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Erick Buberwa

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Job sharing practices and organisational performance in higher education: a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach in Tanzanian universities

Erick Buberwa[a,b]

[a]Department of Human Capital Management and Administration, Moshi Co-operative University, Moshi, Kilimanjaro, Tanzania; [b]College of Human Resource and Development, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Nairobi, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The study investigates how job-sharing practices influence academic staff's perceived organisational performance of universities in Tanzania. Guided by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the study conceptualises job sharing through three responsibility configurations; shared responsibility, divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits, and tests their effects on perceived organisational performance. A positivist cross-sectional survey design was employed. The institutional study frame comprised operational universities in Tanzania, while the analytical unit was academic staff; usable data were obtained from 306 academic staff drawn from 11 public and 17 private universities. Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The structural model showed that shared responsibility, divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits all had positive and significant effects on perceived organisational performance. A substantial proportion of the variance in perceived organisational performance was explained by the model, and blindfolding results showed adequate predictive relevance. The findings indicate that collaboration in accountability, clear division of tasks, and transparent workload allocation are performance-supportive ways of organising shared academic work. The study adds to job sharing theory by modelling job sharing in the form of a multidimensional responsibility structure as opposed to a generic flexible work strategy and demonstrating that unequal ratio divisions are not always performance destructive. The study recommends that universities establish formalised job-sharing structures that align work distribution with expertise, transparency, and coordination in shared academic work.

IMPACT STATEMENT

Tanzanian universities, like many cash-strapped higher education organisations, are faced with the challenge of improving teaching, enrolments, graduates, research, and service provision with limited human and financial resources. This study shows that job-sharing is a work-design model for universities to organise academic work. The research on shared responsibility, divided responsibility and unequal ratio splits demonstrate that job-sharing is not just a flexible work arrangement, but also a responsibility system that can improve perceived organisational performance through co-ordinated tasks, clear responsibility allocation and justification. The study is important for university academic and administrators, human resource practitioners, scholars, and policy makers in the higher education sector as it demonstrates that performance enhancement relies on the allocation of responsibility with academic roles. Shared responsibility can enhance co-operation, continuity, support and responsibly and divided responsibility can reduce role ambiguity, role conflict and co-ordination problems. More importantly, the research also shows that unequal split ratios are not always bad, but can improve, not hinder performance if these ratios are determined by ability, workload, skills, and organisational objectives. This research contributes to the research on job-sharing and work design, by refocusing from the generic approaches to job-sharing in flexible working arrangements to a complex responsibility model. The study informs job-sharing policy, workload allocation, accountability, and co-ordination of different jobs in a department to enhance

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CONTACT Erick Buberwa buberwaerick@yahoo.co.uk Department of Human Capital Management and Administration, Moshi Co-operative University, Moshi, Kilimanjaro, Tanzania.

academic performance in correspondence with individual and organisational performance. By improving the sharing and management of academic roles, the research provides insights for better, effective, fair, and performance-focused management in higher education in Tanzania and similar university settings.

1. Introduction

Organisations worldwide, especially higher learning institutions, are under pressure to achieve more with limited resources. Universities are experiencing evolving student populations, limited government funding, and increased demands in terms of teaching quality, research output, consultancy, and community partnerships (Farnell, 2020; Ouwehand et al., 2022; Teferra & Altbach, 2022). When this is the case, organisational effectiveness hinges on the manner in which human work is designed and coordinated (Harney & Nolan, 2023; Yu et al., 2022).

Job-sharing is one of the flexible working arrangements that are becoming popular within university campuses to alleviate the workload pressures, enhance retention, and promote the performance of the institutions (Apostolou & Galanaki, 2023; Atiku & Ganiyu, 2022). Job-sharing is a formal arrangement where two or more employees share the duties of one full-time position (Branine, 2004). Work sharing is also considered a general umbrella expression of the redistributing work (Calmfors, 1985; Calmfors & Hoel, 1989) and thus, job sharing is taken as the main interest in this study; the two terms are not used as rigid synonyms. These arrangements can significantly redefine the location of accountability, coordination, and responsibility in academic work in higher education.

University performance includes strategic and operational objectives of enrolment, graduation, research, quality of service, and satisfaction of stakeholders (Loukkola et al., 2020; Teferra & Altbach, 2022). In this study though, the dependent variable is not an objective university scorecard; here, it is treated as perceived organisational performance, or the ratings of the academic staff about the level of performance of their respective universities in terms of these institutional outcomes (Guan et al., 2014; Prodanova & Kocarev, 2023). Such a difference will matter since the research uses inferences of the staff opinion regarding the performance of the university, and not audits of institutional records. The relevance of such perceptions to the context of the Tanzanian higher education is substantive due to the fact that academic personnel are placed at the centre of the core teaching, research, and service activities in the context of which university performance is experienced and evaluated (Komba & Mwakabenga, 2022; Mgaiwa, 2021; Mtebe & Raphael, 2023).

Even though the literature on flexible work arrangements tends to claim that it is positively associated with such employee outcomes as job satisfaction, engagement, and retention (Apostolou & Galanaki, 2023; Mungai & Kimani, 2023), its organisational impact is relative, not automatic. Subsequently, studies from African higher education indicate that flexible work arrangements may have the potential to influence academic staff performance and service continuity planned and coordinated effectively (Mungai & Kimani, 2023; Muriithi, 2023).

This study addresses an underdeveloped and partially unclear theoretical gap in literature on job-sharing. The current literature has been inclined towards viewing job sharing as an umbrella form of flexible work arrangement, thus leaving the architecture of responsibility in shared roles under theorised and generating an ambiguity as to whether asymmetrical workload distributions is or must be performance detrimental. In alignment with this background, this study provides an adequately incremental theoretical contribution by way of modification and partially expanding upon established frameworks (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Lim, 2026).

The study adjusts the literature by conceptualising job sharing as three different responsibility configurations and broadens, to some extent, Herzberg responsibility logic of individual job design to shared academic work. The theoretical interest of the study consists both in the first instance of noteworthiness (Hollebeek et al., 2025; Lim, 2026) because it contributes to the understanding of the roles of responsibility configurations in influencing perceived organisational performance and in the second instance, a narrow counterintuitive response, namely that unequal ratio splits which are generally expected to

compromise performance can contribute to performance. Put in this context, the contribution is not just contextual but explanatory in the sense of why the responsibility structures in job sharing can induce various organisational implications.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: Section 2 is the general literature review of the main variables of study, both theoretical foundations and empirical evidence. Section 3 presents the research methodology, which includes the research design, population, sampling, and methods of analysis. Section 4 gives the results and discussion, understanding the findings based on the theoretical framework and past studies. The last section, 5, wraps up the research and provides the conclusion around the main findings and actionable recommendations, theoretical and empirical implications of the research to higher education management and policy, as well as limitations and future research directions.

2. Theoretical foundation and hypotheses development

2.1. Underpinning theory

This study is underpinned by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), according to which it is possible to distinguish between motivators (intrinsic job characteristics, which include: achievement, recognition, responsibility, meaningful work, and growth) and hygiene factors (supervision, organisational policies, working conditions, and interpersonal relations) that help to prevent dissatisfaction but do not independently provoke the persistent change of performance (Herzberg et al., 1959; Lundberg et al., 2009; Miner, 2005). The framework created by Herzberg has been extensively applied to describe the effect of job design and structure of responsibility on employee motivation and behaviour (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Miner, 2005).

Although the theory's initial focus is on individual job satisfaction, its concern with responsibility and task structuring suggests its theoretical applicability to study differentiated job sharing arrangements. The scholarly work on work design has repeatedly shown that intrinsic motivation and performance behaviours are influenced by the autonomy, task identity, and the allocation of responsibility (Parker, 2014). Intrinsic motivators are especially central in determining the performance outcomes in knowledge-intensive environments like the universities (Jiang et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, job sharing arrangements can have an indirect effect on the organisational performance through motivational processes entrenched in the responsibility distribution.

In order to provide a coherent theoretical position, Herzberg was considered in terms of IMPACT (Interestingness, Matching, Parsimony, Applicability, Conceptual rigour, and Testability) framework for theory choice as suggested by Hollebeek et al. (2025). To begin with, the theory was of interest since the process of job sharing is all about responsibility allocation (Thakur et al., 2018). Furthermore, it matches with the study as intrinsic motivators make discretionary effort and performance actions more effective, whereas hygiene conditions make dissatisfaction unavoidable and limit its effectiveness (Herzberg et al., 1959; Judge et al., 2001). Additionally, the theory is parsimonious with the study since it uses a dual-factor differentiation (motivators and hygiene factors) enabling the systematic mapping of job-sharing arrangements (Lundberg et al., 2009). Moreover, it is applicable in the contexts of higher education where autonomy and academic responsibility are some of the fundamental motivating forces (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

This theory is contextually appropriate with the study since various responsibility constructions can work as motivators or hygiene factors in relation to perceived fairness, transparency, and interdependence of tasks (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cropanzano et al., 2007). Lastly, it is testable, since all the existing job-sharing dimensions can be empirically operationalised and classified according to the theory and be associated with performance indicators.

2.2. Conceptualisation of job sharing

Research on job sharing has increased in the past few years and organisations have found it necessary to have flexible means of scheduling work without the loss of continuity and accountability. Job sharing is an official practice where two or more workers share one substantive position and jointly distribute the responsibility of that position (Branine, 2004; Lynn et al., 2023; Williamson et al., 2015). In

comparison, the broader use of work sharing is frequent to mean the reallocation of tasks or time to the workers (Calmfors, 1985; Calmfors & Hoel, 1989). Thus, this study treats job sharing as the focal construct and examines its internal responsibility patterns instead of using the terms job sharing and work sharing as synonyms. In job-sharing literature, three fundamental responsibility frames are repeated: shared responsibility, divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits. Such structures have been chosen as they reflect the key points of how accountability and workload sharing are introduced in a common role and thus are directly reflected in Herzberg concerns with responsibility, recognition, and task design (El Zein et al., 2019; Herzberg et al., 1959; Williamson et al., 2015).

Accordingly, the study conceptualises job sharing as a multidimensional responsibility configuration comprising shared responsibility, divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits. These three dimensions are analytically relevant as they reflect the different logic of coordination, that is joint accountability, and segmented accountability, and asymmetrical accountability. Distinguishing them allows the study to test whether different forms of responsibility allocation carry different motivational and performance implications in universities (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Parker, 2014; Wu & Cormican, 2021).

2.2.1. Shared responsibility (SR)

Shared responsibility as one of job-sharing responsibility structures refers to the situation when the partners organise the tasks together and share the overall responsibility and accountability to the results, as they make, plan, and act jointly (Branine, 2004; Nollkaemper, 2018). It often increases collaborative problem solving and skills transfer (Gede & Huluka, 2023). Accordingly, El Zein et al. (2019) and Bunjak et al. (2022) emphasise that shared responsibility is consistent with the motivator factors of Herzberg since it contributes to meaningful participation, group achievement, and increased task identity. In academic institutions, this collaborative model has the potential of enhancing quality of teaching, research output, and institutional integration through intellectual exchange and peer assistance (Liu & Sun, 2025; Rokhmani et al., 2019).

2.2.2. Divided responsibility (DR)

Divided responsibility means a definite division of duties, in which job partners are given responsibility of certain parts of the role (Cheng et al., 2023; Kong et al., 2022). This design minimises role ambiguity, duplication, specifies expectations and minimises conflict. According to Williamson et al. (2015) and Liu et al. (2022), this arrangement functions as a hygienic-supporting component that establishes the conditions of stabilisation of work, as well as a motivator of the situation of tasks ownership improving individual performance and manifesting competence. Divided responsibility in academia helps in specialisation and productivity, which helps in accurate organisational performance output (Davidescu et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2022).

2.2.3. Unequal ratio splits (UR)

Unequal ratio splits refer a job-sharing arrangement in which partners assume different proportions of the workload (e.g. 60/40 or 70/30) which brings about asymmetry in accountability (Branine, 2004; Williamson et al., 2015). Although, as Colquitt et al. (2001) and Inegbedion et al. (2020) caution, perceived injustices in workload allocation may decrease motivation and boost dissatisfaction, Jiang et al. (2023) and Barney (1991) believe that when based on expertise, seniority, or strategic purposes, unequal splits may boost specialisation and organisational productivity.

2.3. Organisational performance in universities

University organisational performance is the ability of a university to meet its strategic and operational objectives in terms of teaching, research, community service, and institutional sustainability (Loukkola et al., 2020; Teferra & Altbach, 2022). The indicators are common (such as enrolment, graduation, research productivity, publication output, and satisfaction with institutional services) (Loukkola et al., 2020; TCU, 2023). Resource-based systems may put pressure on staffing, rising enrolment, and accountability demands, leading to increasing performance pressure and consequential internal work design demands (Komba & Mwakabenga, 2022; Mtebe & Raphael, 2023). In this research, organisations are operationalised based on their perceived performance, as opposed to audited archived information: the respondent rated the performance of their

universities on their enrolment, graduation, and publication output. The construct is in line with the operational choice and the level of analysis or survey design used in the study.

2.4. Job sharing and organisational performance

Recent scholarship suggests that job sharing, as a form of flexible work arrangement, may have important implications for organisational outcomes. This is in line with Herzberg's argument, the organisational structure of responsibilities within a job may affect employee motivation and performance especially in cases where responsibility has been used as an intrinsic source of achievement, recognition, and growth (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg et al., 1959; Olmsted, 1979; Parker, 2014).

The literature on empirical studies generally justifies that, flexible structures of responsibility can affect performance, even though not all evidence has been positive. Davidescu et al. (2020) findings show that employees must be involved in job sharing so that they can acquire relevant skills through doing the actual work and ultimately contribute to organisational performance. Additionally, Mwiti et al. (2022) study found that job sharing help universities retain experienced staff and enhance organisational performance, while Fundi et al. (2023) report favourable effects of job-sharing arrangements on employee performance.

Furthermore, Gacheri and Kiiru (2022) study established that flexible time arrangements such as telecommuting, compressed work week, job sharing, and flexi time positively and significantly affect employee performance. Moreover, Sasela and Agustian (2022) study found that job sharing, and work motivation have a positive and significant impact on employee performance which subsequently leads to organisational performance. However, Antunes et al. (2023) suggests that labour flexibility can enhance the outcomes in terms of satisfaction and work-life without necessarily creating a clear competitive advantage. Also, Wang and Xie (2023) determined that the existence of workload imbalances in job sharing contracts caused the performance level to be inconsistent, the perception of fairness to be lower, and the efficiency of collaboration in technology-based Chinese companies.

Consequently, this literature leaves a more specific theoretical gap which the current study seeks to fill. A large portion of literature focuses on job sharing within the larger repertoire of flexible work, with the main outcomes of the topic being satisfaction, retention, and overall performance of employees. Though informative, that stream lacks the internal responsibility architecture of shared roles and therefore fails to offer sufficient insight into whether joint, divided, and asymmetrical responsibility arrangements are to be anticipated to have the same organisational implications. The unsolved problem is particularly apparent with unequal ratio splits, which are commonly implicitly viewed as problematic, but can equally be useful in an organisation when workload asymmetry is a manifestation of differentiated expertise and role requirements. This theoretical ambiguity is addressed in the current study to conceptualise job sharing as a multidimensional responsibility configuration as well as analyse the relationship between the three forms of responsibility and perceived organisational performance in Tanzanian universities. Conceptually this makes the study a sufficiently incremental theoretical adjustment with partial extension as opposed to an entirely contextual implementation (Lim, 2026).

2.4.1. Shared responsibility and organisational performance

Application of shared responsibility is expected to lead to the improvement of organisational performance since collective responsibility intensifies collaboration, mutual assistance, and the combination of complementary expertise within an identical role (Decuyper et al., 2023; Gu et al., 2022). This is motivational in Herzberg's sense since employees are engaged in the process of planning, execution, and achievement rather than being subjected to compulsory activities (Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg et al., 1959). Recent empirical data attests to this opinion. Decuyper et al. (2023) demonstrated the importance of collaboration and shared responsibility as key dimensions of effective team teaching and higher frequency of team teaching correlates with greater levels of both.

Khasawneh et al. (2023) also detected that the teacher collaboration within the framework of professional learning communities and collaborative instructional practice led to teacher growth and positive student academic outcomes. Similarly, Mariën et al. (2023) indicated that initiation of team-teaching teams found clear additional value in collaborative teaching in adaptive teaching, activating learning, and effective classroom management. These findings have implications in university environments by indicating that shared

responsibility will reinforce institutional performance and enhance organisational performance by ensuring continuity in teaching, joint supervision and work associated with research (Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023). Therefore, the development of the hypothesis is based on the research context:

H1: Shared responsibility positively influences perceived organisational performance of universities.

2.4.2. Divided responsibility and organisational performance

The division of responsibility is anticipated to enhance organisational performance when the allocation of responsibilities is in a manner that enhances clarity, lessens duplication, and maintains coordination along a common ground (Gede & Huluka, 2023; Martínez-Díaz et al., 2021). In the view of Herzberg, this structuring can stabilise the work conditions and at the same time enable employees to form ownership of specialised tasks thus favouring efficiency and motivation (Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg et al., 1959). Empirical studies point in the same direction. Ahmed et al. (2022), working with employees in higher education institutions in Sindh, Pakistan, found that goal clarity positively contributed to employees' job performance, both directly and through related motivational mechanisms. Likewise, Gede and Huluka (2023) reported that goal clarity had a positive and significant effect on the performance of higher educational institutions.

Such results have implications to universities as teaching, supervision, assessment, student support, and research-related activities tend to demand differentiated efforts. With such jobs delegate-shared, job sharers will benefit by not duplicating their jobs, reducing coordination expenses, and performing their specific job responsibilities effectively whilst remaining a part of the larger institutional agenda (Hong and Smith, 2022). It is therefore reasonable to expect that divided responsibility, when properly coordinated, will improve organisational performance in universities. Therefore, the development of the following hypothesis:

H2: Divided responsibility positively influences perceived organisational performance of universities.

2.4.3. Unequal ratio splits and organisational performance

Asymmetrical workload distribution in job sharing (uneven ratio splits) can have both positive and negative effects on organisational performance (Branine, 2004; Williamson et al., 2015). On the one hand, workload can be unevenly distributed in a way that can be perceived as dissatisfying, unclear, or unjustified (Colquitt et al., 2001; Inegbedion et al., 2020). Conversely, asymmetry can be tolerable and even productive in contexts in which disparities in workloads may be based on expertise, experience, role demands, or institutional needs as opposed to random privilege (Kenny & Fluck, 2022, 2022; Olwal, 2023). In Herzberg's viewpoint, such arrangements can be either motivating when they are perceived to be justified and significantly related to the responsibility or be frustrating when perceived to be unfair (Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg et al., 1959).

Generally, the current literature in the field of higher education substantiates this argument. Accordingly, Kenny and Fluck (2022) demonstrate that valid academic workload assignment ought to be participatory, trusting, and receptive to the facts of academic work. Subsequently, Kenny and Fluck (2022) suggest in a follow-up study that the planning on academic workload must be transparent, research-based and institutional. Likewise, Olwal (2023) states that the distribution of workload can be fair and transparent to facilitate the productivity and job satisfaction among academics. The fact that in these studies unequal ratio splits are not studied in precisely the same form as they are in the present study, nevertheless, points to the fact that asymmetrical workload distribution is not necessarily detrimental. The reason is that in the case of universities, one should anticipate that unequal ratio splits could help to legitimise perceived organisational performance whenever such splits are perceived as just and as consistent with the requirements of an academic work. Thus, hypothesising as follows:

H3: Unequal ratio splits positively influence perceived organisational performance of universities.

2.5. Theoretical research framework

The theoretical research framework for this study was developed through a critical review of the existing literature, together with the hypotheses and assumptions derived from the key study variables. Figure 1

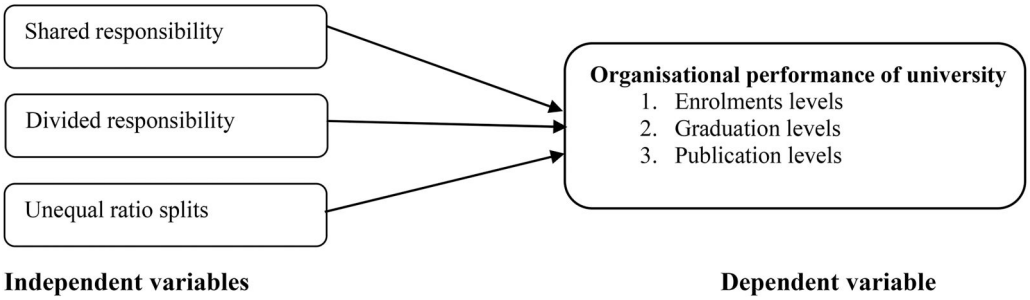

Figure 1. Theoretical research framework.

presents the proposed relationships among the three independent variables and one dependent variable and reflects the three hypotheses guiding the study. These hypotheses were derived, elaborated on, and placed in context based on the Two-Factor Theory by Herzberg and from the previous body of empirical literature regarding job sharing, work design, flexible work arrangements, role clarity, and academic workload distribution (Herzberg, 1968; Herzberg et al., 1959; Kenny & Fluck, 2022; Mwiti et al., 2022; Parker, 2014; Wang & Xie, 2023). The argument of the framework is that the way responsibility is structured within job-sharing arrangements may shape institutional outcomes in university settings. In this study, job sharing is treated as the independent construct and is represented by three key dimensions, namely Shared Responsibility (SR), Divided Responsibility (DR), and Unequal Ratio Splits (UR), while Organisational Performance (OP) is the dependent variable, measured as perceived organisational performance by academic staff. It is examined through respondents' perceptions of institutional outcomes such as enrolment-related performance, graduation-related performance, and research publication productivity, as reflected in the study context. The framework assumes that different responsibility configurations within job sharing may influence organisational performance in different ways. The hypotheses are examined using data obtained from academic staff in Tanzanian universities. Accordingly, the units of analysis are individual academic staff drawn from public and private universities in Tanzania, while the dependent variable represents their perception of their universities' organisational performance.

3. Methodological approach

3.1. Philosophical underpinning

Research philosophy concerns the assumptions researchers make about knowledge and how it can be generated (Creswell, 2013; Saunders et al., 2019). Common philosophical positions in business and social research include positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Lim, 2023). This study adopted a positivist philosophy because it sought to test theory-driven hypotheses using structured quantitative data and statistical analysis (Dawadi et al., 2021).

3.2. Research design

In order to examine the variables of interest and test the hypothesised relationships among them, this study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, collecting data from respondents at a single point in time. A cross-sectional design is appropriate when the researcher seeks a snapshot of a population or phenomenon and intends to analyse associations among variables without manipulating the study setting (Capili and Anastasi, 2024; Setia, 2016). The study used a self-administered structured questionnaire to collect primary data from academic staff in public and private universities in Tanzania. The quantitative approach was considered suitable because the study aimed to generate numerical evidence on the relationship between the dimensions of job sharing and organisational performance. Additionally, the study used a deductive methodology, starting with a theoretical framework, generating hypotheses from earlier research, gathering information from the chosen respondents, and statistically testing the suggested correlations. This methodological decision is in line with previous research on job sharing and related flexible work arrangements, which frequently examined performance outcomes in organisational settings using survey-based quantitative

designs and structured questionnaires ( )(Fundi et al., 2023; Gacheri & Kiiru, 2022). Accordingly, the cross-sectional survey design was considered appropriate for assessing how shared responsibility, divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits relate to organisational performance in universities.

3.3. Study area

The study was conducted in Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar. The institutional frame initially covered all 30 university institutions listed by TCU and UNESCO at the time of the study. However, only 28 were fully accredited/chartered and operational for student admission, while 2 held provisional licences and were not yet admitting students (TCU, 2020; UNESCO, 2022). Accordingly, the effective field frame for data collection comprised the 28 operational universities, from which responses were ultimately obtained.

3.4. Research participants

Academic staff constituted the units of observation because they participate directly in universities' core functions of teaching, research, consultancy, and community service (TCU, 2022). The universities were not the analytical units, rather, they were the institutional environment in which individual academic staff were surveyed. This distinction is important because the study's inferences are drawn from staff perceptions of university performance, not from institution-level audited performance records. The study population was 8,507 (TCU, 2023), consisting of professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, lecturers, assistant lecturers as well as tutorial assistants of public and private universities.

3.5. Sample size and sampling techniques

In calculating the required and generalisable sample of respondents, the study used the Yamane formula of calculating sample size (Yamane, 1967): $n = N/[1 + Ne\ 2]$, where n = required sample size, N = size of the target population (8,507 academic staff) and e = allowable sampling error (0.05) at the 95% confidence level. This produced a target sample of 382 academic staff. The final usable sample of 306 respondents remained adequate for PLS-SEM and exceeded contemporary minimum size guidance for a model with three predictors of one endogenous construct (Kock & Hadaya, 2018; Lim, 2025).

Because the target population was heterogeneous across university type and academic rank, stratified random sampling was used to improve representation across the major subgroups (Cochran, 1977; Sarfo et al., 2022). Once the target sample size had been established, proportional allocation was used across the strata and each stratum was then selected using simple random procedures. Thus, the study employed broad institutional coverage at the frame level but sampled respondents at the staff level.

3.6. Measurement of constructs

The study model comprised four latent variables: three exogenous dimensions of job sharing - shared responsibility (SR), divided responsibility (DR), and unequal ratio splits (UR) - and one endogenous construct, perceived organisational performance (OP). The SR, DR, and UR indicators were modelled out of the existing job-sharing and role-structure literature (Decuyper et al., 2023; Kenny & Fluck, 2022; Mwiti et al., 2022). The six reflective indicators based on higher education performance literature and university-performance measures, measured perceived organisational performance by assessing performance of universities in terms of enrolment, graduation, and publication outcomes as perceived by the academic staff (Loukkola et al., 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; TCU, 2023). All substantive items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

For purposes of PLS-SEM estimation, all four constructs were specified as reflective. This specification is appropriate because the indicators are conceptual manifestations of their underlying latent variables (Hair & Alamer, 2022). In particular, organisational performance was modelled as a reflective construct because favourable perceptions of university performance are expected to be reflected in higher perceived student enrolment, graduation outcomes, and research publication performance (Becker et al., 2023; TCU, 2023). The measurement items and their original adaptation sources are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement constructs, items, and source.

Construct	Code	Measurement items/indicators	Source
Shared responsibility	SR1	In my university, job-sharing partners jointly take responsibility for achieving agreed work outcomes.	Decuyper et al. (2023); Mwiti et al. (2022)
	SR2	Shared responsibility improves continuity in teaching, supervision, and related academic duties.	
	SR3	When responsibility is jointly shared, coordination and mutual support improve overall work effectiveness.	
Divided responsibility	DR1	In my university, responsibilities are clearly divided between partners according to assigned duties.	Ahmed et al. (2022); Martínez-Díaz et al. (2021)
	DR2	Clear division of responsibilities reduces duplication of work and role ambiguity.	
	DR3	Dividing responsibilities according to task areas improves efficiency in executing university duties.	
Unequal ratio splits	UR1	Unequal sharing of workload can improve performance when duties are allocated according to competence and capacity.	Kenny and Fluck (2022); Martinez-Vazquez, (2023)
	UR2	In my university, unequal workload splits are effective when the basis for the difference is transparent and justifiable.	
	UR3	Assigning different proportions of work to job-sharing partners helps the university perform better when aligned with institutional priorities.	
Organisational performance of university	OP1	Student enrolment in my university has improved over the last five years.	Nguyen and Nguyen (2023); TCU (2023); Prodanova and Kocarev (2023); Loukkola et al. (2020);
	OP2	My university has maintained satisfactory student enrolment performance over the last five years.	
	OP3	Graduation levels in my university have improved over the last five years.	
	OP4	My university has maintained satisfactory graduation performance over the last five years.	
	OP5	Research publication output in my university has improved over the last five years.	
	OP6	My university has maintained satisfactory research publication performance over the last five years.	

3.7. Questionnaire development, pre-test, and pilot study

The study used a pre-designed self-administered questionnaire (Kempen, 2012). A questionnaire was appropriate because it allows standardised data collection from a large and geographically dispersed group of respondents within limited time and cost, while preserving comparability across cases (Saunders et al., 2019). The self-administered version was especially appropriate to the academic staff since it allowed the respondents to fill out the questionnaires at their convenience even when their work schedules were hectic. This study's data was collected between May to August 2023.

To ensure that the respondents understood the survey items without ambiguity, the questionnaire was first pre-tested through a debriefing procedure involving 38 respondents drawn from one of the universities included in the study. During the pre-test exercise, the respondents were observed carefully and were requested to comment on any difficulties they encountered in understanding the questions, including issues of clarity, meaning, comprehension, and relevance. The wording, arrangement, and sequencing of the questionnaire items were then refined in accordance with the feedback obtained from the pre-testing phase.

Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted to assess the feasibility of carrying out the main study and to determine the appropriateness, validity, and reliability of the research instrument before the actual survey (Teresi et al., 2022; Ying & Ehrhardt, 2023). The researcher applied the 10% rule as suggested by Ying and Ehrhardt (2023), and therefore 38 respondents, representing about 10% of the sample size, were involved in the pilot study. This number was also considered adequate because Totton et al. (2023) recommend at least 30 participants for pilot-based parameter estimation. The pilot participants were not included in the final study. The findings from the pilot study were used to improve and strengthen the questionnaire before the main data collection.

The questionnaire also contained items capturing the demographic characteristics of the respondents. In addition, all construct items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly

Agree to Strongly Disagree, with a neutral option retained so that responses were not forced. The internal consistency of the scales in the pilot study was found to be above 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability of the instrument for the main study.

3.8. Common method bias

Because the exogenous and endogenous constructs were measured from the same respondents using a single questionnaire, common method bias (CMB) was assessed as a diagnostic step prior to structural interpretation. Harman's single-factor test was applied to the 15 substantive indicators used in the PLS-SEM model, namely SR1-SR3, DR1-DR3, UR1-UR3, and OP1-OP6. The single-factor test by Harman states that the first factor extracted ought to interpret most of the total variance to have a case of common method variance (CMV) (Kock, 2021, 2023). The unrotated principal component analysis revealed that the first factor explained 39.5% of the total variance, as shown in Table 2, which is less than the widely accepted 50% criterion (Kock, 2021). Therefore, the majority of the covariance among the indicators could not be explained by a single factor, indicating that CMB is not severe in this study's diagnostic test.

3.9. Analytical approach

The empirical data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics and the general distribution of responses. Inferential analysis was performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4 to estimate the relationships between shared responsibility, divided responsibility, unequal ratio splits, and organisational performance.

There were two phases to the PLS-SEM analysis. First, indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (rho_a and rho_c), average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) were used to evaluate the reflective measurement model. Also checked was Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) which is a diagnostic test of collinearity. Second, results of the structural model were assessed with path coefficients, bootstrapped t-values and p-values, coefficients of determination (R^2 and adjusted R^2), effect sizes (f^2) and predictive relevance by blindfolding (Q^2).

3.10. Model specification

Model specification encompasses determining which independent variables should be included in a regression equation in order to establish the relationship between variables (Gates et al., 2023). The

Table 2. Common method bias test.

Total variance explained						
	Initial eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings		
Component	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	5.950	39.536	39.536	5.950	39.536	39.536
2	1.987	13.206	52.742			
3	1.264	8.396	61.138			
4	1.158	7.695	68.833			
5	0.937	6.228	75.061			
6	0.588	3.907	78.968			
7	0.564	3.744	82.712			
8	0.455	3.025	85.737			
9	0.402	2.671	88.408			
10	0.380	2.524	90.932			
11	0.350	2.324	93.256			
12	0.320	2.124	95.380			
13	0.304	2.021	97.401			
14	0.226	1.501	98.902			
15	0.165	1.098	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

researcher identified and tried to enumerate parameters shaping this study with their respective relationships. Since the study was on determining the relationship between independent and dependent variables, there was a need to specifically model the theorised relationship to test it against the empirical data gathered from the field. Hence, the study's models are specified as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon \quad \text{H1}$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon \quad \text{H2}$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon \quad \text{H3}$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where;

Y = Overall organisational performance (OP)

β_0 = Constant (coefficient of intercept) values of regression

$\beta_{1\text{-}3}$ = Unstandardised beta coefficient of job-sharing practices (SR, DR, and UR)

ε = Error Factor

Therefore, the overall structural equation model of the study is expressed as follows: $OP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SR + \beta_2 DR + \beta_3 UR + \varepsilon$. The structural model estimated the direct effects of shared responsibility, divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits on organisational performance of universities in Tanzania.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

The study sought to examine the demographic characteristics of the 306 respondents whose responses were recorded. The focus was on variables such as sex, age, education level, and academic rank. Analysing demographic characteristics is important since it facilitates the understanding and interpretation of findings more comprehensively (Garrido-Cumbrera et al., 2022). Table 3 summarises the demographic distribution of the study's respondents. The sample was composed of male participants (68.6%) that represent the gender makeup of academic personnel in Tanzanian universities (TCU, 2023, 2024). The number of female respondents was 31.4%, which is sufficient to conduct an analysis (Nulty, 2008).

Regarding university type, 202 (66.0%) respondents were drawn from public universities and 104 (34.0%) from private universities. The private university segment remained substantial at 34.0%, meaning that the study was not restricted to one institutional context only. Consequently, the distribution provides a reasonable basis for interpreting the findings across both public and private universities. Respondents' ages ranged from 20 to over 60 years, with the largest group aged 30–39 (40%). Older academics (60+) were the smallest group (3%). Generally, universities have a much younger population

Table 3. Respondents' demographic characteristics.

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Proportion
Gender	Male	210	69%
	Female	96	31%
University Type	Public	202	66%
	Private	104	34%
Age	20–29	71	23%
	30–39	123	40%
	40–49	78	26%
	50–59	24	8%
	60+	10	3%
Level of Education	PhD	119	39%
	Master's Degree	130	41%
	Postgraduate Diploma	5	2%
	Bachelor's degree	52	17%
Academic Rank	Professor	5	2%
	Associate Professor	12	4%
	Senior Lecturer	50	16%
	Lecturer	72	24%
	Assistant Lecturer	109	36%
	Tutorial Assistant	58	19%

Source: Field Data (2023).

Table 4. Reliability and validity test.

Construct	Indicator	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	Rho_a	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE
SR	SR1	0.798	0.798	0.797	0.882	0.713
	SR2	0.874				
	SR3	0.859				
DR	DR1	0.836	0.811	0.817	0.888	0.725
	DR2	0.846				
	DR3	0.872				
UR	UR1	0.835	0.785	0.794	0.874	0.698
	UR2	0.873				
	UR3	0.798				
OP	OP1	0.827	0.927	0.927	0.943	0.733
	OP2	0.874				
	OP3	0.840				
	OP4	0.848				
	OP5	0.876				
	OP6	0.872				

Notes: Composite Reliability (Rho_a), Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

who actively engage in research activities, and seniors who are invaluable are fewer (TCU, 2022, 2023, 2024).

Most of respondents held a master's degree (41%), consistent with TCU (2022) regarding academic staff composition. Postgraduate diploma holders were the smallest group (2%). Assistant lecturers commanded a significant 36% response rate, while professors featured as the minimally represented (2%), reflecting academic staff proportions in universities (UDSM, 2023).

4.2. Measurement model assessment

The reflective measurement model was first evaluated before proceeding to the structural relationships. Table 4 demonstrates that all indicator loadings, which ranged from 0.798 to 0.876, were higher than the suggested 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2022). These findings show that the indicators had acceptable indicator reliability since they shared enough variance with the corresponding latent variables. Additionally, convergent validity and construct-level reliability were satisfactory. The Cronbach alpha ranges, rho_a, and composite reliability (rho_c) were 0.785 to 0.927, 0.794 to 0.927 and 0.874 to 0.943, respectively. On the same note, AVE values were above the minimum acceptable value of 0.50 with a range of 0.698 to 0.733 (Hair et al., 2024a; Lim, 2024; Sarstedt et al., 2023). All these findings lend credence to the measurement model's convergent validity and internal consistency reliability.

Moreover, the discriminant validity of the measurement model was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), and cross-loadings. HTMT was used as the primary assessment criterion because it is considered a more robust approach for establishing discriminant validity among conceptually related constructs (Cheung et al., 2024). Table 5 results indicate that the range of HTMT was between 0.228 and 0.819, which is lower than the conservative value of 0.90, indicating that the constructs were empirically differentiated and that no conceptual overlap was a critical issue prior to testing of the structural model (Henseler & Dijkstra, 2023). The Fornell-Larcker matrix also supported discriminant validity, with matrix values ranging from 0.183 to 0.856 and with the square root of AVE for each construct exceeding its corresponding inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Rasoolimanesh, 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2023). In the same vein, cross-loading results, which ranged from 0.798 to 0.876, indicated that each indicator loaded highest on its respective construct relative to the others, consistent with Hair et al. (2024b) and Hair et al. (2022) guidelines. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the measurement model satisfied the required discriminant validity conditions and was appropriate for further structural analysis.

Additionally, the collinearity diagnostics were done using the variance inflation factor (VIF) values generated by the PLS-SEM algorithm. As depicted in Table 6, the VIF values for all indicators fell below the recommended critical threshold of 5, providing strong evidence against multicollinearity issues and confirming the structural stability of the measurement model (Hossain et al., 2025; Kock, 2023).

The results in Table 6 imply reasonable indicator collinearity and supports the discriminant validity and stability of the measurement model for further analysis.

Table 5. Assessment of discriminant validity.

Construct	DR	OP	SR	UR
Fornell-Larcker criterion				
DR	0.851			
OP	0.713	0.856		
SR	0.491	0.702	0.845	
UR	0.183	0.354	0.272	0.836
Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)				
DR				
OP	0.819			
SR	0.603	0.814		
UR	0.228	0.412	0.349	
Cross-loadings				
DR1	**0.836**	0.550	0.371	0.159
DR2	**0.846**	0.605	0.401	0.140
DR3	**0.872**	0.659	0.474	0.168
OP1	0.611	**0.827**	0.602	0.251
OP2	0.602	**0.874**	0.610	0.255
OP3	0.545	**0.840**	0.639	0.355
OP4	0.602	**0.848**	0.597	0.331
OP5	0.646	**0.876**	0.596	0.306
OP6	0.657	**0.872**	0.562	0.322
SR1	0.485	0.613	**0.798**	0.102
SR2	0.376	0.559	**0.874**	0.249
SR3	0.376	0.599	**0.859**	0.342
UR1	0.125	0.319	0.183	**0.835**
UR2	0.201	0.309	0.257	**0.873**
UR3	0.131	0.254	0.249	**0.798**

Note: Values in bold indicate the highest loading of each indicator on its intended construct.

Table 6. Indicator collinearity diagnostics.

Construct	Indicator	VIF	Assessment
Shared responsibility (SR)	SR1	1.426	Acceptable
	SR2	2.201	Acceptable
	SR3	2.045	Acceptable
Divided responsibility (DR)	DR1	1.765	Acceptable
	DR2	1.730	Acceptable
	DR3	1.829	Acceptable
Unequal ratio splits (UR)	UR1	1.554	Acceptable
	UR2	1.878	Acceptable
	UR3	1.617	Acceptable
Organisational performance (OP)	OP1	2.690	Acceptable
	OP2	3.378	Acceptable
	OP3	2.685	Acceptable
	OP4	2.981	Acceptable
	OP5	3.317	Acceptable
	OP6	3.263	Acceptable

Notes: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF).

4.3. Structural model assessment

According to the existing PLS-SEM reporting principles, the structural model was measured by the explanatory power (R^2 and adjusted R^2), the effect size (f^2), and the predictive relevance measured by blindfolding (Q^2) (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2023). The interpretation therefore focuses on the SmartPLS algorithm, bootstrapping, and blindfolding outputs for the four-construct model linking shared responsibility (SR), divided responsibility (DR), and unequal ratio splits (UR) to perceived organisational performance (OP).

With respect to explanatory power, results from Figure 2 and Table 7, respectively, show that the three exogenous constructs jointly explained 69.3% of the variance in organisational performance ($R^2 = 0.693$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.690$), indicating that the model accounts for a sizeable proportion of the variation in the endogenous construct. Overall, the job-sharing dimensions of SR, DR, and UR included in the model, collectively demonstrate strong explanatory power in predicting organisational performance. The remaining 30.7% of the variance is attributed to other organisational or external factors not captured in this model, reflecting the multifaceted nature of performance outcomes.

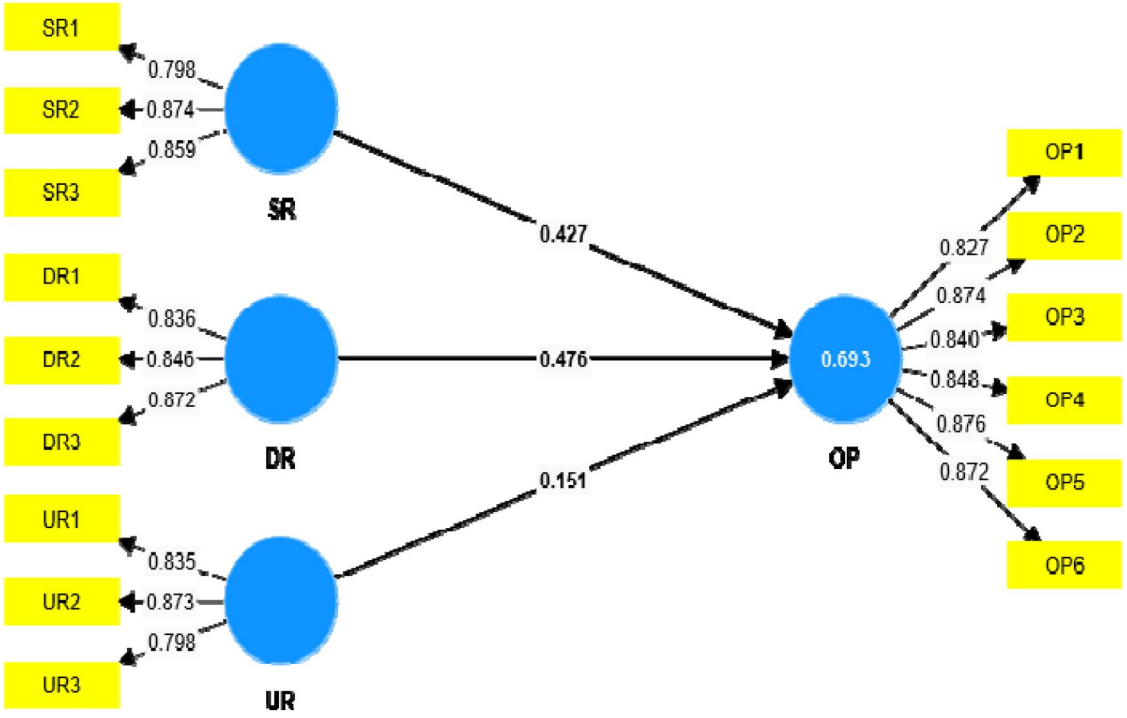

Figure 2. A path analysis of SR, DR, and UR on OP.

Table 7. Results of R^2, R^2 adjusted, Q^2, and f^2.

Dependent variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2	Predictor	f^2
OP	0.693	0.690	0.501	DR	0.558
				SR	0.429
				UR	0.068

The explanatory power reported here is comparably higher than the R^2 of 0.16 reported by Aliane et al. (2023) in their investigation of behavioural predictors of innovative work behaviour in Egypt, and the R^2 of 0.47 reported by Singh and Arora (2024) in their study investigating job enrichment and performance in Indian hospitality industry. Such comparisons help situate the study's findings within the growing body of empirical SEM literature.

Moreover, blindfolding with an omission distance of 7 was conducted to examine the predictive relevance of the structural model. The findings in Table 7 revealed that the Stone-Geisser Q^2 value for the endogenous construct was 0.501, which is greater than zero, thereby confirming that the model possessed adequate cross-validated predictive relevance (Garson, 2016; Geisser, 1974). Furthermore, the f^2 estimates in Table 7 strengthen the structural model interpretation by showing clear differences in the relative contribution of the three job-sharing dimensions to organisational performance.

The central explanatory importance of DR ($f^2 = 0.558$) and SR ($f^2 = 0.429$) in the model was confirmed by their significantly stronger effects on the explained variance in OP. In contrast, UR ($f^2 = 0.068$) contributed very little. Taken together, these effect-size results corroborate the path analysis (Henseler et al., 2016; Sarstedt et al., 2023) and suggest that the performance-enhancing potential of job sharing in universities is driven more strongly by divided responsibility and shared responsibility than by unequal ratio splits.

Generally, these results demonstrate that the measurement model exhibits sound psychometric properties, rendering it sufficiently reliable and suitable for subsequent path analysis within the PLS-SEM framework.

4.4. Hypotheses testing and discussion

Table 8 reports the bootstrapped direct effects of the three job-sharing dimensions on perceived organisational performance. None of the hypothesised paths was both negative and not statistically significant

but the relative strength of the coefficients demonstrates that not every responsibility configuration has the same effect. The discussion therefore interprets the findings not only in terms of statistical support for the hypotheses, but also in relation to Herzberg's responsibility logic and the organisational realities of university work.

Results show that shared responsibility (SR) demonstrated a positive and significant effect on perceived organisational performance (OP) ($\beta = 0.476$, $t = 12.562$, $p < 0.001$). This result provides empirical support for H1, indicating that increased sharing of responsibilities among employees enhances perceived organisational performance. The beneficial implication of collective responsibility is that in cases where academic staffs collectively possess tasks and responsibility, there will be enhanced coordination, support, and sustained performance of duties in universities (Cowhy et al., 2024; Kyambade et al., 2023). This result aligns with the literature indicating that the collaborative responsibility structure may reinforce team performance and institutional operation due to sharing of knowledge, cross-checking of others, and maintenance of service delivery during unavailability of one of the members (Davidescu et al., 2020; Wu & Cormican, 2021). As Herzberg's terminology indicates, shared responsibility seems to be motivating job-design factor since it increases meaningful participation in the core work as opposed to redistribution of hours.

Divided responsibility also exerted a strong positive effect on perceived organisational performance ($\beta = 0.427$, $t = 11.567$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting H2. This means that job sharing does not only help in the situation, when everything is done together; it also enhances performance in the situation when all the responsibilities are separated and coordinated. Such practice at the university level can decrease duplication, role conflicts and coordination expenses in teaching, supervision, assessment, and research related activities. This agrees with findings that differentiated role structure and role clarity leading to improved work performance in cases where role responsibilities are well allocated and combined (Kong et al., 2022; Martínez-Díaz et al., 2021).

The positive though weaker effect of unequal ratio splits ($\beta = 0.151$, $t = 3.334$, $p < 0.001$) implies that asymmetrical workload distribution in organisations is not impacting organisational performance equally negatively. Instead of suggesting that any unequal split is positive, the outcome indicates that split of proportions unequally can be associated with positive performance perceptions in university setting as studied (Asamani et al., 2025; Gan et al., 2025). As such, this supports H3 and is in accordance with higher-education workload scholarship that differentiated job assignments can be embraced when plausibly based and connected to the knowledge and institutional necessity as opposed to random privilege (Kenny & Fluck, 2022, 2022; Olwal, 2023). Notably, transparency, competence-based allocation and institutional prorities were not directly tested in the present study as moderators. Those conditions can then be viewed as hypothetically plausible boundary conditions that can perhaps explain why unequal ratios splits can at times be performance-supportive rather than necessarily harmful.

Relative to each other, the strongest predictor was shared responsibility, with divided responsibility coming next and finally unequal ratio splits had minor influence. Such a trend is indicative of the fact that collaborative accountability and the presence of explicit task structuring is where performance value of job sharing in the university context is located as opposed to asymmetric workload distribution. The discovery lends credence to the theoretical reasoning of the study that job sharing cannot be viewed as a homogenous flexible work set-up; responsibility set-ups do not have the same motivational or organisational implications.

Combined, the results bring to higher education the responsibility logic advanced by Herzberg in the design of jobs. They also state that the influence of job sharing on university performance is not comprehended as well using the presence or absence of flexible arrangement, but rather based on the organisation of responsibility. This gives a better theoretical reason as to why certain job-sharing arrangements are performance enhancing whereas others are only conditionally effective.

Table 8. Direct path analysis.

Hypotheses	Paths	β	STDev	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	SR -> OP	0.476	0.038	12.562	< 0.001	Supported
H2	DR -> OP	0.427	0.037	11.567	< 0.001	Supported
H3	UR -> OP	0.151	0.045	3.334	< 0.001	Supported

Source: Field Data (2023).

5. Implications of the research

5.1. Theoretical implications

The study contributes to theoretical understanding of job-sharing appropriately and in an incremental way by altering and slightly expanding the current scholarship on job-sharing (Lim, 2026). The altering factor is the re-definition of job sharing as a multidimensional architecture of responsibility (shared responsibility, divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits). The importance of that re-conceptualisation is that it demonstrates that organisational effects of job sharing are configuration-specific, and not uniform. The study offers a more detailed explanation of how shared roles can influence perceived organisational performance in universities by making a distinction between joint, divided, and asymmetrical allocations of responsibility.

The partial extension is the fact that the responsibility logic as formulated by Herzberg is applied to the design of shared academic work and not just the job design. Responsibility, in the current research, is not just a personal motivational quality, but it is also a feature of organisational design whose structure is the factor that determines the coordination, ownership and evaluation of academic work. The high positive effects of shared responsibility and divided responsibility imply that shared accountability and explicit task partitioning both might trigger performance-relevant motivational and coordination processes in knowledge-intensive environments. The research thus builds on Herzberg by demonstrating that responsibility does not just play a role in jobs, but also in cross-co-performing roles.

The theoretical interestingness of the study lies primarily on its noteworthiness and secondarily on limited counterintuitive knowledge (Lim, 2026). It is interesting in the sense that it helps explain an underdeveloped facet of the literature that is, the internal responsibility architecture of job sharing and connects such an architecture to organisational, as opposed to solely employee-level, results. Its constrained counterintuitive contribution is that the unequal ratio splits, which are commonly assumed to be harmful, were positively related to perceived organisational performance though they were not as strong as the other two configurations. The fact that finding does not imply that transparency, allocation based on competency, and strategic alignment were empirically tested as moderators in this research. Instead, these factors can be best conceived of as theoretically plausible boundary conditions, which should be directly tested in future research. Viewed through this prism, this study lends a refinements explanatory value to job-sharing theory by demonstrating that asymmetry in shared positions is not always dysfunctional per se; it is the structure and meaning of responsibility within organisational contexts that is crucial. This subtlety reinforces the explanatory scope of the responsibility-based work design arguments in the sphere of higher education and is generally in line with the fairness and workload scholarly in academic communities (Colquitt et al., 2001; Kenny & Fluck, 2022; Olwal, 2023).

5.2. Practical implications

The implications of the findings have direct implications on the university management, policy on human resource and planning of the academic workload. Most importantly, job sharing should not be considered as an informal coping strategy in the universities. Universities should institutionalise job-sharing by developing formal policy guidelines that in turn lay out the modalities of sharing, dividing, documenting, monitoring, and reviewing responsibilities. The data show that performance improvement is more probable in the event that job-sharing plans are carefully planned based on role clarification, complementary skills and joint responsibility as opposed to being negatively negotiated.

Moreover, from a managerial perspective, the findings indicate two specific action-oriented priorities. To begin with, universities are supposed to increase shared responsibility where collaboration will be beneficial like team teaching, joint supervision, coordinating curriculum, developing grants, and collaborating in conducting research. Second, they should improve divided responsibility in areas where specialisation and task ownership are more beneficial, such as assessment coordination, administrative assignments, publication management, and student support functions. These two dimensions produced the strongest substantive contributions in the model, meaning that universities are likely to achieve better performance when they combine collaborative interdependence with clear task partitioning.

Nevertheless, the practical value of unequal ratio splits is more conditional. Unequal workload assignments may also persist in universities, particularly where seniority, limited expertise or institutional emergency demand differentiated responsibilities. Nonetheless, this type of arrangement should be regulated by clear standards, documented role requirements, and periodic evaluation processes in order to make the difference in workloads perceived as just and meaningful instead of random. This practically implies that leaders in universities should align unequal divides to competence profiles, strategic duties, and documented justifications, as well as making sure that the junior employees are facilitated instead of overworking them. In this case, job sharing will serve as a performance-promoting system of governance instead of a labour-flexibility tool.

6. Limitations and future research areas

There are several limitations to this study. First, the study makes significant contributions to understanding the relationship between job-sharing practices and organisational performance of universities, however, it does not cover every aspect of this broad topic. There is an ample opportunity for further investigations, and other researchers are encouraged to conduct additional empirical studies to extend the findings presented here. Future researchers may examine different job-sharing practices beyond those studied. Additionally, the study did not employ a moderating variable that checks the relationship between job-sharing and organisational performance, however, future research could explore moderating variables such as top management support, motivation, organisational culture, policies, working conditions, and employee engagement, to determine how they influence the relationship between job-sharing and organisational performance.

Furthermore, the study relied on a self-administered questionnaire. Future studies may involve a synthesis of surveys and interviews, observations, and institutional documentary facts to come up with an enriched view of the functionality of job-sharing arrangements. In addition, the units of observation were academic staff within Tanzanian universities, and the dependent variable captured perceived rather than objective organisational performance. This is in line with the study design, but future research may enhance the generalisability and mitigate the shortcomings of same-source findings by triangulating staff perceptions with institutional performance records. Data should be aggregated at the university level where relevant or a comparison between public and private universities should be conducted independently.

Lastly, this research utilised cross-sectional survey design, which allowed the researcher to gather data from a large population at a single point in time, primarily using quantitative methods. However, future research could consider adopting alternative research designs, such as case study and correlational research designs. A case study approach could provide an in-depth understanding of the relationship between job-sharing practices and organisational performance, while correlational design could help explore the strength and direction of that relationship. Applying these designs to similar variables may yield more insightful findings, contributing to deeper understanding of job-sharing practices and their impact on organisational performance.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

The study examined the influence of job sharing on perceived organisational performance in Tanzanian universities using PLS-SEM. The findings showed that all three dimensions of job sharing; shared responsibility, divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits, significantly predicted perceived organisational performance. Nevertheless, they did not have the same effects: shared responsibility was the best predictor, followed by divided responsibility, and unequal ratio splits showed a smaller but significant contribution.

These findings suggest that job sharing can be best structured in universities that have collaborative accountability and distinct tasks to gain the greatest benefits. Such arrangements seem to enhance the aspect of coordination, continuity, and clarity of roles within academic work, hence enhanced institutional functioning as experienced by the staff.

Unequal ratio splits, although weaker, were also positively associated with perceived organisational performance. This implies that unequal distribution of workload is not inherently detrimental and may, in some academic contexts, be interpreted positively when it is viewed as legitimate rather than arbitrary. Management of unequal allocation should however be handled carefully by the universities, which should explain the reasons.

Overall, the paper comes to the conclusion that job sharing may positively influence university performance in case it is established in a formal way, managed clearly, and in accordance with the academic skills. Clear job-sharing policies should be institutionalised by universities, coordination mechanisms enhanced on shared roles, and workload allocations of shared roles should be designed in such a way that they have credibility and are implemented on fair and transparent grounds.

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Ethical approval statement

This study adhered to ethical research standards. Ethical clearance was availed from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (ISERC) (Ref: JKU/2/4/896B of 4th May 2023). Prior to participation, all respondents were provided with an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, their rights, and conditions of participation. Only those who voluntarily signed the consent form proceeded to complete the questionnaire. Principles of confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the study, and no identifying information was collected or reported. This study adhered to ethical research standards.

Author's contribution

CRediT: **Erick Buberwa**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Software, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

About the author

Erick Buberwa is a Lecturer in Human Resource Management and Patron of the Human Resource Management Students' Club in the Department of Human Capital Management and Administration at Moshi Co-operative University, Tanzania. His research interests include human resource management practices, and succession planning in organisations.

ORCID

Erick Buberwa http://orcid.org/0009-0006-9047-9175

Data availability statement

Data associated with this study's findings will be readily available upon reasonable request to the author.

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