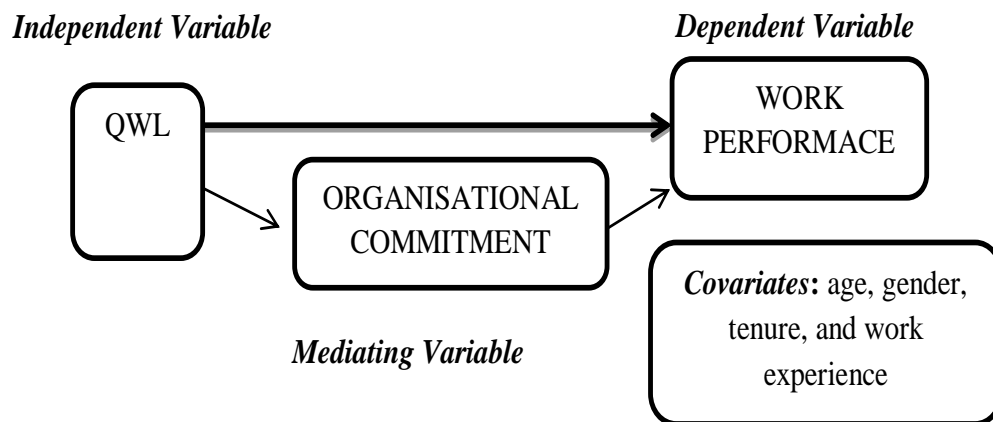

Table. 2 Summary of results on correlation between academic staff perceived QWL and work performance

Variables	1	2
1. Quality of Work life	-	.868*
2. Work Performance	.868*	-

*p < .001

Table.3 Summary of Mediated Regression Analysis for the Effect of Organizational Commitment in the University Academic Staff Perceived QWL – Work Performance Relationship

	b	SEβ	β
Step 1: M on IV			
Plus Control Variables			
Constant	30.011	7.737	-
Gender	6.908	2.924	.287
Age	-1.674	1.088	-.186
Tenure	2.199	1.401	.188
Work experience	.854	1.455	.070
QWL	.245	.054	.535*
Step 2: DV on IV			
Plus Control Variables			
Constant	27.439	5.930	-
Gender	6.254	2.241	.199
Age	-1.572	.834	-.133
Tenure	.967	1.074	.063
Work experience	.648	1.115	.041
QWL	.512	.042	.855*
Step 3: DV on IV and M			
Plus Control Variables			
Constant	14.142	5.688	-
Gender	3.194	1.967	.101
Age	-.830	.707	-.070
Tenure	-.007	.912	.000
Work experience	.269	.924	.017
QWL	.404	.042	. 674*
Organizational commitment	.443	.097	.339*

Note: M = Mediator; IV = Independent Variable; DV = Dependent Variable. R^2 = .42, .80, .87 for steps 1, 2, and 3 respectively, ΔR^2 = .35, .78, .85 for steps 1, 2, and 3 respectively.
*p < .001

Conclusion

Pearson product moment correlation and the three step process proposed by Baron and Kenny were used to examine organizational commitment's role in university academic staff perceived QWL and work performance. The results revealed that organizational commitment partially mediated the relationship between perceived QWL and work performance. This result is consistent with the previous findings from other studies on the mediating role of organizational commitment (e.g. Awan, Qureshi, Akramand Shahzad, 2014; Suliman, 2002; Yousef, 2000). For example Suliman (2002) argued that employees who positively perceived their work climate and showed higher levels of commitment (affective) tended to rate their performance more highly than those who perceived their work climate less positively and showed less commitment.

In addition to the above findings, it was also found that there is a positive significant relationship between university staff perceived QWL and work performance. Thus respondents who positively perceived their QWL reported higher levels of self-rated work performance. This finding is in consonance with previous findings which has shown that QWL is positively linked with work performance (e.g. Azril, Jegak, Asiah, Azman, *et al*., 2010; Madlock, 2008). Perceived QWL was found to explain 75% of the variation in academic staff work performance. This finding demonstrates the importance of QWL in academic settings. There is improved performance from academic staff when they perceive their work life to be of higher quality.

Limitation

The findings and conclusions of this study should be understood keeping in mind the following limitations. Firstly, the study was correlational in nature and therefore conclusions about cause-and-effect are unwarranted. Future studies attempting to replicate this study could adopt a longitudinal design to be able to make cause-and-effect inferences. Secondly, the study adopted the self-report measures as only tool for collecting data. It is believed that this can affect the social desirability of the responses provided. A replication of this study should therefore, take into consideration a more objective assessment of the study variables. Finally this study only examined the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between academic staff perceived QWL and work performance. Although academic staff commitment to their organizations was found to explain the link between their perception of QWL and their work performance, it only acted as a partial mediator. Researchers could also

examine other mediating variables (e.g. job satisfaction and organizational trust) in order to be able to provide a complete explanation of the QWL - work performance relationships.

Practical Implications

Teachers (i.e. lecturers) constantly have to deal with a pressurized and changing work environment. They are also the bedrock of every academic institution. Maintaining and improving lecturers' levels of QWL, commitment and work performance is therefore, of fundamental importance to every academic institution. In this study organizational commitment was found to mediate academic staff perceived QWL and their work performance. Some practical implications and theoretical implications can be highlighted from this finding. Firstly, academic institutions may need to pay special attention to academic staff commitment, because it appears to be playing a positive role in mediating the QWL – work performance relationship. Academic staff QWL may positively influence their performance, but if they are also committed, they will be eagerly prepared to show higher levels of work performance.

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