EFFECTS OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE AND ACADEMIC IDENTITY TOWARDS FACULTY JOB STRESS, SATISFACTION, AND PERFORMANCE IN TAIWAN

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Abstract

For the past two decades, differentiation and competition among higher education institutions have given rise to various changes within university governance. In Taiwan, challenges brought forth by the global university rankings and combined with the deceasing number of incoming enrolees due to low birth-rates have resulted in the need for institutions to perform beyond their traditional roles and thus, created the current multi-functioning faculty. Similarly, the myriad change that is happening within higher education has also resulted in a shift of the university work environment from a relative autonomous academic practice to externally dictated performative priorities. Within such an environment, faculty are now faced with conflicting role and purpose. Hence, their academic identity is now in question. In effect, stress and burnout among faculty have now become a common issue. With these having said, the current study shall seek to understand how faculty job stress, satisfaction, and performance are affected by the changing university governance and academic identity. Using a simplified version of the Changing Academic Profession Questionnaire; a total of 457 academics (311 male and 146 female faculty) in Taiwan were surveyed. Data were encoded and analysed using ordinary least square (OLS) multiple linear regressions. Dependent variables for the models were job stress, job satisfaction, and faculty performance, while the independent variable was academic identity, classified as either dual (combination of research and teaching), research, or teaching. Teaching identity was used as a criterion variable. In addition, demographic and academic background, current work conditions, and university culture and governance (affiliation, empowerment, collegiality, and managerialism) were also included. OLS multiple regressions results show that job stress is related to the market-like academic culture, top-down management style, and dual identities of faculty. Furthermore, findings also showed that younger academics, faculty who are not professors, and either research or teaching preference only faculty have higher tendencies to get stressed. In addition, results also showed that job satisfaction is very much related to faculty affiliation, empowerment, and collegiality. In addition, findings also showed that the more top-down like the management are, the more dissatisfied are the faculty. Interestingly, results also showed that tenured faculty tends to exhibit higher dissatisfaction than their non-tenured counterparts. Lastly, outcome performance is found to be much related to time spent on research. In sum, results showed that the current academia is more suited for individuals who have dual academic identities, as compared to those who focused only on either research or teaching. These are all brought about by the current neoliberal management strategies within Taiwan universities. In addition, the top-down management style is not popular among faculty, while collegiality is also not helping with their performance. Interestingly, tenured faculty are also not satisfied with their job, indicating the increased need for compliance with neoliberal management policies are making them unhappy. Lastly, as the pressure to perform within universities increases, changes within institutional governance are but inevitable.

Keywords: research teaching nexus, neoliberal management practices, changing academic profession, faculty affiliation, collegiality.

1 INTRODUCTION

Differentiation and competition of higher education institutions is not new [1]. In Taiwan and elsewhere around the globe, universities are considered to be in constant competition [2-4]. Worsen by the effects of the university league tables [5]; competitions right now are mostly being shaped with the intention of changing the status within the global rankings [6]. In addition, Taiwan universities are also challenged by the deceasing number of incoming enrollees [7], while at the same time striking to make

a balance between sustainability, performance, and education quality [8]. However, no matter how difficult and challenging are the effects of the global, national, and local implications of the marketization and/or commercialization of universities [9], institutions still needs to perform their basic function.

Within the higher education academia today, academics do played an important role in the basic university functions of teaching, research, and management of the institution. As the saying goes a *university is only as good as its faculty* … [10], signifying that academics are important to the success of universities. In contrast, some do note that research is not the only path to academic success [11], while non-academics are also able to provide positive impacts towards institutional performance [12]. More important, studies have shown that management practices also have a direct impact on faculty performance [13]. However, with the recent drive for universities to perform in a certain direction, the *research-teaching nexus* is compromised. The research-teaching nexus is the balance or harmony between the two major functions of faculty; research and teaching [14]. For instance, faculty incentives and promotion related policies are highly correlated with teaching and research outputs. Hence, creating the current multi-role (teaching, research, and administration/management) nature of university faculty [15], in effect, burnout among academics have now become a common issue [16]. To add, studies have correlated the stress and burnout among faculty to neoliberal management practices within university governance [17-20].

This so called neoliberal management or *new managerialism* is the phenomena wherein universities are focusing more on market-driven competitiveness [21]. Since the 1980s, institutions have gradually shifted from the previous open culture of intellects to the performance driven environment [22]. This corporate like culture within the academe has been criticized as dangerous towards the purpose of higher education [23]. In other words, the myriad changes that is happening within higher education has resulted in a shift of the university work environment from a relative autonomous academic practice to externally dictated performative priorities. Within such an environment, faculty are now faced with conflicting role and purpose [24]. Hence, their *academic identity* is now in question. In Taiwan, all faculty are expected to teach and do research. However, the current changes within university governance have triggered unexpected workloads and impacted work related stress [25]. Hence, an internal role conflict occurs. In essence, this continuing role conflicts have created the **misalignment** of academic identity and **blurring** work ideologies [26].

With these having said, the current study shall seek to understand how faculty job stress, satisfaction, and performance are affected by the changing university governance and academic identity. It is hoped that by understanding these issues, faculty should be able to further clarify the meaning and value of an academic profession. More important, provide academics with a sense of purpose towards their role within the university, which directly explains their performance. Lastly, results should be able to provide administrators with various insights for policy revision and university governance.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In viewing identity within an academic profession, some suggests that professions should be separated into the *trait* and *functionalist* models [27]. Traits are said to be the distinct characteristics of a university job. Some commonly used examples are *skill based on theoretical knowledge*, *adherence to a professional code of conduct*, *provision of training and education*, and many others. In addition, Macfarlane further associated the academic profession to the likings of an *intellectual leader*, which also possesses the traits of a role model, mentor, advocate, guardian, and ambassador [28]. Researchers of the professional trait model often identifies the characteristics of what is considered to constitute a 'true' or 'high status' profession as indicators [29, 30]. The functionalist is the *professional behaviors* in relation to the institution or to the society at large [24]. For instance, in an early literature four distinct attributes that constitute a functionalist approach to the academic profession, namely: 1) a high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge; 2) primary orientation to the community interest rather than to individual self-interest; 3) a high degree of self-control of behavior through codes of ethics internalized in the process of work socialization and through voluntary associations organized and operated by the work specialists themselves; and 4) a system of rewards that is primarily a set of symbols of work achievement and thus ends in themselves, not means to some end of individual self-interest (pp. 671-672) [31]. Note that a functionalist approach is more focus on the relationship with the academic institution or community.

These early concepts of academic profession created the notion of identity as much related with a high degree of self-control. However, with recent changes in the academic profession, the generally

perceived binary division of professional identities (academic and professional; same as teaching and research) is beginning to change [32, 33]. A less bounded form of professionals, which is best described as blended identities has emerged [34]. For some cases, faculty needs to constantly *juggle* from a triple-form of identity from researcher, teacher, and administrator [35]. Some to an even diverse multi-form of academic identity [28]. More important, with the uncertain conditions in higher education employment, some even deconstruct the academic profession, to the form of a *job* [36], which ultimately creates problem with the quality of teaching. This conflicting academic identity can also be explained as to being either *cosmopolitans* or *locals* [37]. *Cosmopolitans* are said to be loyal to their discipline of study, considered to be experts in a certain field of study, prefers research activities, quite high with regards to mobility, and considered to have an academic identity inclined towards their discipline. While, *locals* are said to be rather loyal to their institution, considered to possess general skills (teaching), prefers teaching activities, low in mobility, and considered to have an academic identity inclined towards their institution [38]. The dual perspective of academic identity is said to have distinct differences in terms of their degrees of influence, participation, propensity to either accept or reject institutional rules, and informal relations [37]. For instance, when a faculty that is inclined to be more cosmopolitan (discipline focused identity) is considered to be more mobile. This means that when certain favorable condition exists, that faculty has more tendencies to move to another university and work in the same field of discipline.

The trait and functionalist approach also encompasses the debate within management ideologies [32]. Currently, within the neoliberal management universities are either *congruent* (academic manager) or *incongruent* (managed academic). Congruent; meaning that the institution is more inclined to academic self-regulation, as compared to incongruent, wherein faculty activities are more directed by the institutional administration. More important, when faculty is misaligned with the institutional priorities, the *person-organization values* conflict arises [39]. Lastly, as the conflict in person-organization value increases, the notions of authenticity and success changes, hence, the formation of academic identity is affected [40]. In sum, the changes within university governance have transformed the seemingly discrete academic identity into a more diverse one, which inevitably affects ones perception of their career.

3 METHODOLOGY

From the previous theoretical background discussions, it is evident that academic identities are highly influenced by the various changes within the university governance [41, 42]. With these having said, the current study shall seek to understand how faculty job stress, satisfaction, and performance are affected by the changing university governance and academic identity. Using a simplified version of the *Changing Academic Profession* Questionnaire [14]; ; a total of 457 academics (311 male and 146 female faculty) in Taiwan were surveyed. Average age of faculty is 46 years old, while mean years of service is around 8 years. Data was encoded and analyzed using ordinary least square (OLS) multiple linear regressions. Dependent variables for models were job stress, job satisfaction, and faculty performance. The independent variable was academic identity, classified as either dual (combination of research and teaching), research, or teaching. Teaching identity was used as a criterion variable. In addition, demographic and academic background, current work conditions, and university culture and governance (affiliation, empowerment, collegiality, and managerialism) were also included. Table 1 shows the details of all the variables and measures.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

For predicting job related stress, OLS regression results revealed that the factors *age*, *top-down management style*, *rank*, *dual identity*, and *market-like culture*, all fit with the model significantly with $F(5, 325)=12.36$, $p=.000$. R^2 for the model was .16, and adjusted R^2 was .15. Together, those five variables contributed 16% in shared variability. Table 2 shows the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), unstandardized regression coefficients (B), standard error (SE), standardized regression coefficients (Beta), *t* values, and confidence intervals. With regards to the individual relationships between the independent variables and job stress, three factors *age*, *rank*, and *dual identity* have negative values. Signifying that **younger** academics, faculty who are **not** professors, and **either** research or teaching preference only faculty have higher tendencies to get stressed. Furthermore, *top-down management* and *market-like* institutional governance also contributed to the stress buildup of faculty.

Table 1. Variables and measures.

Variables		Measurements
Independent Variables		
Academic identity		Dual; Research; Teaching (criterion variable)[2, 3]
Personal	Gender	Male = 1; Female = 0[2, 3]
	Age	2018 – birth year[2]
	Marital status	Married/Partner = 1; Single = 0[2]
Academic	Rank	Professor = 1; others (criterion variable)[2]
	School type	Public = 1; Private = 0[2, 3]
	Years active	Years working in higher education institutions
	Job transfer	Change of employment, Yes = 1; No = 0
	Tenure track	Tenure track = 1; Non-tenure track (contractual) = 0
	Country of PhD	Local university = 1; Overseas university = 0[2]
	Post-doctoral	Yes = 1; No = 0[2]
	Discipline	Science = 1; Non-science = 0[2, 3]
Current work conditions	Access to resources	Mean score on resource allocation policies[1]
	Time spent on service	Percentage of work time spent on services[3]
	Time spent on research	Percentage of work time spent on research[3]
	Time spent on teaching	Percentage of work time spent on teaching[3]
Affiliation		Mean score on respondents' feeling of affiliation[1, 2, 3]
Empowerment		Mean score on respondents' perception on level of influence[1, 2, 3]
Collegiality		Mean score on respondents' perception on shared governance[1, 2, 3]
Managerialism	Market-like	*Strong emphasis on institution's mission*[1, 3]
	Top-down	*At my institution, there is a top-down management style*[1, 2]
	Performance-based	*Strong emphasis on research and teaching performance*[1, 2]
Dependent Variables		
Job stress		*My job is a source of considerable personal strain*[1, 2]
Job satisfaction		Mean score on satisfactions with current employer[1, 2, 3]
Performance		Total points incurred on scholarly activities[3]

Note. [1]Data collected using 5-point Likert type scale. [2]Based from Lee et al. [41]. [3]Based from Shin et al. [42].

Factors	M	SD	B	SE	Beta	t	p	95% CI	
								LB	UB
Constant			4.168	0.506		8.239	.000	3.173	5.163
Age	45.95	7.42	-0.028	0.008	-0.192	-3.386	.001	-0.045	-0.012
Top-down Management	3.68	1.00	0.127	0.065	0.117	1.962	.051	0.000	0.255
Rank (professor)	0.18	0.39	-0.471	0.159	-0.168	-2.959	.003	-0.784	-0.158
Dual identity	0.85	0.36	-0.394	0.157	-0.130	-2.511	.013	-0.703	-0.085
Market-like culture	3.79	0.74	0.179	0.087	0.122	2.052	.041	0.007	0.350

For predicting job satisfaction, OLS regression results revealed that the factors *affiliation*, *access to resources*, *empowerment*, *top-down management style*, *tenure*, *rank*, and *collegiality*, all fit with the model significantly with $F(7, 324)=28.62$, $p=.000$. R^2 for the model was .38, and adjusted R^2 was .37. Together, those seven variables contributed 38% in shared variability. Table 3 shows the *M*, *SD*, B, SE, Beta, *t* values, and confidence intervals. With regards to the individual relationships between the independent variables and job satisfaction, two factors *top-down management* and *tenure* have negative values. Denoting that both factors **negatively** correlated with satisfaction, hence the more top-down like the management are, the more **dissatisfied** are the faculty. Interestingly, results also show that tenured faculty are **not** quite satisfied with their job as denoted by the negative value. While, the sense of *affiliation*, *access to resources*, *rank* being a professor, and *collegiality* are all connected to job satisfaction.

Factors	M	SD	B	SE	Beta	t	p	95% CI	
								LB	UB
Constant			2.161	0.455		4.747	.000	1.266	3.057
Affiliation	3.96	0.78	0.382	0.049	0.361	7.730	.000	0.285	0.480
Access to resources	2.57	0.70	0.258	0.061	0.222	4.228	.000	0.138	0.379
Empowerment	1.99	0.92	0.104	0.043	0.117	2.428	.016	0.020	0.188
Top-down management	3.68	1.00	-0.099	0.037	-0.121	-2.717	.007	-0.171	-0.027
Tenure	0.99	0.10	-0.935	0.382	-0.108	-2.445	.015	-1.687	-0.183
Rank (professor)	0.18	0.39	0.242	0.100	0.114	2.409	.017	0.044	0.440
Collegiality	3.25	0.95	0.090	0.044	0.104	2.034	.043	0.003	0.177

For predicting faculty performance, OLS regression results revealed that the factors *time spent on research*, *affiliation*, *collegiality*, and *rank*, all fit with the model significantly with $F(4, 327)=18.89$, $p=.000$. R^2 for the model was .19, and adjusted R^2 was .18. Together, those four variables contributed 19% in shared variability. Table 4 shows the *M*, *SD*, B, SE, Beta, *t* values, and confidence intervals. With regards to the individual relationships between the independent variables and faculty performance, only *collegiality* has a negative value. Implicating that the more collegiality in the

decision and making process the lesser the performance are. More important, *time spent on research*, sense of *affiliation*, and *rank* as being a professor are all connected to having higher performance levels within the institution.

Table 4. Multiple regressions analysis for faculty performance (N=457).

Factors	*M*	*SD*	B	SE	Beta	*t*	*p*	95% CI	
								LB	UB
Constant			-13.19	6.731		-1.960	.050	-26.429	0.052
Time spent on research	3.99	2.36	2.791	0.469	0.303	5.955	.000	1.869	3.713
Affiliation	3.96	0.78	5.25	1.439	0.187	3.647	.000	2.418	8.081
Collegiality	3.25	0.95	-2.631	1.148	-0.115	-2.292	.023	-4.890	-0.373
Rank (professor)	0.18	0.39	6.486	2.890	0.116	2.244	.025	0.800	12.171

5   CONCLUSIONS

Several interesting results are seen within the findings; first, it would seem that new entrant younger (junior) faculty are more prone to stress. Indicating that starting a university career in Taiwan is not an easy undertaking. Furthermore, findings also show that the current academia is more suited for individuals who have dual academic identities, as compared to those who focused on only either research or teaching. These are all brought about by the current neoliberal management strategies within Taiwan universities. In addition, the top-down management style is not popular among faculty, while collegiality is also not helping with their performance. Interestingly, tenured faculty are also not satisfied with their job, indicating the increased need for compliance with neoliberal management policies are making them unhappy. In sum, as the pressure to perform within universities increases, changes within institutional governance are but inevitable.

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