

Review Article

International Journal of
Business Dynamics and Management

Volume 2, Issue 3 (July–September 2026)

(An International Peer-Reviewed, Open Access Journal)

ISSN: 3121-6412



OPEN ACCESS

Compromising Strategy and Performance of Academic Staff in Chartered Private Universities in Uganda: A 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: Chartered private universities in Uganda stand out as one of the biggest changes in the country's higher education system over the past four decades. This expansion has provided a significant degree of extension in access to tertiary learning, but at the same time has raised new significant challenges around academic staff performance. This review examines large chunks of empirical evidence cited in recent investigative studies in Ugandan chartered private universities to look at the many factors that affect the strategy and performance of academic staff in these institutions. The review pinpoints 5 key compromising factors, namely rigid structures with too high a level of centralisation and bureaucratic control; poor and inconsistent performance monitoring systems; poor compensation, resource constraints; insufficient focus on demographic variations of qualifications, experience and gender; and poor-quality assurance systems. The review shows that the interaction of various structural, motivational and demographic factors revealed the complexity of the factors which can systematically limit the performance of academic staff based on Administrative Management Theory, Expectancy Theory, Human Capital Theory and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. The review finds that changes to how things are done, in terms of governance, performance management and human resource processes is needed in the private university sector in Uganda to improve the situation.

Keywords: *Compromising Strategy, Academic staff performance, chartered private universities, organizational structure, performance monitoring, Uganda higher education*

1. Introduction

Academic staff is recognized as the pillar of quality and efficacy of the higher education institutions having universal manner. Academic staff actively affect learning, teaching outcomes, research productivity, curriculum development and student experiences within the learning environment (Kansiima, 2023). Academic staff performance is at the core, and especially so in Uganda, where an increasing number of private universities are providing access to tertiary education. Despite the government's commitment to making higher education more accessible and efficient, driven by the principle of privatising higher education, Uganda's higher education sector has undergone a remarkable

transformation. It now has over 60 universities, with over 40% being private (Silaji et al., 2026)

A charter is the most prestigious award granted to a university that is not public, and grants the institution complete recognition for its degrees, the right to offer postgraduate courses, and competitive status for the purpose of acquiring academic visibility (Birungi et al., 2021; Injikuru et al., 2024). A charter of the NCHE is signed by the president of the country, signifying an important institutional step towards service delivery. The rights of charter status include being able to audit itself, compare with international standards, confer the doctorate degree and have institutional perpetuity (Silaji et al. 2026). But the higher they rise, the higher the

expectations of academic excellence, research production and staff productivity are raised. Although the private universities have proliferated and become more well-known, there is still a long way to go concerning the quality of academics and education offered by private universities. The challenges faced by the academic staff in African universities could affect their effectiveness, especially structural and motivational issues (Kansiime, 2023). Previous survey indicates that ineffective management structures have significant impact on the performance of private universities in Uganda (Injikuru et al., 2024). This increase in private universities has also brought to the fore governance and administration problems that could affect the performance of staff members, including with regard to structuring and internal control systems.

Private universities in Uganda have conditions and environment quite different from public institutions, with financial limitations, less government support and different levels of institutional autonomy (Injikuru et al., 2024). These dynamics work synergically and with a high degree of complexity in connection with institutional structures, management and other structures and demographic particulars, which have an impact on the performance of academic staff both positively and negatively. Based on empirical evidence, there are multiple issues that educational workers encounter in private universities, such as teaching burden, lack of research support, insufficient salary, lack of interest in monitoring their performance, and the absence of a formal structure (Birungi et al., 2021; Injikuru et al., 2024). Private universities have been under pressure to prove their quality and effectiveness because the government has said that the private educational institutions will lose their right to operate if they do not get charter status (Silaji et al., 2026). The ability of private universities to do so, however, is uncertain, given the difficulties that hinder the performance of academic staff. The review aims to arrive at an integrated conclusion of the factors that undermine the academic staff strategy and performance in the chartered private universities in Uganda (Silaji et al., 2025).

Purpose and Review Scope

This review intends to look at all the factors that affect the academic staff strategy and performance in chartered private universities in Uganda. Specifically, the paper tackles the following: (1) what exactly compromising factors are and how common they are in academic staff in the Ugandan private universities; (2) theories justifying these compromises; (3) evidence from recent research in Ugandan private universities; (4) what implications the issues raised in the paper have for policy and practice. Please note that the review is based on peer-reviewed articles, empirical research and institutional reports in the period 2010-2026.

2. Literature Review

Compromising Strategy

The compromising strategy is described in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument as a widely recognised instrument for handling conflict style, which implies collaboration as another legal representative's strategy (Tholen, 2022; Igbinoba et al., 2022). This theory conceptualises conflict along two domains: assertiveness, how much the individual tries to meet his/her concerns and cooperativeness, how much the individual tries to meet the other party's concerns. Moderate assertiveness and cooperativeness competencies seem to be portrayed in compromising, which appears at the center of this constellation (Tholen, 2022; Igbinoba et al., 2022). In practice, this means some give and take as both sides move slightly in order to reach an agreement, even if it is not perfect, which is acceptable to both. It is sometimes referred to as a lose-lose situation because neither side gets everything they wants, but achieves some element they can live with. The compromise in its most balanced form can be considered as half the "pie" (half the resources) being given to one party and the other half to the other party (Tholen, 2022).

This can be expanded to a definition of the compromising strategy as being pragmatic and expedient. The key goal is not to seek an optimum solution, or even a 'win' for both sides, but rather an arrangement which satisfies a good portion of all the parties involved and is 'expedient'. This can include compromising, making concessions or settling for some compromise (Tholen, 2022). It, therefore, is most effectively used in limited contexts: in cases where a temporary solution needs to be found for a complex problem or issue; when a decision needs to be made with a short time frame; if the issue is important for both parties; and if a deadlock situation needs to be resolved between two contending parties that have about the same power (Miwa et al., 2025). Academic staff may be encouraged to adopt a compromising style as a means for engaging in conflict resolution, or research suggests that one of the most widely used strategies of academic leaders.

It is useful in some situations, but the compromising approach has shortcomings that limit its usefulness in conflict management theory. It is a distributive zero-sum game, in which the total gain of the two players isn't more than 100%, which means it can never satisfy both parties equally (Temelkovski, 2019). This can result in resentment because some may feel as though they compromised on something, and they may come to dislike the other party at a later stage (Hjermitslev, 2023). In addition, since a compromise is settling for the middle ground, it may fail to consider a more innovative and integrative approach that would meet both people's

deeper need an attribute that sets it apart from the more participative “win-win” negotiation (Plescia et al., 2022; Dixit, 2025). This is therefore the point at which some scholars disagree with the compromise model and suggest that it and problem solving (collaboration) are often mixed up, and therefore that there should be a “cooperating” strategy in academic settings. In the end, compromising like all conflict management strategies will depend on the situation and the type of conflict issue.

The Growth of Private Universities in Uganda

Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are a major intervention in the Ugandan Higher Education Sector. Until the 1990s, the role of higher education was largely a sole public sector undertaking in Uganda. But, with the necessity of expanding the tertiary education system in the face of ever-shrinking government funding, the appearance and growth of private universities were observed. In today's world, private universities are competitive centres of learning, research and innovation, challenging the monopoly often held by the public university. Some institutions like Kampala International University (KIU), Uganda Christian University (UCU), Ndejje University and Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU) have grown to become significant players. This was confirmed by the Webometrics 2025 global rankings, where KIU placed 2nd in the country (Silaji et al., 2026). 1st among the private institutions with a position of 1516. This is a message that the quality and visibility in academic institutions are not must-have features and that solely public institutions offer them. Since the rise of the private universities, though, there has been a concern about the quality of the institution. Literature shows that the growth of private universities in Uganda led to a number of them paying little attention to quality, resulting in demands for quality service delivery in teaching and learning procedures (Kansiime, 2023). The private universities are a relatively new phenomenon in Uganda and could be managed with some challenges arising from limited managerial competency to manage the universities by the managers.

Organizational Structure and Academic Staff Performance

Organizational structure is the organizational arrangement of roles, responsibilities, communication lines and authority in a formal institution. A properly defined structure builds accountability, task definition and brings efficiency to decision making. Whereas, in many private universities, the discretionary power is very tight and there is little delegation of authority and low academic participation in the governance process (Injikuru et al., 2024). Empirical research has investigated the organizational structure-academic staff performance link in the recently established private universities in Uganda (Birungi et al., 2021). The

research conducted by Turyamureeba et al (2026) revealed that most respondents (55.4%) reported having a highly centralised decision-making power, while 42.5% reported that it was not good within the organization in terms of communication flow. The result of this study showed that there was a significant positive correlation between organizational structure and academic staff performance, with organizational structure accounting for 26.2% of the variance in academic staff performance.

Performance Monitoring Systems

Performance monitoring, a systematic and continuous tracking and evaluation of activities among academic staff in the institution against the achievement of set goals, is a crucial factor that can influence academic staff performance (Alemiga & Kibukamusoke, 2019). Performance monitoring is crucial to improve academic staff productivity and accountability in HEIs. A study on the type and effectiveness of performance monitoring systems in private chartered universities in Uganda pointed out that different types of performance monitoring approaches exist, namely student evaluation, peer review and supervisory assessment (Kiiza 2021). The use is less seamless and robust; however, in terms of feedback loops, they may be less integrated into staff learning plans (Plescia et al., 2022). The results of the quantitative analysis indicated a moderate positive correlation between effective performance monitoring and the academic staff performance, with 21.3% variance in staff performance explained by the variable of performance monitoring (Silaji et al., 2026). The study findings revealed that, although performance monitoring tools exist in private chartered universities, they are not always used and therefore they are not effective. To improve academic staff's performance, integration between monitoring outcomes, professional development and decision-making processes could be strengthened (Kansiime, 2023).

The perception of academic staff on performance monitoring, as well as the influence of these perceptions on the academic staff performance, was found through the implementation of a related study (Plescia et al., 2022). It was found that 58.2% of the academic staff had a moderately positive view of the current measures of student performance. Pearson correlation test revealed a moderate positive correlation between the perception of monitoring of academic staff and academic staff performance. However, regression analysis also found that perception of performance monitoring was a significant predictor of the academic staff performance, with 18.7% explained. (Alemiga et al., 2022). Qualitative data uncovered difficulties with the irregularity of feedback, lack of transparency and limited participation among academics in creating performance indicators. The study focused on academic staff

performance and found that the efficacy of academic staff performance can be improved if the existence of performance monitoring systems in these institutions is perceived as fair, that is, it is perceived as transparent and participatory.

Demographic Characteristics and Performance

Gender and skill gaps, academic rank and teaching experience are continuing to undermine the concerns of equity and institutional effectiveness in private chartered universities (Hjermitslev, 2023). A study conducted to determine the relationship of selected demographic factors and academic staff performance revealed that years of teaching experience, academic rank and education level were significantly related to academic staff performance (Silaji et al., 2025). Academic staff with a doctoral degree, holding senior academic positions and with more teaching experience showed higher performance indicators. Gender gaps were also noted – experience and qualifications were found to have a differential impact on the performances of men and women (Alemiga et al., 2022). The results provide evidence that education, experience in the academic job market and academic rank are key factors that affect academic staff performance in private universities in Uganda. These traits can affect promotions: opportunities to move up in the ranks, incentives, distribution of workloads, and opportunities for additional training and research productivity.

Management Practices and Staff Performance

Academic staff performance is also heavily influenced by management practices such as recruitment & selection, compensation system, training & development, and evaluation activities, as well as disciplinary measures for work misconduct (Silaji et al., 2025; Silaji et al., 2026). A study was made at Bishop Stuart University on how some of the management practices affect the performance of the academic staff members; these practices were found to be recruitment and personnel selection, payment or remuneration system, job security, training and development of the academics, availability of information to them, performance appraisal of the academics, and development opportunities for them (Bech-Pedersen & Carl, 2025). These practices impacted academic staff's professional conduct, fostered ethical standards and values, and established an organizational identity for staff and top management.

Challenges in Research Productivity

The level of research productivity in Uganda's private universities is still low. Even though market-oriented, employability-oriented courses are offered, and teaching is emphasised at many private universities, they are, however, often most lacking in investment in research

infrastructure or full-time research staff (Hjermitslev, 2023). Private universities still do not get much funding support for research, due to low levels of research infrastructure, a lack of PhD-qualified faculty and capacity for bidding for research grants (Silaji et al., 2025). Academic personnel in private universities in Uganda bear the burden of balancing administrative duties, teaching and yet still pursue publications to propagate themselves in their academic careers. Academic staff, however, are challenged to meet these competing demands. Even after the Government of Uganda has taken several interventions to encourage public and private universities to boost research production, the academic staff in private universities still have poor research productivity.

Academic Staff Retention

The rapid growth in the number of universities in Uganda calls for a large number of academics who should be retained to offer services. Most of the private universities, however, find it difficult to attract Lecturers and Professors to their universities from public universities due to better offers placed by the government (Silaji et al., 2025). A university administrator noted: "The recent government decision to increase salaries for lecturers and professors in public universities has put private universities in a tough spot. This is making it very difficult for all private universities, because we can't compete in terms of paying staff, to hold staff in private universities like this (Hjermitslev, 2023). Career progression and clear promotion criteria are important approaches to keeping staff and encouraging staff motivation by a range of merit-based promotions and recognitions. The problem of quality staff, especially in the science fields, still dominates the discussion in the private university sector, though.

Theoretical Underpinning

Four theories underpinned this review: administrative management theory, expectancy theory, human capital theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory.

Administrative management theory: This theory was attributed to the work of Henri Fayol (Balikuddembe, 2025). The principles of administrative management theory cover specialisation of the work, subordination of subordinates, concentration of authority and the unity of command, communication and the flow of information, providing some insight into the workings of institutions (Balikuddembe, 2025). According to Fayol, good organizational structures should parallel centralisation and delegation, establish communication systems and organisation of functions (Tarrillo et al., 2024). Even so, experience with private universities in Uganda points to the fact that these principles are being ignored; sometimes, the communication gap and centralisation have been detrimental to academic autonomy and

performance. The theory can contribute to the understanding of why some academic institutions tend to be inflexible, lack innovation, and are unable to collaborate with others due to their rigid and bureaucratic structure.

Expectancy Theory: Victor Vroom's expectancy theory suggests that motivation is the product of three beliefs: Expectancy, Instrumentality, and Valence (Kamberi, 2025). This theory can be applied to the understanding of the institutional arrangements' effects on staff behaviour and performance outcomes (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). In the case of Ugandan private Universities, Expectancy Theory describes why the academic staff may be demotivated due to a lack of fairness in the performance monitoring systems, irregularity of academic staff performance feedback, and inadequate appreciation for academic performance by the academic staff. The theory also helps to explain why performance by academic staff may be undermined when there is a gap between effort and performance, and valued outcomes (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). According to studies, perception of performance monitoring plays a pivotal role and has a significant prediction of the academic staff performance, which is in accordance with expectancy theory.

Human Capital Theory: Gary Becker's Human Capital Theory argues that people's knowledge, skills, and abilities are the resources that can be stored for later use and combined to boost productivity and the economy's economic returns (Teixeira, 2019). Within the school setting, this theory provides evidence for the reasons why the education level, experience and academic rank are significant factors affecting performance. Human capital theory implies the academic staff performance will be improved with increases in investment in human capital promoted by doctoral studies, professional development and research training (Congna & Saad, 2025). Uganda, however, has challenges with private universities that have a limited ability to invest in human capital development, owing to financial constraints. In addition, the theory describes why the difference in qualifications and experience comes with the difference in performance.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, motivators are the factors that contribute to satisfaction and hygiene factors are the factors which help to avoid dissatisfaction (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). Achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the job are motivating factors and salary, working conditions, supervision and organisational policies are hygiene factors (Kamberi, 2025). This theory has been adapted to support the link between job satisfaction of Academics and teaching quality in Private Universities in Uganda. The theory offers an explanation as to why poor pay and poor work

environment (hygiene factors) can create dissatisfaction, and poor recognition and limited opportunities for advancement (motivators) can cause a decrease in motivation. Herzberg's dichotomy has been studied in Ugandan universities to understand academic satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

3. Research Methods

This review employed an integrative literature review methodology to synthesise empirical evidence on factors compromising academic staff strategy and performance in chartered private universities in Uganda (Cronin et al., 2008). The integrative review approach was selected because it allows for the inclusion of diverse methodologies, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies, to generate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A systematic search was conducted across multiple databases, including PubMed, DOAJ, F1000Research, PMC, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories. The search terms included combinations of the following keywords: "Uganda," "private universities," "chartered universities," "academic staff," "performance," "organizational structure," "performance monitoring," "retention," "quality assurance," and "higher education." The search was limited to publications from 2010 to 2026 to ensure relevance to the contemporary context.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The approach for this review was an Integrative Literature Review method used to merge empirical evidence on the factors that hinder academic staff strategy and performance in Chartered Private Universities (CPUs) in Uganda. An integrative review approach was used as it enabled the review of each of the diverse methodologies, quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods, yielding a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. An extensive search, spanning several databases such as *PubMed, Google Search, DOAJ, F1000Research, PMC, Google Scholar and institutional repositories*, was made. The following keywords were used in various combinations: Uganda, private universities, chartered universities, academic staff, performance, organizational structure, performance monitoring, retention, quality assurance and higher education. The research was conducted between the years 2010 and 2026 to emphasise current literature and relevance in the context. These were the specific criteria the studies had to meet to be included: They (1) studied academic staff performance in Ugandan private universities; (2) were published in peer-reviewed journals, or they were credible institutional research; (3) adopted any of the empirical research designs; and (4) contained data regarding the factors that influence academic staff performance. Studies were not included if

they: (1) limited the analysis to public universities; (2) only explored the performance of university administrators; or (3) did not provide in English. Studies included were searched using a standardised schema that collected data on: key findings, theory, research design, sample size, and author(s) and year of research. The extracted information was thematically synthesised and analysed based on the aspects of organizational structure and performance monitoring, demographic attributes, management practices, research productivity hurdles, and retention problems, which were identified through the literature reviewed as being important compromising factors.

Quality Assessment

Studies included were evaluated based on methodological considerations by applying standards suitable to their methodology. In quantitative studies, the criteria consisted of the number of samples, the validity and reliability of the instruments used, and the type of statistical analysis appropriate for the study (Ochengo & Deng, 2023). The criteria for qualitative studies were credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The studies reviewed in this product tended to have decent methodological quality, but some limitations were identified in some of these studies.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This review has integrated some empirical findings in the recent studies carried out in Ugandan chartered private universities to explore issues that weaken academic staff's strategy and performance. The evidence shows that the issue isn't simply to be solved by solving structural, systemic and demographic issues separately, but they all exist and interact with each other to affect the efficiency of academic personnel. One is an over-powerful centralisation, bureaucratic control and limited academic autonomy in the organizational structures of private chartered universities. These can facilitate controlled compliance, yet they want to stifle advancement, association, and growth in academic output. There is qualitative evidence to indicate that increased staff demotivation and less effective teaching are associated with extreme centralisation. Second, there is some monitoring, but not regular, and it is not applied consistently. Performance monitoring done fairly and as a partnership with the community can improve motivation and performance, but practices are not currently conducted in such a manner. Thirdly, differences in important qualifications, experience and sex have a marked effect on the performance of the results. Academic staff with doctoral degrees, higher ranks and higher experience are promoted well. The results highlight the need for fair working practices in human resources and the need for inclusive promotion strategies and professional development. Fourth, private

universities are confronted with huge resource limitations that restrict their ability to build human resources, research capabilities and competitive salaries. Competencies with the Public Sector wages make it harder to hold onto employees. Fifth, issues of quality assurance remain, and in a majority of cases, private universities do not apply NCHE quality assurance requirements to the fullest. Teaching and courses driven by the market, at times, have taken the place of research and faculty development.

There is a great opportunity and challenge in the expansion of chartered private universities in Uganda. Although these institutions are making significant efforts to make higher education more accessible, they are facing great difficulties in ensuring the higher education performance of faculty and academic quality. This review has brought together evidence that shows that organising, monitoring performance, the demographics, resources, and quality assurance all compound the impact on the strategy and performance of academic staff. The resolution of these compromises demands a holistic approach, with governance reforms, enhancement of performance management, human resources training, and research investments. Theories used in this review, Administrative Management Theory, Expectancy theory, Human Capital Theory and Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, complement each other for analysis of these challenges and possible avenues for improvements. In the end, the success of Uganda's private university industry hinges on its ability to develop other institutional structures that facilitate effective academic performance. Over the years, the field has developed, and continued focus on factors that impact academic staff performance is crucial in securing the quality, equity, and institutional effectiveness that this sector needs to grow and evolve.

Theoretical Contributions

There are many ways this review aids insight into theoretical understandings. First, it illustrates the transferability of Administrative Management Theory to the Ugandan setting and how the lack of respect for Fayol's principles, such as centralisation or communication, negatively affects performance. Secondly, this validates the predictions made by Expectancy Theory, as there are significant relationships between the outcome of performance and the perception of performance monitoring. Third, it validates the propositions of the Human Capital Theory in terms of their associations with demographic characteristics and performance. Fourth, it validates Herzberg's Two-Factor theory in the context of Uganda's private universities, highlighting the effect of hygiene and motivators on the academic staff's satisfaction and performance.

Practical Implications

This review has several policy/practice implications for the private university sector in Uganda. There is a need to redesign the structures of university governance and increase participatory governance and accountability. For universities, flexible structures knitting together items of structural coordination with academic autonomy would be better, which could be adaptive and participative. Decision-making power needs to be decentralised, academic staff needs to be more involved in governance, and communication facilities need to be improved. To accomplish performance management, the universities should have uniform team of performance evaluation process, improvement of feedback mechanism, and can put academic staff members in the performance evaluation target setting. Performance monitoring should be done as part of professional development programmes and not just as a compliance programme. The staff positioning is vital for the motivation and engagement of staff, if it is fair and transparent. Aiming at human resource development, universities can implement human resource policies that ensure that they treat everyone fairly and based on evidence, and provide opportunities for professional growth, promotion and equal representation by type of group. One of the key elements of human capital formation is investment in doctoral training, capacity building, and research. Transparency in terms of career paths and promotion processes can encourage employees by promoting the advancement of talent and recognition. Developing infrastructure and full-time faculty for research activities is the natural way to invest in research development in a private university. Public-private partnerships may help fill in resource deficiencies and tap into other resources to improve research capacity. The NCHE needs to increase its monitoring efforts at private universities with respect to quality assurance and support the capacity building in the field of performance management for regulatory oversight. Close monitoring of institutional capacity development for academic staff performance should be a part of the chartering process.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are a number of limitations in this review. First, the evidence base is largely from Western Uganda, which makes the results of the evidence hard to generalise across regions of Uganda. Second, the majority of the studies reviewed used Cross Section design; this type of design does not reveal causation in the study. Third, pertinent literature not identified in the databases used in the review may have been missed. Future studies should look at reducing these weaknesses with: (i) longitudinal studies to track academic staff performance over time, (ii) cross-sections of different parts of Uganda, (iii) studies to determine effectiveness of specific interventions to improve academic staff performance, (iv) research to determine whether there is

a link between charter status and academic staff performance and (v) research including views of academic staff on challenges encountered by them.

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