



Compensation Strategies and Retention of High-Quality Academic Staff in Public Universities in Uganda

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Abstract

Higher Education Institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa continuously face the problem of academic staff retention, affecting the development of Nations. This study examines how compensation strategies influence retention of high-quality staff in public universities in Uganda with staff designation as moderating factor. Data was collected from five public universities using a questionnaire and interviews. The findings show that job security ($\beta = 0.153$), salary ($\beta = 0.149$), promotion ($\beta = 0.176$), and recognition ($\beta = 0.216$) at 0.05 predicted staff retention. The study concludes that effective compensation packages should consider factors beyond standard salary regulations, according to the findings of the study. Interviews also revealed that the criteria and the time required for promotion, along with the failure to meet requirements, discourage staff and thereby affecting retention.

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Introduction

The capacity of universities to deliver quality teaching, research, and community engagement depends fundamentally on their ability to attract and retain competent academic staff (Mushemeza, 2016). However, throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, most public universities continue to struggle with persistent turnover, low morale, and challenges in maintaining a stable academic workforce (Ng'ethe et al., 2012). Uganda is no exception. Despite policy reforms in the higher education sector in Uganda such as sector liberalization, public-private partnerships, affirmative action for women and disadvantaged groups, and shifting towards science and technology programme and enhanced investments in higher education institutions (HEIs), public universities continue to face staffing shortages. These challenges include delayed promotions, limited research support, salaries that are non-competitive, and inconsistent implementation of human resource policies (Kyaligonza & Kamagara, 2017; Ssali et al., 2019). These constraints undermine institutional performance and compromise the broader goals of national development and knowledge production.

Academic staff compensation strategies such as improved salary, non-pecuniary benefits, promotion opportunities, recognition, and job security, remain central