

ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND LENGTH OF SERVICES: DESCRIPTIVE AND CORRELATION ANALYSES

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Abstract

The issue of overwork due to numerous responsibilities among academicians is getting a serious attention in educational literature. Academicians have to fulfil many responsibilities simultaneously, including teaching, conducting research, writing, publication, holding administrative posts, involvement in committees and community services, and other professional works which may improve the image of their university. Thus, the objectives of this study are to examine the academicians' perceptions on their academic and non-academic responsibilities and investigate the relationship between the respondents' length of service with academic workloads and administrative posts. This study has used self-administered questionnaires, which have been distributed to 391 lecturers from various faculties on the Campus of UiTM Cawangan Terengganu. Results obtained from 119 academicians have indicated that a majority of the respondents have chosen to be in the teaching-and-learning track for their performance-evaluation purpose. This is consistent with the findings that they have spent most of their working hours to fulfil their academic workloads. In addition, the non-academic responsibilities have required them to work beyond office hours in performing their duties. Overall, the findings of this study have shown that most academicians have spent more time on the academic responsibilities. On the other hand, the correlation has revealed that the longer the length of service of the respondents, the more academic workloads will be given and the higher their chances to be appointed as administrators. This has implied that the academicians will be responsible for higher positions and a wide range of tasks as they become more experienced and at a senior level.

Keywords: Academicians, Academic Responsibilities, Non-academic Responsibilities, Academic Workloads

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Introduction

Teaching profession is a noble job and a very unique process where knowledge is transferred from one person to another. As known, academicians are responsible to educate their students and improve their own knowledge and expertise in ensuring that the knowledge delivered is kept updated and relevant to the current and future development. Their daily activities are meeting teaching hours allocated, completing syllabus, preparing teaching materials and continuous assessments, setting and marking final examination questions and papers, and supervising students' project papers. In addition, the academicians are also expected to update their knowledge, teaching skills, and techniques that meet students' learning styles in the era of new millennia (Awang, Ahmad, & Zin, 2010). Nowadays, teaching and learning are no longer concentrated solely on the traditional methods of lectures and textbook-based but requires the academicians to adopt the elements of technologies, such as e-learning and ICT. Besides, the students are required to conduct activities, such as field trips, case studies, problem-based learning, and online courses, where their involvement will be evaluated as their continuous assessments (Rahman & Avan, 2016). Thus, the academicians must equip themselves with new teaching methods and be creative in evaluating the students' performances. However, this increases their burdens to attend interrelated courses and develop course contents by using sophisticated software.

These days, the role of the academicians has required them to be involved in publications, community services, students' activities, consultations, and administrative services to both the profession and the community. Besides, the academicians are also expected to get involved in the process of disseminating knowledge as a contribution to the society by conducting studies. According to Rahman and Avan (2016), academicians should publish papers in well-reputed journals for performance appraisal. This is because teaching and research have remained to be core university functions universally since they are interdependent (Houston, Meyer, & Paewai, 2006) and as a consequence, academicians are expected to excel at both teaching and research (Coate & Williams, 2001). Thus, the academicians should not only teach but also need to focus on research, writing, and publication. However, too much time getting involved in administrative activities has left the academicians with less time spent on research and professional development (Paull & Sharafizad, 2011; Rahman & Avan, 2016).

Having an average of 12 to 24 hours of teaching loads per week has demanded the academicians a lot of time to settle down academic and non-academic responsibilities. A few studies have reported that most of academicians have experienced to work more than normal working hours due to work overloads. For example, a study by Forgasz and Leder (2006) has indicated that academicians appear to work 55 hours per week instead of the normal working hours, which is 40 hours. This has been supported by Timms, Graham, and Cottrell (2007) who have reported that 97.5 per cent of the respondents fall under a few categories associated with working for long, very long, and extremely long hours, which is more than 40 hours per week. Additionally, most of the respondents interviewed in this study have also stated that they have been given too many pressures where the job is placed as the first priority, which has resulted in the 'unbalanced nature' of workloads.

Both academic and non-academic responsibilities must be fulfilled since there are certain criteria which need to be met for a yearly performance evaluation and career enhancement. Unfortunately, the academicians have had no choice but to meet all the duties placed on their shoulders. The issue of overwork due to numerous responsibilities among academicians is getting an attention in most education literatures. There are various commitments the academicians need to juggle, for example, administrative posts to be held and committee responsibilities to be delivered to the management, upgrading their own achievement for better career path through research and publication, and, the most important one, ensuring that their students' results are excellent. In addition, the academicians must also get involved in works related to the community and profession, which may build a good reputation for their university. Basarudin, Yeon, Yaacob, and Rahman (2016) have addressed that academicians have owed responsibilities to the members of society in terms of the contribution of knowledge and social welfare. Thus, the academicians have been expected to share their expertise and help local people in the aspects of economic and social development. In meeting these demands, the academicians may also need to focus on their priorities, which should always be the academic responsibilities.

Although to some academicians, the present scenario is a usual phenomenon which needs to be adapted positively, others may have a negative opinion on academic and non-academic responsibilities that have to be performed. In seeing this issue, Basarudin et al. (2016) have asserted that the role of academicians has extended beyond teaching and time spent on research activities. Multi-tasks are performed at the expense of the instruction of students or the core duties of the academicians. Therefore, the primary objectives of this study is to investigate the perception of the academicians on the academic and non-academic responsibilities to avoid negative effects on their performances in educating the students. It is hoped that the result of this study may assist the management in exploring the academicians' perception on the academic and non-academic responsibilities. In addition to that, the findings of this study added the empirical evidence on the interactions of the academicians' length of service with their academic workloads and administrative post.

Methodology

This study has been carried out to identify the perceptions of the academicians on the academic and non-academic responsibilities. Moreover, this study has also been conducted to investigate the relationship between the respondents' length of service with academic workloads and administrative posts. The primary data have been collected to achieve these objectives. The survey questionnaire consists of three (3) sections. Section A comprises the demographic profile of the respondents related to the information of gender, age, marital status, current position, and length of service. In Sections B and C, the respondents have been asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statements by using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = "strongly disagree", 3 = "neutral", and 5 = "strongly agree". The items included in the questionnaire have been adapted from Schulze (2006), Houston et al. (2006), and Rahman and Avan (2016). Meanwhile, Section B consists of 28 items designed to measure the academic responsibilities. The first part of Section B comprises academic workloads (15 items), supervision of students (2 items), research/writing/publication (5 items), and consultation projects (7 items). In the interim, Section C comprises 16 items developed to examine the non-academic responsibilities, which are administrators (7 items), internal and external examiner committees (5 items), and community services (4 items). The last part of questionnaire has required the respondents to evaluate their work and time balance.

The samples for this study consists of a group of academicians from various faculties in three (3) satellite campuses; Dungun, Bukit Besi, and Kuala Terengganu. The self-administered questionnaire has been distributed to these academicians and further analysed by using the SPSS Version 24. Out of 391 questionnaires distributed to the academicians, 119 (30%) usable responses have been returned. A reliability test of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient has been conducted to examine the internal consistency of the scale. The higher the value, the more consistent is the individual item score varying with the total score (Santos, 1999). Table 1 presents the reliability analysis for each element. These results have indicated that the variables have a good level of reliability. The descriptive data analysis has been conducted by calculating frequencies to describe the selected demographic characteristics and mean scores for determining the background of the respondents and their perceptions on the academic and non-academic responsibilities. Meanwhile, the Pearson Correlational analysis has also been used to test the relationship between academic workloads and administrative posts with the length of service.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha for Each Variable

Academic Responsibility	Cronbach's Alpha	Non-academic Responsibility	Cronbach's Alpha
Academic workloads	0.864	Administrator	0.985
Supervision of students	0.910	Internal/external committees	0.934
Research/writing/publication	0.829	Community service	0.951
Consultation projects	0.946		

Result and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented in two (2) sections. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in the first section as shown in Table 2, while the results of the analyses are presented in the second section.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Academicians

Description	Range	Freq.	%
Gender	Male	44	37
	Female	75	63
Age (number of years)	21-30	3	3
	31-40	54	45
	41-50	37	31
	51-60	14	12
	Not stated	11	9
Marital status	Single	18	15
	Divorced	1	1
	Married (no child)	13	11

	Married with child	87	73
Current position	Associate Professor (DM54)	2	2
	Senior lecturer (DM52)	55	46
	Lecturer (DM45)	49	41
	Lecturer (DM41)	2	2
	Not stated	11	9
Length of service in current university	Less than 5 years	12	10
	5 - <10 years	44	37
	10 - < 15 years	27	23
	15 - <20 years	18	15
	20 years and above	14	12
	Not stated	4	3
Track for performance evaluation	Teaching and learning	109	91
	Academic leadership	7	6
	Research	2	2
	Experienced practitioner	1	1

As seen in Table 2, the participants are 37 % male and 63% female. Concerning the age of the participants, most of them are between 31 to 40 years old (45%), 31% are between 41 to 50 years old, and 12% are between 51 to 60 years old. However, only 3% are between 21 to 30 years old. Most of the respondents are married (84%), 15% are single, and only 1% is divorced. Out of the 119 respondents, only 2% are associate professors, 46% are senior lecturers, and others are lecturers. In terms of the length of service, a majority of them (37%) are working between 5 to 10 years, 10% are working less than 5 years, 23% are working between 10 to 15 years, 15% are working between 15 to 20 years, and only 12% are working 20 years and above. Based on the track that the respondents have chosen to be evaluated, 91% of them are on the teaching-and-learning track, 6% are on the academic-leadership track, 2 % are on the research track, and the remaining 1% is on the experienced-practitioner track.

Table 3. Perceptions of Academicians on Their Academic Responsibilities

Academic responsibilities	Mean score	SD
<i>Academic Workloads</i>		
I usually respond to students' inquiries	4.229	.6432
I have adequate knowledge of subject matters in the courses I teach	4.160	.7363
I meet the deadlines in assessing the final-exam questions	4.093	.8436
I meet the deadlines in assessing the continuous assessments	4.076	.8453
<i>Supervision</i>		
The number of students I am expected to supervise is reasonable	3.288	1.4866
I allocate time to supervise students' final-year projects	3.126	1.4029
<i>Research/Writing/Publication</i>		
I allocate specific time to carry out my research duties	3.276	1.4029
I allocate time to write research proposals for applying for research grants	3.265	.9863
<i>Consultation/Expertise</i>		
I allocate time on consultation activities	2.833	1.0416
I allocate time to meet industries for the purpose of securing consultancy projects	2.759	1.0449

Table 3 summarises the highest mean scores of the respondents' perceptions on their academic responsibilities. The mean scores for the items identified have ranged from 4.229 for academic workloads to 2.750 for consultation projects. The result has depicted that most of the respondents have agreed that their core responsibility is teaching compared to supervision, research/writing/publication, and consultation. For academic workload, the highest mean is 4.229, which shows that the academicians always respond to their students' enquiries. This is consistent with their daily activities, which require them to communicate with their students via face-to-face or virtual medium of communication. For the second item, the result has shown that the respondents have also

allocated their time on supervision for the students. However, the mean score is not that high since only certain faculties have had final-year projects to be supervised. Regarding the research/writing/publication, the mean score of 3.276 has depicted that not all the respondents have allocated their time on research. Meanwhile, the mean score of 2.836 for consultation has signified that most of the respondents have allocated least time on consultation projects. The result is consistent with their performance-evaluation track as 91% have chosen to be evaluated under the teaching-and-learning track. Therefore, it is evident that the respondents have allocated most of their time on teaching compared to other responsibilities.

Table 4. Perceptions of Academicians on Their Non-academic Responsibilities

Non-academic Responsibilities	Mean score
<i>Administrators (54 respondents)</i>	
My administrative post requires me to prepare a lot of administrative paper works	3.962
My administrative post requires me to spend most of my office hours assisting other people	3.962
My administrative post requires me to work beyond office hours	3.962
<i>Internal/external committees (97 respondents)</i>	
I have to spend many hours for attending committee meetings	3.362
My involvement in committee requires me to work beyond office hours	3.307
<i>Community services (41 respondents)</i>	
My involvement in community services requires me to work beyond office hours	3.629
My involvement in community services requires me to prepare a lot of administrative paper works	3.419

The highest mean scores for the academicians' perceptions on their non-academic responsibilities are shown in Table 4. Out of the 119 respondents, 54 of them have held administrative posts, while 97 respondents have been appointed as the internal or external committee members, and only 41 respondents have got involved in community services. The mean scores for the items identified have ranged from 3.962 for administrators to 3.307 for committees. Based on the above results, the respondents have agreed that they need to work beyond office hours to carry out the administrative duties. On top of that, the non-academic responsibilities have also required them to prepare a lot of paper works. This shows that they have to work longer hours in order to fulfil their daily academic workloads and administrative works. This is in line with the extant literature that has indicated that academicians' duties can only be completed by working beyond working hours (Barkhuizen, and Rothmann, 2008; Leathwood & Read, 2013; Gill, 2014; & Pereira, 2015).

Table 5. Relationship between Length of Service and Academic Workloads

	Length of service
Academic workloads	Pearson Correlation .303**
	Sig. (2-tailed) .001

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

In the interim, Table 5 presents the relationship between the length of service and the academic workloads. Based on the Pearson Correlation, the result is significant (.303), $p = .001$. The result has shown that there is a significant relationship between the length of service and academic workloads. This finding has suggested that the longer the length of service, the more academic workloads are given. This is parallel with a study conducted by Kyvik (2013) who has found that older staff have spent more time on works and tasks compared to their younger colleagues. In addition, based on findings by Rahman and Avan (2016), it has been suggested that less workloads should be given to youngers staff so that they can focus more time on research and training in order to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Similarly, Kenny, Fluck, & Jetson (2012) found that younger academics preferred less workload to pursue their research passion.

Table 6. Relationship between Length of Service and Administrator

Administrator	Length of service	
	Pearson Correlation	.281*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.039

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In the meantime, Table 6 presents the relationship between the length of service and administrative posts. Based on the Pearson Correlation, the result is significant (.281), $p = .005$. The result has revealed that there is a significant relationship between the length of service and administrative posts. This shows that administrative positions are typically held by seniors compared to junior staff, which means that experienced academicians are preferable to be appointed as administrators. The result is in line with a study conducted by Ariffin, Ramli, Abdul, Husain, and Wahab (2011).

Conclusion

The present findings offer some insights that can be useful for the administrators of universities in determining the academic workloads of academicians. Teaching and research have remained the core university functions, but somehow these have been distracted by other tasks related to administrative activities, which in turn, affects their research competencies. The result provided evidence that the academicians have to work longer hours in fulfil their responsibilities. In addition, the correlation result between workload and administrative post with academicians' length of service implied that experienced staff will hold greater responsibility as compared to junior staff. As a conclusion, knowing the academicians' perception on the academic and non-academic responsibilities will be useful for the universities as to develop positive working culture so that positive educational outcome can be created.

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