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IMPACT OF STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMICS' PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NIGERIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Performance management for academics is critical and demanding especially to those vested with the responsibility of evaluating academics' job performances within a particular period. Institutional development pursuing a robust quality assurance system in every process of execution should be the main objective of every higher educational institution's performance management system. Student's appraisal of academic' performance is a foremost element of determining performance in some countries. However, academics seem critical to students' participation in their performance management relating to teaching performance and quality. The purpose of this study is to determine how impactful can students' participation in academics' performance management on quality assurance could be in Nigeria's higher education institutions. In this cross-sectional survey, questionnaires were employed to gather data from participants. Partial-least square (PLS SEM) was used in analyzing gathered data. The study found the existence of significant relationship between Performance management and quality assurance as well as students' participation and quality assurance. A significant finding of this study is that students' participation moderates the relationship of performance management and quality assurance. Research suggests that involving students in academics performance management can make a significant impact towards achieving quality assurance. Consequently, the study recommended that management of higher education institutions should ensure that academics see students as partners in progress and should be involved in academics' performance management towards attaining better and proficient academics as well as quality education.

Keywords: Performance Management, Quality Assurance, Students' Participation, Academics, Higher Educational Institutions

Introduction

Performance management (PM) support all-inclusive management as well as replacement of managerial dominance substituted with a feedback-oriented system towards attaining development (Türk, 2016). Management of the academics' performance is one of the issues HEIs are contending with (Mapesela & Strydom, 2004). PM has become issues of concern in HEIs especially towards providing qualitative education (Tinuke, 2015). For this study's purposes, PM's scope is

narrowed to the academics' performance appraisal (PA). Academics' job is particularly demanding; thus, requiring an effective PA towards achieving improved performances on the job (Tinuke, 2015).

The essence for determining academics' performance is to strengthen performance aligning performance appraisals (PAs) with organizational strategic objectives embracing goal setting and PAs falling within the PM realm (Stanton & Nankervis, 2011). Contemporary PM has recently been pursued by HEIs (Kallio, Kallio,

Tienari, & Hyvönen, 2016); in order to address issues related to decline in resources (Türk, 2016). As a service delivery entity, Sahney, Banwet and Karunes (2004) argue that systems for evaluating quality of services, and satisfaction end users foresee to derive; comparable to commercial organizations have to be adopted or established. These services are performed by individuals (academics) and their performance is critical towards rendering quality service. However, in Nigeria, stakeholders have expressed concerns on the country's educational system quality (Ubogu, 2021).

Quality happens to be an essential element of HE because of rising national and international competition among HEIs, utilizing limited resources more efficiently and effectively in order to meet society's expectations and needs as significantly as desired (Aycicek & Konokman, 2021). Quality assurance (QA) in education strives to ensure that education objectives and development are realized in the process of education delivery (Okpa, Odigwe Emeribe & Obule, 2020). Making reference to the Nigerian QA system in the university system for example, Ubogu (2021) observed that the National Universities Commission's (NUC) QA roles in university education has not been able to carry stakeholders along, and as critical as they are in the university system, students do not constitute NUC's peer review teams (Ubogu, 2021).

Students' participation (SP) in the quality assurance process (QAP) is a focal issue and a prevalent practice in most part of the world, and thus, educational managers in several countries are looking at the best possible ways of involving students in the QA system of their institutions (Elassy, 2013). As critical stakeholders, students are supposed to be involved or participate in some aspects of managerial decision-making process of institutions such as employment of academics since they constitute the most critical element in the HEI system (Okpa, et al., 2020).

Therefore, the aim of the research is to examine how impactful can students' participation in academics' PM on QA could be in Nigeria's higher education institutions (HEIs). This article is structured as follows. The first section is the introduction/background of the

study. Next, extant literatures were reviewed with prior empirical studies outlined. Following is the study's research design, then, presentation and analysis of results, discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review

Performance Management (PM)

PM encompasses group of undertakings targeted towards improving employees' performance by concentrating on how to stimulate and enhance their performance (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). The concept incorporates expressions such as; performance indicators, performance measures, performance appraisal and review, quality assurance (Boland & Fowler, 2000). Performance information is needed by policy makers to be more strategic and efficient in managing employees (Moynihan, Fernandez, Kim, LeRoux, Piotrowski, Wright & Yang, 2011). However, the accomplishment or failure to attain expected performance level suggest organizations inability to influence certain contextual factors and thus, making it complicated knowing their direct impact to an outcome (Gilmour & Lewis, 2006).

HEIs have over time been exposed to thorough quality assessments to be ensured that they meet the required benchmark (Camilleri, 2021). These institutions academic evaluate academics' performance against their importance, commitments and objectives employing appropriate international standards and objectives (Lo, 2009). Hence, academics' job performance appraisal measures, even though often complex and subjective, ought to be objective and aligned with all-inclusive judgment about job performance (Mohammed, 2020).

According to Waring (2013), it is expected that academics abide by their institutions PA system and policy. PA is a prescribed procedure that assesses the quality of academics' performance (Dhamne, Jadhav, & Somhan Shi, 2017) as well as measures and develops the individual and team performance; a group of PM or appraisal practices with goal-setting and planning, monitoring and feedback (Aguinis & Pierce, 2007). It is further indicated that PA activities support determinations whether employee performances are in conformity with set goals (Tinuke, 2015). In a nut shell,

PA is basically established on the assessment of employees' proficiency and job outcomes (Fletcher, 2001).

Quality Assurance (QA)

Accountability and transparency have achieved prominence resultant from globalization in higher education (HE) and this led to the pursuit of quality culture by various institutions (Smidt, 2015, Ter Bogt, & Scapens, 2012). Simply put, quality connotes to the magnitude clients' needs are attained (Meraler & Adiguzel, 2012). It is all about efficient service delivery in this context.

In their contribution to the clarifications on the concept relating to the HEIs, Štimac and Katić (2015) noted that, the process of quality assurance control has been described to generally take form of quality management, quality control, quality assurance and quality culture quality guarantee. More specifically, Saidi (2020) associates quality assurance to policies, procedures and other means employed in HEIs that directs the attainment of certain benchmarks or minimum conditions of qualitative education. According to Seyfried and Pohlenz (2018), institution's management is critical concerning decisions pertaining the practice of QA which varies among institutions. Hence, Aycicek and Konokman (2021) argue on the need for a well-established and quality indicator to be well-defined to pursue a sound QA system. Drawing from these, it therefore becomes imperative to evaluate academics teaching effectiveness since decisions concerning especially the prospects of an academic could be based on the evidence established from such evaluations (Kwarteng, Doku & doh Fia, 2014). Besides, Tinuke (2015) submit that the quality of performance in instruction in HEIs requires students' minds are inclined and grounded towards performance on initial or potential job statuses. Despite the fact that there have been arguments that quality is difficult to achieve in developing countries (Kanyongo 2005), a further challenge in quality assurance domain has emerged as a result of rise in cross-border education (Ryan, 2015), especially in Nigeria. Thus, quality assurance has been pursued vigorously by several HEIs especially in

Nigeria, in order to address among others, issues concerning regular training of academic staff as well as inconsistent policies (Usman & Chinyere, 2021).

Linking QA to PM, Mohammed (2020) argues that institutional development by means of QA in every process of execution ought to be the foremost objective of a HEI PM system. Thus, Mwanza, Kambikambi and Mbohwa (2019) noted that, existing human and material resources, process as well as outcomes, are QA indicators. Also, Hutchinson (2021) submit that PM observation was the most critical and demanding moment on the academic's work especially within a particular period. Furthermore, Hutchinson argue that "if there is explicit evidence that performance can be improved at individual or faculty level, then the appraisal process should be linked and used to address those issues". Moreover, immediate supervisors, colleagues and students' appraisal feedback is useful towards supporting academics' professional development (Mohammed, 2020). Employing the most effective organizational decisions, control and evaluation, a good quality management which embraces planning, organizing and, practical execution suggests efforts aimed at addressing the needs of the stakeholders (Bakri & Pipaş, 2019).

Students Participation (SA)

Students' participation (SP) in QA processes is of significant concern to HEI systems in developed and developing nations (Shahanga, Ogondiek & Kigobe, 2021). SP implies manner students are allowed to actively participate in decision-making in the areas of QA and other matters for better, effective and result oriented management of HEIs (Ashwin & McVitty 2015). Similarly, SP in QA processes has been reported as a means for getting feedback by the management of HEIs which is expected to support the objectives for which institutions were established (Barnes, Kohler-Evans & Wingfield, 2020).

Arguably, the rationales for SP in HEI decision-making are meant to support developmental, social and functional elements that benefit students and other critical stakeholders (Meeuwissen, Sprujit, Veen, & Goji, 2019). Similarly, such participation to a large

extent supports and ensures the availability of competent academics in institutions (Sanyal, 2013). More importantly, student evaluation of academic performance was recognized to be a very foremost element of determining performance in some countries (Herdlein, Kukemelk & Türk, 2008). In line with these arguments, developing countries implemented the participation of students in QA processes with a view of getting direct feedback by the management from students as significant inputs for enhancing the quality of education (Shahanga, et al., 2021). Additionally, Kwarteng, et al. (2014) indicated that academics' evaluation by students could offer feedback that could support academics to improve on their performance. Moreover, Ryan (2015) observed that considering the fact that student in HEIs as those that invest a lot of resources in the system, their involvement in QA could improve the processes.

Despite the fact that students benefit immensely from QA practices (Alaniska, Codina, Bohrer, Dearlove, Eriksson, Helle & Wiberg, 2006), mistrust between academics and students is prevalent which hinder the effective relationship among them (Berner, 2017), and other stakeholders in the QA processes (Essel, Boakye-Yiadom & Kyeremeh, 2018). Relating these to PM, the academics' reservations/resistance to SP in their PAs concerning academics' teaching performance and quality has been emphasized (Reckers, 1995; Liaw & Goh, 2003).

Empirically, Okpa, et al.'s (2020) study findings suggest that SP in decision-making has a strong positive relationship with management of institutions. This consistent with the findings of Jeruto and Kiprop (2011) as well as Naidoo (2004).

At this juncture, it is worth stating that. every research effort strives to build on certain postulations put forward by several authorities to discover particular things for the first time (Genty & Ekanem, 2022; Olorunninsola, 2007). This is to either support such postulations or contradict them. Nevertheless, to carry out this study and accomplish its objectives, it is necessary to state hypotheses developed to test the postulations. Thus, the research hypothesized as follows:

H1: PM have a significant impact on QA.

H2: SP have a significant impact on QA.

H3: SP moderates the relationship between PM and QA.

Theoretical Framework

The importance of SP in PM and QA can be theoretically supported in several ways as well as perspectives. However, this study is built on Locke and Latham (1990) Goal-Setting Theory (GST). The GST underscores the substantial connection between goals and performance (Lunenborg, 2011). Goal Setting Theory exists in all facets associated to PM practices (Brudan, 2010). One of the principles of the theory is participation in goal setting. The current study suggests that, the extent to which SP in the PM for academics exist, has impact on QA. The higher the level of SP, the more prospect of better QA. HEIs strive to attain minimum benchmark and therefore, goals have to be set in that regard. Numerous studies have applied this theory to in PM (e.g., Audenaert, Decramer, George, Verschuere & Van Waeyenberg, 2019; Heslin, Carson & VandeWalle, 2009; Latham, Borgogni & Petitta, 2008) and, QA (e.g., Taurina, 2015; Ginsburg, 2001) to explain their significance.

Methodology

The study used a survey method to gather data from students studying in a HEI in Nigeria offering different programs as well as academics. A survey questionnaire consisted of different parts were issued to the participants. Participants were asked to rate their participation rate with the statements in the first and second parts of a questionnaire based on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." 283 questionnaires were administered and 260 were returned. However, 221 were found usable and thus, constituted the sample size for analysis. The sample size used in this study was greater than the minimum sample size of 200 required for a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis (Hair, Ringle M., & Sarstedt, 2011).

Data Analysis Method

The structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis is one of the commonly used methods for the estimation of casual relationships between multiple independent and dependent variables in a structural model (Ringle, Sarstedt, Schlittgen & Taylor, 2013). This study used the SmartPLS3.0 software for the PLS SEM analysis.

Measurement of the Construct

Constructs items measuring the PM were adapted from Sharma, Sharma and Agarwal (2016) and for QA, from Aycicek and Konokman (2021). To measure SP construct, the items used in this study were adapted from Kwarteng, et al. (2014).

Presentation and Analysis of Results

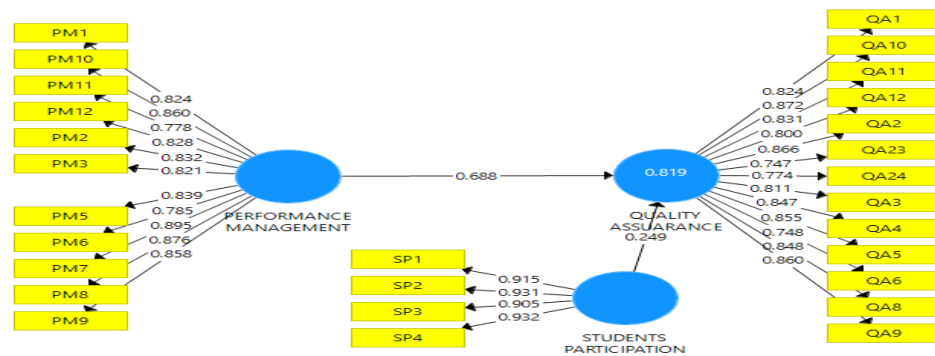


Figure 1: Measurement Model

Evaluation of Reflective Measurement Model

One of the most important criteria for assessing the reflective measurement model using the PLS-SEM consists of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, internal consistency reliability was measured through the composite reliability (CR), and any value below 0.60 indicates a lack of internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Table 1 indicates that the composite reliability values of all constructs exceed 0.77, satisfying the critical value of construct reliability. Similarly, the convergent validity was established through the outer loadings of the indicators and the average variance extracted (AVE). Any outer loadings

The analysis of PLS-SEM is constructed on the evaluation of two models: a measurement model and a structural model. The measurement model of PLS-SEM displays the relationship between the construct (latent variable) and its indicators. On the other hand, the structural model or the inner model of the PLS-SEM shows the relationships (paths) between the constructs.

Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Since misspecification of formative and reflective constructs leads to measurement errors of construct quality (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph & Chong, 2017), the study measures the construct quality based on a reflecting measurement model and a formative measurement model.

value below 0.40 should be eliminated from the construct (Hair, et al., 2011). The AVE value of less than 0.50, indicating more variance remains in the error of the items than in the variance explained by the construct, should be eliminated from the construct (Hair et al., 2017). Table 1 shows that the outer loadings of each indicator range from 0.677 to 0.848, and the AVE value of each construct exceeded the critical value of 0.50, confirming the convergent validity of the study constructs.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity of The Reflective Constructs

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
PM	0.957	0.962	0.700
QA	0.960	0.965	0.677
SP	0.940	0.957	0.848

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022

To handle issues of discriminant validity structural equation modeling, the discriminant validity was evaluated through the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of correlations method (HTMT), which is more efficient than the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion and the

assessment of cross-loadings (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). The HTMT value above 0.90 determines a lack of discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). The results Table 2 show that all HTMT values are less than 0.90, confirming the discriminant validity of the study constructs.

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

	PM	QA	SP
PM			
QA	0.899		
SP	0.870	0.849	

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022

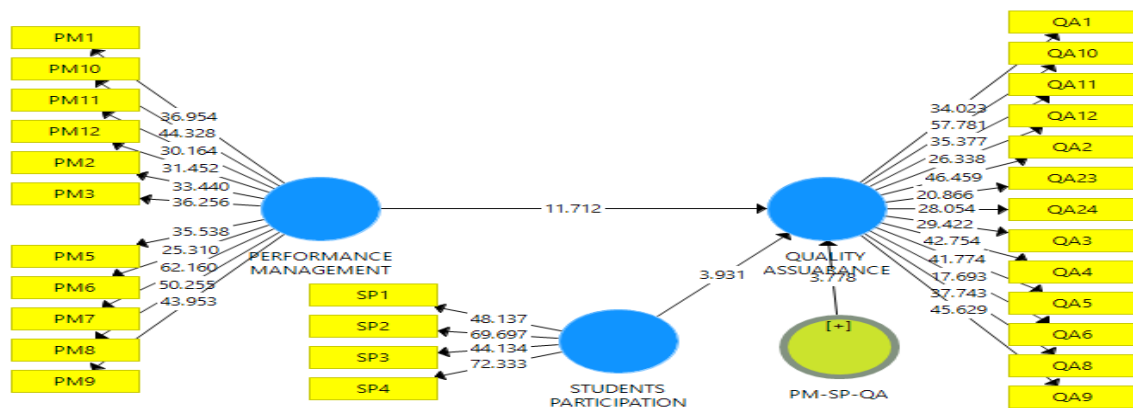
Formative Measurement Model Evaluation

Unlike the reflective constructs, the formative constructs do not necessarily co-vary and are assumed to be error-free. Therefore, the internal consistency not appropriate and cannot be applied to formative measurement model (Hair et al., 2017). Similarly, Multicollinearity is an issue of the construct if the variance inflation factor (VIF) exceeds 5 (Hair et al., 2011). The results obtained shows that all variance inflation factors (VIFs) are less

than 5, indicating that collinearity is not a problem in this study.

Evaluation of the Structural Model and the Moderating Effects

To perform the moderation analysis, the structural model results with the moderator (SP) included, estimating the interaction term using the two-stage approach as recommended by Sarstedt, Hair, Pick, Liengaard, Radomir and Ringle (2022).

**Figure 2: Structural Model**

Incorporating the moderator, the path coefficients for both PM and QA increased as did the R^2 value (0.88). It is concluded therefore that the structural model revealed moderate in-sample prediction (Sarstedt, et al., 2022; Hair & Sarstedt, 2021). All path coefficients were significant,

Table 3: Path-Coefficients

	β	Standard Error	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
PM -> QA	0.690	0.059	11.712	0.000	Supported
PM-SP-QA -> QA	0.045	0.012	3.778	0.000	Supported
SP -> QA	0.247	0.063	3.931	0.000	Supported

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022

Furthermore, the result of the moderation analysis was shown in the simple slope analysis in Figure 3. Based on the significance and positive relationship between the

moderator and the dependent variable. It is therefore concluded that SP positively moderates the relationship between PM and QA.

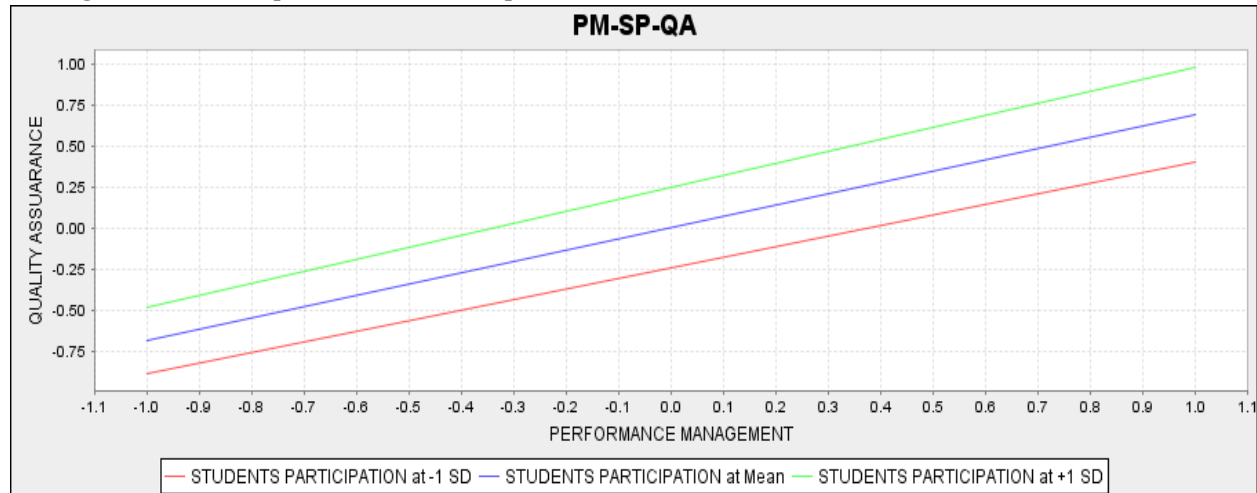


Figure 3: Simple Slope Analysis

Discussion

Below is the discussion of the study's findings related to the three key hypotheses that were postulated and tested.

H1: PM have a significant impact on QA

This hypothesis sought to assess the impact of PM for academics in a HEI on QA. The findings of this study reveal that a but positive and significant relationship exists between of PM for academics in a HEI and QA ($\beta=0.690$, $t=11.712$, $p<0.05$). Hence, this study accepts hypothesis, thus establishing that PM for academics significantly impact on QA. Therefore, the study's

findings support the findings prior studies (e.g., Ter Bogt, & Scapens, 2012; Mohammed, 2020), which could be because, the more proficiency of an academic is ascertained and found to up to date, the more likelihood of attaining QA in a HEI.

H2: SP have a significant impact on QA

Based on the findings of this study, this postulation has been supported. The results of analysis indicated that SP have a significant impact on QA ($\beta=0.247$, $t=3.931$, $p<0.05$). Beside maintaining that SP in QA is critical sound education delivery (Okpa, et al., 2020),

encouraging to participate in QA, improves the processes (Ryan, 2015).

H3: SP moderates the relationship between PM and QA

It was predicted that SP moderates the relationship between PM and QA. As expected, this hypothesis is supported. Findings as regards the moderating effect of SP with PM and QA appears well-suited with goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990). Moreover, it supports the impact of PM and QA. Specifically, results established a strong relationship between PM and QA with SP.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to examine the impact of SP on the relationship of PM towards QA. By and large, this study has advanced more support to the developing body of knowledge concerning the moderating impact of SP on the relationship between PM towards QA. The survey research design was adopted for this study and copies of questionnaire on a 7-point Likert scale was used to gather and analyze data. The research hypotheses were tested by means of the regression analysis at a significant level of 0.5 calculated. The study tested the hypothesized influence of the independent variables and dependent variable on the study sample. Furthermore, this study's findings provide support to the fundamental theoretical assumptions. Findings in this study

established a positive and significant relationship between PM and QA as well as SP and QA in the HEI studied. The moderating impact of SP on the relationship of PM towards QA had also been established. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. As a matter of policy, management of the HEI should ensure that academics see students as partners in progress and should be involved in academics' PM so that engagement of proficient academics as well as quality education is attained maintained.
- ii. Pursue a deliberate of policy of students' participation in academics' performance management. This can be done by borrowing models from other HEIs that has experience for adoption by management the HEI.
- iii. There should in place an effective appraisal feedback by students concerning academics' PM from the management so that academics can improve on any observed weakness so that the minimum benchmark for quality education is achieved and maintained.

Thus, based on the present study, there are opportunities for future research considering wide scope of study and therefore, the area not exhausted. Further research is suggested on how SP could booster academics' performance and QA in HEIs.

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