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Optimizing Employee Efforts: The Implications of Job Design for Administrative Staff Performance in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of job design on administrative staff performance in higher education in Ghana. It further sought to establish whether the administrators' selected demographic characteristics had any relationships with main job design effects on their performances in assigned roles. Four hundred and twenty participants drawn from the administrative sections of five universities in Ghana were purposively sampled. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study identified that job design had many effects on administrative staff performance, including being able to specialize in a particular task and gain in-depth knowledge of task performance. The research also found significant associations between the staff's selected demographic characteristics and the key job design effects on staff performance.

Keywords: administrative staff, Ghanaian universities, higher education, job design, performance

INTRODUCTION

The quest for world-class status and globalization has resulted in increased competition among higher education institutions. This situation impacts the administration of these institutions, resulting in administrative staff being used as key actors to implement policies to meet the challenge (Kauppinen 2012; Shin, et. al, 2011; Shin & Kehm, 2013). In line with Jung and Shin's (2015) assertion, the term administrative staff refers to workers who occupy administrative positions in higher education institutions. These individuals play complex but indispensable roles, including office work, teaching, research support, quality assurance, planning, and facility and financial management, among others.

Administrative staff need effective support to maximize their productivity (Li, Li, & Erring, 2009; Niazi, 2011). Although productivity has been high on the agenda of many higher education institutions, only a few of them, especially in the developing world, provide a friendly and supportive working environment for administrative staff to achieve their working goals (Wilson, 2016; Zareen, Razzaq, & Mujtaba, 2013). Achieving job performance objectives can be challenging for administrative staff, given the nature of job design and the associated support (Ali & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2014; Grag & Rastogi, 2005). Previous authors have explained job design as a specification of the contents and methods of tasks for employees to perform to ensure organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Clegg & Spencer, 2007; Macf & Mam, 2018). Motowidlo et al. (1997) have referred to job performance as the totality of workers' behavior portrayed within a specific time frame. In the context of this research, while taking into consideration Clegg & Spencer's (2007) definition, our operational use of the concept of job design is extended to include organizing or re-organizing employees' tasks or assigned roles using any or all of the techniques of rotation, simplification, enrichment and enlargement to eliminate or at least, minimize job dissatisfaction. Performance, in this research, is conceptualized as the process of doing an activity against a pre-determined standard of accuracy. This framing situates job performance as task–oriented rather than contextual–oriented.

Although existing literature has established that effective job design plays a pivotal role in employee satisfaction and performance maximization in general (Lawler, 2006; Zareen et al., 2013), earlier studies on this topic, and in the African context have only focused on the effects on employee motivation and performance in the banking sector in Ghana (Mensah-Bonsu, 2012) and in Kenya (Nguzi, 2014). To the best of our knowledge, no research

to date has been conducted on the effects of job design on administrative staff performance in education generally and in higher education specifically, especially from the perspective of a developing country. The only research that has come somewhat close is the one conducted by Kariuki and Makori in 2015 on job design's role on employee engagement in private universities in Kenya. Consequently, research on the nature of the connection between job design and employee performance in the developing world's higher education sector is well placed. From the organizational context, it is important to have an understanding of how job design relates to performance in the higher education sector in Ghana while also contributing to the global debate on the relationship between job design and employee performance, thereby extending the literature in the field of human resource management.

Furthermore, it is also necessary to narrow the scope of this research on Ghana at this time because of the country's quest to achieve the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Ghana is a developing country located in West Africa. It has a population of 31,153,490 (Wikipedia, n. d.). The country has 16 regions, and Accra is its capital city. English is its official language and used as the medium of instruction from primary four to higher education (Bafoe & Amoah, 2015). The country has over 100 public and private accredited higher education institutions classified as universities, polytechnics, and colleges (National Accreditation Board, Ghana (n.d.).

This study's objectives were two-fold: first, to analyze the effects of job design on administrative staff performance in the higher education sector of the country; and second, to examine the relationship between selected demographic characteristics of respondents and identified key job design effects on staff performance. Based on these objectives, we examined the following questions:

a) What effects does job design have on the performance of administrative staff in higher education in Ghana?
b) What is the relationship between demographic characteristics of administrative staff in Ghanaian higher education and their performance in assigned roles?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Job Design

Job design, also referred to as work design or task design, is a specification of contents and methods of jobs for each person to perform to bring about

organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Clegg & Spencer, 2007). The current competitive business world closely associates job design with job analysis (Aswathappa, 2006; Clegg & Spencer, 2007). The former has been widely considered preponderant role player in the management aspect of human resources relative to content specifications, methods, and interactions that meet personal and organizational needs (Clegg & Spencer, 2007).

According to Garg and Rastogi (2006), whether deliberate or by default, job design informs employers' choices about which tasks to group to form a job and the extent to which job holders should follow prescribed procedures in completing those tasks. Several lines of evidence suggest that there is the need to break down tasks and assign them to individual staff in an organization in accordance with their expertise (Ali & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2014; Burke & Moore, 2000). Clegg and Spencer (2007) have argued that since the 20th century, the advent of rapid technological advancement has brought in its wake increased production in the business world. As jobs continue to become more sophisticated and specialized, the need for job design and specifications has become inevitable.

Effective job design attracts the best employees into an organization (Garg & Rastogi, 2006). Also, job design can make employees work effectively to achieve their set targets (Dewhurst et al., 2009; Sonawane, 2008). Kahya (2007) has recommended the following guidelines for designing jobs: variety in assigned jobs, individual or collective feeling of responsibility, freedom to work without interference, a clear understanding of job description, feedback, involvement in decision making, recognition, and safe working environments (Kahya, 2007). The following have also been given as some factors that determine the successful implementation of job design policies: appropriate coverage of the job, optimization of manager's/supervisor's time, manager's skill, job needs of an organization, job preference of individual workers, the structure of an organization, and quality of technology being used in an organization (Ali & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2014; Opatha, 2002; Orpen, 2001; Wilson,2016).

From a human relation perspective, job design can be made to stimulate employee motivation and increase job satisfaction. For example, motivator factors such as achievement, advancement, growth, recognition, responsibility, and work itself tend to create satisfaction, positive attitude, and employees' discretionary effort (Grant, 2008). There has been a growing volume of research exploring how to bring elements of job design together so that jobs can be designed to both maximise the engagement and satisfaction of individual workers on the one hand, and maximise the productivity and performance of organizations through skills upgrade on the other hand (Truss

et al., 2013). Common job design approaches used in most organizations include job rotation, job enlargement, and job enrichment (Aswathappa, 2006; Garg & Rastogi, 2006; Towers, 2010). While job rotation and job enlargement are designed to take advantage of specialization of labor from the job engineering approach, job rotation allows an employee to work according to scheduled rotations in different departments or jobs in an organization to gain better understanding of the various aspects of the job (Luthans, 2005; Kudaligama, 1991). Similarly, whereas job enlargement expands the scope of a task, job enrichment increases the degree, depth, extent, and magnitude of tasks to let them appear challenging to employees (Towers, 2010).

Overall, the review of the literature has been on the explanation and importance of job design. Further, the principles underlying the organization of job design and the factors influencing the successful implementation of a job design program have been examined. Finally, the historical underpinnings of job design have also been discussed. In the following review, the focus will be on job performance and its relationship with job design.

The Concept of Job Performance

Job performance has been widely used in many contexts, yet it is often misunderstood. While some scholars such as Borman &Motowidlo (1993), Muchhal (2014), and William (2006) have perceived job performance as a single dimension, others (Alessandri et al., 2017; Conway, 1999; Pandey, 2019) have emphasized its multidimensional nature resulting in differing measurement parameters in terms of “how” and “whom” to measure. Accordingly, Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) have explained it as “scalable actions, behavior, and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that is linked with and contribute to organizational goals” (p. 216). Recently, the concept has been expanded to encompass core task performance, counterproductive performance, and citizenship performance. While core task performance is the requirement of a particular job, citizenship performance delineates employees' additional behaviors beyond their core task requirements, which promote overall organizational effectiveness. Counterproductive performance refers to a behavior engaged in by employees that intentionally harm the well-being of the organization (Ng & Feldman, 2010; Okoyo & Ezejiofor, 2013).

To some people, performance is just a process of accomplishing a particular task specified by a set standard (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Hancock et al., 2013). To others, it is the product or result of activities of an organization (Campbell, 1999, William, 2006). From a psychological perspective, Campbell (1999) has described performance as an individual-

level variable that should be manifested by an employee. This conceptualization draws a line of distinction between performance and outcomes where the latter is the result of an employee's performance but not the result of other influences. In other words, there are more factors that influence outcomes than just an employee's behavior or actions. According to William (2006), job performance is a crucial aspect of organizational success yet loosely explained to mean how well employees can meet set targets or otherwise.

Birdsall (2018); and Deschamps and Mattijs (2018) have argued that job performance refers to focusing directly on employee productivity by assessing the units of acceptable quality produced by an employee in a business environment for some time within an organization. Every organization's success depends on employees' performance. In Putterrill and Rohrer's (1995) view, one of the most effective ways of increasing organizational performance and profit is to increase employees' performance, from the lowest level of the organization, to the senior management level. Performance improvement in job design is a result of well-functioning systems and a result of effective human resource strategies bringing about recruitment and maintenance of a committed and motivated workforce (Al-Ahmadi, 2009). Ivancevich (1998) has asserted that the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of job design are a measurement for employees' dimensions of performance based on the employee's contribution to growth and profitability of the organization.

In addition, Opatha (2002) has pointed out several criteria that are necessary to ensure an accurate evaluation of employees' performance, some of which include: knowledge of the job, level of creativity and initiative, ability to meet timelines, and the quality and quantity of the job to be performed. Further, Mathis and Jackson (2003) have indicated that data management on how well employees are performing their jobs can be of three different types: trait-based, behavior-based, and result-based information. While the trait-based information identifies a subjective character of the employee such as attitude, initiative, or creativity, behavior-based evaluations of job performance focuses on what is included in the job itself (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). Because results are outcomes produced by the employee, result-based information considers employees' job accomplishment. For jobs in which measurement is easy and obvious, a results-based approach works well (Mathis & Jackson, 2003; Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009).

The Relationship between Job Design and Employee Performance

Globally, numerous studies have been done on how job design relates to employee performance. In Sri Lanka, Hettige (2007) and Riyasa (2008) have found that arranging tasks, duties, and responsibilities into an institutional unit of work had high performance implications. Similarly, in Nigeria, Adeyemi's (2011) research has also revealed an association between job rotation and teaching-staff's allegiance in performing school activities. Consequently, Orpen (2001) has argued that the nature of a job itself positively correlates with performance because satisfaction with variety and challenge in people's job actually influences their performance. The sense of job significance, feeling important in others' eyes, realizing one's competence, and freedom to make decisions are positively related to performance. Ivancevich (1998) has suggested that job design approaches place different emphasis on performance and satisfaction as desirable outcomes. In other words, certain methods of job design primarily improve performance, while others are more concerned with satisfaction.

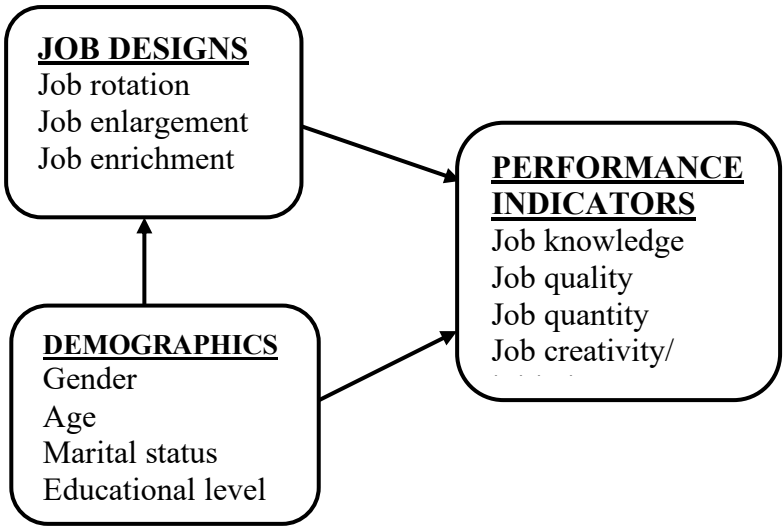
Contribution to the Literature

Despite its importance in fostering a good working environment and contributing to achieving organizational goals, many of the studies hitherto published in job design and its effects on employee motivation and performance have tended to be primarily focused on the financial sector. There is also little published work on job design as a relational flow to employee job performance, and this has also created a paucity of information in the extant literature**.** Therefore, assessing the relationship between job design and administrative staff performance in higher educational institutions within the current study's African context is a timely effort. Given that the effects of job design on staff performance may depend on their peculiar characteristics and other exogenous factors, understanding the factors that condition variations in the effect of job design on staff performance is critical for both staff and organizational development in higher education. Further, an investigation of administrative staff perspectives of job design, their job performance, and individual characteristics should provide valuable insights into how particularly large educational institutions with big classes in the global south can create a more favorable work environment to improve and enhance organizational effectiveness and advance the literature on the role job design plays in administrative staff performance.

Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Relationship between Job Design and Employee Performance

The framework presented in Figure 1 depicts our conceptualization of the relationship between job design and employees' performance in a typical work environment.

Figure 1
Conceptual Framework



Its creation was informed by the views expressed in the literature by key theorists in the field such as Aswathappa (2006), Birdsall (2018), Campbell (1999), and Clegg and Spencer (2007). The framework shows how employees' demographics influence their job design. For instance, younger employees and employees with low academic levels may require job rotation, enlargement, and enrichment to increase their depth of knowledge on the job and expand their understanding of the requirements to perform a task. Similarly, job rotation is preferred in most business organizations in Africa because of cultural reasons. It is thought to be flexible to allow married women to be put on work shifts to meet domestic commitments and avoid performing physically-involving tasks during advanced pregnancy stages (William, 2006). Another feature of the framework is that it portrays how job design and some employee demographics have far-reaching consequences on performance effectiveness. According to the framework, the effectiveness of

performance is measured by key indicators such as employees' job knowledge, job quality and quantity, level of creativity and initiative, and ability to meet timelines. It is also assumed that employees' high performance has a positive relationship with good results in the workplace.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Ghanaian universities do not have uniform job design or job specifications for administrative staff (Bingab et al., 2016). However, many of the universities have two broad classifications of administrative staff in accordance with their job specifications; namely, Senior Member administrators (SMAs) who are lecturers and Senior Staff Administrators (SSAs)/Junior Staff Administrators (JSAs) who are non-lecturers. Both administrative staff categories are found at four main administrative levels: Central Administration, College, School, and Department. The SMAs have a further classification known as Academic Senior Member Administrators (ASMAs) and Non-Academic Senior Member Administrators (NASMAs). (University of Ghana, 2015). The Central Administration level is the topmost in the hierarchy of university administration in Ghana. At this level, job designations have a Vice Chancellor followed by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor or Pro-Vice-Chancellors who are ASMAs on the Professorial rank. Also found at this level are NASMAs such as the Registrar, the Director of Finance (DoF), and other professional bodies (e.g., the University Legal Council made up of lawyers). Directly under the Registrar are Assistant Registrars who are also NASMs, and Administrative Assistants who could either be on the Senior Staff or Junior Staff rank (University of Ghana, 2015).

The next level on the administrative hierarchy is the College headed by a Provost who is an ASMA on the Professorial rank. Under the Provost are an Assistant Registrar called College Secretary and a College Finance Officer (CFO), both of whom are NASMAs. Some Administrative Assistants are either SSA's or JSAs and work under the College Secretary (University of Ghana, 2015). The hierarchy's penultimate level is the School headed by a Dean who is an ASMA on the Associate Professorial or Professorial rank. Under the Dean are an Assistant Registrar called School Administrator and a School Accountant who are both NASMAs. School Administrators perform their role assisted by Administrative Assistants who are either SSAs or JSAs (University of Ghana, 2015).

The last level is the Department administered by a Head who is an ASMA usually on the rank of Senior Lecturer or higher. Working under the

Head is an Administrative Assistant who is either an SSA or JSA. It is important to add that ASMAs such as Vice-Chancellors, Pro-Vice Chancellors, Provosts, Deans, and Heads of Department run their job roles on tenure basis, usually a four-year term with a renewable opportunity of an additional four-year term. However, all the NASMAs, SSAs, and JSAs hold their job roles until retirement and acquire such roles through experience and qualification(s) (University of Ghana, 2015).

METHOD AND DESIGN

This research adopted the quantitative approach and used the cross-sectional survey design. The design provided the most meaningful way through which the views of a large section of administrative staff in Ghanaian universities could be collected, collated, and analyzed for valid conclusions on the effects of job design on performance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It also enabled us to understand and describe the sample's demographic characteristics, examine relationships between different factors, and delineate the reasons for particular practices (Creswell, 2009).

Participants & Ethics

The participants for the research were selected based on a three-stage sampling design. First, the modal purposive sampling technique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) was used to select five Ghanaian universities, namely, the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, University of Cape Coast, University of Education, Winneba, and the University for Development Studies (See Table 1). They were selected because of their sizes and their student and faculty population. After the initial selection, 420 administrative staff-participants were further selected from the universities using non-proportional quota sampling. Finally, the accidental or haphazard technique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) was used to select any interested administrative staff from the selected universities to partake in the study. It is acknowledged that, to some extent, the accidental technique may lead to selection biases. Nonetheless, the awareness of this potential limitation made us cautious not to influence the selection process.

Institutional ethical clearances were obtained from each university's ethics board responsible for the conduct of research, including permission to research from the Registrars of the selected universities. All participants signed an informed consent form before being involved in the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and participation was purely voluntary.

The instrument

A researcher-developed questionnaire the *Job Design Questionnaire (JDQ)* was used to collect data. The instrument was chosen because of its efficacy as the most effective tool for collecting data from a large sample size (Creswell, 2009). The JDQ had closed-ended items that were grouped into two sections. Section "A" of the survey comprised items dealing with the participants' relevant demographic information. Section "B" included items examining the respondents' assessment of job designs' effects on their work performance.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of participants

	No.	%
Age		
<29	51	12.10
30-39	243	57.90
40-49	68	16.20
50-59	57	13.60
60+	1	0.20
Gender		
Male	232	55.20
Female	188	44.80
Marital Status		
Married	273	65.00
Divorced	5	1.20
Widowed	11	2.60
Single	129	30.70
Cohabiting	2	0.50
Educational Level		
Bachelor's Degree	95	22.60
Master's Degree	205	48.80
PhD	106	25.20
Chartered Accountant	14	3.30
Work Experience		
< 5 years	43	10.20
5-9 years	214	51.00
10-14 years	37	8.80
15-19 years	75	17.90
20+	51	12.10

N=420

The items in section 'B' were designed according to views on job design expressed by key authors and researchers such as Grant (2008), Hart and Cooper (2002), and Luthans (2005), among others. Section "B" items were designed using a three-point Likert scale consisting of the following response options: Disagree-3; Unsure-2; and Agree-1. As previously indicated, the survey items were designed to measure respondents' perceptions of job design effects on their work output. The validity and reliability tests were conducted before the use of the survey for data collection. A face validity test was conducted by measuring its precision in covering all the research objectives' domains, and the result was positive. The questionnaire was pre-tested using 120 administrative staff drawn from three other Ghanaian universities outside the sample to ascertain its reliability. Cronbach's alpha reliability test yielded a coefficient of 0.88, making the instrument highly reliable for use.

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

Five hundred surveys were administered to the administrative staff in a face-to-face setting. A total of 420 copies of the questionnaire were completed and returned, giving an 84% response rate. Fieldwork and administration of the questionnaire took 35 days to complete. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze respondents' demographic characteristics and effects of job design on staff performance. In addition, factor analysis was used to identify the key job design effects on administrative staff performance. Further, Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests, were also employed to examine the relationship between respondents' demographic characteristics and the key job design effects on staff performance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effects of Job Design on Administrative Staff Performance

A descriptive analysis of participants' responses to questions on 14 job design constructs was conducted (see Table 2)**.** The job design constructs were developed to measure job knowledge, job quality, job quantity, job creativity and meeting of timelines theorized in this research as performance indicators. From Table 2, the first four constructs measured job knowledge, the next three measured job quality and the ensuing construct measured job quantity.

Table 2
Effects of Job Design on Administrative Staff Performance

	Variable	Disagreement %	Unsure %	Agreement %	Significance χ^2
1	Job design enables you to specialize in a particular task	0	0.477	99.52	0.00*
2	Job design guarantees your personal development	0	0	100	0.00*
3	Job design allows you to gain in-depth knowledge in the task you perform	0	2.86	97.14	0.00*
4	Job design expands your scope of understanding the requirements to perform a task	0	0	100	0.00*
5	Job design makes you more efficient in your assigned role	0.71	0	99.29	0.00*
6	Job design brings about flexibility in the performance of your task.	0	0.95	99.05	0.00*
7	Job design reduces boredom in your work	0	3.1	96.90	0.00*
8	Job design increases your work output	19.52	0	80.48	0.00*
9	Job design motivates you in your assigned role	1.90	0.24	97.86	0.00*
10	Job design allows you to use material resources judiciously	0	0	100	0.00*
11	Job design enables you to work with minimum or no supervision	0.48	0	99.52	0.00*
12	Job design engenders creativity and improves your performance at work	0.95	1.19	97.86	0.00*
13	Job design makes your duties easier and simpler to perform	5.24	10.24	84.52	0.00*
14	Job design enables you to meet timelines	0	0.95	99.05	0.00*

*5% level of significance

The penultimate four constructs measured creativity/initiative and the last two measured timelines. An examination of the Table reveals a general agreement with the constructs. That is to say that respondents were unanimous on the view that job designs were positively associated with various effects on their work performance as itemized in Table 2.

Situating the above findings in contemporary literature, it appears this positive outcome resonates with Grant's (2008) assertion that a good and effective job design policy could guarantee to some extent employees' knowledge of job, quality and quantity of work done, creativity and meeting timeliness since it simplifies work and defines clear roles for them. The outcome of this research further lends credence to the fact that a well-defined role in an organisation could be one of the surest panaceas for improved staff performance. This argument is made based on the premise that good job designs have been noted to make employees work effectively to achieve their set targets (Dewhurst, Guthridge & Mohr, 2009; Sonawane, 2008). It can be inferred that since employees' job content and methods have been clarified, organizational efficiency and effectiveness is more likely to be assured (e.g. Clegg & Spencer, 2007; Macf & Mam 2018). It also implies that employees are able to meet their core task performance (Ng & Feldman, 2010). This finding is consistent with Bond's (2010) finding that job designs lead to increase in employee performance. In his view, a good job design enriches employees' knowledge, upgrades skills and improves their abilities to bring about the smooth workflow that could, in the end, benefit an entire organisation. But this only happens when defects are eliminated and organisations have the right capability to ensure effective supervision. In the case of this research, it appears job designs have created an opportunity for the university administrative staff to specialise in their assigned roles and also become efficient and effective in the use of resources.

Major effects of job designs on staff performance

Having analysed the effects of job designs on performance of the respondents, we were interested in going further to find out which of the identified effects were key in influencing performance. We employed factor analysis with the principal components extraction to focus the analysis on a manageable subset of the outcomes of job design on administrative staff performance. Appendix 1 shows the extracted components which explain nearly 88% of the variability in the original 14 variables. This allowed us to reduce the complexity of the data set by using these components, with only a 12% loss of information.

Table 3
Rotated Component Matrix[a]

Variables	Components			
	1	2	3	4
Specialise in a particular task	.938	.066	.124	.139
Guarantee your personal development	.376	.316	.819	.087
Gain in-depth knowledge in the task you perform	.858	.222	.132	.195
Expand scope of understanding the requirements to perform a task	.155	.922	-.068	.145
More efficient in your assigned role	.297	.248	-.024	.898
Flexibility in the performance of your role	.927	.108	.112	.181
Reduce boredom in your work	.630	.604	.341	.017
Increase your work output	.590	.079	.577	.432
Motivate you in your assigned role	.538	.653	.393	.074
Allow you to use material resources judiciously	.185	.616	.509	.079
Enable you to work with minimum or no supervision	-.266	-.054	-.901	.138
Engender creativity and improves your performance	.269	.757	.456	.257
Make your duties easier and simpler to perform	-.233	.614	.689	.130
Enables you to meet timelines	.781	.306	.321	.035

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

The rotated component matrix in Table 3 indicates that the first component is most highly correlated with three effects; *specialisation in a particular task*, *flexibility in the performance of the role and gaining in-depth knowledge in task performance*. The second component is most highly correlated with two other effects; *expanding the scope of understanding the requirements to perform a task* and *engendering creativity and improving performance.* The third component is most highly correlated with *guaranteeing personal development* and *enabling one to work with minimum or no supervision.* The fourth component is highly correlated with the effect of *being more efficient in the assigned role.* The results suggests that the most important factors related to the effects of job designs on administrative staff performance were seven in all: one; being able to specialise in a particular task, two; being flexible in the performance of the role, three; gaining in-depth knowledge in task performance, four; expanding the scope and understanding the requirements to perform a task, five; engendering creativity and

improving performance, six; guaranteeing personal development, and seven; being more efficient in the assigned role.

Relationship between respondents' demographic characteristics and main job design effects on staff performance

Table 4 presents the chi-square test results seeking to establish whether there was any significant association between selected demographic variables of the respondents (i.e., gender, age, marital status, work experience and educational level) and each of the seven main job design effects on performance previously identified.

Table 4 shows statistically significant association between age and all the job design effects ($P<0.05$) thus, suggesting that age is an important consideration in job designs particularly for the youngest age group below 29 years. Gender also showed statistically significant association with (3) gaining in-depth knowledge in task performance and (7) being more efficient in the assigned role particularly for males. Marital status also showed statistically significant association with (2) being flexible in the assigned role, (3) gaining in-depth knowledge in task performance and (7) being more efficient in the assigned role particularly for men.

Education of respondent showed statistically significant association with (2) being flexible in the assigned role, (3) gaining in-depth knowledge in task performance, (5) engendering creativity and improving performance and (7) being more efficient in the assigned role, particularly for degree holders only. The results appear to validate previous studies which have shown that when organisations raise the educational qualifications for their jobs, conceptualisation of job performance increases considerably (Ali & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2014; Kroch & Sjoblom, 1994; Wilson, 2016; Zareen, Razzaq, & Mujtaba, 2013).

Furthermore, the length of work experience of the staff showed a statistically significant association with all job design effects. This perhaps, implies that employees' work experiences have an effect on their levels of performance in assigned roles. This corroborates the findings of Birdsall (2018), Torrington et al. (2011) and Truss et al. (2013) that employees' work experiences of their day-to-day work directly affect their engagement levels, and also their personal effectiveness.

All the background variables of the respondents and showed constant associations with two of the job designs effects, namely; (4) expanding the scope and understanding the requirements to perform a task and (6) guaranteeing personal development.

Table 4

Relationship between demographic characteristics of respondents and key effects of job design

Variable		Main Job Design Effects 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age	X^2	10.798[f]	17.344[f]	50.120[f]	-	39.143[f]	-	13.876[f]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.019*	0.000*	0.000*	-	0.000*	-	0.004*
Gender	X^2	1.628	3.273	10.01	-	6.970[f]	-	2.449
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.504[f]	0.131[f]	0.002*	-	0.16*	-	0.256
Marital status	X^2	9.659[f]	11.682[f]	20.277[f]	-	20.264[f]	-	10.429[f]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.178	0.040*	0.000*	-	0.026*	-	0.087
Education	X^2	5.365[f]	9.328[f]	30.905[f]	-	21.378[f]	-	7.161[f]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.116	0.012*	0.000*	-	0.000*	-	0.026*
Experience	X^2	8.267[f]	14.846[f]	49.806[f]	-	34.476[f]	-	11.299[f]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.018*	0.000*	0.000*	-	0.000*	-	0.002

*f = fisher's exact test, * significant at 0.05 alpha*

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Establishing how job design affects the levels of training and job performance among employees must be given a serious consideration in the education sector. However, it appears it has not been given research attention within the higher education context. We concede that the findings of this research have a limitation in terms of the capacity to generalise for the entire administrative staff population in all higher educational institutions in Ghana and beyond due to the non-probability sampling technique used in the selection process. However, by conducting this research in the under-researched context of higher education, our effort is a novelty and the findings make a significant contribution to the limited knowledge and understanding about what constitutes job design and its effects on employee performance in that context. In particular, this research argues that a well-thought-out job design programme could enhance skill training of employees leading to

improved performance. While we acknowledge that employment in higher educational institutions is normally informed by the provision of training relevant to the specific need of administrative staff in assigned roles, what the findings of this study seek to imply is that such training should emphasize the personal characteristics of employees as a priority for most tasks. Doing so is likely to ensure that the training received really meets their individual needs thereby helping Ghana achieve its Sustainable Development Goal 4 which emphasizes quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all.

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