Academic Staff's Feedback on Performance Appraisal Exercise and their Job Satisfaction in ODL Institution

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Abstract
This empirical study explores academic staff's feedback on performance appraisal exercises and consequences on job satisfaction at an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) university. Today, amidst the competitive landscape of higher education, performance appraisals play a critical role in shaping employees' job satisfaction and organisational effectiveness, particularly within private universities and colleges. This is a descriptive study leveraging a quantitative research design. A structured questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to 88 academic and only 54 responding. The aims is to capture insights into their perceptions and satisfaction levels on the two respective constructs. A purposive sampling technique was deployed in this study. The composite reliability for the two constructs (performance appraisal and job satisfaction) surpassed 0.7; 0.954 and 0.943 respectively. The Cronbach's alpha values for both constructs were also greater than 0.7; 0.944 "performance appraisal" and 0.937 "job satisfaction". The findings demonstrate that the academic staffs nearly have a

balanced score between agreement and disagreement with the performance appraisal exercise but are slightly more negative towards it, with 51.8% (28) expressing disagreement and 48.1% (26) agree. Consequently, 57.4% (31) of participants reported a low level of job satisfaction. This reflects broader concerns about the fairness and accuracy of the appraisal exercise and its impact on job satisfaction. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the academic staff disagreed with the notion that current appraisal practices effectively promote job satisfaction. Thus, critical measures need to be taken to improve the performance appraisal exercise to ensure they are both fair and transparent, fostering a more satisfied and motivated academic staffs. In term of demographic factors such as gender and years of employment, the study also sheds light on varying perceptions among male and female groups. Overall, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse on optimising performance appraisal exercise within ODL settings to better meet the needs and expectations of academic staffs. Further research should explore longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of revised performance appraisal systems and investigate how demographic factors such as age and years of service influence perceptions of fairness and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Academic Staff, Job Satisfaction, Performance Appraisal, Open And Distance Learning (ODL), Private Universities.

Introduction

The effectiveness of performance appraisal practices plays a critical role in shaping academic staffs' satisfaction and overall job contentment, which applies to Open and Distance Learning (ODL) universities as well. Performance appraisal is a systematic evaluation process instrumental in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of staff, guiding decisions on promotions, and serving as a feedback mechanism to enhance individual and organisational performance (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018). Despite its significance, the perception and reception of performance appraisals among academic staff often vary, raising concerns about their fairness, accuracy, and overall impact on job satisfaction (Sanyal et al., 2017; Kim & Holzer, 2016).

The effectiveness of the appraisals system is crucial in the unique context of ODL institutions, where faculty members often work under certain conditions that differ significantly from traditional university settings (Dasanayaka et al., 2021). This research aims to explore how ODL university academics perceive performance appraisals and the extent to which these perceptions influence their job satisfaction. Given the scarcity of studies focusing on ODL settings, this study seeks to fill a significant gap in the literature.

Background of Study

Recent studies suggest that less than 6% of employees view their performance evaluations as effective, which is insufficient to foster job satisfaction (Teckchandani & Pichler, 2015). Additionally, issues such as perceived injustice and the annual ritualistic nature of the appraisals contribute to dissatisfaction among staff (Sanyal et al., 2017). This study builds on the premise that a fair and transparent appraisal system is likely to enhance job satisfaction, which in turn, can contribute to the overall effectiveness of educational institutions (Mahmoud et al., 2020).

This study also investigates the demographic factors such as gender and years of employment to understand their impact on job satisfaction and perceptions of performance appraisals

exercise among academic staff in ODL institution. Previous studies have indicated that these factors can significantly influence perceptions of fairness and satisfaction (He et al., 2017; Mahmoud et al., 2020). Through a descriptive research design, this study aims to obtain valuable insights from academic staff on performance appraisals and job satisfaction at an ODL university.

Problem Statement

Employee performance appraisal and job satisfaction are directly influenced by the performance evaluation method used (Chandhana & Easow, 2015). In many scenarios, managers, subordinates, peers, and the workers themselves are involved in the evaluation of performance (Prasad, 2015). Managers and supervisors use the appraisal system to manage and motivate their employees to work efficiently by recognizing and rewarding their performance through promotions, pay awards, and bonuses (Park, 2014). It has been reported that less than 6% of employees think their evaluations are effective, which is not enough to boost job satisfaction as described by (Teckchandani & Pichler, 2015). this finding has raised concerns among all stakeholders.

Some lecturers view the performance appraisal exercise very negatively because it does not accurately evaluate their workload and responsibilities. They feel demotivated and no longer take the annual exercise seriously. The worst part is the evaluation system continues to be viewed as unfair, inaccurate, and a yearly ritual by most employees (Sanyal et al., 2017). This common phenomenon negatively impacts overall staff job satisfaction. Therefore, an empirical study is needed to investigate how ODL university academic staff view performance appraisal exercise in their university and how these views influence their level of job satisfaction.

While many believe that performance appraisals improve productivity and efficiency in the workplace and that they continue to be an integral part of human resource management, this is not always the case. The evaluation procedures and the fairness they are supposed to provide are often viewed negatively by employees and managers (Kim & Holzer, 2016). This study is significant as it may help us better understand how lecturers view their job satisfaction in relation to performance appraisal. This study is crucial because there is limited research on lecturers' job satisfaction and performance appraisal exercises in the context of ODL.

Regarding job satisfaction and performance appraisal topics, lecturers' feedback is needed to help university top management to better understand the lecturers' feeling and responses to these sensitive issues. This scientific research would enable superiors and subordinates in ODL universities to discuss this important issue related to job satisfaction and performance appraisal exercises mutually. It is understood that, in most of the situations, all parties do not bring up this topic for discussion.

By addressing this sensitive issue professionally and overcoming such obstacles, superiors would be able to concentrate on work objectives and activities to improve work performance and increase job satisfaction. This situation should be encouraged in organisations (Ali, 2016). Hence, it is important for open and distance learning education providers to look into job satisfaction and performance appraisal exercises seriously. Many employees have expressed

their disappointment, demotivation and unhappiness in response to performance appraisal exercise each year. Therefore, it is necessary to explore this phenomenon further scientifically, and it is hoped that the primary data obtained from the participants may improve the performance appraisal practice in a more harmonious manner.

Research Objectives
Specifically, the objectives of this research are as follow
- To examine academic staff's feedback on the performance appraisal exercise
- To examine academic staff's feedback on job satisfaction
- To analyse academic staff's job satisfaction based on gender
- To analyse academic staff's job satisfaction based on years of employment

Research Questions
The research questions for this research are below
- What are the academic staff's feedback on the performance appraisal exercise?
- What are the academic staff's feedback on job satisfaction?
- What are the academic staff's feedback on job satisfaction based on gender?
- What are the academic staff's feedback on job satisfaction based on years of employment?

Literature Review
Performance Appraisal
In general, performance appraisal is crucial, unavoidable, and universal, particularly in organisations where individuals evaluate the work performance of others (Cappelli & Conyon, 2018). Indeed, performance appraisal especially in education setting, is vital for organisational effectiveness. It is one of the key management tools that identify employees' strengths and weaknesses, serves as the primary mechanism for rewarding/training employees based on their performance, and essential for achieving organisational goals by creating a satisfied workforce (Dasanayaka et al., 2021).

Since increased employee performance is an important objective for organisations to maintain their business success, monitoring and improving individual performance through appraisal is crucial (Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). Performance appraisal can also be considered as a reliable tool for ensuring that the appropriate employees fill the right positions within the organisation (Iqbal et al., 2014; Al-Jedaia & Mehrez, 2020). An effective performance appraisal must reflect the exact performance of employees from different perspectives as well as how employees are evaluated. An organisation needs to consider employees' feedback on the performance appraisal system or process implemented to ensure that both employees' and organisations objectives are achieved.

In the context of ODL institutions, performance appraisals are even more significant due to the unique challenges and operational modalities. Besides, perceived fairness and accuracy are persistent issue in performance appraisal. A study conducted by Kim and Holzer (2016) has shown that these perceptions significantly affect the satisfaction and engagement of staff within organisations. This is particularly relevant to ODL institutions where academic staff often work remotely and require trust and transparency in evaluation processes to feel valued and fairly treated.

Performance Appraisal & Job Satisfaction

The direct impact of performance appraisal on job satisfaction has been widely studied, with mixed results. One of the studies conducted by Mahmoud et al (2020), reported that job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between employees' attitudes towards performance appraisal systems and trust within organisations. This finding suggests that effective appraisal systems can enhance job satisfaction by fostering a trusting organisational environment.

Other studies have explored the impacts of demographic factors, such as genders and years of employment, on perceptions of performance appraisal. A study conducted by He et al. (2017), noted significant differences between male and female academics in perceiving motivation and job satisfaction in a university setting in Beijing. Findings showed that gender-sensitive approaches do influence performance appraisal.

Additional studies have investigated employees' feedback on performance appraisal from the perspective of satisfaction such as Ahuja et al (2018), Memon et al (2019), Ibeogu and Ozturen (2015), and Ajibola et al (2019), on the engagement perspective. Research conducted in the private education industry in Malaysia revealed that system design, managerial systems practices, and system support were significantly and positively related to the effectiveness of performance appraisal.

Meanwhile, job satisfaction can be defined as the degree to which an employee likes or dislikes their job (Mahmoud et al., 2020). The level of satisfaction that an employee feels within their organisation can be affected by several factors, including performance appraisal evaluation and employees' attitude towards them. According to Mahmoud and Reisel (2015) and Nair and Salleh (2015), trust is a key element in the efficient and smooth operation of any organisation. Previous research shows that job satisfaction is a direct antecedent to employee' trust (Mahmood & Reisel, 2014; Reisel et al., 2010).

Based on a study conducted by Mahmoud et al (2020), job satisfaction significantly and fully mediates the relationship between employees' attitudes towards performance appraisal system and trust. In other words, the more effective the performance appraisal system in an organisation, the higher the levels of job satisfaction, thus resulting in lower levels of deviant behaviours. Empirical evidences have shown that the perceived value of the appraisal system, marked by a career development, employee engagement, satisfaction with the assessment feedback, and target setting is positively linked to job satisfaction (Kotter, 2017). Job satisfaction serves as transmitter of such effects to other organisational outcomes (Mahmood & Reisel, 2014). Efficient communication and feedback, particularly relating to performance appraisal and job satisfaction, should be maintained among academics working in administration, teaching and service support areas in the university.

Successful organisations always strive to keep maintain their employees motivated and satisfied in their jobs (Griffin, 2006). It is indispensable in education system to maintain the teaching staff motivated and satisfied in their jobs (Munyengabe et al., 2017). Previous studies have shown that employees who are satisfied with their job are more likely to be creative, innovative and initiate breakthroughs that can increase their job performance (Usop et al, 2013). According to Garcia et al (2005), organisations cannot achieve competitive levels

of quality, either at a product or a customer service level, if their employees do not feel satisfied. Thus, management should be highly alert to the factors that influence employees' work satisfaction.

Additionally, dissatisfaction impairs motivation and restricts individual and institutional productivity and success (Webber, 2019). It may even lead to withdrawal or disengagement from the local or larger academic community (Holdsworth et al., 2020). Therefore, scientific research is needed to examine the effect of various factors, including performance appraisal exercise, stress and job satisfaction of lecturers at ODL higher education institution. This research will be able to provide solutions for handling lecturers' low job satisfaction issues. Job satisfaction is a significant driver of employee performance and, invariably, institutional success because it reflects employee well-being and their perception of their job. Academics' feedback on performance appraisal and job satisfaction cannot be ignored.

Methodology
The study employed quantitative method to gather data by distributing a set of questionnaires to a targeted population of academic staffs at ODL university. A purposive sampling technique was deployed in this study. The questionnaire was adopted from previous researchers including performance appraisal with 4 items (De Cannière et al., 2009) and job satisfaction with 4 items (Wang et al., 2020) to analyse the academic staff's feedback towards performance appraisal and its impact on job satisfaction. Data collection was facilitated through an online platform using Google Forms and WhatsApp, allowing for a wide-reaching and efficient process of gathering responses. 58 participants responded and 54 responses were identified as clean and suitable for analysis. composite reliability for the two constructs (performance appraisal and job satisfaction) surpassed 0.7; 0.954 and 0.943. Cronbach's alpha values for both constructs are greater than 0.7; 0.944 "performance appraisal" and 0.937 "job satisfaction".

The survey instrument consists of Part A and Part B. Part A comprises respondent profile or demographic information such as gender, age, faculty, and years of employment. Part B is divided into two sections, each aimed at measuring academic staff's feedback on performance appraisal and general job satisfaction, and job satisfaction based on gender and years of employment.

A Likert scales was used ranging from 1 to 5, classified as 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree with higher values representing higher levels of agreement. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with all items on the following Likert scale: "1" = Strongly disagree, "2" =Disagree, "3" =Neutral, "4" = Agree, and "5" = Strongly agree. Data obtained from the survey were analysed using SPSS 22.0.

Results & Discussion
Demographics
The following Table will show the demographic profile of the academic staffs involved in this study. There are four demographic variables that have been considered in this study to analyse possible differences among the academic to the topic being studied.

Table 1
Academic Profile

Items		Category	Total	Job Category
				Academic n (%)
Gender		Male	54	21 (38.8)
		Female		33 (61.1)
Age Group		25 to 35 years of age	54	1 (1.8)
		36 to 45 years of age		18 (33.3)
		46 to 55 years of age		24 (44.4)
		Above 55 years of age		11 (20.4)
Level	of	Master Degree	54	32 (59.3)
Education		PhD		22 (40.7)
Length	of	Less Than 2 Years	54	6 (11.1)
Service		2 – 5 Years		3 (5.5)
		6 – 10 Years		21 (38.8)
		>10 Years		24 (44.4)

55 academics staff were participated in the study. 38.8% (21) are male and 61.0% (33) are female. In terms of age groups, the highest number of age categories were those from 46 to 55 age, namely 44.4% (24), followed by 36 to 45 years old with 33.3% (18), the age above 55 years old with 20.4% (11), and only 1.8% (1) from the age group of 25 to 35 years old.

In terms of education level, individuals holding a Master's Degree comprise the highest percentage, with 59.3% (32), followed by PhD holders with 40.7% (22).

Regarding the length of service, among all these academic staffs, 44.4% (24) have been with the university for more than 10 years, while 38.8% (21) have been working for between 6 to 10 years. Additionally, 11.1% (6) have been employed for less than 2 years, and 5.5% (3) have been with the university for between 2 to 5 years.

Performance Appraisal and Job Satisfaction
In this research, there are two Objectives to be examined. Firstly, the academic staff's feedback on performance appraisal exercise and secondly, about job satisfaction. the finding is showing below:

Table 2

Feedback on Performance Appraisal and Job Satisfaction

Items	Category	Total	Job Category
			Academic
Job Satisfaction	Disagree		31 (57.4)
	Agree		23 (42.5)
		54	
Performance Appraisal	Disagree		28 (51.8)
	Agree		26 (48.1)

As for performance appraisal exercise, the results showed some differences. Specifically, 51.8% (28) of participants disagree with their performance appraisal result, while 48.1% (26) agree with it. This result indicated that more than half of the participants were not happy with the performance exercise.

In term of job satisfaction, the results showed that 57.4% (31) of participants demonstrated that they have low job satisfaction. while 42.5% (23) of them indicated that they agreed to have job satisfaction. Again, this research finding demonstrates that majority of the participants were not happy with their job.

Job Satisfaction Based on Gender

Table 3

Job Satisfaction based on Gender

Questions	Category	Category	
		Male (M - 21)	Female (F – 33)
1. The current work culture in terms of appraisal practised promotes my job satisfaction.	Disagree	7 (33.3)	22 (66.6)
	Agree	14 (66.6)	11 (33.3)
2. Satisfied with the usefulness of the training inputs in improving my current performance.	Disagree	4 (19.0)	17 (51.5)
	Agree	17 (80.9)	16 (48.4)
3. The performance appraisal system increases my overall job satisfaction level.	Disagree	7 (33.3)	24 (72.7)
	Agree	14 (66.6)	9 (27.3)
4. Satisfied with the procedural and distributive fairness of the performance appraisal.	Disagree	9 (42.8)	22 (66.6)
	Agree	12 (57.1)	11 (33.3)
5. The rewards system also plays an important role in raising my job satisfaction.	Disagree	3 (14.3)	13 (39.3)
	Agree	18 (85.7)	20 (60.7)
6. The contribution with respect to my job is recognised.	Disagree	9 (42.8)	24 (72.7)
	Agree	12 (57.1)	9 (27.3)

There are Six questions were developed to measure job satisfaction in relation to job performance appraisal based on gender perspective as presented in table 3. The data analysis showing a significant difference between male and female participants. Based on the 6 questions measured, result indicated that male participants are agreed to all the 6 items. In contrasts, female participants were disagreed on 5 out of the 6 items. Item no. 5 is the only one gained the majority agreement from the female participants. This implies that males' participants are more satisfied to their job and; the female participants do not have job satisfaction due to job performance appraisal exercise.

The first question measured how the current work culture, in terms of appraisal practices in the organisation promotes academic staffs job satisfaction. The responses given by participants differ significantly. Male participants generally agree that the appraisal practices promote their job satisfaction, with a score of 66.6% (14), while 33.3% (7) disagree. However, for female participants, 66.6% (22) disagree, and 33.3% (11) agree.

The second question measures academic satisfaction regarding the usefulness of the training inputs in improving performance. The finding shows a distinctive difference between male and female participants. Male participants seem to agree with this statement, with 80.9% (17) of them choosing to agree, while only 19.0% (4) disagree. This is in stark contrast to female academics, where both categories (agree and disagree) received a quite fair score for the statement, namely 51.5% (17) disagree and 48.4% (16) agree.

A clear difference in responses is also seen between male academics and female academics when the third question asks whether the performance appraisal system increases their overall job satisfaction level. Male academics mostly agreed with the statement, with 66.6% (14) agreeing and 33.3% (7) disagreeing. However, the majority of female academics disagree with the notion that the performance appraisal system increases their overall job satisfaction level. Specifically, 72.7% (24) express disagreement, whereas only 27.2% (9) concur with the statement.

In term of academic feedback on the procedural and distributive fairness of the performance appraisal, the data also reveals a clear disparity in the perception of performance appraisal fairness between genders. A majority of male group 57.1% (12) agrees that the procedural and distributive fairness of performance appraisals is satisfactory, contrasting with only 33.3% (11) of the female academic group. This indicates a significant difference in how performance appraisal processes are viewed between gender, suggesting that one gender may perceive these processes as more equitable and just than the other. While, for the female group basically disagrees with the procedural and distributive fairness of the performance appraisal, which score 66.6% (22), and male academic only 42.8% (9).

Question five measures whether the rewards system applied raises academic job satisfaction or vice versa. This time, both genders show similar results, indicating that the rewards system plays a pivotal role in job satisfaction, with 85.7% (18) of respondents from the male academic group agreeing to its importance, compared to 60.7% (20) from the female academic group.

The last question used to measure recognition of contributions to the job satisfaction. Recognition of individual contributions also varied significantly between genders, with 72.7%

(24) of female academic group feeling their job contributions were not recognized, compared to 57.1% (12) of the male academic group agrees with the statement. Only 27.3% (9) female academic agrees that their organisation recognised their contribution. However, the score for male academic disagrees with the statement is not much different compared to those agreed, namely 42.8% (9).

Job Satisfaction Based on Years of Employment
Table 4
Job Satisfaction based on Years of Employment (Academic – Job Satisfaction)

Questions	Category	Category			
		Less Than 2 years (6)	2-5 Years (3)	6-10 Years (21)	>10 Years (24)
1. The current work culture in terms of appraisal practised promotes job satisfaction.	Disagree	0 (00.0)	0 (00.0)	14 (66.6)	14 (58.3)
	Agree	6 (100)	3 (100)	7 (33.3)	10 (41.6)
2. satisfied with the usefulness of the training in improving current performance.	Disagree	0 (00.0)	0 (00.0)	11 (52.4)	9 (37.5)
	Agree	6 (100)	3 (100)	10 (47.6)	15 (62.5)
3. The performance appraisal system increases overall job satisfaction level.	Disagree	0 (00.0)	1 (33.3)	13 (61.9)	17 (70.8)
	Agree	6 (100)	2 (66.6)	8 (38.1)	7 (29.1)
4. satisfied with the procedural and distributive fairness of the performance appraisal.	Disagree	1 (16.6)	1 (33.3)	14 (66.6)	15 (62.5)
	Agree	5 (83.3)	2 (66.6)	7 (33.3)	9 (37.5)
5. The rewards system also plays an important role in raising job satisfaction.	Disagree	0 (00.0)	0 (00.0)	8 (38.1)	8 (33.3)
	Agree	6 (100)	3 (100)	13 (61.9)	16 (6662)
6. The contribution with respect to my job is recognised.	Disagree	0 (00.0)	0 (00.0)	18 (85.7)	15 (62.5)
	Agree	6 (100)	3 (100)	3 (14.2)	9 (37.5)

The fourth research question analysed the academic staffs job satisfaction in relation to job performance appraisal exercise based on years of employment. The findings showed that the satisfaction levels of academic staff strongly determined by their tenure of service.

interestingly, the finding demonstrates that the junior academic staffs are agreed that they satisfied to their job. However, for senior academics particularly, result showing that they are not happy to their job due to the job performance appraisal exercise. the two extreme finding are; the academic staffs who served less than 5 years are satisfied to all 6 items as compared to those who served for more than 5 years and above, in which their job satisfaction in relation to job performance appraisal are not satisfactory for all the 6 items.

The first question measured the appraisal practices ad job satisfaction. Based on the data, participants with less than 5 years of service unanimously agreed that the current work culture and appraisal practices promote job satisfaction. However, the agreement levels decrease with tenure: 66.6% (14) for 6-10 years and 58.3% (14) for those over 10 years agree. This might indicate that initial enthusiasm wanes as staff become more entrenched in the system, possibly due to increasing awareness of the system's flaws or discrepancies in expectations versus reality.

While, for the second question, newer employees (less than 5 years) unanimously find training inputs useful. As tenure increases, satisfaction with training usefulness declines to 47.6% (10) for those with 6-10 years and 62.5% (15) for those over 10 years. This suggests a mid-career dip in perceived training efficacy, which may recover slightly as staff approach longer tenures.

Third question examined the academics' performance appraisal system and overall job satisfaction. 100% of staff with less than 5 years feel that performance appraisals increase their job satisfaction. Satisfaction significantly decreases for longer-tenured staff, dropping to 38.1% (8) for 6-10 years and 29.1% (7) for those over 10 years. This decline could reflect disillusionment with the appraisal system's ability to accurately reflect long-term contributions and performance.

Next question, is to analyse the feedback of these academics on the fairness of the performance appraisal. A majority of newer employees perceive the performance appraisal as fair. However, perceived fairness declines among staff with longer tenure, with only 33.3% (7) for 6-10 years and 37.5% (9) for those over 10 years feeling satisfied. This might indicate a growing perception of bias or inequity in appraisal processes as employees spend more time within the system.

In term of the role of rewards system in job satisfaction, the academics with less than 5 years believe the rewards system raises their job satisfaction. For those with longer tenure, fewer than two-thirds agree, highlighting possibly unmet expectations regarding rewards as careers progress.

The last question is to identify the academic feedback on the recognition of contributions in their institution. Again, newer staff universally feel their contributions are recognized. Contrastingly, only 14.2% (3) of those with 6-10 years and 37.5% (9) of those with over 10 years agree, indicating a significant gap in recognition satisfaction as tenure increases. This may reflect a systemic issue in recognizing and rewarding sustained contributions or a shift in expectations over time.

Regarding the length of service, among all these academic staff, 44.4% (24) have been with the university for more than 10 years, while 38.8% (21) have been working for between 6 to 10 years. Additionally, 11.1% (6) have been employed for less than 2 years, and 5.5% (3) have been with the university for between 2 to 5 years.

Discussion

This research focused on academic staff's feedback on performance appraisal exercises and their impact on job satisfaction in an ODL institution. Pertaining to the performance appraisal exercise, the findings demonstrate that all academic staffs nearly have a balanced score between agreement and disagreement, but there is slightly more negative feedback on the performance appraisal exercise, with 51.8% (28) expressing disagreement and 48.1% (26) agreement. This suggests a polarized perception of appraisal systems. This division could indicate inconsistencies in appraisal processes, perceived fairness, and the transparency of criteria used in evaluations. These are known factors that impact staff perceptions of appraisals and could be influenced by personal experiences, departmental differences, or the objective clarity of appraisal guidelines (Thompson et al., 2019).

The findings indicate that a majority of academic staffs (57.4%) (31) are dissatisfied with their job satisfaction at the institution. This level of dissatisfaction is significant and may reflect broader issues within the academic environment, such as work-life balance, workload, administrative support, and recognition, which are frequently cited in the literature as key factors influencing academic job satisfaction (Sullivan & Bhattacharya, 2020). Comparatively, 42.5% (23) of academic staffs expressing satisfaction could suggest that there are redeeming aspects of the work environment that may include collegiality, autonomy, or intellectual stimulation, which often contribute to job satisfaction in academia (Lee & Won, 2021).

The gender disparity in how appraisal practices influence job satisfaction is evident. In this finding, 66.6% (14) of male staff view these practices favourably, while a slightly higher percentage of female staff disagrees, suggesting a gender bias or a difference in expectations or experiences with these appraisal systems. This aligns with studies by Ramirez and Richardson (2018), which found that appraisal systems often fail to account for gender-specific challenges or biases, potentially impacting the perceived fairness and effectiveness of these systems.

This research findings align with other studies, indicating varying levels of job satisfaction among academics, often influenced by gender, age, tenure, and qualifications. Studies such as Bentley et al. (2013) in "The Academic Profession in Australia" highlight job satisfaction issues tied to similar demographic and institutional factors. This study includes a gender distribution where 61.1% (33) are female and 38.8% (21) are male, reflecting broader trends observed in academia where there is a significant representation of female in education, while leadership roles remained male-dominated. Similar finding is stated in Marschke et al., (2017) who found that male still monopolise key leadership roles in organisation.

The data shows a clear divide: 66.6% (14) of male academics believe performance appraisals enhance their job satisfaction, whereas 72.7% (24) of female academics disagree. These differences could be due to differing perceptions of the objectivity and relevance of performance criteria, as noted by Park and Burgess (2020), who highlight that performance

appraisal systems often do not adequately reflect individual contributions and challenges, especially in gender-diverse settings.

The perception of fairness in performance appraisals also differs significantly by gender. While 57.1% (21) of males find the appraisals fair, a significant 66.6% (22) of females perceive them as unfair. According to studies by Klein and Nguyen (2021), such perceptions can stem from actual or perceived inequities in how performance is evaluated and rewarded, potentially exacerbating feelings of injustice and dissatisfaction among female academics.

In terms of tenures, the data indicates a stable academic workforce, with 83.2% (45) of the respondents having served more than six years. This long tenure could imply deep-seated institutional knowledge and a potentially resistant attitude towards organisational changes (Harvey et al., 2021). The smaller percentages of staff with less than five years could suggest either recent hiring slowdowns or higher turnover among newer employees, which could be a concern for institutional vitality and innovation (Peterson, 2022).

Interestingly, this study demonstrates that the largest category of academic staff working with the university are older age groups, particularly those aged from 46 to 55, and 36 to 45. This reflects a mature workforce and could be attributed to the effects of conducive academic culture, job security, and institutional loyalty. Younger academics (25 to 35 years old) are significantly underrepresented, possibly reflecting recruitment trends, career progression barriers, or a generational shift in career preferences (Johnson et al., 2018).

One significant finding clearly shows that job satisfaction in various facets is higher among staff with shorter tenures, with notable declines as tenure increases. This trend suggests potential areas for improvement in maintaining and increasing job satisfaction level among more senior academic staffs. Universities might need to re-evaluate how they conduct performance appraisals, deliver training, administer rewards, and recognise contributions to retain staff effectively. Addressing these issues could not only improve job satisfaction but also enhance overall institutional performance by ensuring academics feel valued and fairly treated.

It is important to note that the dissatisfaction projected in job satisfaction and performance appraisals exercises might be interrelated, as effective performance appraisal systems are often associated with higher job satisfaction by providing clear expectations, meaningful feedback, and development opportunities (Jensen et al., 2022). Inadequacies in one can adversely affect the other, thus enhancing the need for reviewing and possibly overhauling the appraisal mechanisms (Martin & Cullen, 2023). ODL universities need to take these research findings seriously to improve performance appraisal exercises, which may eventually lead to higher job satisfaction among the academic staffs in the near future.

Finally, recognition of contributions showed a significant gender gap, with a much higher percentage of female academics feeling their contributions are not adequately recognized compared to their male counterparts. This finding supports the research by Lopez and Scott (2023), which suggests that gender biases in recognition practices can lead to decreased job satisfaction and engagement among women.

Conclusion

Overall this research shows that majority of academic staffs at this particularly ODL university demonstrate slightly more negative attitudes towards the performance appraisal exercise, which carried out annually. Perhaps, this scenario is leading to majority of them expressing low job satisfaction. The result also showed a significant gender gap, with a much higher percentage of female academics demonstrating lower job satisfaction due to their dissatisfaction with the performance appraisal exercise. This implies that there is substantial room for improvement in these two areas. Last but not least, one important extrinsic message is that the criteria used for performance appraisal require urgent attention from top management. It is hoped that the criteria used to measure academic work performance become more practical and make sense.

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