

The Role of Office Accommodation in Enhancing Academic Staff Performance in Higher Institutions in Mwanza Region, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of office accommodation in enhancing academic staff performance in higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region, Tanzania. Specifically, the study assessed how office accommodation conditions, including workspace adequacy, privacy, ventilation, lighting, cleanliness, and overall physical working environment, influence academic staff effectiveness in teaching, research, student consultation, and administrative responsibilities. The study was guided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943) and employed a mixed-methods approach using a convergent parallel research design. The target population consisted of 363 participants, including 347 academic staff and 16 Heads of Departments (HoDs) from selected higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region. A sample of 94 respondents was involved, comprising 78 academic staff selected through simple random sampling and 16 HoDs selected purposively. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis through SPSS version 26, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The reliability of the questionnaire was established through the test-retest method, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.83, indicating acceptable consistency. The findings revealed that conducive office accommodation enhances academic staff concentration, productivity, research engagement, student support services, and effective academic service delivery. The study concludes that office accommodation is a critical institutional support service that shapes academic staff motivation, wellbeing, and professional effectiveness.

KEYWORDS

Office accommodation; academic staff performance; higher learning institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Office accommodation plays a significant role in enhancing academic staff performance in higher education institutions by providing a conducive working environment that supports teaching, research, student consultation, and administrative responsibilities. Academic staff require appropriate office spaces that enable them to prepare lectures, conduct scholarly activities, supervise students, collaborate with colleagues, and manage academic duties effectively. A well-designed and adequately equipped office environment contributes to staff motivation, job satisfaction, productivity, and professional commitment. Conversely,

inadequate office accommodation, such as limited workspace, lack of privacy, poor furniture, and insufficient facilities, may negatively affect academic efficiency and reduce the quality of service delivery in higher education institutions (UNESCO, 1997; Carr & London, 2017).

The effectiveness of academic staff performance is closely linked to the quality of institutional support provided by universities. Office accommodation is among the essential educational support services that influence how academic staff execute their professional responsibilities. A supportive office environment facilitates effective lesson preparation, research writing, academic advising, and interaction with students and colleagues. When academic staff have access to suitable offices equipped with necessary facilities such as computers, internet connectivity, storage spaces, and comfortable working conditions, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of productivity and commitment. Studies have shown that favourable workplace conditions enhance academic staff morale, reduce occupational stress, and promote effective teaching, research, and community engagement (Amangala, 2024; Yusuf, 2025).

Globally, higher education institutions have increasingly recognized office accommodation as an important component of academic work environments. Universities in developed countries have invested in modern academic offices that provide flexible workspaces, digital infrastructure, and collaborative environments to support teaching and research innovation. These institutional arrangements enable academic staff to access resources, engage in knowledge exchange, and improve their professional performance. However, in many developing countries, including several African nations, academic staff often operate under challenging conditions due to inadequate office facilities, overcrowding, and limited institutional resources. Such challenges may affect individual productivity and the overall capacity of universities to achieve their goals of knowledge creation and human capital development (Sevart & Dean, 2019).

In the African context, the expansion of higher education enrolment has increased pressure on institutional infrastructure, including office accommodation for academic staff. Many universities face challenges related to insufficient office spaces, poor maintenance, limited technological facilities, and inadequate working environments. These conditions may hinder academic staff from effectively conducting research, providing student support services, and fulfilling administrative obligations. In Tanzania, the rapid growth of universities and increasing demand for higher education have created a need for improved academic infrastructure. Despite efforts to expand university facilities, some institutions continue to experience shortages of suitable office accommodation, which may influence academic staff motivation, efficiency, and service delivery effectiveness (Mwantimwa, Elia, & Ndenje Sicalwe, 2018; Kuzilwa & Kuzilwa, 2022).

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the role of office accommodation in enhancing academic staff performance in higher institutions in Mwanza Region. The study is based on the understanding that appropriate office facilities provide the physical and psychological conditions necessary for academic staff to perform their duties effectively. By assessing the availability, adequacy, and influence of office accommodation on academic staff performance, the study aims to generate evidence that can assist university managers and policymakers in improving institutional support systems. Strengthening office accommodation is expected to enhance teaching effectiveness, research productivity, student support services, and the overall quality of higher education delivery in Mwanza Region.

Theoretical Review

This study was guided by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943. The theory explains that human motivation is influenced by the fulfillment of different levels of needs, including physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. The theory assumes that individuals perform effectively when their basic and psychological needs are adequately satisfied. In the context of higher education institutions, academic staff require supportive working conditions, recognition, security, and opportunities for professional growth to enhance their commitment and productivity. Although the theory is criticized for assuming a fixed order of needs and giving limited attention to organizational and structural factors, it provides an important framework for understanding how institutional support influences employee performance.

In this study, the theory was applied to explain the role of office accommodation in enhancing academic staff performance in higher institutions in Mwanza Region. Adequate office accommodation, including sufficient workspace, privacy, furniture, ICT facilities, and a conducive working environment, was considered an important institutional support service that contributes to academic staff motivation, satisfaction, and effectiveness. When academic staff have appropriate office facilities, they are better able to prepare teaching materials, conduct research, supervise students, collaborate with colleagues, and perform administrative responsibilities effectively. Therefore, Maslow's theory provided a basis for examining how the availability and adequacy of office accommodation influence academic staff performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globally, Davis, Leach, and Clegg (2020) used a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the relationship between academic staff performance and the work environment in higher education in Australian universities. The findings revealed that adequate and well-equipped office spaces enhanced staff concentration, morale, and overall service delivery effectiveness, enabling lecturers to prepare lessons efficiently, conduct research, and engage more effectively with students. However, the study was carried out in well-resourced institutions with modern infrastructure and ample funding, limiting its generalizability to universities in developing countries, where office space is often limited, poorly equipped, or shared, potentially constraining academic staff effectiveness.

Similarly, Vischer and Wifi (2021) conducted a study on office design and knowledge of worker performance across European universities using a quantitative research design to explore the relationship between office environments and staff productivity. They found that private, well-equipped offices improved academic staff focus, efficiency, and productivity in teaching, research, and administrative tasks. However, the study did not consider budgetary constraints, limited infrastructure, or shared office arrangements common in African public universities. Additionally, relying solely on quantitative data overlooked staff perceptions and experiences, a methodological gap this study addresses through a mixed-methods approach that combines surveys and interviews to capture both measurable impacts and qualitative insights from staff in Mwanza institutions.

In Africa, Akanbi and Alao (2022) found that inadequate office accommodation, including overcrowded and poorly equipped offices, negatively affected academic staff performance in Nigerian universities by limiting effective teaching preparation, research activities, and student supervision. However, their study mainly relied on quantitative methods, leaving limited understanding of staff experiences regarding office conditions. Similarly, Ng'ethe et al. (2023) revealed that poor working environments reduced academic staff motivation, concentration, and service delivery effectiveness in Kenyan

universities. Nevertheless, the study examined the broader work environment rather than focusing specifically on office accommodation as an independent factor. These limitations created a need for the current study, which specifically examines the role of office accommodation in enhancing academic staff performance in higher institutions in Mwanza Region using a mixed-methods approach to capture both measurable effects and participants' experiences.

Locally, Sanga and Mbilinyi (2021) found that inadequate office space and limited workplace facilities negatively affected academic staff performance in Tanzanian universities. However, the study was conducted in only one university and employed a qualitative design, which limited the generalizability of the findings and the ability to quantify the relationship between office accommodation and staff performance. Similarly, Mkumbo and Anangisye (2024) revealed that inadequate office infrastructure, including congested and poorly furnished offices, reduced academic staff effectiveness in teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. Nevertheless, their study focused on general trends across public universities and did not consider regional differences, particularly the context of higher institutions in Mwanza Region. Therefore, the current study addresses this contextual and methodological gap by examining the specific role of office accommodation in enhancing academic staff performance in higher institutions in Mwanza Region through a mixed-methods approach.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed a mixed-methods research approach using a convergent parallel research design. The target population comprised 363 participants, including 347 academic staff and 16 Heads of Departments (HoDs). A total sample of 94 respondents was selected, consisting of 78 academic staff obtained through simple random sampling and 16 HoDs selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. Questionnaires were administered to academic staff to obtain quantitative data, while interviews were conducted with HoDs to obtain detailed qualitative information regarding institutional support services and staff performance.

The validity of research instruments was ensured through expert review and alignment with the study objectives, while reliability was established through the test-retest method, which produced an overall reliability coefficient of 0.83, indicating acceptable consistency of the instrument. A pilot study was conducted at the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences (CUHAS), and the results were used to improve the research instruments before the main study. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 through descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and correlation analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically and presented through narratives supported by quotations. Ethical principles were observed throughout the study, including obtaining research permissions from relevant authorities, securing informed consent from participants, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and ensuring academic integrity through proper citation and referencing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

This study aimed to examine the role of office accommodation in enhancing academic staff performance in higher learning institutions in Mwanza. The researcher collected data from heads of department through semi-structured interviews, and from academic staff through structured questionnaires, to investigate how physical workspace conditions influence

concentration, comfort, productivity, and the overall effectiveness of academic service delivery. The responses gathered helped to establish the extent to which office accommodation facilitates or constrains academic staff performance across teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. The detailed findings for this objective are presented in the table and explanations below:

Table 1 . Academic Staff Responses on the Role of Office Accommodation in Enhancing Academic Staff Performance in Higher Learning Institutions (n = 78)

	Statements	SD F (%)	D F (%)	N F (%)	A F (%)	SA F (%)
i.	The acoustic quality of my workspace allows me to concentrate effectively.	10 (12.8)	11 (14.1)	13 (16.7)	31 (39.7)	13 (16.7)
ii.	The temperature in my office space is comfortable for my work activities.	12 (15.4)	11 (14.1)	7 (9.0)	33 (42.3)	15 (19.2)
iii.	I experience uncomfortable glare on my computer screen due to lighting design.	12 (15.4)	19 (24.4)	17 (21.8)	15 (19.2)	15 (19.2)
iv.	The ventilation system is effective in preventing stuffiness or odours.	10 (12.8)	14 (17.9)	8 (10.3)	28 (35.9)	18 (23.1)
v.	The general cleanliness of my office and common areas is satisfactory.	6 (7.7)	9 (11.5)	12 (15.4)	29 (37.2)	22 (28.2)
vi.	There is enough privacy in my office to handle confidential matters.	17 (21.8)	9 (11.5)	11 (14.1)	24 (30.8)	17 (21.8)

Source: Field Data (2026)

Acoustic Quality of the Workspace and Academic Staff Concentration

The findings indicate that 31 (39.7%) agreed and 13 (16.7%) strongly agreed that the acoustic quality of their workspace allows effective concentration, yielding a combined agreement of 56.4%. However, 10 (12.8%) strongly disagreed, and 11 (14.1%) disagreed. In comparison, 13 (16.7%) remained neutral, indicating that a significant minority of academic staff experience noise-related distractions that impair their ability to concentrate on teaching preparation, research, and administrative tasks. Sound quality in academic workspaces is a critical determinant of cognitive performance, particularly for activities that require deep focus such as research writing, marking, and scholarly reading. Offices situated near high-traffic corridors, student areas, or poorly insulated shared spaces are especially vulnerable to acoustic disruptions. During interviews, heads of department acknowledged the impact of workspace acoustics on academic staff effectiveness. As one head of department observed:

Noise is a persistent problem in our office spaces, particularly in shared offices and those adjacent to student common areas. When staff cannot concentrate due to ambient noise, their productivity in research writing and lesson preparation suffers noticeably. Improving the acoustic quality of office spaces would have a direct and measurable impact on staff performance (HoD₁, 2026).

This implies that acoustic quality is not a peripheral concern but a core determinant of academic staff cognitive performance and research productivity. Institutions in Mwanza must consider acoustic treatment, strategic office placement, and the provision of designated quiet work zones as components of a broader office accommodation improvement strategy. Davis, Leach, and Clegg (2020) affirmed that adequate and well-equipped office spaces enhanced staff concentration, morale, and overall service delivery

effectiveness in Australian universities. Vischer and Wifi (2021) similarly found that well-designed office environments improved academic staff focus, efficiency, and productivity in teaching, research, and administrative tasks in European universities. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) frames a conducive acoustic environment as a fundamental safety need; persistent noise disruption creates an unstable and stressful working environment that impedes both lower-level comfort needs and the higher-level cognitive engagement required for research and scholarly productivity.

Thermal Comfort in Office Spaces and Academic Staff Productivity

Regarding thermal comfort, 33 (42.3%) agreed, and 15 (19.2%) strongly agreed that office temperatures are comfortable for their work activities, giving a combined agreement of 61.5%. Nevertheless, 12 (15.4%) strongly disagreed, and 11 (14.1%) disagreed, while 7 (9.0%) remained neutral, indicating that a meaningful proportion of academic staff experience thermally uncomfortable work environments. Temperature comfort is a foundational aspect of office accommodation that directly influences staff energy levels, concentration span, and overall work effectiveness. Excessively warm or cold office conditions can cause physical discomfort that reduces the duration and quality of sustained intellectual work, particularly in activities such as research writing, student consultation, and curriculum development. Interviewees reflected on the relationship between thermal conditions and staff productivity. One head of department noted:

The temperature in many of our offices fluctuates significantly depending on the season. During hot periods, staff struggle to maintain concentration for extended work sessions, and this directly affects how much they can accomplish in their offices each day. Consistent thermal comfort is essential for maintaining high levels of academic productivity throughout the working year (HoD₂, 2026).

This implies that thermal comfort is a basic yet essential component of office accommodation that institutions in Mwanza cannot afford to overlook. Addressing temperature regulation through functional ventilation systems, ceiling fans, or climate control in priority office areas would directly support sustained staff productivity. Vischer and Wifi (2021) established that the physical office environment, including temperature regulation, significantly influenced academic staff efficiency and productivity in research and administrative tasks. Akanbi and Alao (2022) found that poor physical office conditions, including inadequate temperature regulation, negatively affected academic staff teaching preparation and research in Nigerian universities. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) identifies physiological needs, including a physically comfortable working environment, as the most fundamental prerequisite for human performance. When thermal discomfort in office spaces leaves these basic needs unmet, academic staff cannot effectively pursue the higher-level professional aspirations associated with esteem and self-actualization.

Lighting Design and the Experience of Glare on Computer Screens

On the issue of glare caused by lighting design, 15 (19.2%) agreed, and 15 (19.2%) strongly agreed that they experience uncomfortable glare on their computer screens, while 12 (15.4%) strongly disagreed and 19 (24.4%) disagreed. A substantial 17 (21.8%) remained neutral, indicating uncertainty or variability in the experience of this issue. The combined agreement of 38.4% among those reporting glare problems is significant given the centrality of computer use to modern academic work. Glare on computer screens causes visual fatigue, headaches, and reduced screen readability, all of which diminish the

productivity of academic staff engaged in extended periods of digital research, online teaching, manuscript preparation, and administrative documentation. Interview respondents acknowledged lighting-related discomfort as an underappreciated yet practically significant aspect of office design. As one head of department explained:

Several staff members have complained about glare on their computer screens, especially in offices with large windows and poor blind or curtain systems. This may seem like a minor issue, but when staff spend several hours daily working on computers, persistent glare causes eye strain and fatigue that reduces their concentration and overall daily output (HoD₃, 2026).

This implies that lighting design, including the management of natural and artificial light sources to minimize glare, deserves serious attention in office accommodation planning for higher learning institutions. Simple interventions such as adjustable window coverings, anti-glare screen filters, and repositioning of workstations can significantly improve staff comfort and visual productivity. Davis et al. (2020) affirmed that well-equipped and thoughtfully designed office spaces enhanced staff concentration and morale, with physical environment factors including lighting influencing overall service delivery effectiveness. Ng'ethe, Namusonge, and Iravo (2023) found that inadequate office accommodation features reduced staff motivation, focus, and service delivery effectiveness in Kenyan universities. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), physiological comfort, including freedom from physical discomfort such as eye strain, is a prerequisite for sustained intellectual performance. Unaddressed glare problems therefore operate as a physiological barrier that limits academic staff capacity to concentrate fully on research and teaching responsibilities.

Effectiveness of Ventilation Systems in Office Spaces

Concerning ventilation effectiveness, 28 (35.9%) agreed, and 18 (23.1%) strongly agreed that the ventilation system effectively prevents stuffiness or odours, yielding a combined agreement of 59.0%. However, 10 (12.8%) strongly disagreed, and 14 (17.9%) disagreed, while 8 (10.3%) remained neutral. The finding that over a quarter of academic staff experience inadequate ventilation in their workspaces is a matter of institutional concern. Poor ventilation contributes to stuffy, uncomfortable office environments that reduce cognitive alertness, increase fatigue, and lower overall work effectiveness. Academic staff who spend long hours in poorly ventilated offices are likely to experience reduced stamina for intellectually demanding tasks, including research, manuscript writing, and student consultations. Respondents during interviews highlighted the direct connection between ventilation quality and daily work performance. One head of department observed:

Ventilation is a critical but often neglected aspect of office comfort. Staff in offices with poor air circulation frequently complain of stuffiness, particularly during the warmer months. This physical discomfort is not trivial; it drains energy and reduces the number of productive hours staff can sustain in their offices, with direct consequences for research and teaching preparation (HoD₄, 2026).

This implies that effective ventilation is an essential component of a physically enabling office environment in higher learning institutions in Mwanza. Institutional facilities management should prioritize regular maintenance of ventilation systems and consider upgrading air circulation infrastructure in offices where poor ventilation has been identified. Sanga and Mbilinyi (2021) found that inadequate physical working conditions, including poor ventilation, hindered academic staff effectiveness in Tanzanian universities.

Akanbi and Alao (2022) similarly established that overcrowded and poorly equipped offices negatively affected academic staff performance in Nigerian universities, with physical discomfort features including ventilation being significant contributors. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) positions physiological comfort as the foundational level of the motivational hierarchy; a stuffy, poorly ventilated office directly violates this foundational need, creating a physical environment that suppresses academic staff motivation, cognitive performance, and long-term health, all of which are essential for sustained high-quality service delivery.

General cleanliness of office spaces and common areas

The findings on office cleanliness reveal the most positive result among all accommodation dimensions, with 29 (37.2%) agreeing and 22 (28.2%) strongly agreeing that cleanliness of offices and common areas is satisfactory, giving a combined agreement of 65.4%. Only 6 (7.7%) strongly disagreed, and 9 (11.5%) disagreed, while 12 (15.4%) remained neutral. This finding indicates that institutional cleaning and maintenance services are performing relatively well in maintaining hygienic office environments, which contributes positively to staff morale, professional image, and general wellbeing. A clean workspace signals institutional respect for staff and supports a professional atmosphere conducive to academic work. Interview respondents affirmed that cleanliness contributes meaningfully to a positive work environment. As one head of department stated:

The cleanliness of our office spaces and common areas has improved considerably, and staff genuinely appreciate this. A clean, well-maintained workspace creates a professional atmosphere that positively influences how staff feel about coming to work. It signals that the institution values its staff and their working conditions, which in turn motivates better performance (HoD₅, 2026).

This implies that maintaining high standards of cleanliness in office and common areas is a cost-effective institutional investment with a meaningful positive impact on staff morale, wellbeing, and professional motivation. Institutions in Mwanza should sustain and further strengthen cleaning and maintenance services as part of a comprehensive office accommodation strategy. Davis et al. (2020) confirmed that well-maintained office environments enhanced staff morale and overall service delivery effectiveness. Mkumbo and Anangisye (2024) found that office infrastructure conditions, including cleanliness and maintenance, influenced academic staff morale, concentration, and overall productivity in Tanzanian universities. From the perspective of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), a clean and hygienic workplace addresses both physiological and safety needs by providing a healthy, dignified working environment. When these foundational needs are adequately met through good office maintenance, academic staff are better positioned to direct their energy and attention toward higher-level professional activities associated with esteem and self-actualization.

Office Privacy for Handling Confidential Academic Matters

Regarding office privacy, 24 (30.8%) agreed, and 17 (21.8%) strongly agreed that there is sufficient privacy to handle confidential matters, yielding a combined agreement of 52.6%. However, 17 (21.8%) strongly disagreed, and 9 (11.5%) disagreed, while 11 (14.1%) remained neutral. The relatively high proportion of disagreement 33.3% is particularly concerning given that privacy is essential for academic staff to conduct sensitive student consultations, handle examination materials, undertake confidential administrative work, and engage in focused research. Shared offices, inadequate soundproofing, and open-plan

layouts are common structural features that compromise the privacy needed for these professional activities. Interviewees highlighted privacy deficits as one of the most pressing accommodation challenges facing academic staff in higher learning institutions. As one head of department remarked:

The lack of adequate privacy in many of our offices is a serious professional constraint. Staff are expected to handle sensitive student matters, mark examinations, and conduct confidential discussions, but shared offices and thin walls make this extremely difficult. Insufficient privacy also discourages students from seeking consultations, which undermines the staff-student engagement that is vital for academic performance (HoD₆, 2026).

This implies that office privacy is not merely a comfort preference but a professional necessity that directly shapes the quality of academic service delivery in higher learning institutions. Institutions in Mwanza must address structural privacy deficiencies through office redesign, partition systems, the provision of dedicated consultation rooms, and, where possible, the allocation of individual offices for academic staff with significant confidential responsibilities. Ng'ethe et al. (2023) found that inadequate office accommodation reduced staff motivation, focus, and overall service delivery effectiveness in Kenyan universities, with privacy being identified as a key dimension of accommodation quality. Mkumbo and Anangisye (2024) similarly noted that insufficient and poorly equipped office spaces negatively affected academic staff morale and concentration in Tanzanian public universities. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), both safety needs, through a secure and confidential working environment, and esteem needs, through professional dignity and respect, are compromised when academic staff lack adequate office privacy. Addressing this dimension of office accommodation is therefore essential for creating the motivational and environmental conditions necessary for academic staff to perform at their full professional potential in higher learning institutions in Mwanza.

Specific Challenges Regarding Office Accommodation that Affect Academic Staff Performance in Higher Learning Institutions in Mwanza Region

This is the second part of the third objective, which sought to examine the specific challenges related to office accommodation that affect academic staff performance in higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region. To achieve this objective, the researcher collected information from academic staff, heads of departments, institutional administrators, and support staff through questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review of institutional infrastructure reports, office allocation records, and strategic development plans.

The analysis generated several themes concerning office accommodation challenges affecting academic staff performance. The major themes identified included inadequate office space and overcrowding, lack of office equipment and furniture, inadequate privacy and interruptions, poor physical working conditions, and insufficient office accommodation for research and student consultation. These themes are presented and discussed below.

Inadequate Office Space and Overcrowding

The study established that inadequate office space and overcrowding were among the major challenges affecting academic staff performance in higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region. Respondents reported that many offices were shared by several lecturers,

creating congestion and limiting their ability to perform academic responsibilities effectively. Another respondent explained:

“Several lecturers share our office, and sometimes it becomes difficult to concentrate on preparing lectures, marking assignments, or conducting research because of constant movement and limited working space. The overcrowding affects both productivity and comfort.” (HoD₇, 2026)

This response indicates that overcrowded offices create distractions that reduce concentration and efficiency in performing academic tasks. Academic staff require adequate personal workspace to engage effectively in teaching preparation, research activities, student supervision, and administrative responsibilities.

The finding agrees with Akanbi and Alao (2022), who found that overcrowded office spaces negatively affected teaching preparation, research productivity, and student supervision among academic staff in Nigerian universities. Similarly, Mkumbo and Anangisye (2024) reported that insufficient office accommodation reduced staff morale, concentration, and productivity in Tanzanian public universities. The finding is further supported by Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943), which emphasizes that employees require safe and conducive working environments to satisfy their safety needs before achieving higher levels of motivation and performance. Inadequate office space creates discomfort and stress that may hinder academic staff from attaining professional excellence and self-actualization.

Lack of Office Equipment and Furniture

The study further revealed that inadequate office equipment and furniture limited academic staff performance. Respondents reported shortages of essential facilities such as desks, chairs, filing cabinets, bookshelves, computers, printers, and internet-enabled devices required for academic work. Another respondent stated:

“Even when office space is available, some offices lack essential equipment such as computers, printers, and adequate furniture. This forces lecturers to move from one office to another seeking resources needed for their daily work.” (HoD₈, 2026)

This finding indicates that office accommodation extends beyond physical space and includes the availability of adequate facilities and equipment necessary for efficient service delivery.

The finding concurs with Davis, Leach, and Clegg (2020), who found that well-equipped office environments enhanced academic staff concentration, morale, and effectiveness in teaching and research activities. Likewise, Sanga and Mbilinyi (2021) established that inadequate office facilities constrained academic staff effectiveness in Tanzanian universities. According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, adequate work resources contribute to employees’ safety and esteem needs by enabling them to perform their duties confidently and effectively. Lack of office equipment creates frustration and limits academic staff’s ability to achieve desired performance outcomes.

Inadequate Privacy and Frequent Interruptions

The study also found that limited privacy and frequent interruptions within shared office spaces negatively affected academic staff performance. Respondents indicated that conducting confidential discussions with students, preparing examination materials, and engaging in scholarly writing became difficult in environments characterized by constant interruptions. One respondent explained:

“Student consultations often require confidentiality, but when several lecturers share one office, maintaining privacy becomes difficult. Frequent interruptions also affect concentration when writing research papers or preparing examinations.” (HoD₉, 2026)

This finding demonstrates that privacy is an important component of an effective academic working environment. Academic staff perform a variety of duties that require concentration, confidentiality, and uninterrupted attention.

The finding supports Vischer and Wifi (2021), who found that private and well-designed offices improved academic staff focus, efficiency, and productivity in teaching, research, and administrative tasks. Their study revealed that uninterrupted work environments significantly enhanced employee performance. Maslow’s theory further explains that supportive and secure work environments contribute to employees’ psychological well-being and sense of belonging. Inadequate privacy may reduce job satisfaction and negatively affect staff motivation and productivity.

Poor Physical Working Conditions

The study further established that poor physical working conditions within office environments affected academic staff performance. Respondents cited inadequate ventilation, poor lighting, excessive noise, insufficient maintenance, and uncomfortable office conditions as barriers to effective service delivery. One respondent explained:

“Some offices have poor ventilation and inadequate lighting, making it uncomfortable to spend long hours working on research, lesson preparation, and student assessments. Such conditions affect both health and productivity.” (HoD₁₀, 2026)

This finding indicates that the quality of the physical work environment directly influences academic staff performance. Unfavorable office conditions can contribute to fatigue, stress, and reduced work efficiency.

The finding agrees with Ng’ethe, Namusonge, and Iravo (2023), who reported that inadequate work environments reduced staff motivation, focus, and overall effectiveness in Kenyan universities. Similarly, Sanga and Mbilinyi (2021) found that poor physical working conditions hindered academic staff effectiveness in Tanzanian higher learning institutions.

According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, physical safety and comfort are fundamental requirements for employee wellbeing and productivity. When working conditions are poor, academic staff may struggle to meet higher-level needs related to achievement, recognition, and self-actualization.

Insufficient Office Accommodation for Research and Student Consultation

The study finally found that limited office accommodation affected academic staff’s ability to conduct research activities and provide effective consultation services to students. Respondents reported that inadequate office facilities reduced opportunities for academic mentoring, research collaboration, and supervision of postgraduate and undergraduate students. Another respondent stated:

“Research supervision and student consultation require a professional environment where discussions can take place comfortably. Limited office space often forces lecturers to meet students in unsuitable locations, affecting the quality of academic support.” (HoD₁₁, 2026)

This finding suggests that office accommodation plays a critical role in facilitating academic interactions and supporting institutional teaching and research objectives.

The finding is consistent with Davis et al. (2020), who reported that adequate office facilities enhanced lecturers' ability to engage effectively with students and conduct research activities. Similarly, Mkumbo and Anangisye (2024) found that inadequate office accommodation negatively affected teaching, research, and administrative effectiveness among academic staff. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs explains that opportunities for professional interaction, mentoring, and academic achievement contribute to belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization needs. Therefore, inadequate office accommodation may limit academic staff's ability to realize their full professional potential.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that office accommodation plays a significant role in enhancing academic staff performance in higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region. The findings demonstrate that a conducive physical working environment, characterized by adequate acoustic quality, thermal comfort, effective ventilation, proper lighting, cleanliness, and sufficient privacy, contributes to improved concentration, productivity, research engagement, student consultation, and effective delivery of teaching and administrative responsibilities. Academic staff who operate in comfortable and supportive office environments are better able to prepare lectures, conduct research, supervise students, and participate effectively in institutional activities. However, the study also concludes that challenges related to inadequate office space, overcrowding, limited office equipment and furniture, poor privacy, frequent interruptions, and unfavorable physical conditions continue to constrain academic staff effectiveness. These challenges reduce staff motivation, limit opportunities for scholarly activities, and affect the quality of academic service delivery. The findings further indicate that office accommodation should not be viewed merely as a physical facility but as an essential institutional support service that influences staff wellbeing, professional commitment, and performance. In relation to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), the provision of suitable office accommodation addresses basic physiological and safety needs, creating conditions that enable academic staff to achieve higher levels of professional growth, recognition, innovation, and self-actualization. Therefore, improving office accommodation is essential for strengthening academic staff performance, enhancing institutional effectiveness, and supporting the broader mission of higher education institutions in Mwanza Region.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that higher learning institutions in Mwanza Region should prioritize the improvement of office accommodation by developing comprehensive infrastructure plans that provide adequate, comfortable, and functional workspaces for academic staff. Institutional management should address overcrowding by constructing additional offices, redesigning existing workspaces, and ensuring that academic staff have sufficient private areas for research, teaching preparation, student consultation, and administrative duties. Universities and colleges should also invest in essential office facilities, including appropriate furniture, computers, internet access, filing systems, and other technological resources necessary for effective academic work. Furthermore, institutions should improve physical working conditions by ensuring proper ventilation, adequate lighting systems, temperature regulation, noise reduction measures, and regular maintenance of office environments. Special attention should be given to

privacy requirements through the provision of individual offices, consultation rooms, or properly designed shared offices that minimize interruptions and protect confidential academic interactions. Institutional leaders should regularly assess staff accommodation needs through consultations with academic staff and Heads of Departments to ensure that office facilities correspond with changing academic demands. Additionally, education stakeholders and university management should allocate sufficient financial resources for the improvement and maintenance of office infrastructure as part of broader strategies for enhancing staff motivation, research productivity, teaching quality, and overall academic service delivery. By strengthening office accommodation, higher learning institutions will create supportive work environments that enable academic staff to perform their responsibilities effectively and contribute meaningfully to institutional development.

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