

Influence of Meetings on Academic Staff Performance in Islamic University in Uganda

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Abstract

The study looked at the influence of meetings on academic staff performance in Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) main campus. The specific objectives that guided the study were; to determine the influence of staff meetings on improving staff regularity and the influence of staff meetings on improving staff teamwork in Islamic University in Uganda. The study was quantitative in nature and used cross-sectional survey design. The total population under study was 253. Questionnaires were administered to 100 respondents but 84 of them were returned hence considered for data presentation and analysis. The study used proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected through questionnaires which were based on three Likert scale of 1 for Agree, 2 for not sure and 3 for Disagree. The data collected was analyzed using relative frequencies and percentages (univariate statistics), and regression analysis. The findings revealed that staff meetings had a weak significant influence on improving staff regularity and a moderate significant influence on improving staff teamwork. The study recommends that the administrators should regularly organize meetings focussed on addressing staff performance challenges for better results.

Keywords: meetings, academic staff, staff performance, team work, staff regularity

Globally, meetings are an essential, indispensable, valuable and absolutely unavoidable part of getting the job well done in an organization (John, 2009). They are a crucial element in organization management and an easy way of communicating organizational objectives to the members of the organization and directing members to working towards these objectives (Maicibi, 2007). Therefore, meetings consist of people coming together for the purpose of resolving problems or making decisions. Carysforth (1988) revealed benefits of meetings which include; saving time, increasing understanding and appreciation of views of other people, arriving at possible solutions, and gaining commitment of those present to the decisions reached. Most meetings at work are more formal

with pre-arranged agenda items, time and venue. A typical meeting has a clearly defined purpose usually summarized in an agenda which must be circulated among attendants in advance. It was revealed by Hodgson and Houston (1993) that face-to-face, two-way communication (meeting) has the most impact. In fact person-to-person contact is usually essential if one wishes to influence other people, get their agreement or make things happen. Meetings come in various shapes and sizes and they are held for different reasons, they vary tremendously in their effectiveness. Some people enjoy them and find it very difficult to perform without them while others take them as a necessary evil that must be endured.

Meetings are considered the most effective mode of communication and where meetings are not employed as a management tool or poorly managed it may lead to poor management decision or conflict within a university.

A wide range of meetings can be held by organizations. Some may be formal and others informal. It should be noted that by policy, several meetings take place in Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU). Among them are Executive Board, Management, Examinations Committee, Quality Assurance, Faculty Board, and Departmental meetings. There is evidence that these meetings take place in IUIU based on the minutes. What is not clear however, is the influence of these meetings on staff performance in IUIU.

Whereas we expect good staff performance in organizations, universities face a number of challenges as regard to academic staff performance. Among the issues include irregularity of some members of staff, failure to follow their teaching time table and teaching during weekends as though they were part-time lecturers, late submission of results by some lecturers, and poor time management. If this state of affairs continues to prevail, then it is most likely that students might become rowdy and hostile which may cause the public to lose trust and confidence in some of the Universities. It is against this background that the study investigated the influence of meetings on staff performance in Islamic University in Uganda. Specifically the study focused on the influence of staff meetings on; improving staff regularity and staff teamwork at IUIU.

Hypotheses

The study was guided the following hypotheses:

1. Staff meetings do not significantly improve staff regularity at IUIU.
2. Staff meetings do not significantly influence staff teamwork at IUIU.

Meetings and Staff Regularity

Staff have a contractual responsibility to achieve an acceptable level of performance at work and will be supported and encouraged to reach that level. Managers should set realistic and achievable standards consistent with the employee's contract and the university's policy on academic workload planning. These should ensure that employees understand what those standards imply in terms of the quality and quantity of work and the time and costs associated with

the expected outputs. Any shortfalls in performance should be discussed promptly with the employee concerned and the causes of the shortfall identified. Consideration should be given to whether it is due to inadequate training, supervision or guidance and if appropriate measures should be taken to provide additional support. Heads of department should meet regularly with employees on an individual basis to discuss performance, current work and current work issues, plus any other relevant topics. Poor performance should be raised at these meetings or at an earlier meeting if a one to one is not imminent. How regular a one to one meeting is held is for the line manager and member of staff to decide but where there are performance concerns the regularity of these meetings is likely to increase for the individual concerned (Simpson, 2007).

Balyejusa (2001) is of the view that there are various forms of communication used in schools including individual briefings (circulars, verbal or e-mail communication), audio and audio-visual communication and above all face-to-face communication (i.e. meetings). The ability to communicate clearly is crucial to good administration. However, communication between Dean of faculty, Head of department and the members of staff are often flawed and can even break down altogether not surprisingly considering the many potential difficulties and distractions involved. However, in theory at least there is no great complexity to the solution. Of course, there are technical skills involved – writing and presenting effectively, handling meetings skillfully, listening actively and so on, but successful communication starts with the acceptance of a simple principle: the communicator has total responsibility for getting a message across.

It should be noted, however, that though Balyejusa (2001) gave a hint on good meetings, he did not discuss how meetings can help to improve staff regularities in school activities. In this study the researcher analysed how staff meetings improve staff regularity in school activities. According to Kasende (2006) in 'Schools that Excel', he asserted that staff meetings are used by staff to discuss the general situation of the school which include academic performance of students as well as staff attitude towards teaching, staff welfare as well as the discipline of both students and staff. Worth to note is that Kasende's work made a general analysis of staff meetings and did not analyse how staff meetings improve staff regularity which fosters effectiveness in staff performance.

Maicibi (2004) indicates that there are many staff actions that put the achievement of the organizational objectives at risk or which pose a threat to its assets or reputation. These include inadequate work performance, absenteeism, poor time keeping, breaking rules, and interfering with work of others, rudeness to colleagues, improper personal appearance, conflict of interest and others. All these are a threat to competence of teachers. He further identified defective communication system (meetings) and lack of timely redress to workers' grievances (especially through meetings) as the major causes of incompetence in an organization. It should be noted however that Maicibi did not handle meetings

in particular and how they help staff to be regular, because holding regular meetings is one way of finding solutions to such and this study has done so.

Meetings and Staff Teamwork

A team is a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, share responsibility for outcomes, see themselves and are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems (for example, institution, business unit or corporation), and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries and work collectively toward achieving organizational goal (Cohen and Bailey, 2000). Teamwork is the process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal (Walton, 2002).

In his study about the influence of social amenities on job satisfaction, Matovu (2001) indicated that schools where heads of department allowed staff to express themselves freely in staff meetings, their mutual understanding and teamwork was found to be good. In his study, he found a significant relationship between staff meetings and staff teamwork. He indicated that in staff meetings heads of department are able to know the hidden ideas of staff that can affect their participation in school activities as a team and therefore can improve on them. This study sought to find out the influence of meetings on teamwork in IUIU while Matovu (2001) studied the effect of meetings on staff participation.

The need for practice development work to promote and develop the use of teamwork as a critical ingredient for effective academic staff performance, was identified as a result of research undertaken by Mainey and Crimmins (2006) which stated that “*Teamwork is a crucial component of the effective staff performance* (p, 39). Respondents from across the United Kingdom (Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales) had consistently highlighted teamwork as being critical both to staff morale and to the quality of care provided to young people.

Form the above authors’ views concerning staff teamwork, it should be noted that they give different opinions about staff teamwork but they did not discuss how meetings can help to improve staff teamwork. While no members might get all their own way, the outcome always reflects the best thinking and priorities of each group member. Teamwork can be quite efficient since it results in everyone feeling that his or her point of view is adequately represented and accounted.

In this study the researchers analyse how staff meetings can improve staff teamwork. The implication of this is that majority of empirical studies reviewed are relatively old and also most of the reviewed literatures here are qualitative while this study was based on quantitative research.

Empirical studies

Byakutaga, Kasande, Onen, Onyu and Kasenene (2016) examined how written and non written communication methods correlate with performance of academic staff of Primary Teachers’ Colleges in Central Uganda. The study used

correlational cross sectional survey design where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Questionnaire and interviews were data collection techniques used. A sample of 120 respondents was involved in the study. The results revealed that non written communication methods generally have a statistically weak correlation with the performance of the academic staff while written communication methods had a statistically significant correlation with academic staff performance. Whereas Byakutaga et al. (2016) looked at correlation between communication skills and staff performance, this study focused on meetings and staff performance.

Mushemeza (2016) analysed Opportunities and Challenges of Academic Staff in Higher Education in Africa. The paper argues that recruitment, appointment and promotion of academic staff should depend highly on their productivity (positive production per individual human resource). The paper identified several challenges that face the African Universities today – funding, infrastructural demands, inadequate staff remuneration, high student enrolment with low staff-student ratio, and governance deficits. In spite of these challenges, it is possible to identify and implement strategic interventions to admit quality students/optimum level of student intake, appoint and retain quality academic staff if we are to build a well-functioning University for both institutional and society development in Africa. Whereas Mushemeza (2016) studied staff opportunities and challenges, this study was on staff performance in IUIU.

Fejoh and Faniran (2016) investigated the impact of in-service training and staff development on workers' job performance and optimal productivity in public secondary schools in Osun State, Nigeria. The study used the ex-post-facto research design. The sample consisted of purposely selected 152 respondents and only 132 questionnaires were returned. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Regression were used to analyse data. The level of significance used was 0.05. Results showed that in-service training and staff development had insignificant combined effects but significant relative effects on workers' optimal job productivity. The study therefore recommended that schools should design proper and functioning in-service training and staff development programmes for their workers to boost their morale, enhance their performance. Fejoh and Faniran (2016) focused on the impact of in-service training and staff development on workers' job performance whereas this study focused on meetings and staff performance.

Ssekulima (2012) examined the effect of management functions on teacher performance in private secondary schools in Mbale Municipality. He found that management functions improved teachers' performance in Mbale Municipality schools. He focused on lesson preparation, time management, and content delivery while this study focused on teachers' regularity and teamwork. His method of study was mainly qualitative while this study used quantitative method.

Nepo (2010) examined the effectiveness of technology on performance of instructors who are working with adolescents and adults with autism. The

multiple baseline treatment design was used across instructors with the age between 26-34 who had been trained on basic knowledge and extensive application of ABA principles. However, the videotaping sessions and the presence of supervisor affected staff performance and the videotaped sessions were used for positive feedback instead of corrective feedback as the author intended initially.

Musisi (2010) investigated the role of staff meetings on teachers' situation in secondary schools in Butambala District, Uganda. He focused on role played by meetings on improvement of level organization of teachers, teachers' regularity and remuneration of teachers. He found that staff meetings play a great role in teachers' level of organization, check teachers' regularity and improve teachers' remuneration. Musisi (2010) did not focus on teamwork which this study did. Musisi used majorly qualitative method yet this study used quantitative method only and inferential statistics in data analysis.

Acaio (2010) examined the effect of continuous professional development (CPD) and teachers' performance in selected primary schools in Mbale district. Acaio found that the CPD provided to teachers in primary schools did not have positive effect on teacher performance. This is due to the nature of content of the programs.

Yu, Hamid, Ijab, Soo and Hsaio (2009) investigated the suitability of adopting an automated balanced scorecard for managing and measuring the performance excellence of academic staff in the higher education setting. A comprehensive study of related literature with requirements elicited from the target population in a selected premier university in Malaysia through document analysis, interviews and survey questionnaires provided the foundation for the system development. By adopting the balanced scorecard, the proposed system provided a means for top down alignment of organisational objectives while creating a medium of communication between the lecturers and management. Though the method suggested in this study primarily focuses on the academic staff, it addresses the lack of a representative form of performance measurement for lecturers that accommodates the complexities of the profession while providing the potential adoption of an unconventional method to encourage excellence and development amongst all levels of employees in the industry.

Conclusion on literature review revealed that the variables studied by the previous researchers include: written and non written communication and teacher performance (Byakutaga, Kasande, Onen, Onyu and Kasenene, 2016), Opportunities and Challenges of Academic Staff (Mushemeza, 2016), in-service training and staff development on teacher performance (Fejoh & Faniran, 2016), Management functions and teachers' performance (Ssekulima, 2012), Technology on performance of instructors (Nepo, 2010), staff meetings on teachers' situation (Musisi, 2010), Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and teachers' performance (Acaio, 2010), automated balanced scorecard for managing and measuring the performance excellence of academic staff in the higher education setting (Yu, Hamid, Ijab, Soo and Hsaio, 2009). They did not

focus on meetings which is our entry point. Most of the studies used qualitative method and descriptive statistics yet this study used quantitative method.

Methodology

The study used quantitative research approach and was basically based on cross-sectional survey design. The total population under study was 253 (University secretary office IUIU, 2014) and a sample of 100 was used. This was selected based on De Vos (1998) Table. One hundred questionnaires were administered to the respondents but 84 questionnaires were returned hence considered for data presentation and analysis. The study used proportionate stratified random sampling technique. This was used to sample respondents from the six different Faculties based on the number of lecturers in each Faculty. Data was collected through questionnaires which were based on three Likert scale of 1 for Agree, 2 for not sure and 3 for Disagree. The data collected was analysed using relative frequencies and percentages and regression analysis.

Findings and Discussions

Responses on Staff Meetings

Table 1 presents findings on Independent Variable (staff meetings) which was used to run the regression with the dependent variables.

Table 1

Responses on staff meetings

Statement	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Total
Meetings in IUIU are effective	66 (78.6%)	9 (10.7%)	9 (10.7%)	84 (100%)
Meetings in IUIU are regular	60 (71.4%)	18 (21.4%)	6 (7.1%)	84 (100%)
IUIU holds academic meetings	66 (78.6%)	9 (10.7%)	9 (10.7%)	84 (100%)
IUIU conducts departmental meetings	72 (85.7%)	6 (7.1%)	6 (7.1%)	84 (100%)
IUIU members have spirit of attending meetings	56 (66.7%)	13 (15.7%)	14 (17.9%)	84 (100%)

Source: Field Research, 2015

Responses on the statement that Meetings in IUIU are effective revealed that; 63(75%) agreed, 14(16.7%) were not sure and 7(8.3%) disagreed. Most of the respondents agreed with this particular item. This finding is in line with Heathfield (2017) who observed that turning meeting time into sustained results is a priority for successful organizations. Hence meetings should produce results.

According to the findings on the statement that meetings in IUIU are regular, 60(71.4%) agreed, 18(21.4%) were not sure, while 6(7.1%) disagreed. According to them, majority agreed that meetings in IUIU are regular. This finding is in agreement with Musisi (2010) who found that staff meetings are regular in Butambala secondary schools.

Anonymous (nd) calls for regular meetings even for 15 minutes, to get people talk and solve problems together. It can be surprising how a quick meeting can help alleviate stress and re-energize the group.

Responses on the statement that academic meetings are held in IUIU revealed that 66(78.6%) agreed 9(10.7%) were not sure, and 9(10.7%) disagreed. This finding is supported by Kasende (2006) who found that staff meetings are used by teachers to discuss the general situation of the school which include academic performance of students as well as teachers' attitude towards teaching.

On the statement that IUIU conducts departmental meetings, 72(85.7%) of the respondents agreed to the statement, while 6(7.1%) of them were not sure and 6(7.1%) disagreed with the statement. This implied that IUIU conducts departmental meetings.

The statement that IUIU staff has the spirit to attend departmental meetings was supported by majority of the respondents since 56(66.7%) revealed so and 13(15.5%) were not sure. Nevertheless, 15(17.9%) disagreed. Such findings suggested that IUIU staff has spirit of attending staff meetings.

The responses above indicate that meetings are regular and effective at IUIU. Departmental meetings are conducted and staff have spirit of attending meetings.

Responses on Staff Regularity

Responses in Table 2 on statement that staff in IUIU are regular to work, 66(78.6%) of the respondents agreed, 12(14.3%) disagreed while 6(7.1%) disagreed. These responses imply that staff at IUIU are regular at work.

On the statement that staff regularity at work is decreasing in IUIU, 57(67.9%) of the respondents agreed, 20(23.8 %) of them were not sure, while 7(8.3%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Since majority of the respondents agreed, it implied that staff regularity to work is decreasing in IUIU.

Table 2

Responses on staff regularity

Statement	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Total
Staff in IUIU are regular at work	66 (78.6%)	12 (14.3%)	6 (7.1%)	84 (100%)
Staff regularity at work is decreasing in IUIU	57 (67.9%)	20 (23.8%)	7 (8.3%)	84 (100%)
IUIU staff have improved regularity at work	69 (82.1%)	11 (13.1%)	4 (4.8%)	84 (100%)
Head of departments caution staff to be regular at work	59 (70.2%)	19 (22.6%)	6 (7.1%)	84 (100%)
Regular staff are always praised	66 (78.6%)	9 (10.7%)	9 (10.7%)	84 (100%)
Regularity of staff is usually discussed in meetings	65 (77.4%)	14 (16.7%)	5 (6%)	84 (100%)

Source: Field Research, 2015

Findings revealed that 69(82.1%) of the respondents agreed that staff at IUIU has improved regularity at work, 19(22.6%) of them were not sure and 6(7.1%) disagreed with the statement. This implied that staff at IUIU improved on regularity at work.

Responses on the statement that head of departments caution staff to be regular at work revealed that 59(70.2%) of the respondents agreed to the

statement, 19 (22.6%) of the respondents were not sure and 6 (7.1%) disagreed with the statement. This implied that head of departments caution staff to be regular at work.

The above result indicated that 66(78.6%) of respondents agreed that Staff who are regular at work are always praised in staff meetings. About 9(10.7%) respondents were no sure of that, and 9(10.7%) disagreed with the statement.

The responses further show that 65(77.4%) of the respondents agreed that regularity of staff is usually discussed in meetings, while 14(16.7%) of them were not sure and 5(6.0%) disagreed with the statement. This implied that regularity of staff is usually discussed in staff meetings. The findings revealed that the items discussed on staff regularity are fairly observed in IUIU.

Influence of Staff Meetings on Improving Staff Regularity at IUIU

A simple regression analysis was conducted to establish the influence of staff meetings on improving staff regularity in Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU). Results in table 3 revealed that staff meetings had a weak significant improvement on staff regularity ($\beta = 0.234$, $p < 0.05$) suggesting a statistically significant contribution as indicated by the Sig. 0.032 which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$.

Table 3

Simple regression between staff meetings and staff regularity

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.025	.138		7.451	.000
1 Staff regularity	.212	.097	.234	2.182	.032

Source: Field Research, 2015

This implied that staff meetings had weak contribution to staff regularity in IUIU. This weak contribution could be as a result of the meetings discussing many issues at ago without focusing on the challenges of staff performance. Kasende (2006) asserted that staff meetings are used by staff to discuss the general situation of the school on a regular basis which includes academic performance of students as well as staff attitude towards teaching, staff welfare as well as the discipline of both students and staff.

Responses on Staff Teamwork

Table 4 presents responses on statements on teamwork. When respondents were asked if IUIU members considered meetings as team building activity, majority 71(92.9%) agreed, 6(7.1%) were not sure, while none disagreed to the statement. This result suggested that IUIU staff consider meetings as team building activity in IUIU. Matovu (2001) found significant relationship between staff meetings and teamwork.

Table 4

Responses on staff teamwork

Statement	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Total
IUIU members use meetings as team building activity	76(92.1%)	6 (1.9%)	0 (00%)	84(100%)
IUIU staff have cordial relationship with colleagues	4 (4.8%)	75 (89.3%)	5 (6%)	84(100%)
IUIU academic staff work as a team	77 (91.7%)	6 (7.1%)	1 (1.2%)	84 (100%)
Teamwork is crucial to IUIU staff	84 (100%)	0 (00%)	0 (00%)	84 (100%)
IUIU staff always negotiate and compromise	63 (75%)	19 (22.6%)	2 (2.4%)	84 (100%)
Staff teamwork is emphasized in staff meetings	77 (91.7%)	4 (4.8%)	3 (2.4%)	84 (100%)

Source: Field Research, 2015

From the result in Table 4, it shows that 75(89.3%) of the respondents agreed that IUIU staff have cordial relationship with colleagues, 5(6.0%) were not sure while, 4(4.8%) disagreed. This implies that staff in IUIU have cordial relationship. This is in line with Gopal (2009) who observed that meetings aim at generating a positive attitude and enthusiasm.

Responses on the statement that IUIU academic staff work as a team indicated that 77(91.7%) of the respondents agreed, 6(7.1%) were not sure with the statement, and 1(1.2%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, suggesting that IUIU academic staff work in teams. This is supported by Cohen & Bailey (2000) who observed that research shows that staff want to be a part of a team and they want to be more involved with decision making.

From the presentation above, all the 84(100%) respondents agreed that teamwork is a crucial component for effective staff performance. This emphasizes the importance of teamwork. The above result indicated that 63(75.0%) of respondents agreed that IUIU staff negotiation and compromise. About 19(22.6%) respondents were not sure of that, and 2(2.4%) disagreed. Such presentation implied that negotiation and compromise help staff to come out with the natural decision of teamwork. Gopal (2009) asserted that one of the purposes of conducting a meeting is to arrive at widely acceptable decisions.

The responses show that 77(91.7%) of the respondents agreed that staff teamwork is usually discussed in meetings. While 4(4.8%) of them were not sure and 3(2.4%) disagreed with the statement, implying that staff are encouraged to work as a team during staff meetings in IUIU.

The findings revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that all aspects under teamwork discussed are observed by staff in IUIU.

Influence of Staff Meetings on Improving Staff Teamwork at IUIU

A simple regression analysis was conducted to establish the influence of staff meetings on staff teamwork in IUIU.

Table 5

A simple regression between staff meetings and staff teamwork

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.943	.058		16.399	.000
1 Staff teamwork	.127	.041	.328	3.122	.002

Source: Field Research, 2015

Results in table 5 revealed that staff meetings had a moderate significant influence on staff teamwork ($\beta = 0.328$, $p < 0.05$) suggesting a statistically significant contribution as indicated by the Sig. 0.002 which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$. This implied that staff meetings moderately contributed to staff teamwork in IUIU.

The results are supported by Matovu (2001) who indicated that schools where head of departments allowed staff to express freely in staff meetings, their mutual understanding and teamwork was found to be good. In his study, he found a significant relationship between staff meetings and staff teamwork. He indicated that in staff meetings heads of departments are able to know the hidden ideas of staff that can affect their participation in school activities as a team and therefore can improve on them. In addition a study by Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock (2012) revealed that better meetings were associated with higher team productivity.

Conclusions

The findings revealed that staff meetings had weak significant influence on improving staff regularity and moderate significant influence on improving staff teamwork. The study recommends that the administrators should regularly organize meetings focussed on addressing staff performance challenges for better results.

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