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Avoidance Strategy and Performance of Academic Staff in Chartered Private Universities in Uganda: A Comprehensive Review

Aisha Najjuma¹, Friday Ogbu Edeh² & Wandiba Augustine³¹PhD Candidate, College of Economics and Management
Kampala International University (Main Campus), Kampala, UgandaEmail: aishanajjuma87@gmail.com²College of Economics and Management

Kampala International University (Main Campus), Kampala, Uganda

Email: friday.edeh@kiu.ac.ug³College of Economics and Management

Kampala International University (Main Campus), Kampala, Uganda

Email: augustine.wandiba@kiu.ac.ug

Abstract: This study reviews the linkage between avoidance strategies and academic staff performance in chartered private Universities in Uganda. Based on empirical studies carried out in Ugandan private higher education institutions in the last decade, the paper synthesises the available evidence on the use of avoidance behaviour among the academic staff in tertiary institutions in response to work pressure, the impact of such behaviours on teaching effectiveness, the production of research and their overall professional performance. The review centers on four theoretical bases: Lazarus and Folkman's principles of Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, Vroom's Expectancy Theory, the Self-Determination Theory, and Administrative Management Theory. The study finds that avoidance strategies are common among academic staff of private universities in Uganda, citing numerous reasons such as workload, low remuneration, centralised organisation, poor performance monitoring and lack of institutional support, among others. They are consistently linked with the decreased quality of instruction, lower production of research, lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions. The review determines that avoidance is identified as a short-term coping mechanism, but as time goes on, avoidance carries drawbacks for individual and institutional performance and is therefore considered to be maladaptive. Policy, practice and further research implications are presented.

Keywords: Avoidance strategy, academic staff performance, chartered private universities, Uganda, coping mechanisms, higher education

1. Introduction

Academic staff performance is the most important asset of higher education institutions, affecting student learning and research productivity through their teaching performance (Birungi et al., 2021). The higher education sector in Uganda has changed significantly in 20 years. The private chartered universities are becoming an integral part of the process of accessing higher education (Nachonga et al., 2022). The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) in Uganda has listed a few Universities, namely, Ndejje University, Uganda Christian University, Uganda Martyrs University, Bugema University, Nkumba University, Kampala International University and others as Private Universities (Emily & Dorcas, 2023). Such institutions

have now emerged as key drivers of human resource development and growth for this country.

The rapid growth of NCHE in Uganda, however, has created governance and administrative problems which also could adversely affect academic staff performance, particularly in managing institutional structure, applying internal monitoring systems and providing staff welfare (Birungi et al., 2021). In African universities, structural and motivational challenges in academia have been highlighted and affected academic effectiveness (Birungi et al., 2021). In the face of such difficulties, academic staff can develop coping mechanisms by which they attempt to avoid the situation.

Although there is improved academic literature on academic staff performance in Ugandan institutions, there is a dearth of literature focusing on the impact of avoidance strategies on the performance of academic staff in chartered private universities (Nachonga et al., 2022). The problems encountered by Private universities in Uganda are diverse, as they have limited resources at their disposal and often operate without established systems, such as those found in public universities (Injikuru et al., 2024). Additionally, they must balance academic quality with financial sustainability in their operations. In these institutions, the academic workforce often faces a heavy teaching burden, administrative duties, low pay, limited research funding, and pressure to publish to secure a good job (Birungi et al., 2021).

Other studies have revealed the negative impact on research productivity among the academic staff of private universities after many interventions from the government (Birungi et al., 2021). Likewise, research has shown there can be difficulties in applying effective performance monitoring, and monitoring can be said to be coercive and unsustainable (Injikuru et al., 2024). All the aforementioned conditions serve to engender some avoidance behaviors which has not been linked to the performance outcomes in a systematic way in the Ugandan private university context.

Purpose and Scope of the Review

This review is for the purpose of summarising the literature available on avoidance measures and academic staff performance in chartered private universities in Uganda. Specifically, the review aims to (1) define the manifestations and ranges of avoidance strategies utilised by academic staff; (2) chart organizational and personal factors that trigger avoidance behaviours; (3) assess the link between avoidance behaviours and different aspects of academic performance; and (4) sketch out policy and practice implications for private higher education in Uganda. The approach of the review is based on empirical research findings that have been produced in the last ten years in Ugandan chartered private universities, which have been complemented with selected theoretical and conceptual materials from the wider African and international higher education sector. The review is structured in five parts: introduction, literature review, theoretical underpinning, methodology, and conclusion and implications.

2. Literature Review

Avoidance Strategy

In psychology, avoidance strategy pertains to a set of behaviours that involve escaping, postponement, or avoidance of tasks, responsibilities, or circumstances that are threatening, stressful, or overwhelming (Gupta et

al., 2025). Avoidance in school-coping may be in various forms, such as conflict avoidance (adverse attempts to manage interpersonal and organizational stress), workload avoidance (postponing or delegating teaching and administrative tasks), research avoidance (adverse attempts to manage scholarly work) or coping avoidance (adverse attempts to manage interpersonal and/or organizational adjustment) (Khaled et al., 2025). Avoidance coping has been shown to have negative consequences such as increased anxiety, decreased problem-solving ability and negative mental health effects (Devi & Dhiman, 2020).

In the Ugandan University environment, there are reports of special avoidance strategies being prevalent. The prevailing coping strategies adopted by the majority of the University staff during the COVID-19 pandemic were avoidant coping strategies. However, among academic staff, avoidant coping was found to have negative relationships with coping success according to Du Plessis (2020). Studies, in general, on teacher trainee Universities in Uganda, have found that avoidance coping has a negative relationship with academic performance, while problem-focused coping has a positive relationship with performance outcome.

Landscape of Private Higher Education in Uganda

Since liberalisation of higher education in Uganda in the 1990s, the private sector has grown at a very remarkable rate (Nachonga et al., 2022; Injikuru et al., 2024). Along with public universities, there is an increasing demand for tertiary education services in the country, and today, there are also private chartered universities that fill these needs to a certain extent. The NCHE charters these institutions and determines the quality assurance standards. The NCHE issues the charter to these institutions and observes compliance by the institutions.

Growth of private universities has not been trouble-free, however. Research has shown that the quality of staff in private universities in Uganda is generally low because of non-compliance with the NCHE's policies regarding recruitment, promotion and development of staff (Injikuru et al., 2024). The institutional contexts in which these institutions are operating have created challenges for students to deal with for academic faculty, who have to engage in three sets of activities, such as teaching, research, and administration, and manage precarious employment conditions (Nachonga et al. 2022).

Dimensions of Academic Staff Performance

In the context of higher education, academic staff performance is a multi-dimensional construct, which includes dimensions in relation to teaching effectiveness, research productivity, community involvement and administrative service (Nachonga et al., 2022). In the private universities of Uganda, the assessment of

performance is usually done by student evaluation, peer evaluation, supervisory evaluation and research output measures (Nachonga et al., 2022). However, the use of these monitoring instruments is rarely consistent, and there is a limited number of feedback loops and poor integration into staff development programs.

Studies in private chartered universities in Uganda have found that staff generally have moderately positive attitudes towards performance monitoring, although there are some concerns about its irregular use, insufficient structured feedback and the lack of staff participation in identifying the monitoring tools (Birungi et al., 2021). Through quantitative analysis, a moderate positive correlation between effective performance monitoring and the performance of academic staff was found to be significant (Injikuru et al., 2024).

Research productivity studies have given worrisome results. The academic productivity of academic staff in CPUs was only fair, implying that none of the organizational variables, with the exception of technological progress and computer skills, were positive and significant. (Rahim & Katz, 2020). Broadly speaking, there was evidence that intrinsic (but not extrinsic) motivation was a strong predictor of the amount of research conducted (Lewis et al., 2025). The results indicate that the institutional context of private universities may not be set in the optimal way to promote scholarly engagement.

Avoidance Strategies in Academic Contexts

Conflict Avoidance

In the world of organizational life, there will be conflict between people and in comrade with people as well, in academic institutions. In the university system, conflict can be healthy, as it can help build mutual affection and team spirit, or destructive, and cause confusion and uncertainty that stifles service (Rahim & Katz, 2020). Preventing, accommodation, compromise, and collaboration strategies are known to impact the performance of academic staff (Devi & Dhiman, 2020).

Conflict management in the Ugandan context indicates that it is possible to enhance the performance of university academic staff with avoidance strategies in conflict management. There's such a thing as too much when you're talking about that connection (Birungi et al., 2021). Other studies found that avoidance, dominating, compromise, obliging and integrating strategies significantly affected academic faculty affective, normative and continuance commitment (Injikuru et al., 2024). However, avoiding a conflict brings a dilemma (Lewis et al., 2025). Chronic avoidance can result in not dealing with conflict, poor communication, weak teams, and facilitated interpersonal misunderstandings, which can be

detrimental in the longer term. Conflict avoidance can be seen as leaving department-based meetings, not wanting to discuss aspects of performance with peers or students, or even avoiding hard-to-handle discussions with administrators, in an academic environment (Khaled et al., 2025).

Workload Avoidance

Incorporate the capacity of the academic personnel in the private universities of Uganda to cope with heavy workloads (Nosrati et al., 2024). In the comparison of academics' workload, 66.7 per cent of academics from the private universities see workload as high, while 44.0 per cent of academics at public universities see it as high. There are a number of ways in which the workload of academic personnel is generally assessed, including their time spent on teaching, research supervision, typing and/or administrative duties and community service. Administrative stress, a high teaching load and publication pressure to advance one's career are some of the demands placed on the academic staff in private universities in Uganda. As workloads increase, academic staff could develop avoidance behaviours, such as delegating work, putting off tasks, not doing as much research as is their duty or prioritising only teaching rather than research (Nosrati et al., 2024). A positive correlation between academic workload and CPSW of university lecturers in public and private universities has been documented in the literature.

Research Avoidance

The productivity of the researchers is still a major challenge in Ugandan private universities. Although the government has implemented measures and efforts to boost research interest, the activities of academic staff in research have shown a persistent decline (Rupčić et al., 2022). This decrease could be due, at least partly, to research avoidance, which includes intentional or unintentional avoidance of scholarly work. There are several reasons that academic staff have an inability to research (Gupta et al., 2025). Barriers to research engagement include limited research funding, technological limitations, heavy teaching loads and lack of institutional support. Moreover, research motivation might be low due to the lack of support and feedback for scholars' work in a structured way. In addition, there might be a decline in motivation to do research because of limited support or feedback for scholars' positions (Shehu-Usman et al., 2024). Academic staff members get traumatised from traumatic experiences as graduate students; some of them people are treated with brutality by their academic supervisor, which may lead to avoiding research supervision and collaboration.

Coping Avoidance

Coping avoidance is characterised by unhealthy methods of stress coping, such as thinking negatively about the stressor, engaging in substance use, and avoiding discussing the stressor (Yi, 2024). In the study of academic staff in African universities, it has been established that avoidant coping is a general coping style for dealing with stressful events, especially during the challenges of COVID-19. Coping strategies have been found to have a relationship with performance (Silaji et al., 2026). Emotion-focused and avoidant coping strategies are negatively related to academic performance, but problem-focused coping is positively related (Nuraini et al., 2021). Avoidant coping is dysfunctional to performance, and stress and coping increase as students grow through their academic or career experience. Avoidance coping for academic staff can cause them to get burned out, lose interest in their work, and be less efficient (Al Kabbani & Dalati, 2025).

Factors Influencing Avoidance Strategies in Ugandan Private Universities

Organizational Structure

Academic staff behavior and performance are greatly influenced by organizational structure. Research in private chartered universities in Uganda has found prevailing mechanistic dimensions of structure defined by centralisation of authority, and formalism in the structure's processes (Trifan et al., 2024). Qualitative results suggest that whilst there is a strong positive correlation between the dimension of organizational structure and academic staff performance, with structural dimensions representing staff performance, the ability to innovate, collaborate and exercise autonomy to deliver academic work is constrained by over-centralisation and control that the students experienced (Silaji et al., 2026). A failure of structural decentralisation, lack of autonomy and monitoring issues result in lower staff morale and teaching effectiveness. If academic staff feel they have limited control over their work, avoidance behaviours could be a means of "resisting" or "self-preserving". In contrast, faculties with leaders who hold senior academic and inclusive leadership credentials experience more positive cultures, more positive staff engagement, and more effective institutions (Injikuru et al., 2024).

Performance Monitoring Systems

In higher education, the management of performance is a crucial aspect for improving the effectiveness of academic staff and the accountability of the institution. For private chartered universities, however, the issue is that they have difficulties putting in place a proper system of monitoring their performance (Silaji et al., 2026; Silaji et al., 2025). A range of monitoring tools is used, but applications of these are inconsistent, with

little feedback and poor links with staff development programmes. It is important to know how academic staff think about performance monitoring of performance. Academic staff feel motivated and productive when it is perceived that monitoring processes of work are fair, transparent, and based on meaningful outcomes (Silaji et al., 2026). However, if perceived as forced, infrequently monitored, or ineffective in terms of positive reinforcement, monitoring can result in avoidance behaviors (Injikuru et al., 2024). Academic workers might refrain from working with evaluations, opt out of targeted activities and focus only on measurable results, or neglect to engage in professional development for personal growth.

Management Practices

Academic staff performance in private universities is greatly affected by management practices. A study carried out in Uganda found that recruitment and selection processes, compensation systems (rewards, incentives and penalties), employment security, training and development, use of information, performance appraisal, evaluation of academic staff, development opportunities and issues relating to performance misconduct would have a significant impact on academic staff professional conduct, ethical issues and organizational identity (Alemiga & Kibukamusoke, 2019). Academic staff may adopt avoidance strategies if they feel the management practices are unfair or not supportive (Silaji et al., 2026). For example, short extracts might cause decreased participation or withholding from unnecessary performances. Uncertainty about jobs can reinforce conservative attitudes and a reluctance to new or difficult tasks. Mishandling of performance misconduct issues can create a "cover-up" mentality instead of "taking ownership" (Silaji et al., 2025).

Job Satisfaction and Retention

Academic staff performance is one of the determining factors of job satisfaction among academic staff and retention of academic staff (Alemiga & Kibukamusoke, 2019). Research conducted in the private sector universities in Uganda revealed significant differences between public and private universities, particularly in terms of workplace equity, as noted by the academic staff of private universities (Kansiime, 2023). Some signs of dissatisfaction with the job are avoidance behaviours such as decreased engagement, absences and intention to leave the organisation. This issue of keeping the academic staff at the Ugandan private universities is a major problem. Private universities have been found to have high turnover rates, negatively impacting the knowledge base and the financial resources of private universities as a whole (Silaji et al., 2026). Among academic personnel demands for retention are

straightforward pay, expert development practices and work-life balance programs (Kansiime, 2023). Where these expectations are not met, staff may disengage and/or look for another job, which is a level of ultimate avoidance.

Consequences of Avoidance Strategies

Impact on Teaching Quality

The avoidance strategies have a direct impact on the quality of teaching. Lack of academic staff lesson preparation, engagement of students or provision of feedback to students results in the quality of instruction being less effective (Injikuru et al., 2024; Emily & Dorcas, 2023). There have been reports that the implementation of otherwise unsustainable and coercive staff performance monitoring mechanisms in private universities can negatively impact the quality of teaching and research. Likewise, scheduling time for administrative duties and teaching workloads can also be a challenge, resulting in impoverished pedagogical investments (Birungi et al., 2021).

Impact on Research Productivity

Avoidant behaviours may diminish scholarly production, a process that is already not the best in the academic circle of chartered private universities. Some defensive reactions to research avoidance include delays in manuscript preparation, eschewing the approach of seeking funding, or disassociating oneself from research networks.

Impact on Staff Well-being and Retention

Staff have negative outcomes when they engage in avoidance strategies, specifically coping avoidance. Research has shown that avoidant coping is linked to greater anxiety, fewer problem-solving skills, and poorer mental health (Kansiime, 2023). The alarming rate of lecturer absenteeism and turnover reported from various academic institutions in Uganda is a growing concern, especially regarding staff member burnout (Kiiza, 2021). The lack of a model of burnout management in private universities highlights the need to address such issues.

Impact on Institutional Performance

The ineffectiveness and sustainability of private universities can be seen at the institutional level, as the majority of academic staff avoid them (Silaji et al., 2025). Collectively, these poor academic staff quality, low research productivity, high staff turnover, and poor teaching quality are affecting the institutions' credibility, achievements, and prospects (Emily & Dorcas, 2023). With the growing competition among private universities for students and resources, teaching is more than ever a key to institutional performance.

3. Theoretical Underpinning

Four theoretical frameworks provide a solid basis for viewing how avoidance strategies are related to the performance of the academic staff in chartered private universities in Uganda.

Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping: This theory views stress as an interaction between the person and their environment, and there are two important processes in it: appraisal and coping (Wu et al., 2025). Avoidance coping is part of the emotion-focused strategies and is characterized by attempting to avoid or withdraw from the stressful situation. Academic staff at private universities of education in Uganda are exposed to a myriad of stressors in the context of a large workload, poor compensation, limited resources, and pressure from within the institution (Emily & Dorcas, 2023). If these situations are evaluated as threatening by staff and resources are perceived as limited to cope with the situation, avoidance coping may result. This has been observed in Uganda, with avoidant coping having a negative correlation with performance, whilst problem-focused coping has a positive correlation with performance (Silaji et al., 2026).

Expectancy Theory: The theory assumes that motivation is determined by three cognitive expectations: expectancy, instrumentality and valence (Silaji et al., 2025). In a Ugandan private university, academic staff might have low expectancy, low instrumentality or low valence as academic staff may not always be able to rely on their own performance to get the desired outcome, or a performance may not meet with any meaningful reward, or rewards may not be valuable to them (Silaji et al., 2026). In such instances, staff can choose wisely that they will begin to invest fewer efforts into their work, which implies they are avoiding the job. A study has revealed that, if monitoring of a process is seen as fair, transparent and causally connected to meaningful outcomes, academic staff are more motivated and productive (Silaji et al., 2025). However, if these conditions aren't present, the level of motivation decreases and avoidance increases.

Self-Determination Theory: The theory of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci & Ryan (1985) targets people's intrinsic motivation for action. SDT offers the support and tools needed to comprehend avoidance in the classroom (Alemiga & Kibukamusoke, 2019). In contrast, increased autonomy, competence and relatedness positively affected staff performance and engagement levels. If academic staff have an unhelpful, negative, or even controlling experience at work, they may use avoidance as a strategy to decrease the psychological risk of their work environment.

Administrative Management Theory: The Administrative Management Theory of Fayol gives a structural model to understand the impact of

Organizational Design on behaviour and performance. The theory gives importance in the group's organization to a clear chain of command, unity of command, division of labour and organisation hierarchy or scalar chain in making the organisation effective. For example, research in Uganda's private chartered universities has been based on the theories of Administrative Management to help clarify the effects of institutional design on staff behaviours and performance. A highly centralized, rigid, top-down decision-making and procedure-based approach has been identified as a way to reduce academic autonomy and encourage compliance-oriented rather than development-oriented performance (Emily & Dorcas, 2023).

Nonetheless, the four theoretical perspectives presented above complement one another and all offer a powerful perspective for analyzing avoidance behaviours and teacher academic performances. The staff's use of avoidance to deal with perceived stress is explained (in the transactional theory of stress and coping). Expectancy Theory: Predicts work motivation – when to work/when not to work (Effort to performance to outcome). The influence of the work environment on intrinsic motivation and engagement is explained by Self-Determination Theory (Kansiime, 2023). When considering self-efficacy with avoidance behaviors, Administrative Management Theory can be applied to understand how the structure of organizations either helps or hinders avoidance behaviors (Birungi et al., 2021). These theories indicate that avoidance strategies among academic practitioners in Ugandan private universities are a reflection not only of individual incompetence but also conditions in the private university institutions, such as a stressful working environment, low expectancy-instrumentality-valence linkages, unmet psychological needs and bureaucratic organizational structure (Injikuru et al., 2024). Addressing avoidance must be based on institutional-level interferences, such as improving working conditions, motivation systems and organizational structures, as well as individual-level interventions (increasing adaptive coping).

4. Research Methods

This was a systematic literature review which allowed the researcher to draw a conclusion on existing literature relating to avoidance strategies and academic staff performance in chartered private universities in Uganda. It was a review based on the recommended steps for systematic reviews in social sciences, such as defining search strategies and including and extracting the information (Ochengo & Deng, 2023). These electronic databases were searched, namely, Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PubMed and African Journals Online. A manual search was done in the reference lists of relevant literature, and targeted

searches were undertaken in institutional repository searches in private universities of Uganda. The keywords combination that was used: avoidance strategy, avoidance coping, academic staff, faculty performance, private universities, chartered universities, Uganda, higher education, avoidance, conflict avoidance, workload avoidance, research productivity, work satisfaction, and turnover.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria were used in determining the inclusion of studies: (1) studies that focused their research on academic staff in Ugandan universities especially private or chartered private universities were included; (2) studies that examined avoidance strategies, coping mechanisms or related constructs were included; (3) studies that examined performance outcomes (teaching, research, or overall performance) were included; (4) studies published in peer-reviewed journals, doctoral dissertations, and as institutional research reports were included; (5) studies published between 2010 and 2026 were included; and (6) studies that used English were included. New studies were omitted when they: (1) were about students (and not academic staff); (2) covered contexts outside of Uganda that did not have relevance to the Ugandan higher education context; (3) were opinion pieces and not empirical-based; or (4) they were not available in full text.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Avoidance strategies and performance data were extracted from included studies on a standardised extraction form addressing: author(s) and year of the study, location and context, research design and research methods, sample characteristics, key findings of avoidance strategies and performance, as well as the theory used (Cronin et al., 2008). The data that were retrieved were thematised and grouped into the thematic key points that were found in the literature (Thomas et al., 2023).

5. Conclusion and Implications

The present study is a review of “The Relationship between avoidance strategies and academic staff performance in the chartered private universities in Uganda”. The analysis of the existing body of knowledge brings some significant results. First, avoidance strategies are found to be common in academic Staff of Private Universities in Uganda and come in various forms: conflict avoidance, workload avoidance, research avoidance and coping avoidance. They are not just things that singletons do badly, but are reactions to institutional conditions that can cause stress, reduce motivation and abate engagement. Secondly, there are a number of factors that cause avoidance behaviour. Organisations that are centralised with

bureaucratic control mechanisms restrict academic autonomy and promote compliance-driven instead of development-driven performance. Avoidance and/or poor motivation can result from inadequate performance monitoring that provides limited feedback and poor linkage to staff development. What upsets employees is when management is not fair, or they don't feel supported, such as when they don't receive adequate compensation, have little access to professional development opportunities, or are not being properly addressed regarding their performance. Lack of satisfaction with the present job, due to feelings of inequity and lack of support, can lead to avoidance-oriented responses or a desire to leave the job. Lastly, avoidance strategies always have negative effects on performance. A lack of preparation, engagement and feedback from staff impacts the quality of teaching. Research avoidance is just another drag on already inadequate research productivity. Avoidance coping causes employee health to suffer due to its drawbacks on mental health. Institutionally, the widespread avoidance weakens the effectiveness and sustainability of the activities of private universities.

However, avoidance is a reaction towards the feeling of stress and is understood in the context of the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping. According to expectancy theory, when there is a low relationship between effort and outcomes, motivation decreases. Self-Determination Theory: psychological needs are undermined from affecting intrinsic motivation. Administrative Management Theory elucidates why bureaucratic organisation and systems encourage compliance but not commitment.

Theoretical Implications

Some theoretical contributions to the study of avoidance and performance in higher education are discussed here.

Its first implication is the importance of synthesising into one model two or more different theoretical frameworks: stress and coping, motivation, self-determination and organizational structure to explain complex organizational behaviours. Avoidance strategies are not simply additive, and any single contributing factor would not lead to such strategies, but co-occurring individual, organizational and environmental factors converged and mutually strengthened to produce them. Secondly, avoidance behaviours are reviewed, taking into account their situational specificity. The causes of avoidance in Ugandan private universities (RP, institutional pressure, precarious employment) may be a product of specific factors in each of these institutions and outside others. This highlights the importance of theory/approaches that are context-driven - one that captures the uniqueness of higher education in the developing world. Lastly, the review calls into question

the traditional, simplistic conceptualisation of avoidance as 'maladaptive'. Although avoidance has typically been linked to negative consequences, in some contexts, avoidance strategies can be observed as positive associations, e.g., in terms of lessening conflict or safeguarding well-being. Further theoretical development should take this into account because of the complexity.

Practical Implications

The result of this study could have implications for policy and practice in Ugandan private universities. University management; the institutional systems need to be rethought with greater autonomy for universities and participatory governance. Studies have revealed that faculties with inclusive leadership cultures have better performance cultures and higher engagement among staff members when led by inclusive deans. Some form of decentralisation of decision-making, along with a required level of coordination, can minimise the bureaucracy that leads to avoidance. For performance monitoring systems, universities should establish clear, fair, and consistent performance monitoring guidelines and guidelines that reduce the perception of bias and irregularity. Successful and useful feedback should be integrated within performance monitoring systems that help support continual professional development. Academic staff need to be engaged in the development and review of materials to encourage ownership and relevance. Academics feel motivated and productive when processes are considered to be perceived as fair, transparent and participatory.

In the area of management practices, universities need to further strengthen HR processes both in recruitment and selection, compensation, training and development and performance assessment. Rewarding compensation, employment stability and professional growth are all crucial factors in keeping talented employees and preventing turnover intentions. The approach to dealing with breaches of good conduct should be developmental, supportive, and nonretaliatory, rather than punitive, and should instil a culture of responsibility instead of responsibility. For academic staff support, universities need to make an effort to promote staff wellbeing and coping adaptively. Little interventions have proven effective at enhancing psychological well-being when they're short, structured and based on theory. Staff-focused coping strategies, instead of avoidance, can be learned through workplace wellness initiatives, mentorship, and continuations with ongoing staff growth and development.

Academic staff performance is a main piece driven the quality and capacity of a higher education institution. Avoidance strategies are also very much a challenge in Ugandan private universities that face resource shortages

and/or pressure. This review has shown that avoidance is not just a personal failing, but a reaction to institutional contexts which can lead to stress, lack of motivation and reduced engagement. Avoidance is a complex issue, and a multi-component solution is needed that looks at both institutional and individual factors. Staff should be given opportunities to get support to develop adaptive coping strategies and maintain well-being at the individual level. On the institutional side, reforms to organizational structure, increasing the strengthening of performance monitoring systems, strengthening management of performance and improving working conditions are required within universities. The theoretical basis for this review-the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping, the Expectancy Theory, the Self-Determination Theory, and the Administrative Management Theory-all offer different perspectives on these processes and the design of intervention.

With the increase and development of the private Universities in Uganda, the performance of academic staff will continue to be at the forefront of their concerns. Avoidance dynamics are driven by root causes that can be addressed, with the aim of developing conditions that allow more students to be engaged, productive, and excellent. The outcomes of higher education performance, human capital development and the future of Uganda's knowledge economy rely on the performance of the higher education academic staff.

Recommendations For Future Research

In this review, several gaps are indicated that need further study. First, more empirical studies directed specifically towards avoiding strategies in private universities in Uganda are needed. Although the academic staff literature continues to expand, and research focusing on avoidance behaviours is increasing, there is much less research that explicitly examines avoidance behaviours in terms of their prevalence, forms, antecedents and consequences. Representative samples could be recruited for quantitative studies to indicate prevalence and correlates. Qualitative research can yield depth to understanding of lived experience and affective understandings of avoidance behaviors related to academic work. Secondly, a more longitudinal study would provide insight into the cause-and-effect relationships between institutional conditions, strategies employed by parents and children, and outcomes of performance. Although the cross-sectional studies are useful, they do not show cause-and-effect. Longitudinal designs might be used to examine the impact of variations in organisation structures, management and working conditions on avoidance behaviours and performance across time. Thirdly, comparative research between public, private, chartered and non-chartered institutions, as well as between faith-based and secular institutions, could identify how particular characteristics

of the institution impact avoidance and performance. If such research were found, then it could be used to guide interventions for various institutional settings. Fourthly, research on interventions to identify strategies to decrease avoidance and improve performance. Policy and practice suggestions can be informed by studies on the effects of specific interventions (e.g. participatory governance reforms, improved feedback systems, staff wellness packages, etc.). Lastly, individual differences such as personality and coping styles, and self-efficacy should be explored along with their moderation effects on the relationship between institutional conditions and avoidance behaviors. This investigation would guide the school to provide individual, tailored support for academic staff with various needs and vulnerabilities.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this review. Secondly, there is a lack of literature devoted to avoidance strategies in private universities in Uganda, making it necessary to rely on literature from other contexts (both public universities, other African countries, and the international context) where relevant. Secondly, the different methodologies of the included studies, some qualitative, some quantitative, and some with a mixed-method design, do not allow for easy comparison of results. Thirdly, there may be publication bias, and studies that spat out large results might be more likely to be published. Lastly, it is a review of English-language publications only, which may not have included research of relevance. Nonetheless, this is a comprehensive synthesis of available evidence on this significant issue.

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