

Behind the Scenes: Evaluating the Performance of University Support Personnel for Institutional Progress

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Abstract. To remain competitive in the higher education market, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have to provide quality services to their clientele (Legcevic, 2014; Guaimalon et al., 2022). These services must be aligned with the mission, vision, and long-term goals of the university, which include employee productivity and service sustainability. This study sought to assess the university support personnel's performance for institutional progress and students' satisfaction. It also determined the relationship between the support personnel's profile, in terms of sex and length of service, and their performance. The descriptive-correlational design was applied in this inquiry wherein all 97 regular support personnel were the respondents and were evaluated by their supervisor and two randomly selected senior co-workers. A standardized questionnaire was utilized to gather data on the performance of the support personnel. Weighted Mean, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficients, and Chi-Square Test were used as statistical tools. The data revealed that the performance of the support personnel "exceeds expectations" in the following areas: work quantity, work quality, work relationships, work skills, job knowledge, and time record. The results further indicated that the work performance in terms of extension work is classified as "meeting the expectations." Moreover, the study found that the support personnel's length of service is inversely related to their work performance and that female personnel performed better at work than their male counterparts.

Keywords: Support personnel; Work quantity; Job knowledge; Work performance; Work quality

1.0 Introduction

Performance has always been a top issue in any firm as it is a sign of how well workers are doing (Andreas, 2022). It deals with how closely an employee's productivity level complies with the performance expectations the company has set (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019; Mohammad, 2020). It is also the outcome of the employees' quality and quantity of work as they accomplish their assigned tasks (Kurniawan et al., 2019; Jufrizen & Sitorus, 2021). Moreover, the outcomes of the employee's work can be used to evaluate performance, which is a combination of their skills, efforts, and opportunities (Soedarso 2018).

Performance can be enhanced in an environment that prioritizes the needs of the workers. Havaei et al. (2020) define the environment as encompassing all elements impacting employees' task performance. Research by Badrianto and Ekhsan (2019) and Havaei et al. (2020) underscores that an unfavorable work environment detrimentally affects productivity and employee motivation. Conversely, when individuals can fulfill their assigned tasks in a secure, healthy, and pleasant atmosphere, it is deemed conducive or positive (Hidayat & Latief, 2018). Although the work environment does not directly execute the company's production process, it has a substantial bearing on the employed personnel (Al Sabei et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, having happy and satisfied personnel increases work productivity (Harini et al., 2020).

Every company relies on its personnel to function. To achieve high productivity and performance—which are both essential to the sustainability of the company—employees are expected to perform their jobs effectively, expeditiously, and to the best of their abilities. They are also expected to manifest self-discipline (Bawamenewi et al., 2024), effective time management (Odoh & Moluno, 2024), willingness to learn new things (Tannady et al., 2023), and good relationships with their colleagues (Rustiawan et al., 2023). These characteristics of employees are essential, especially to the support staff of the university. While many studies have investigated the performance of employees in government agencies, banks, or hotels, the current study focused on university staff members who act as the support network of an academic institution whose major clientele is the students. These support staff are assigned to the different auxiliary services of the institution. These services, according to Bonnarens et al. (2021), are crucial for students to attain a fulfilling experience and exemplary academic-related performance. Nonetheless, this aspect of the university has not received enough research.

In this study, the performance of the support staff or personnel was measured in terms of (a) work quantity; (b) work quality; (c) work relationships; (d) work skills; (e) time record; (f) job knowledge; and (g) extension work. The connection between the support personnel's profile (i.e. sex and length of service) and their performance was also explored.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The descriptive-correlational design was applied in this inquiry. The performance of the support personnel was described and correlated to their profile in terms of sex and length of service.

2.2 Research Locale

The study considered the support personnel of a private university in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, Philippines. The university is a non-sectarian and non-profit institution recognized for its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In terms of instructional facilities, the school uses technology as its basic learning resource. It is also recognized for its green and eco-friendly campuses that are powered by technology and marked by paperless transactions.

2.3 Research Participants

The respondents of the study were the 97 support personnel consisting of the non-teaching staff mostly assigned in the offices and those in charge of the buildings and grounds department. These support personnel were rated by their respective supervisors and two randomly selected senior co-workers. This was done to avoid bias in the evaluation of the personnel's performance.

2.4 Research Instrument

The study used a validated questionnaire with reliable items to examine every construct of the support personnel's performance. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are the following: 0.923 for quantity of work; 0.895 for quality of work; 0.756 for work relationships; 0.875 for work skills; 0.701 for job knowledge; and 0.724 for time record.

In describing the personnel's performance, the following scales of the weighted means and verbal descriptions (VD) were used: 4.21 – 5.00 as Outstanding (O); 3.41 – 4.20 as Exceeds Expectations (EE); 2.61 – 3.40 as Meets Expectations (ME); 1.81 – 2.60 as Needs Improvement (NI); and 1.00 – 1.80 as Unsatisfactory (U).

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher observed proper protocols in gathering the data. A letter of request to conduct the study was first sent to the HR department of the university with the endorsement of the university's dean of the graduate school. The signed and approved request was then presented to the deans/heads and respective supervisors of the support staff. The yearly performance of the support personnel, as rated by their supervisors, was obtained from the HR office. To validate the document, two randomly selected senior colleagues were tasked to re-evaluate it. The results were then consolidated, processed using JAMOWI software, analyzed, and interpreted.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

All necessary ethical considerations and protocols for the entire duration of the study were stringently followed. The researcher maintained the confidentiality of all data obtained, including the support personnel's identity as well as their ratings. Moreover, the researcher ensured that the study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the University Research Office.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Support Personnel Performance in Terms of Work Quantity

Table 1 reflects the level of performance of the support personnel in terms of quantity of work, which is measured based on competence, effectiveness, accuracy, thoroughness and neatness, and cost control objectives. Performance has always been a top issue in any firm as it is a sign of how well workers are doing (Andreas, 2022). As theorized by Negara, Fadli, and Suherman (2023), paying attention to the employees' performance is how the company works to raise the standard of its human resources.

Table 1. Support personnel's performance in terms of work quantity (n = 97)

Performance Indicators	Explanation	w $\bar{x}$	VD
Competence	The staff knows all aspects of his assigned tasks and works with minimal supervision.	4.13	EE
Effectiveness	The staff is organized & systematic in their work. He can bring out the best results in his work assignments. & creates a favorable impression with every work output.	4.11	EE
Accuracy	The staff does work correctly and can easily follow instructions given by the supervisor/head.	4.14	EE
Thoroughness & Neatness	The staff makes sure that the assigned work is accomplished thoroughly and neatly.	4.12	EE
Cost Control Obj.	The staff performs the work at the lowest cost with minimum use of additional manpower by using efficient methods without compromising quality service.	4.09	EE
Composite		4.14	EE

As presented in the table, the level of performance of the support personnel is "exceeding expectations" in all areas as evidenced by the values of the weighted means ranging from 4.09 to 4.13. This finding suggests that the personnel consistently perform above most of the performance standards and have made valuable contributions to the efficiency and productivity of the organization through such performance in terms of quantity. This is in line with what Sembiring et al. (2021) highlighted in their study that the efficiency of employees' work helps a company achieve organizational objectives and boost performance. Audenaert et al. (2019) also opined that it is essential to have the capacity to accomplish tasks to meet the organization's goals.

3.2 Support Personnel Performance in Terms of Work Quality

Table 2 displays the level of performance of the support personnel in terms of work quality, which covers proper use of work hours, volume of work accomplished, ability to meet schedules, and productivity level. As reflected in the table, the support personnel got an "outstanding" rating ($w\bar{x} = 4.21$) under proper use of work hours. This signifies that the personnel adhere to work hours even when the supervisor is not around and keep their supervisors updated on their whereabouts. The university places a strong emphasis on punctuality within its workforce, ensuring adherence through the utilization of biometric technology and turnstiles to monitor employee attendance and absences rigorously. The punctuality of support personnel significantly impacts employee morale and productivity, with tardiness resulting in adverse effects.

Furthermore, the data indicate that the support personnel's performance "exceeds expectations" in terms of the volume of work accomplished, ability to meet schedules, and productivity level. This result implies that the personnel go beyond the performance standards and have significantly increased the organization's production and efficiency in terms of quality. It also affirms the assertion of Hidayat and Latief (2018) that individual employee performance, as evaluated by quantity and quality, has a considerable impact on the success of the organization.

Table 2. Support personnel performance in terms of work quality (n = 97)

Performance Indicators	Explanation	w $\bar{x}$	VD
Proper Use of Work Hours	The staff observes work hours even when the supervisor/head is not around. He keeps the supervisor/head informed of his/her whereabouts.	4.21	O
Volume of Work Accomplished	The staff can meet a target work assignment and is willing to accept new and unexpected additional assignments as demanded by the work situation. He is willing to go the "extra mile".	4.19	EE
Ability to Meet Schedules	The staff is a fast worker who meets target schedules and deadlines.	4.14	EE
Productivity Level	The staff maximizes the use of eight (8) hours, with visible results	4.14	EE
Composite		4.17	EE

3.3 Support Personnel in Terms of Work Relationships

Table 3 exhibits the level of performance of the support personnel in terms of work relationships, which include the ability to work with superiors and co-workers, build rapport with co-workers and the public, and be a good influence.

Table 3. Support personnel performance in terms of work relationships (n = 97)

Performance Indicators	Explanation	w $\bar{x}$	VD
Ability to Work with Superiors & Co-Workers	The staff always exercises tact, manifests humility, does not boast of achievements, elicits respect, and does not entertain rumors in the workplace.	4.24	O
Rapport with Co-Workers & the Public	The staff responds to queries from co-workers and the public quickly and courteously, showing flexibility within the bounds of existing rules and regulations and displaying a pleasant disposition at all times.	4.16	EE
Good Influence	The staff possesses the ability to be a role model to other employees in the workplace.	4.11	EE
Composite		4.17	EE

As shown, the support personnel received an "outstanding" ($w\bar{x} = 4.24$) rating in terms of their ability to work with superiors and co-workers. This means the personnel have exceeded all the performance expectations in terms of work relationships, have always shown tactfulness, have displayed humility and respect, and have avoided workplace gossip. This further connotes that the support personnel maintain a harmonious and productive atmosphere at work.

Correspondingly, Hidayat and Latief (2018) posited that a workplace is considered favorable when employees get to effectively perform and accomplish their tasks. On the contrary, according to Badrianto and Ekhsan (2020) and Havaei et al. (2020), an unfavorable working environment will adversely affect productivity and, ultimately, employee motivation.

Meanwhile, the table also displays that the support personnel's performance "exceeds expectations" in terms of rapport with co-workers and the public ($w\bar{x} = 4.16$) and that the personnel has a positive influence on others ($w\bar{x} = 4.16$). This means the personnel quickly respond to queries from co-workers and the public in a manner that displays the core values of the university. In addition, it implies that the personnel possess characteristics that are worth emulating.

Relationships in the workplace are crucial. As pointed out by Elliott et al. (2023), connection with co-workers seems to have a greater impact on well-being outcomes. Van der Borg et al. (2017) also recognized the influence of relationships among co-workers that results in the success of team-based skills training.

3.4 Support Personnel Performance in Terms of Work Skills

Table 4 reveals the level of performance of the support personnel in terms of work skills, which comprise planning and organizing work, the ability to communicate, problem-solving and judgment, and initiative.

Table 4. Support personnel performance in terms of work skills (n = 97)

Performance Indicators	Explanation	w $\bar{x}$	VD
Planning and Organizing Work	The staff shows orderliness in his workplace, files communication data neatly for easy access, anticipates things to be accomplished and schedules work to achieve maximum results.	4.00	EE
Ability to Communicate	The staff knows how to answer the telephone, easily follows verbal instructions, speaks correct English, and writes grammatically correct communications/reports.	3.98	EE
Problem Solving and Judgment	The staff identifies a problem on a timely basis and properly analyzes it. Develops possible solutions, exercises sound judgment and acts upon the best solution. Advises supervisor/head appropriately or asks for assistance, as needed.	4.00	EE
Initiative	The staff can take appropriate action without being told and consistently strives to produce the best output in any given task.	4.17	EE
Composite		4.04	EE

As depicted in the table, the support personnel's performance is rated by their supervisors and senior colleagues as "exceeding expectations," as made evident in the values of the weighted means ranging from 3.41 to 4.20, signifying that the support personnel show orderliness in the workplace such that communication files are accessible anytime. The personnel can also converse appropriately with clients and know how to solve problems that may arise in the workplace. Furthermore, these personnel can evaluate and initiate things independently and with less guidance from their superiors. These skills shown by the personnel are heightened through the initiative of the school administration to provide the personnel with opportunities to attend seminars on how to organize their workplace. The continuous Saturday hangouts (seminars), for example, cover relevant training on improving communication skills, telephone etiquette, mind management, and a lot more. The honing and enhancement of the personnel's abilities are geared towards a better support system in the university.

Indeed, it was emphasized by Jermsittiparsert and Boonratanakittiphumi (2019) that to enhance expertise and keep a competitive advantage, employees must constantly advance their skills and knowledge. Al-kharabsheh et al. (2023) also argued that the motivation to accomplish job obligations is high among skilled workers.

3.5 Support Personnel Performance in Terms of Job Knowledge

Table 5 presents the level of performance of the support personnel in terms of job knowledge, which includes a degree of technical knowledge, and understanding of and compliance with job procedures and methods and university objectives. The data show that the support personnel's performance "exceeds expectations" in all three areas, as evidenced by the values of the weighted means ranging from 4.16 to 4.09. This finding suggests that the personnel have exceeding knowledge of their responsibility and how the work is done. It also means the support personnel contribute to the attainment of the university objectives by displaying desirable character.

Table 5. Support personnel performance in terms of job knowledge (n = 97)

Performance Indicators	Explanation	w $\bar{x}$	VD
Degree of Technical Knowledge	The staff does not need to be taught a given task more than once. Has the technical skills necessary to perform work assignments and demonstrates such skill during everyday work hours.	4.09	EE
Understanding & Compliance of Job Procedures & Methods	The staff knows the totality of procedures in his work area, complies with such procedures, and can relay them to co-workers and the public effectively.	4.09	EE
University Objectives	The staff contributes to the attainment of the university objectives by exhibiting sound character, broad culture, and skillful potential towards a vocational and /or professional career.	4.16	EE
Composite		4.12	EE

According to Irawati et al. (2021), to produce high-quality work, every employee needs to possess the required know-how and abilities, as well as self-discipline, determination, good morale, and experience. Jermsittiparsert and Boonratanakittiphumi (2019) also asserted that for employees to keep a competitive edge and expand their expertise, they must constantly update their knowledge and skills.

3.6 Support Personnel Performance in Terms of Time Record

Table 6 discloses the level of performance of the support personnel in time record, punctuality, and intermittent attendance. As indicated, the support personnel are rated “outstanding” by their supervisor and senior colleagues in time record with $w\bar{x} = 4.33$. The personnel are also viewed as “exceeding expectations” in terms of punctuality ($w\bar{x} = 3.92$) and intermittent attendance ($w\bar{x} = 4.13$).

Table 6. Support personnel performance in terms of time record (n = 97)

Performance Indicators			Explanation	$w\bar{x}$	VD
Time Record	5		= Present all work hours.	4.33	O
	4		= Absent (3) days without approved leave.		
	3		= Absent (6) days without approved leave.		
	2		= Absent (10) days without approved leave.		
	1		= Absent (12) days or average of absence per month without approved leave.		
Punctuality	5		= Arrived earlier or on time during all work hrs.	3.92	EE
	4		= Late 2 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	3		= Late 4 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	2		= Late 6 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	1		= Late 8 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
Intermittent attendance	5		= Does not leave work in all work hours.	4.13	EE
	4		= Present on time however leaves 2 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	3		= Present on time however leaves 4 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	2		= Present on time however leaves 6 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	1		= Present on time however leaves 8 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
Composite				4.13	EE

These findings simply show how the support personnel value their work knowing full well that their attendance and punctuality affect the productivity of their department. This is an affirmation of the statement made by Zaman and Zulganef (2023) that employees are unable to do their tasks by the deadline when jobs are repeatedly put off and piled up.

3.7 Support Personnel Performance in Terms of Extension Work

Table 7 provides the data on the performance of the support personnel in terms of extension. The university sees to it that the employees are involved in the community. The personnel are encouraged to take part in the university's extension program in the adopted barangays. They participate in tree planting activities and facilitate lectures to the 4Ps beneficiaries.

Table 7. Support personnel performance in terms of extension work (n = 97)

Performance Indicators		Explanation	$w\bar{x}$	VD
Extension Work	5	Joined extension activities in our adopted barangay 5 times and above in the current year.	3.35	ME
	4	Joined extension activities in our adopted barangay 4 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	3	Joined extension activities in our adopted barangay 2 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	2	Joined extension in our adopted barangay activities 2 times due to uncontrollable factors.		
	1	Joined extension activities in our adopted barangay 1 time due to uncontrollable factors.		
Composite			3.35	ME

As reflected in the table, the support personnel's performance “meets expectations” with $w\bar{x} = 3.35$. This indicates that the support personnel have met the performance expectations in terms of their participation in extension activities designed for them. This is the lowest of all the ratings regarding the support personnel's performance. The researcher would like to emphasize that almost 25% of the support personnel included in this study come from the Buildings and Grounds Department and these people work from Monday to Saturday. Their line of work is different from those assigned to the different offices. This might be one of the reasons that, generally, the rating is lowest in this area.

3.8 Relationship between the Profile of the Support Personnel and Their Level of Performance

Table 8 reflects that the sex of the support personnel is significantly related to their level of performance in terms of work quality ($p = 0.030$), job knowledge ($p = 0.008$), work relationships ($p = 0.013$), and work skills ($p = 0.007$). All their p -values are less than the level of significance (0.05). Considering the values of the weighted means, the figures attest that female support personnel outperform their male counterparts. This finding suggests that females displayed better work quality, were more knowledgeable in their jobs, had better work relationships, and were more skillful than their male counterparts. These findings are parallel with those of Casanova and Pagua (2022) wherein they identified a significant association existing between sex and job performance in favor of the female employees. However, these findings do not support the claim of Padios, Haguian III, and Sagala (2022) that no significant differences are found between the employees' job resiliency and work values.

Table 8. Relationship between the profile and level of performance of the support personnel ($n = 97$)

Variables Correlated to Motivation	Computed Value	p-value	Remark
Sex and...	χ^2		
• Work Quantity	1.87	0.171	Not significant
• Work Quality	4.73	0.030	Significant
		Male: $w\bar{x} = 4.37$ Female: $w\bar{x} = 4.59$	
• Work Relationships	6.16	0.013	Significant
		Male: $w\bar{x} = 4.32$ Female: $w\bar{x} = 4.57$	
• Work Skills	7.39	0.007	Significant
		Male: $w\bar{x} = 4.24$ Female: $w\bar{x} = 4.52$	
• Job Knowledge	6.94	0.008	Significant
		Male: $w\bar{x} = 4.27$ Female: $w\bar{x} = 4.54$	
• Time Record	0.21	0.648	Not significant
• Extension Work	1.39	0.499	Not significant
	2.64	0.104	Not significant
Length of Service and...	r_s		
• Work Quantity	-0.142	0.165	Not significant
• Work Quality	-0.276	0.006	Significant
• Work Relationships	-0.342	0.001	Significant
• Work Skills	-0.203	0.046	Significant
• Job Knowledge	-0.178	0.080	Not significant
• Time Record	-0.293	0.004	Significant
• Extension Work	-0.257	0.011	Significant

Level of significance = 0.05

On the other hand, the personnel's length of service was found to be significantly and inversely related to their quality of work ($p = 0.006$), work relationships ($p = 0.001$), work skills (0.046), time record (0.004), and extension work (0.011). All the p -values are less than the level of significance (0.05). The negative r_s -values indicate that the younger the support personnel are, the higher their performance is in the enumerated areas than those support personnel who have been in the university for a longer time. This result implies that those who are new tend to exert more effort that is visible to their supervisor and senior colleagues. This finding does not coincide with the statement of Muslim et al. (2020) that work experience is what a person personally acquires throughout their day-to-day employment and so it has an effect on their work performance. Muslim et al. also added that employees with more experience demonstrate better job performance because they are more knowledgeable and are better at organizing what they know.

The above discussion again does not discredit the performance of support personnel who have been loyal to the university. With thorough perusal of the raw data, the figures indicate "exceeding expectations" performance among these support personnel.

4.0 Conclusion

The consistency of the support personnel in performing their tasks in various dimensions reflects the effectiveness of the recruitment and hiring practices of the university, an admirable organizational culture, good leadership, and commitment to employee development. The support personnel's commitment, competence, and effectiveness reinforce the institution's reputation and mission while also improving the student experience and campus atmosphere. Their desirable performance likely has positive contributions to the overall success and effectiveness of the institution in the delivery of its functions. It is therefore recommended that the school administration (a) ensure that the support personnel are given avenues for continuous training and development to maintain or further improve their abilities related to their work, and (b) establish regular team-building activities to sustain the positive relationships among co-support personnel.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

This study has a single author and her adviser reviewed and approved the final version of this paper.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declared that she has no conflicts of interest as far as this study is concerned.

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