

Professional development opportunities as a driver to academic staff job satisfaction in selected public and private universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study was focused on distinguishing the operations in public and private universities and recommending possible policy intervention to improve the academic staff levels of job satisfaction and performance. Guided by the pragmatism research paradigm and the Herzberg two-factor theory, the study employed a concurrent mixed research method design. The target population for this study was the members of the academic staff in a selected private and public university. Participants were purposively identified and selected; therefore, the sample size for public university was 115 participants, while that of private university was 60. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews, evaluated, and analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively, giving an in-depth examination into the subject matter. The study found out that there is that lack of clarity, unequal access, and limited institutional support for training and research for members of the academic staff in public universities compared to private universities, which hindered staff academic growth. The study therefore concludes and recommends that universities should develop policies that mandate regular academic staff training, further allocate budget lines for academic staff professional advancement, and recognize academic staff developmental achievements in promotion criteria. For ethical consideration, the selected public university is referred to as University Alpha, while the private university is University Beta.

Keywords: Alpha, Beta, Development, Private, Professional, Public

I. INTRODUCTION

Professional development is a key driver that propels university academic staff self-satisfaction. The key roles of universities are to foster knowledge creation, innovation, training and inventions; this can only be achieved by investing in professional development of the academic staff members (Otieno, 2021; Altbach, 2015). Therefore, the objective was set out to examine how professional growth opportunities of the academic staff is a driver for job satisfaction. The independent variable in this study was professional development opportunities, which included but not limited to training, workshops, seminars, research grants and funding, study leaves, mentorship and coaching, conference and networking and capacity building programs. In this study, independent variable represents the availability, accessibility and quality of professional development initiatives. Dependent variables in this study was the academic staff job satisfaction whose indicators include satisfaction with teaching and research roles, motivation and morale, retention and turnover intention, perceived fairness in opportunities, commitment and engagement in the university, work life balance and overall career fulfillment. The dependent variable in this study reflects how academic staff feel about their jobs when professional development is available or not. Moderating variable in this study is the institutional type, which may influence the strength, and or direction of the relationship between professional development and academic staff levels of job satisfaction. Possible control or moderating variables include, gender, age, and academic staff rank, workload differences, university policies and funding capacity and governance and management practices.

All this are demographic and institutional factors. The core relationship between independent and dependent variable in this study is that professional development opportunities are expected to have positive relationship with academic staff job satisfaction. When universities provide structured and accessible professional development, academic staff will eventually feel valued, competent and supported in their career growth. This enhances the academic staff levels of job satisfaction making them more motivated, loyal and productive at work. This sentiments seem to find favour in a number of scholarly works by Korir (2017); Otieno, (2021), Tettey (2006) and Ulfah et al (2023). The type of institution whether public or private may determine how strong or weak policies are developed. In private universities, professional

development may be more tailored, flexible and responsive leading to stronger satisfaction outcomes. In public universities, bureaucratic leadership styles, limited government funding may weaken the link between development opportunities and academic staff level of job satisfaction. Demographic factors for example the younger academic staff may value training and mentorship more while the senior professors may prioritize research grants and sabbaticals. Gender may also influence how staff perceive certain services in the universities affecting satisfaction levels. On the other hand, strong institutional policies supports staff levels of job satisfaction as opposed to weak or poorly implemented policies, which may reduce the rates of satisfaction; this also is in line with studies done by Korir (2017), Otieno (2021) and Altbach (2015). This study notes that professional development opportunities directly improves academic staff levels of confidence, career prospects and hence raises the levels of job satisfaction.

From the findings of this study on the influence of professional development opportunities on academic staff job satisfaction, it revealed a significant association between access to structured capacity building programs and the levels of job contentment among academic staff in both public (University Alpha) and private (University Beta) universities. However, marked disparities in opportunity, access, and institutional commitment were observed between the two categories of institutions. Quantitative data indicated that only 34% of academic staff in public universities (University Alpha) agreed that their institutions provided adequate professional development support, compared to 67% in private universities (University Beta). This difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), underscoring a more wide practice of staff development in the private university (University Beta). Specifically, private university staff (University Beta) reported higher satisfaction with access to workshops, short courses, sponsored postgraduate studies, conference attendance, and internal mentorship programs. Qualitative data supported these historical trends. Interviews with public university staff (University Alpha) consistently revealed frustrations over the lack of structured, institutionalized professional development policies this reflects the sentiments pointed out by Korir (2017), Otieno, (2021) and Altbach (2015). Many participants indicated that opportunities were either unavailable, irregularly offered, or based on unclear criteria, often dependent on individual effort or donor funded projects. This perceived institutional neglect among the members of the academic staff created feelings of professional stagnation and diminished morale, particularly among younger academics who felt unsupported in their career advancement.

In comparison, private universities (University Beta) were seen to integrate professional development programs more systematically influencing the academic staff levels of job satisfaction. Participants described routine in-service training, workshops, research seminars, and funded postgraduate scholarships as key features of their universities in promoting academic staff welfare. Additionally, private universities (University Beta) often linked development opportunities to clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and provided feedback avenues to academic staff members. In terms of academic mobility and exposure, the study found that public university (University Alpha) academic staff had access to a wider range of international conferences and research exchange programs, often supported by external grants or international collaborations. However, these opportunities were not equitably and favorably distributed, with most being available to senior faculty or those in STEM fields. Only 22% of junior academic staff in public universities (University Alpha) reported ever participating in an international professional development program, compared to 41% in private universities (University Beta). Qualitative evidence suggested that while public universities (University Alpha) had partnerships with international partners, the benefits often failed to reach the a wider number of the academic staff due to poor communication, favoritism, and institutional challenges (Altbach, 2015).

Another critical dimension of professional development was mentorship and career progression support. In public universities (University Alpha), mentorship was largely informal and inconsistent, with several study participants indicating they had never received formal mentoring since employment. This lack of structured mentorship had a demoralizing effect, contributing to feelings of professional neglect. Consequently, 61% of private university (University Alpha) staff reported participating in formal mentorship programs, often with semester evaluations and clear job outcomes. The presence of career development officers, academic coaching, and regular performance appraisals created a supportive work environment that contributed to higher academic staff job satisfaction. The findings also pointed to university funding as a critical driver or barrier to professional development. Public university (University Alpha) staff repeatedly cited lack of budgetary allocation for staff training and conference participation as a limiting factor to academic staff levels of job satisfaction. Due to resource constraints, some universities either suspended training programs or made them highly competitive, this seems to agree with discussions by Korir (2017). On the other hand, private universities (University Beta), though smaller, had set aside annual budgets for professional development as part of their strategic priorities.

Moreover, the study explored how professional development affected research productivity and academic staff promotion. In public universities (University Alpha), academic staff who accessed training independently or through external funding often published more and progressed faster. However, lack of institutional support meant that many academic staff members remained stagnant or were promoted late, despite years of service. This was confirmed by quantitative data showing that 69% of public university (University Alpha) staff felt that their institution did not support them in meeting promotion requirements, compared to 46% in private universities (University Beta). By comparison, in

private universities (University Beta), professional development was closely tied to institutional goals and staff appraisal systems, which enhanced research output, teaching innovation, and career progression.

This study while applying Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, it notes that professional development opportunities for members of the university academic staff can be understood as a motivational driver that significantly enhances job satisfaction when present. In private universities (University Beta), where training, mentorship, and career planning were actively supported, these opportunities acted as strong intrinsic motivators, fostering commitment, innovation, and institutional loyalty. In public universities (University Alpha), the absence or irregular provision of these opportunities did not merely fail to motivate but actively discouraged staff, leading to disengagement and high turnover intentions.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This paper is based on the premise that the academic staff form the intellectual base of higher institutions of learning both locally, regionally and globally, are entrusted with the creation, generation, dissemination, application, and preservation of knowledge and skills. However, available scholarly evidence on the subject of this study indicate that the levels of the university academic staff job satisfaction which is an essential driver of productivity, institutional commitment, research, and academic excellence is below expectations. In Kenya, both public and private universities have experienced rapid expansion, policy reforms, and intensified demands for quality assurance and standards, yet the institutional environments as a critical driver within which academic staff operate have not equally changed. Consequently, universities are struggling with rising dissatisfaction among members of the academic staff, reflected in diminished morale, declining performance, and increased attrition. Scholarly works by Ngema et al. (2022), Saifalislam et al. (2014) Omweri (2012) and many other have made a significant effort of pointing out the effect of professional development opportunities as a key driver to academic staff levels of job satisfaction. However, these studies have failed short of examining the issue in the context of public and private universities in Kenya whose findings can be generalized to other similar contexts. Similarly, limited research that exists related to the subject matter tends to generalize findings across universities, ignoring the unique governance structure, funding, and operational models that differentiate specifically private and public universities in Kenya. This analytical gap has left MOEST, CUE, policymakers, UMB, UASU, and university councils without wide, evidence-based frameworks for responding to university academic staff welfare concerns in an objective manner, justifying the urgency of this study and why it was conducted.

1.2 Research Objective

The study was guided by the following one key objective, to analyse the effect of professional development opportunities on academic staff job satisfaction in selected public (named University Alpha) and private (named university Beta) universities.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The idea of university academic staff levels of Job satisfaction is a complex issue, influenced, and determined by various key institutional drivers. These key drivers are determined by both local, regional and international forces of which, some are unique to a specific contexts and settings. In order to give an in-depth examination and detailed understanding of these drivers drawing comparison between the public and private universities. This study has used Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory developed by Frederick Herzberg in the 1950s (Herzberg, 1968). This theory has greatly contributed in providing a deeper and detailed understanding of the institutional drivers influencing university academic staff levels of job satisfaction in the context of university Alpha representing public universities and university Beta representing private universities. The theory allowed the study to capture both the structural and psychological dimensions of the university academic staff members in the two universities. Further, it not only strengthened the theoretical foundation of this study but also enabled a deeper reflection of specific investigation of how public and private universities in Kenya have created grounds that influence and affect academic staff job satisfaction levels.

2.1.1 Herzberg Two Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory developed in 1959 (Herzberg et al, 1959; Herzberg, 1968).), was found to be suitable and adequate which is also referred to as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. This theory is found to distinguishes between two sets of drivers that influence university academic staff levels of job satisfaction in both university Alpha and university Beta: that is the *motivators* which is considered as intrinsic motivational driver and *hygiene factors* which is considered as extrinsic drivers. According to Herzberg, motivator drivers consists of elements such as staff recognition, staff achievement, and staff responsibility which are considered to influence academic staff job satisfaction and drive or increase staff output, while on the other hand hygienic drivers consists elements such as university policies, university administrative practices, academic staff salary, and university working conditions which do not in themselves motivate members of the academic staff, but their absence or inadequacy definitely leads to high levels of job

dissatisfaction among the members of the university academic staff in both university Alpha and university Beta for this study (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Based on this study, policies that promote professional development opportunities in both university Alpha and Beta influences largely the level of the university academic staff job satisfaction. When a university whether Beta or Alpha has poorly designed or inconsistently applied policies characterised with unclear academic staff promotion procedures and criteria, it may contribute to lower job satisfaction. On the other hand, when university policies are clearly and well-articulated, procedurally implemented, and transparently it will lead to greater academic staff job satisfaction levels in both university Alpha and university Beta (Ngema et al, 2022; Odhiambo, 2014). It should be understood that university policies such as professional or career progression policies are critical drivers in maintaining and promoting the academic staff levels of job satisfaction.

2.2 Empirical Review

Saifalislam et al. (2014) conducted a study on the Influence of training, recruitment and selection, and development on the organizational performance of the Jordanian Public University in Malaysia. The study revealed that training, recruitment and selection are the development influences on employee performance. Finally, the study recommended that there should be a training and management development program to enhance the capabilities of employees. For any organization to achieve its intended goals, there must be well-organized programs specifically for recruiting, selecting, training and developing workers (academic staff). However, the study focuses on a public university in Malaysia, while the current study will focus on universities, which provide a knowledge gap.

Ngema et al. (2022) studied employee development practices as a solution to the employee job satisfaction outcomes in the Ministry for Home Affairs in South Africa. The study found that employees need to be trained, recruited and placed in a way that will facilitate them to utilize their skills and abilities effectively). For academic staff to perform excellently, their managers must work out their professional development. However, the study was based on the Ministry of Home Affairs in South Africa, while the current study will be on Universities in Kenya. Nama et al. (2022) argues that trained employees were more likely to improve service delivery. Coaching and mentoring could be used to improve performance. The study recommends that the human resource department continuously revise and update its employee policy to ensure that training and development investment equips employees with the required skills and competencies.

Wanjara and Ogembo (2024) found that training is related to academic staffs' performance. Therefore, academic staff should be allowed to undergo different training to develop their professions. Omweri (2012) notes that when there is a high level of academic staff productivity, there is a strong positive relationship between the level of academic staff productivity and the level of career development of academic staffs. The study recommends that policies, plans and actions must always pass the test of not only filling classroom positions but filling them with academic staffs of the highest quality, prepared and able in their content area, their pedagogical approaches, and their commitment to improving student achievement.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

This study employed a mixed-method research design, specifically concurrent mixed method design [QUANT + qual] (Kroll et al, 2005). Generally, a research design was used to determine what, when, how much, where, or by what means a study is conducted. The research design was suitable since qualitative data provided more insights and in-depth information from the information collected. Participants lived experiences played a significant role in drawing conclusions in this study.

3.2 Study Setting

This study was based in Uasin Gishu and Machakos Counties of Kenya. The two counties represent diverse geographical and demographic characteristics needed for this study. Uasin Gishu County, is known for its vast agricultural activities and many educational institutions which includes, several universities namely; Mount Kenya University Eldoret Campus, Moi University, Catholic University of East Africa Gaba Campus, University of East Africa Baraton Eldoret extension Center, and the University of Eldoret, equally Machakos County is inhabited by diverse ethnic communities and has several educational institutions including Machakos University, South Eastern Kenya University Tala Campus, Scott Christian University and Daystar University. Consequently, the variance in these areas provided valuable insights into how different work environmental factors influence the academic staff job satisfaction in the university.

3.3 Target Population

Target population for this study was 887 as tabulated in table 1

Table 1*Target and Actual Study Population*

University Category	Target Population	Accessible Population
University Alpha (Public University)	740	134
University Beta (Private University)	141	66
Total	887	200

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sampling Size

Simple Random Sampling was employed in this study. This method was designed to ensure that every participant within the target population had an equal chance of being selected, which helped in eliminating bias and ensuring that the sample was a clear representative of the population. In this case the the population included all academic staff across the selected public and private universities in Kenya. Therefore, the sample size for the university Alpha was 115 participants, while the sample size for university Beta was 60 participants.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The study used questionnaires and well developed interview schedules as the main data collection instrument for academic staff and university managers. The two data collection instruments corroborated each other to ensure an in depth data collection on the subject.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. This was done concurrently and then merged with the final report. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in quantitative data analysis. For descriptive statistics, percentages and frequencies were used; for inferential statistics, simple linear regression was used.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**4.1 Factor Analysis: Identifying Core Dimensions of Professional Development**

Factor analysis was used to understand how professional development contributes to academic staff satisfaction. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the data collected via survey, participants in this study rated a series of Likert scale items relating to the availability and quality of professional developments programs, including opportunities for further education, participation in conferences and workshops, mentoring, access to grants and institutional support for training. The results from exploratory factor analysis came out with three major findings that collectively explained seventy two point four percent of the total variance in responses as follows:-

Factor 1: Institutional Support for Career Advancement. This factor included items related to institutional support for further or advanced studies, internal promotion pathways, and access to mentorship and leadership programs. This factor had a high eigenvalue of three point one four and strong factor loadings across all related items (≥ 0.71). This outcome conforms well with a study that was conducted by Saifalislam et al. (2014) on the Influence of training, recruitment and selection, and development on the organizational performance of the Jordanian Public University where it study revealed that training, recruitment and selection are the development influences on employee performance. This was found to be a strong factor that influenced the academic staff levels of job satisfaction in university Beta compared to university Alpha.

Factor 2: Participation in Academic Conferences and Workshops. The second factor included support given to the members of the academic staff to attend local and international conferences and seminars, travel allowance, and incentives for paper presentations. This particular factor accounted for twenty five percent of the explained variance and was especially prominent in university Beta. According to Nama et al. (2022), he argues that trained employees were more likely to improve service delivery and at the same time be more motivated at the place of work. Coaching and mentoring could be used to improve performance. This study reveals that the human resource departments in both university Alpha and University Beta should continuously revise and update its academic staff employee policy to ensure that training and development investment equips employees with the required skills and competencies. This will play a significant role in raising their levels of staff motivation.

Factor 3: Access to Research and Training Resources. The third factor focused on access to online journals, institutional funding for research, training in emerging pedagogical technologies, and involvement in interdisciplinary projects. It had an eigenvalue of 1.67 and was more influential among younger members of the academic staff. According to a study done by Wanjara and Ogembo (2024) it was discovered that training is related to academic staffs' level of job performance. Therefore, according to the study, academic staff should be allowed to undergo different training to develop their professions. Omweri (2012) on the other hand notes that when there is a high level of academic

staff productivity, there is a strong positive relationship between the level of staff productivity and the level of career development of academic staffs.

The findings clearly demonstrate how strongly each of the identified factors contributes to the professional development of the academic staff in both university Alpha and Beta. The results from factor analysis indicate that institutional career progression contributes to the largest percentage of the explained variance at thirty-four percent. This finding indicates that it is a major driver in the academic staff job satisfaction. The strength of this factor is based on the importance the staff have attached to promotion systems, mentorship programs and institutional support for further studies. The study further notes that when the support is strong these factors become great drivers of academic staff motivation. Academic staff participation in international conferences, seminars and workshops explains a significant portion of twenty five percent of the variance. This study therefore confirms that academic exposure, networking and intellectual exchange are critical institutional drivers to academic staff job satisfaction.

Close examination on the outcome of the findings indicates that faculty members view institutional support for example engagement as a critical driver to academic staff job satisfaction. It's clear that access to research and training services and resources account to a smaller share of thirteen point two percent. The study discovered that this factor plays a significant role especially among the tutorial fellows. The study notes that the weight of this factor indicates that teaching technologies and cross disciplinary collaboration opportunities are growing in importance, especially in relation to adoption of online teaching in the universities. The comparative satisfaction score for the three of each of the professional development drivers in both university Alpha and Beta which deepens the understanding of institutional differences and their implication on staff job satisfaction levels. The study notes that in university Alpha the average satisfaction score stands at four point one indicating a high level of job satisfaction with the availability of clear promotion pathways, leadership trainings and support for further education among the members of the academic staff. In University Alpha the study indicates that the average score is 2.8, suggesting considerable job dissatisfaction among the academic staff. The study points out that the gap of 1.3 points is a clear reflection that the institutional policies on career advancement are significant drivers to the academic staff job satisfaction that public universities need to observe.

The study concludes that university Beta offers more structured and transparent career development mechanisms, including mentorship, leadership training, and further education support. Participation in Academic Conferences and Workshops. Indicating the highest average score of 4.3, this driver is observed in this study to be the most significant in university Beta. On the other hand the study points out that university Alpha scored 2.4, as a result of delayed disbursements, limited funding, and minimal institutional incentives. The 1.9-point gap in the two institutions suggests differences in institutional prioritization of academic exchange, contributing to dissatisfaction and missed career of professional developmental opportunities among the members of the academic staff. The resultant outcome of this study is that there is differences in availability of funds, policy support, and prioritization of academic staff scholarly engagement in university Alpha and university Beta.

On the factor on access to research, training and resources University Beta indicated an average score of 3.9 showing a positive perception among the members of the academic staff. On the other hand in university Alpha it recorded a low score of 2.1, showing job dissatisfaction among the academic staff. The two institutions show a 1.8-point difference reflecting underinvestment in academic tools and research capacity building, especially in university Alpha. It's therefore clear from the findings of this study that limited access to digital institutional infrastructure, modern pedagogy training, and collaborative projects reduces the levels of job satisfaction among academic staff members in university Alpha.

Table 2*Summary of Factor Analysis Results on Professional Development Dimensions*

Factor	Description	Key Items / Indicators	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)	Supporting Literature	Interpretation / Implication
Factor 1: Institutional Support for Career Advancement	Captures institutional mechanisms that promote academic staff growth and advancement.	Support for further studies, promotion pathways, mentorship and leadership programs.	3.14	34.0	Saifalislam et al. (2014)	Strongest factor influencing job satisfaction. Institutional support and promotion systems significantly enhance motivation among staff, particularly in University Beta.
Factor 2: Participation in Academic Conferences and Workshops	Reflects opportunities for scholarly exposure, networking, and professional recognition.	Funding and facilitation for conferences, seminars, travel allowances, and incentives for presentations.	—	25.0	Nama et al. (2022)	A major determinant of staff motivation and performance. Continuous professional development through training and conferences enhances academic engagement.
Factor 3: Access to Research and Training Resources	Involves accessibility of learning materials, institutional funding, and exposure to modern pedagogical tools.	Access to journals, research grants, training in technology, interdisciplinary collaboration.	1.67	13.2	Wanjara & Ogembo (2024); Omweri (2012)	Least influential but significant among younger and junior academic staff. Limited access to research infrastructure reduces productivity and satisfaction.

Table 3*Comparative Satisfaction Scores (University Alpha vs. University Beta)*

Factor	University Alpha (Mean Score)	University Beta (Mean Score)	Gap ($\beta - \alpha$)	Interpretation
Institutional Support for Career Advancement	2.8	4.1	1.3	Beta provides stronger support for advancement and mentoring, resulting in higher satisfaction.
Participation in Conferences & Workshops	2.4	4.3	1.9	Institutional prioritization of academic exchange and training is higher in Beta.
Access to Research & Training Resources	2.1	3.9	1.8	Underinvestment in academic tools and research facilities in Alpha reduces job satisfaction.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

The study conducted focused group discussions among the members of university Alpha and university Beta to explore their personal views and experiences, opinions, perceptions on the contributions of institutional professional development on the academic staff job satisfaction. The results were analyzed using narrative analysis.

In university Beta the participants noted on the culture of institutional investment on the academic staff that:-

“We have several opportunities to grow, the university though private has elaborate structures such as organizing regular workshops, funding research and seminars. This kind of support makes us as the workers of the university feel appreciated and valued at all times”. KII-14-F-B

‘The staff both teaching and non-teaching is encouraged to grow in this institution, if you want to study a PhD or any program the university will always assist you to plan for it’ KII-11-M-B

The study reveals that there was a strong mentorship programs for the tutorial fellows in the university where they were linked and paired with the older members of the academic staff to assist them improve on their research skills. One participant noted

'When I joined the university I didn't know much about the academy, my chair of department linked me with the one of the eldest members of the department who inducted me to the practices of the university. I was taken through the process of research and grant proposal writing. My morale was lifted'. KII-13-F-B

This discussions clearly indicate on the driving role of professional and career development as an institutional force in promoting academic staff job satisfaction in university Beta. On the other hand participants from university Alpha gave a contradicting outcome emphasizing on demotivating factors such as luck of mentorship, luck of staff in service programs, nepotism, tribalism and institutional autocracy for example:-

'The university will only sponsor those in management and administrative positions to attend conferences. The rest of us if you want to attend a conference you have to sponsor yourself'. KII-12-M-A

The university has a lot of opportunities for the members of the academic staff, unless you know someone you will never benefit from it. They will only consider those whom are in favor with them'. KII-14-F-A

'In this waters in most cases you will feel that you are on your own. Its either you support yourself to grow or you perish'. KII-10-F-A

From the voices of the participants in this study, it is evident that there are great disparities between university Alpha and university Beta on the issue of creating opportunities to academic staff members in both university Alpha and university Beta as well as available institutional professional opportunities and career progression support to the members of the academic staff in those institution.

The findings point out that university Alpha has over time neglected the welfare of the staff members especially on the issue of promotions and career progression compared to university Beta. There are no clear promotion policy framework and instead the universities have taken the advantage of the lapse in clear policy framework for not promoting the members of the academic staff. This move has had a detrimental effect to the general welfare and the moral of the staff. On the other hand in university Beta which is a representative of private universities in Kenya, the university has clear promotion policy framework that support the members of the academic staff, this in turn has positively raised the levels of the academic staff job satisfaction.

This study would like to point out that despite this difference we have shared perspective among the members of the academic staff in the two universities. Staff in the two universities stressed on the need of the institutions to effectively recognize their professional growth efforts such as publishing, attending conferences, earning additional academic certification and winning grants for the university. Participants from university Alpha and university Beta linked professional development opportunities with increased morale, better performance and stronger institutional policy.

4.3 Policy Implications

This objective has a number of policy implication to UASU, university councils, university management boards and other stakeholders. Findings of this objective proposes that university Alpha should developed and implement mentorship programs for its academic staff, they should further allocate enough funds to promote academic staff career progression programs, institutional recognitions mechanism and balance staff workload. University Beta should develop a specific policy that minimizes on strain on the academic staff members especially in achieving institutional policies.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The findings of this objective has demonstrated that professional development opportunities are critical drivers to academic staff job satisfaction. The study concludes that, where the academic staff members are given support they tend to be contended with their work environment, which increases their output at the university. Through the integration of factor analysis, chi square and qualitative methods, the study provides a clear and better understanding of this objective. The findings reinforces the need for universities to invest in the members of the academic staff in order to boost staff morale and achieve institutional goals. The study therefore notes that university academic staff job satisfaction is dependant to professional development opportunities provided by the universities.

5.2 Recommendations

This study would like to recommend that universities should establish clear, equitable, and funded professional development pathways. Universities must create structured, transparent, and well-funded professional development programs aligned with academic career progression. The findings demonstrated that lack of clarity, unequal access, and limited institutional support for training and research hindered academic growth, especially in public universities (University Alpha). Policies should mandate regular training, allocate budget lines for professional advancement, and recognize development achievements in promotion criteria.

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