

Socio-Cultural Factors and Competencies of Senior Staff in Public Universities: The Hierarchical Mediation Role of Staff Satisfaction and Sense of Belonging

ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of socio-cultural factors of public universities on senior staff competencies, taking into consideration the hierarchical mediation role of staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness. The design employed was descriptive cross-sectional survey. A recommended sample of 356 permanent staff was obtained from a population of 3,159 permanent senior staff of three autonomous public universities in Ghana. After selecting three premium universities, one from each of the zones in Ghana, purposively, the proportional and computer random sampling procedures were used to select the senior staff. A questionnaire was the instrument used. In order to test the stated hypotheses, the data were analysed using statistical tools such as hierarchical multiple regression cum mediation analyses. The study found that socio-cultural factors such as social networks, reward/ promotion, discrimination free culture, orientation, control/power, roles/responsibilities and work value systems have weak influence on staff competencies. However, the influence becomes strong when staff satisfaction in the socio-cultural factors is considered sequentially. It is, therefore, recommended to head of departments, support units and central administration of the universities to ensure that there is even-handedness work environment with supportive social networking among all members of the university. This can be done through biannual organisation of inter-staff and inter-departmental social re-orientation activities and re-familiarisation parties with sporting, gaming and funfair activities. This intervention can be used as an administrative support system to help boost staff happiness.

Keywords: Public universities; Socio-cultural factors; Staff competencies; Staff satisfaction; Staff sense of belongingness

1. INTRODUCTION

As organisations within the service sector, particularly universities, try to survive in this turbulent and dynamic world of ours, strong emphasis must be laid on the larger scale forces within the cultures and societies that affect the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of staff. This is so because most stakeholders are now appreciating the roles socio-cultural factors play in defining staff competencies and productivity (Odanga, 2018; Nwodo, Okolo, Onah & Ikpo, 2020). As part of their mandate, public universities in Ghana are expected to prepare and produce different degrees of 'responsible' and competent labour force for the country and beyond.

In order for the universities to continue to meet their obligations, there is the need to look at the competency levels of their staff, particularly the senior staff who possess central spots in these micro societies. They may be seen as non-members of the university community on the basis of the work they do and their academic qualifications. However, their jobs are pivotal and serve as a lubricant to keep the system going with ease (Saani, 2021). In relation to classification, senior staff are the middle level employees of the universities, and they include administrative assistants, assistant librarian, principal research assistants and assistant transport officers. In some cases, some of them have risen through the ranks to earn top salaries, as a result of their long services, higher qualifications and professionalism.

Considering the eufunctional roles of these staff, one may say the socio-cultural factors or powers within cultures and societies that affect their views, feeling, attitudes, and competencies should be a concern to all. Enhancing public universities' socio-cultural factors such as social networking, reward/promotion, discrimination, orientation, control/power, roles/responsibilities, and value systems can help boost staff satisfaction (Abdulla, Djebarni & Mellahi, 2011; Abou-Hashish, 2017), sense of belongingness (Campbell & Hwa, 2014), performance and competencies (Boon, Van der Klink &

Janssen, 2013; Mutegi, 2016; Julius & Maru, 2020; Nwodo et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important for the universities to help staff understand their socio-cultural climate in order for them to appreciate the institutions' socio-cultural factors which may in turn help to enhance their satisfaction, sense of belonging and competencies.

Staff satisfaction represents the pleasurable or positive emotional response defining the degree to which staff are happy with the socio-cultural factors of the universities (Abdulla et al., 2011; Abou-Hashish, 2017). Staff sense of belonging, on the other hand, refers to staff attachment and bond to the university such that they are able to identify themselves with these universities (Ismail, 2016). That is, the relative strength of their identification with, and involvement in the activities of the university (Campbell & Hwa, 2014). Staff competencies also refer to series of capabilities that create room for staff to utilize their innovative, proactiveness and risk-taking ability to gain competitive advantage (Boon et al., 2013; Vargas-Halabí, Mora-Esquivel & Siles, 2017).

Senior staff competencies within the universities are important factors as they give meaning to the work life values and fulfilments of these staff (Gull et al., 2021; Kiyabo & Isaga, 2020). Therefore, it is important to examine the factors that help boost these competencies to help make the staff more productive for them to help the universities fulfilled their objectives. When staff are satisfied with the socio-cultural manifestation of their workplace, they may develop a sense of belongingness to the establishment, a phenomenon that may influence their competencies in positive terms (Nwodo et al., 2020; Gull et al., 2021; Saani, 2021). Senior staff competencies are both qualitative and quantitative incremental changes that occur and have manifestations on staff effective management of resources, service to society, and relevance in the maximisation of capacity. This shows that socio-cultural factors of the universities can be crucial in determining the staff competencies.

In today's Ghana, attracting and retaining senior staff who are risk-takers, innovators and proactive in the various public universities is becoming a problem (Saani, 2021). This phenomenon is manifesting at an increasing rate largely for the reason that competent senior staff are frequently drawn in the direction of well-paid careers, which are usually outside the ecological zone of public universities (Amoah & Afranie, 2014; Mutegi, 2016; Bayona & Gona-Legaz, 2017). Evidence suggests that senior staff pay levels in the various public universities are insufficient when compare to staff in the corporate world with similar qualifications and work experiences (Bayona & Gona-Legaz, 2017; Saani, 2021). Also, other welfare related issues such as lodging facilities, office space and allowances for staff are not sufficient and attractive. Nonetheless, the volumes of work for these staff in the various public universities have increased as a result of increasing number of enrolled students, bureaucratic structures and indiscipline culture on the campuses (Saani, 2021).

In addition, my observation and experience appear to suggest that the socio-cultural work environments of public universities are becoming more complex as a result of the current wave of transparency and accountability culture being propagated by the government. All public universities in Ghana are required to meet the requirement of the new public fiscal and accounting regulation systems. This new wave is putting more workload on senior staff and making their work more involving, because they are responsible for the entire middle-level jobs on campus. In most cases, these staff have to work with dysfunctional equipment and from a contracting asset base (Amoah & Afranie, 2014; Bayona & Gona-Legaz, 2017; Saani, 2021), a situation which appears to be affecting their competencies and productivity.

For public universities to remain productive and competitive, their staff, particularly senior staff, need to be innovators, proactive, and calculated risk takers. However, anecdotal reports suggest that senior staff of public universities in Ghana are not competent enough, leading to their inability to meet adequately the ever-increasing demands and expectations of both students and management. This situation may be blamed on the dissatisfaction and non-sense of belongingness of staff, a situation that can be blamed on their experienced socio-cultural factors within the system (Amoah & Afranie, 2014; Nwodo et al., 2020; Saani, 2021). However, it seems research works on staff competencies have not considered socio-cultural variables (Boon et al., 2013; Vargas-Halabí et al., 2017). Considering staff competencies from the employee perspectives and how socio-cultural factors initiate it, will help to throw more light on the incidents.

In examining the sociocultural components and administrative practices in universities in Ghana, Amoah and Afranie (2014) posit that the interests of universities would be better off when the bureaucratic culture is designed to house some basic socio-cultural assumptions of staff, without compromising efficiency. They found that societal culture is influential in shaping the bureaucratic

behaviour and conducts of organisations' members. Even though they were able to use the mixed methods approach to show that there is the need to consider socio-cultural contexts in designing policies within our universities, they did not consider the satisfaction level of staff regarding these socio-cultural factors not to mention how these factors can predict staff sense of belongingness and competencies hierarchically.

Mutegi (2016) also concludes that socio-cultural factors affect employees' attitude towards performance in private universities in the greater Meru region, Kenya. The indicators used to measure socio-cultural factors by Mutegi were largely background factors. They include gender, religion, level of education, and income levels. There is the need to look at socio-cultural factors that are work related in order to examine its influence on staff competencies. Masovic (2018) also avers that strong interaction exists between social and cultural factors, and they significantly affect the economic activity of multinational companies and their performance as well. Julius and Maru (2020) also concluded in their study that socio-cultural factors immensely influence and relate to entrepreneurial performance. Similarly, Nwodo et al. (2020), in their study, also found that socio-cultural factors have significant influence on employee productivity. As indicated, none of these studies considered the influence socio-cultural factors have on staff competencies, not to mention the cumulative mediation role of staff satisfaction and sense of belonging on the influence socio-cultural factors have on staff competencies.

Most of the literature on public universities' socio-cultural factors and staff competencies seem to be biased towards management and junior staff while senior staff are somewhat overlooked (Boon et al., 2013; Saani & Tawiah, 2017; Saani, 2021). Also, the few research works on employee competencies did not look at the predicting role of socio-cultural factors from the perspectives of public universities' staff in a developing country like Ghana (Boon et al., 2013; Gull et al., 2021), not to mention the possible mediating roles of staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness.

The indicated paucity of evidences about socio-cultural factors and their influence on senior staff competencies presents a critical literature gap that ought to be filled. Therefore, the current study contributes to the bridging of this gap by examining some of the ways by which senior staff competencies such as proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking ability can be improved significantly to help enhance their productivity.

Overall, this study contributes to narrowing the lacunas in the literature as indicated earlier by developing a model to better explain the dynamics of socio-cultural factors and senior staff competencies, taking into consideration the mediating role of staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness hierarchically. Furthermore, an understanding of socio-cultural factors involved in staff competencies will be crucial for management of public universities to improve the happiness and competencies of staff. This would improve the well-being of senior staff as well as the quality of work they do.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The conceptual model links key variables to explain how socio-cultural factors of public universities affect staff competencies, taking into consideration the hierarchical mediating role of staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness. From the literature review, it is apparent that socio-cultural factors, as a composite variable, improve staff competencies significantly (Ajayi, 2015; Mutegi, 2016; Masovic, 2018; Julius & Maru, 2020; Nwodo et al., 2020; Gull et al., 2021). Specifically, Ajayi found that majority of teachers require basic competencies in several areas of environmental issues. This means, to ensure environmental sustainability, there is the need to help boost staff competencies through effective environmental education. On the basis of the findings from related literature one may infer that socio-cultural factors may have significant predicting effects on staff competencies.

The argument of the study was reinforced by the assumptions of the social exchange theory. Basically, expected socio-cultural benefits associated with working in public universities may influence staff to share their knowledge with others (Babalola & Omotayo, 2017) and also be satisfied with the system. This dynamic may influence the staff to develop strong sense of belongingness to the universities and in the long-run enhance their levels of competencies. This may mean that senior staff can demonstrate high levels of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability at the workplace as a result of their satisfaction with the socio-cultural factors of the universities and the strong sense of belongingness they have towards the universities (Nazir, Qun, Hui & Shafi, 2018). That is, when socio-cultural factors within the various public universities are able to ginger senior staff satisfaction and sense

of belongingness. This phenomenon will influence the staff to pay back by being proactive, innovative and risk-takers, as presented in Figure 1.

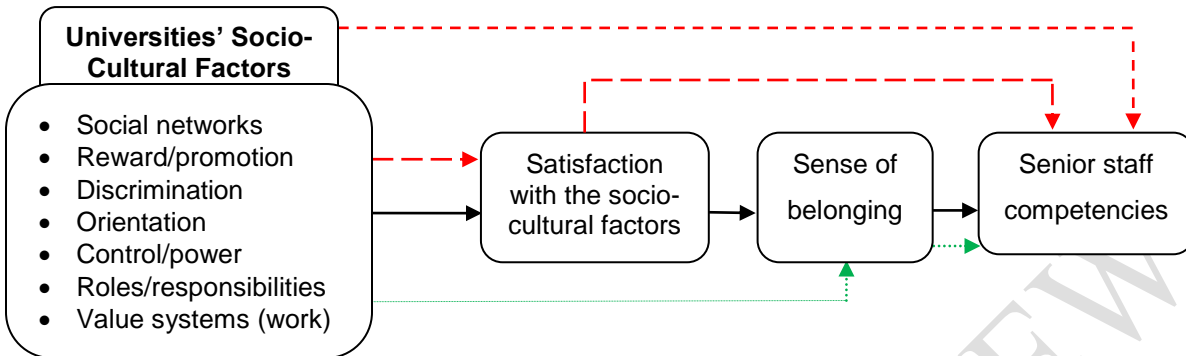


Figure 1: Direct and Indirect Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors on Senior staff Competencies
Source: Author's construct (2021).

As indicated in Figure 1, the influence can become more potent and stronger when staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness are considered (Ismail, 2016; Abou-Hashish, 2017; Bayona & Gona-Legaz, 2017). The first assumption was that universities' socio-cultural factors can influence senior staff competencies significantly. This assumption was based on the conclusions of Mutegi (2016), Julius and Maru (2020) and Nwodo et al. (2020). Mutegi indicated that social-cultural diversity has significant influence on employees' attitude towards performance. Also, Nwodo et al. (2020) found that there is a significant influence of culture on employee productivity. Furthermore, Julius and Maru (2020) concluded that socio-cultural factors immensely influence and relate to entrepreneurial performance. For employees to be productive or increase their performance, they must be able to demonstrate meaningful level of corporate entrepreneurship competencies such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability (Boon et al., 2013; Vargas-Halabí et al., 2017; Gull et al., 2021).

Within the context of social exchange theory, Saani and Tawiah (2017) indicated that staff satisfaction in the kind of compensation they are exposed to can mediate the influence compensation packages have on their performance. Bayona and Gona-Legaz (2017) also made submissions which seem to suggest that socio-cultural factors can help raise staff commitment in public universities. In the examination of social exchange relationships, Nazir et al. (2018) also indicated that affective commitment can help boost staff innovative behaviour through perceived organisational support. Deductions from these related works may mean that staff sense of belongingness to the universities can help boost the influence socio-cultural factors have on staff competencies. On the bases of these assertions, the second, third and fourth hypotheses were formulated. The assumptions of the study were as follows:

H₀1: Socio-cultural factors of public universities have no statistically significant direct influence on their senior staff competencies.

H₀2: Staff satisfaction is not able to significantly mediate the influence socio-cultural factors have on staff competencies.

H₀3: Staff sense of belongingness is not able to significantly mediate the influence socio-cultural factors have on staff competencies.

H₀4: Staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness are not able to significantly mediate in a hierarchical manner the influence socio-cultural factors have on staff competencies.

The study assumes that the forces within cultures and societies that affect the thoughts, feeling and behaviours of staff within public universities (socio-cultural factors) have influence on their competencies. However, this influence becomes stronger when the staff are satisfied with the socio-cultural factors which may lead to a significant increase in their sense of belongingness to the universities. These dynamics cumulatively will help enhance the proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking ability of the staff.

As depicted in Figure 1, the independent variables, which were the seven socio-cultural factors, were adapted from the works of Amoah and Afranie (2014), Mutegi (2016), Masovic (2018), Odanga

(2018), Julius and Maru (2020), and Nwodo et al. (2020). These factors were measured quantitatively using discrete scale items. Staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness were treated as hierarchical mediators. The thrust of the argument is that, socio-cultural factors can predict staff competencies directly or indirectly. This means, when common traditions, habits, patterns and beliefs within the universities are perceived positively by staff, it will lead to an increase in the pleasurable or positive emotional response defining the degree to which the staff are happy with what they do or their stay in the university. This dynamics will cumulatively boost their attachment and ability to identify themselves with the universities which will in turn increase their proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking ability significantly.

3. METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted the positivists' philosophical orientation which culminated into the usage of quantitative approach. This approach was used to collect quantitative data. However, in relation to the design, descriptive cross sectional was used. This design was used in order to appreciate better the research problem (Rosen, 2019), unveil in-depth knowledge on the issues and gain deeper knowledge of the problem (Howitt & Cramer, 2020).

3.1 Population and Sampling Procedure

In relation to the population, only permanent staff in the various public universities in Ghana were considered. In Ghana, public universities are those that are created by a legislative act and are usually governed by the university council (National Council for Tertiary Education [NCTE], 2020). The university council is the highest decision-making body and is made up of government appointees, academic staff representatives, representatives from university unionised groups, and students' representatives. All public universities in Ghana have established rules (statute) which management uses to run them. Currently, 13 public autonomous universities are recognised by the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). The accessible population was all permanent senior staff of three autonomous public universities in Ghana, one from each of the three zones: northern, middle and southern zones. In each of the zones, emphasis was on a premier university. The three universities selected purposively and the number of senior staff in each university are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Senior Staff of Three Public Universities in Ghana

Zones	Institution	Central Administration Teaching Departments and Support Units						Grand Total		
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Southern	UG	441	416	857	457	389	846	898	805	1,703
Middle	KNUST	269	155	424	424	301	725	693	456	1,149
Northern	UDS	100	91	191	71	45	116	171	136	307
Grand Total		810	662	1,472	952	735	1,687	1,762	1,397	3,159

Source: National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE, 2020)

Where *M* = Male, *F* = Female and *T* = Total

A sample of 356 was used. This sample was based on the recommendations of most researchers who indicated on the basis of a tested formula that a sample of 5 – 10 percent of an accessible population in a survey is appropriate (Yamane, 1967; Kelly, 2016). The sample used (11.3% of accessible population) was appropriate because it satisfies the recommendations of Yamane and Kelly with regard to sample techniques. The sample was redistributed proportionally for fair representation on the basis of the accessible population. The sample used was appropriate since the senior staff were perceived to be homogeneous and representative enough when recommended sample and proportional random sampling procedure were used. The sample distribution is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Sample Distribution of Senior Staff of Three Public Universities

Zones	Institution	Central Administration and Support Units						Grand Total		
		Teaching Departments								
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Southern	UG	50	47	97	52	44	96	102	91	193
Middle	KNUST	30	18	48	48	33	81	78	51	129
Northern	UDS	11	10	21	8	5	13	19	15	34
Grand Total		91	75	166	108	82	190	199	157	356

Source: Constructed from National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE, 2020)

Where M = Male, F = Female and T = Total

In selecting the respondents, six (6) sample frames were created, two for each of the universities using Microsoft Excel 2016. The computer random number technique was used to select the respondents. In the selection process, I first identified each participant in the frame which I constructed using staff assigned numbers. I assigned numbers to each of the names of the staff for purpose of anonymity and easy selection. In each of the universities, two sample frames were created, one for males and the other for females. The positions of the numbers were used to select the staff whose list were collected and used to create the frames. Respondents who were selected but were not available to provide data were replaced by doing another selection using the same procedure. The process continued until the required number was obtained. The senior staff of the universities constituted the unit of analysis for the study.

3.2 Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure

A survey was the instrument used. The survey was considered fitting for the review since it gave a much faster method for getting the data from a relatively large literate populace. The survey comprised of five (5) sections. The first section was used to collect data on staff background characteristics (gender, institution & assigned unit/department) using three (3) items. The second section was used to gather data on socio-cultural factors of the universities. Three (3) items/statements each were used to gather data on the seven dimensions of socio-cultural factors. These dimensions were social networks, reward/promotion, discrimination, orientation, control/power, roles/responsibilities and work value systems. The third and fourth sections of the questionnaire were used to gather data on staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness using seven (7) close-ended items each. The fifth section was used to collect data on staff competencies such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability, using three (3) items each. Responses to the items, with regard to sections B, C, D and E were estimated mathematically using seven-point stapel scale such that negative three (-3) addresses the most disagreed response while positive three (3) addresses the most agreed consent to the items. Respondents were supposed to address inquiries as per how it applies to them as senior staff of the universities.

To work on the legitimacy and unwavering quality of the survey, a pre-test was conducted at University of Cape Coast using 65 permanent senior staff. The dependability coefficients attained from the survey ranges from .706 to .873, which were deemed reliable (Mukherjee, Sinha & Chattopadhyay, 2018). To ensure truthfulness of the items used in the questionnaire, I established their content, face and construct validities. That is, I ensured that the items in the questionnaire were able to collect data that measured the variables appropriately as intended. The construct validity was obtained using confirmatory factor analysis.

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the office of the registrar and the local unions of the senior staff were contacted with a letter for authorisation to conduct the study in the institution. Familiarisation visits were made by me to the three universities mainly for the confirmation of the numbers and other relevant information about the staff and the universities. With the help of three of my colleagues and three field assistants, I was able to collect the data within eight (8) weeks period. These field assistants were principal research assistants in the universities, as a result had satisfactory experience in regards to information assortment process. In this way, involving them as field assistants was proper. They were given preparation and direction, which made it more straightforward for them to regulate the surveys. The preparation programme included making sense of the goals of the review, how to distinguish and move toward respondents and manage the data.

During the administration of the questionnaire, the staff were briefed on the objectives of the study and the need to respond as frankly as possible to the items. I assured the respondents that there will be no risks associated with participating in the study, and that they will have access to the outcome of the study. The identity of the respondents remained anonymous throughout the study and no traceable information were collected. Participation was voluntary. Respondents were also assured that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any cost to them when they fill to do so. All respondents were to submit their filled questionnaire to their immediate boss or supervisor for onward submission to me. The last section of the questionnaire was to be filled by the immediate bosses or supervisors of the respondents since it bordered on their competencies at work. At the end of the data collection, I was able to retrieved 356 completed questionnaire print-outs from the immediate bosses or supervisors of the respondents, representing 100 percent response rate.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed quantitatively using inferential statistical tools. In the coding process, all items/statements that were inversely stated were inversely coded for consistency before entering or keying them into the software. Specifically, with the help of the software (IBM SPSS Version 23), I was able to use hierarchical multiple regression cum Hayes (2018) mediation analyses to analyse the data in order to test the stated hypotheses. These statistical tools were employed because the preliminary analysis showed that the distribution was normal with homogeneous respondents.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The basis of the first hypothesis was to examine the socio-cultural factors of public universities that influence senior staff competencies while the second, third and fourth hypotheses looked at the ways through which staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness are able to significantly mediate in a hierarchical manner the influence that may exist in the first assumption. The study variables were composite in nature and were made up of many items that were pooled together using average response values. As indicated in Table 3, the first model show that socio-cultural factors of the universities that contributed positively to staff competencies, in order of importance, were orientation ($B = .846$ [.016], $p = .000$), reward/promotion ($\beta = .091$ [.018], $p = .000$), discrimination ($\beta = .083$ [.033], $p = .000$), and work value systems ($\beta = .076$ [.036], $p = .000$). However, control/power ($\beta = -.043$ [.024], $p = .041$) contributed negatively to staff competencies while social networks and roles/responsibilities were non-significant predictors. Overall, socio-cultural factors of the universities alone were able to predict 48.4 percent of the staff competencies.

The results from Table 3 show that when the universities are able to use reward/promotion to motivate staff, this perceived desirables given in return for what the staff have done and also their advancement to a more senior or a higher rank will make them to be more creative, especially regarding the way their assigned work is done (Mutegi, 2016). Also, the level of stimulation and support received by senior staff from other staff during their first month of working with the university is able to make them more innovative. However, the level of work formation, the existence of rules and procedures and the importance of the hierarchy in the public universities contributed negatively to staff innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability. Thus, the degree to which control over the behaviour of senior staff is formalised and managed in the various public universities is not helping in boosting the staff innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking abilities.

Furthermore, the results may mean that the rate at which senior staff take initiative by acting rather than reacting to events becomes higher when their perceived desirables given to them by the university are high. Likewise, the level of stimulation and support received by senior staff is able to help enhance their ability to take the initiative by acting rather than reacting to events. Also, the way senior staff are treated differently through prejudices may lead to a significant increase in the rate at which they believe that damage or loss will occur in what they do at work. Likewise, the degree to which senior staff and other members of the university clearly delegate authorities within a highly defined structure and also the acceptable set of personal work principles and standards that the staff have and belief in them at work are able to contribute meaningfully to their risk-taking ability.

Table 3. Hierarchical Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors, Staff Satisfaction and Sense of Belongingness on Staff Competencies

Variables	Model I	Model II	Model III						
	Standardized Coefficients Beta (Std. Error)	Standardized Coefficients Beta (Std. Error)	Unstandardized Coefficients B Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta (β)		t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance VIF	
Social networks	.002 (.037) ^{**}	.009 (.033) ^{**}	.016 .033	.009		.485	.628	.882	1.134
Reward/Promotion	.091 (.018) ^{**}	.171 (.024) ^{**}	.112 .024	.168 ^{**}		4.738	.000	.264	3.791
Discrimination	.083 (.033) ^{**}	.077 (.029) ^{**}	.106 .030	.069 ^{**}		3.518	.000	.871	1.149
Orientation	.846 (.016) [*]	.726 (.016) ^{**}	.439 .016	.727 ^{**}		27.237	.000	.468	2.134
Control/Power	-.043 (.024) [*]	-.028 (.021) [*]	-.032 .021	-.029		-1.515	.131	.890	1.123
Roles/Responsibilities	.034 (.034) ^{**}	.036 (.030) ^{**}	.049 .030	.032		1.641	.102	.891	1.123
Value systems (work)	.076 (.036) ^{**}	.072 (.032) ^{**}	.114 .032	.069 ^{**}		3.537	.000	.882	1.133
Staff satisfaction		.395 (.033) ^{**}	.326 .033	.391 ^{**}		9.831	.000	.210	4.753
Sense of belongingness			.040 .028	.029		1.432	.153	.841	1.188
Constant	.894	.525	.479						
R	.540	.871	.922						
R Square	.484	.815	.851						
Adjusted R Square	.481	.812	.848						

Source: Field survey, 2021 **p < .01; *p < .05 (N = 356)

Dependent variables: Staff competencies

The findings that emerged from Table 3 show that socio-cultural factors such as reward/promotion, orientation, control/power, discrimination and value systems at work are able to predict senior staff competencies such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability. On the basis of this finding, I rejected the first hypothesis which states that socio-cultural factors of public universities have no statistically significant influence on their senior staff competencies because the evidence suggest otherwise. However, the influence can be described as not strong and that other factors have a chance of contributing 51.6 percent to staff competencies. The findings are in line with the assertion of Masovic (2018) who averred that socio-cultural factors are one of the main environmental factors that significantly affect the economic activity of multinational companies and their performance as well.

As depicted in Table 3, when staff satisfaction with the socio-cultural factors, which was the first mediator, was added to the independent variables, the total contribution increased to 81.5 percent, almost double. Staff level of satisfaction alone was able to contribute 39.5 percent when it was added into the first model. Nonetheless, staff sense of belongingness ($\beta = .029$ (.028), $p = .153$) to the university failed to contribute significantly to their competencies when it was added into the second mode, even though the total contribution increased from 81.5 percent to 85.1 percent. This means, the staff emotional need to affiliate with and be accepted by members of the university does not influence their competencies. As shown in models II and III of Table 3, staff satisfaction in the universities' socio-cultural factors can mediate the relationship between socio-cultural factors and the competency levels of senior staff. The findings support the argument that when staff assign positive meaning and importance to the social and cultural factors of their institution, they end up being satisfied which in turn help in enhancing their innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability (Saani, 2021).

After examining the possible mediators, the Hayes (2018) mediation analysis was employed to further examine the issues. The composite of socio-cultural factors of the public universities were treated as independent variable while the composite of staff competencies was treated as dependent variable. Staff satisfaction and sense of belongingness were the first and second mediators respectively. The results are presented in Table 4. As indicated in the table, only the first indirect effect (SCF -> Sat -> SC) was significant. This shows that the factors that determine the suitability of the universities working life and corporate culture for the staff are able to influence the staff competencies such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability. However, this influence is strongly mediated by the staff contentedness with the universities socio-cultural factors.

Table 4. Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Socio-Cultural Factors on Senior Staff Competencies

Total effect of X on Y					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
1.73	.09	18.55	.00	1.55	1.92
Direct effect of X on Y					
Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.99	.08	12.04	.00	.83	1.15
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:					
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
TOTAL	.74	.10	.56	.96	
Ind1	.75	.10	.57	.95	----- Significant
Ind2	.00	.02	-.03	.03	----- Not significant
Ind3	.00	.00	-.01	.01	----- Not significant
Indirect effect key:					
Ind1 SCF	->	Sat	->	SC	
Ind2 SCF	->	SB	->	SC	
Ind3 SCF	->	Sat	->	SB	-> SC

Source: Field survey, 2021

**p < .01; *p < .05

(N = 356)

Based on the findings that emerged from Table 4, I rejected the second hypothesis but failed to reject the third and fourth hypotheses. These decisions were made because it was only staff satisfaction that was able to mediate the relationship between socio-cultural factors of the universities and senior staff competencies as indicated in Table 4. Staff satisfaction is thus related to their work characteristics and they will evaluate their satisfaction level according to what they perceive as being important and meaningful to them (Abou-Hashish, 2017). The results support the assertion that apart from the

importance of social networks and reward/motivation, other attributes such as the role/responsibility that comes with the job, work value systems and the recognition one receives from work greatly influenced his/her job satisfaction (Abdulla et al., 2011; Abou-Hashish, 2017). This changing aspect of the staff largely influences their corporate entrepreneurship competencies such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability (Gull et al., 2021).

The tested and acceptable model of this study was that socio-cultural benefits associated with working in public universities are able to influence senior staff competencies. However, this dynamic becomes stronger when the staff are satisfied with the socio-cultural factors of the universities (Figure 2). However, the staff development of strong sense of belongingness to the universities does not necessary based on their satisfaction in the factors. This shows that senior staff can demonstrate high sense of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability at the workplace as a result of their satisfaction with the socio-cultural factors of the universities, but not their strong sense of belongingness they have towards the universities. As indicated in Figure 2, the tested argument is that when common traditions, habits, patterns and beliefs within the universities are perceived positively by staff, it will lead to an increase in the pleasurable or positive emotional response defining the degree to which the staff are happy with what they do or their stay in the university. This dynamic will increase their competencies significantly.

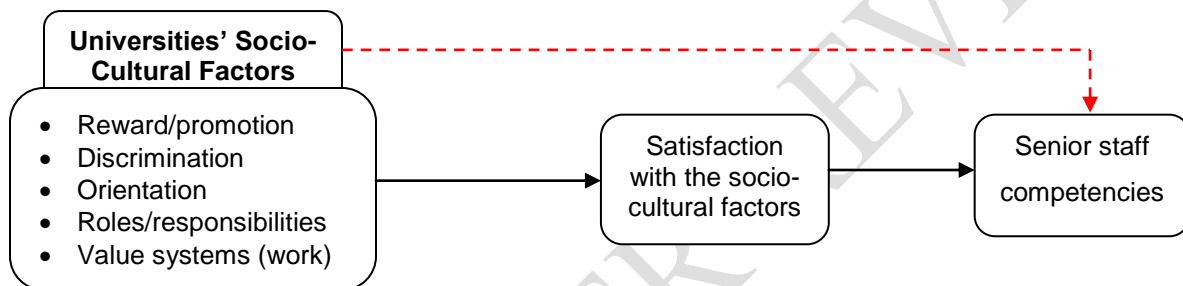


Figure 2: Tested Model

Source: Author's construct (2021).

As shown in Figure 2, it appears that socio-cultural factors of the universities do play important roles in promoting senior staff competencies. However, this could only be achieved strongly if we ensure that appropriate socio-cultural factors are being developed or shaped in the universities that matched both managerial and organisational values, attitudes and behaviours. These findings support that of Nwodo et al. (2020) who indicated that social-cultural factors are able to influence employee productivity. The findings from the current study expand the argument by showing that staff socio-cultural factors are able to influence staff competencies better and stronger when the staff are satisfied with the socio-cultural factors. Similarly, the findings are consistent with that of Julius and Maru (2020) who examined the effects of socio-cultural factors on entrepreneurial performance. Their study revealed that socio-cultural factors such as value systems, social networks and orientation are able to influence profitability and also innovativeness. It, therefore, imply that attractive socio-cultural factors can lead to competencies.

5. CONCLUSION

As previously pointed out, public universities are corporate entities with some specific social responsibilities; as a result, they do not operate in a vacuum but rather in an ever changing environment. Therefore, their performances are influenced largely by the levels of their staff competencies, a phenomenon which is mould and shape by the common traditions, habits, patterns and beliefs present in the various public universities. The socio-cultural factors of the universities are the most remarkable drivers behind the way the staff make decisions in the university and they significantly influence their satisfaction with the work they do. These factors, particularly, orientation, reward/promotion, discrimination free culture and work value systems are able to significantly boost staff level of competencies such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability when the staff are pleased with them. In a nutshell, as long as management of public universities are able to enhance the powers within the universities' cultures and societies that affect staff views, felling, and attitudes regarding socio-

cultural factors of the universities, it will translate into the staff happiness in the work they do. Consequently, their contentment in the socio-cultural factors will sequentially manifest in an increase in the staff ability to demonstrate corporate entrepreneurship competencies such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability, all other factors being the same.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The first implication of the study, theoretically, is that it provides a strategic framework based on socio-cultural dimensions that universities can use to boost staff competencies. The findings have led to the development of a new model which states that the socio-cultural dimensions such as reward/promotion, discrimination, orientation, roles/responsibilities and work value systems, together with staff satisfaction can be adopted as a strategy to influence staff competencies such as innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability. Then again, the findings imply that the assumptions of social exchange theory can be expanded by considering staff satisfaction and dissatisfaction. That is, for the staff to demonstrate meaningful level of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking ability as a result of the universities socio-cultural factors, the staff level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the factors must be taking into consideration. This is so because their satisfaction mediates the relationship between the socio-cultural factors of the university and the levels of their competencies.

Also, in relation to practice and policy, the findings imply that management of universities must put structures in place to ensure discrimination free work environment with supportive social networking among all members of the university. This can be done through regular organisation of inter-staff and inter-departmental social re-orientation programmes and familiarisation party with sporting and gaming activities. This intervention can be used as an administrative support system to help boost staff happiness level. Also, as part of their motivation policy, management of the universities should factor-in staff praising and recognition for good work done in their orientation programmes and services to newly appointed or elected head of units/departments. The findings also imply that there is the need for equity in the reward/promotion system of the universities. This will ensure that staff are not discriminated on the basis of ascriptive factors such as gender, disability, ethnicity, religion and age. In addition, management of the universities can rollout policies and programmes to review promotion criteria, requirements and processes in order to make them more flexible without compromising on quality. In doing so, emphasis should be on mentorship, networking and work value systems. Again, management should ensure that the staff feel that they matter and that their roles/responsibilities and contributions are crucial and indispensable for the success of the universities. Likewise, they must ensure that orientations of staff are made a regular feature of the university's life.

Ethical Approval:

As per international standard or university standard written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

Consent

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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UNDER PEER REVIEW

APPENDIX

Questionnaire for Respondents

TOPIC: Socio-Cultural Factors and Competencies of Senior Staff in Public Universities: The Hierarchical Mediation Role of Staff Satisfaction and Sense of Belonging

Dear Sir /Madam,

This questionnaire has been designed to solicit information for a research work being undertaken on the above topic. The various senior staff within Ghanaian public universities have been selected as a unit of analysis. You have been selected as one of the respondents. The survey is completely voluntary; however, your co-operation and opinions are very important to the success of the study and will be kept strictly confidential. Please kindly respond to the questionnaire by filling in as appropriate. The information given through this questionnaire is purely for academic purposes, but the recommendations may be beneficial to your institution. Please do not indicate your name on the questionnaire.

Consent to Participate in Research:

I understand that any information I share will remain confidential and that when the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal my identity or that of my institution. I am eighteen years of age or older. By agreeing to continue with the survey and submit a response to the researcher in question, I am giving consent to participate in this research work.

I consent to participate in this survey: ☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION A: Background Characteristics of Respondents

Please tick (✓) or provide responses to the questions which follow:

1. Please indicate your gender by ticking in the relevant box
 - a. Male []
 - b. Female []
2. Indicate your university
 - a. University of Ghana, Lagon []
 - b. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology []
 - c. University for Development Studies []
3. Indicate your assigned Unit/Department
 - a. Central administration and support units []
 - b. Teaching departments []

In relation to sections B, C and D, please indicate your response to the items by writing in the space provided using the indicated seven-point stapel scale with its corresponding numerical values with regard to its lowness or highness. Note that negative three (-3) represents or indicates the highest disagreement to the listed statements while three (3) represents the strongest agreement to the statements.

SECTION B: Socio-Cultural Factors

Social Network	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
1. In my university, I feel safe when I am around my co-workers.	[] [] [] [] [] [] []
2. In this university, I am able to collaborate with like-minded individuals.	[] [] [] [] [] [] []

3. The culture of my university creates room for staff to develop relationships with others with whom they might not otherwise be able to connect.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Reward/Promotion	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
1. I am happy with the kind of recognition given to me in this university as a staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. In this university, staff who have demonstrated high levels of competencies in what they do are giving extra reward.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. In this university, the procedures for promotion for all staff are clearly stated in a published document.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Discrimination	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
1. In my university there is prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or cliques on the grounds of sex, ethnicity or disability.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. In this university, information is shared without discrimination.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. In this university there is inequality in the appointments and promotions criteria on the basis of disability, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Orientation	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
1. The orientation given me when I first entered this university has prepared me well for my work.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. As a senior staff, I feel proud of being in this university.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. In this university the staff recognise that no one person can succeed without the contribution of others.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Control/Power	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
1. In this university there are rules and regulations that guide staff in their work and behaviour.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. As a senior staff, I am conversant with the rules and regulations in this university.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Rules and regulations in university are reviewed from time to time to make them relevant to the university community's values.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Role/Responsibilities	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
1. As a senior staff, I understand what I am supposed to do and what I am not supposed to do in this university.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. In my university, there are clearly defined channels of communication.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. In this university responsibilities and roles are equitably shared.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Value Systems (Work)	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
1. The work values of my university are consistent with my work values/principles (honesty, service, self-respect, respect for others, peace, and/or success).	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am very punctual to work in this university.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Professionalism is highly cherished in this university.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION C: Satisfaction with the Socio-Cultural Factors

Statements	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
1. There is good working relationship among staff in this university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
2. I am satisfied with the chances for advancement on my job in this university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
3. I am satisfied with the various form of reward given to me in this university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
4. I am satisfied with the various forms of supervision in this university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
5. I am satisfied with the non-discrimination culture in this university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
6. I am satisfied with the way university policies on roles and responsibilities are put into practice.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
7. I am satisfied with the work value systems of the university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]

SECTION D: Sense of Belongingness

Statements	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
1. I will be willing to spend the rest of my career in this university because I support its goals and ideals.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
2. As a result of the recognition I get from my boss/the university, I take delight in discussing the university with people outside it.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
3. I am proud to identify myself with this university because of its work value systems.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
4. I am proud to remain in this university because I am happy with the orientation I received in this university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
5. It would be very hard for me to leave my university right now as a result of its non-discrimination culture.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
6. I recognise that my role/responsibilities is very crucial and indispensable in achieving the goals of this university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
7. I would not leave this university right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]

SECTION D: Staff Competencies

Innovativeness	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
1. I am able to continually develop new ways of doing things in my university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
2. The services I render or deliver are perceived to be novel by stakeholders.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
3. I constantly develop in-house solutions to improve my work schedules and responsibilities in this university.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
4. The university encourages me to think and behave in original and novel ways rather than imitating.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
Proactiveness	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
1. I usually act in anticipation of future problems, needs or changes.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
2. I prefer to "step-up" and get things going on at work rather than sit and wait for someone else to do it.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
3. My university is actively engage in the corporate environment, not passively observing.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]
4. My university constantly foreseeing potential environment changes and future demands ahead of its competitors.	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]	[[[]]]

Risk-taking ability	-3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3
1. I am familiar with the university's internal financial control systems.	[][][][][][]
2. Whatever I do, I always subject myself to the university's internal control systems to minimise risk.	[][][][][][]
3. I regularly ensure that risk factors are assessed to minimise uncertainty in what I do.	[][][][][][]
4. In this university, individual risk takers are often recognised for their willingness to champion new projects, whether eventually successful or not.	[][][][][][]

Thank you for completing the survey. I appreciate your cooperation.