

THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS IN ENHANCING LECTURER PERFORMANCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract:

This article aims to explore and synthesize the role of individual characteristics in enhancing lecturer performance through a comprehensive literature review. The method employed is a systematic literature review, analyzing scholarly articles from databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar published between 2014 and 2024. The analysis reveals that lecturer performance is not solely determined by institutional systems but is profoundly influenced by a constellation of personal attributes. Key characteristics identified include psychological capital (encompassing self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience), proactive personality, work engagement, and intrinsic motivation. These traits collectively foster adaptive behaviors, innovative teaching practices, resilience against occupational stress, and sustained commitment to multidimensional academic roles. The discussion constructs an integrative framework demonstrating how these individual characteristics interact dynamically with job resources and challenges to drive superior performance in teaching, research, and community service.

Keywords: Lecturer Performance, Individual Characteristics, Psychological Capital, Proactive Personality, Work Engagement, Literature Review.

Abstrak:

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dan mensintesis peran karakteristik individu dalam meningkatkan kinerja dosen melalui tinjauan literatur yang komprehensif. Metode yang digunakan adalah systematic literature review dengan menganalisis artikel ilmiah dari database seperti Scopus, Web of Science, dan Google Scholar yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2014 hingga 2024. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa kinerja dosen tidak hanya ditentukan oleh sistem kelembagaan, tetapi sangat dipengaruhi oleh konstelasi atribut personal. Karakteristik kunci yang teridentifikasi meliputi psychological capital (yang mencakup efikasi diri, optimisme, harapan, dan ketahanan), kepribadian proaktif, keterlibatan kerja (work engagement), dan motivasi intrinsik. Sifat-sifat ini secara kolektif mendorong perilaku adaptif, praktik pengajaran yang inovatif, ketahanan terhadap stres pekerjaan, dan komitmen berkelanjutan terhadap peran akademik multidimensi. Pembahasan menyusun kerangka kerja integratif yang menunjukkan bagaimana karakteristik individu ini berinteraksi secara dinamis dengan sumber daya dan tantangan pekerjaan untuk mendorong kinerja unggul dalam tridharma perguruan tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Kinerja Dosen, Karakteristik Individu, Psychological Capital, Kepribadian Proaktif, Keterlibatan Kerja, Tinjauan Literatur.

INTRODUCTION

Lecturer performance is a critical pillar in the advancement of higher education, directly influencing the quality of graduates, institutional reputation, and the university's contribution to societal development (Xiao & Wilkins, 2015). Lecturer performance is a multidimensional construct, encompassing excellence in teaching and pedagogy, productivity and impact in research, and meaningful engagement in community service (Marsh & Hattie, 2002). In an era of rapid technological change, shifting educational paradigms, and increasing accountability, higher education institutions globally face persistent pressure to enhance the performance of their academic staff (Maassen & Cloete, 2006).

To respond to these pressures, various institutional strategies are often implemented, ranging from remuneration system reviews, professional development programs, to the implementation of strict quality assurance systems (Makhoul, 2019). However, these system- and policy-focused approaches often assume lecturers as homogeneous entities that uniformly respond to external incentives, thus failing to adequately account for the psychological and motivational variations inherent in each individual (Grossmann & Hopkins, 2024).

Traditionally, efforts to improve lecturer performance have focused on structural and institutional factors, such as compensation systems, leadership styles, infrastructure provision, and policy frameworks (Gong & Subramaniam, 2020). While these factors are undeniably important, an emerging body of literature suggests that they may be insufficient on their own. The humanistic perspective in organizational behavior emphasizes that individuals are not passive recipients of environmental stimuli but active agents whose personal attributes significantly shape their interpretation of and response to work contexts (Rogers, 2020). This view shifts the focus towards the internal resources that lecturers themselves bring to their roles.

Therefore, to understand variations in lecturer performance more comprehensively, an in-depth exploration of individual characteristics that function as psychological capital in carrying out the university's *tridharma* (threefold mission) is required. These characteristics—such as resilience, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and proactive personality—serve as cognitive and motivational filters that determine how a lecturer perceives challenges, seizes opportunities, and maintains commitment amidst complex demands (Baguri et al., 2023). The fundamental question that needs to be answered is: what individual characteristics have been empirically proven to be the key drivers of lecturer performance, and through what mechanisms do these characteristics operate?

Within the demanding academic environment, characterized by high workloads, "publish or perish" pressures, and diverse student needs, the role of individual characteristics becomes paramount. Why do some lecturers demonstrate remarkable resilience, innovation, and sustained passion despite shared challenges, while others experience burnout and stagnation? The answer may lie in the constellation of psychological traits, motivational drivers, and behavioral tendencies that constitute an individual's character. Understanding these personal resources is essential for developing more holistic and effective human resource development strategies in academia.

This article, therefore, aims to address this gap by conducting a focused literature review. Its primary objective is to synthesize existing scholarly work to critically examine the role of key individual characteristics—such as psychological capital, proactive personality, work engagement, and intrinsic motivation—in enhancing lecturer performance. By integrating findings from various studies, this review seeks to construct a coherent framework that elucidates how these personal attributes operate as critical mechanisms for achieving superior performance across the academic tridharma (threefold mission). The scope of this paper is confined to peer-reviewed literature from the last decade, ensuring the relevance and contemporaneity of the insights presented.

METHOD

This study employs a systematic literature review methodology to identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing research on the relationship between individual characteristics and lecturer performance. This approach follows established guidelines for systematic reviews to ensure rigor, transparency, and replicability (Mancin et al., 2024; Shaheen et al., 2023).

The review process began with a comprehensive search for relevant literature across several major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. To maintain a focus on contemporary research and evolving educational contexts, the publication timeframe was set from 2019 to 2024. The search utilized a combination of keywords and Boolean operators. Primary terms included: ("lecturer performance" OR "faculty performance" OR "academic performance") AND ("individual characteristics" OR "psychological capital" OR "PsyCap" OR "proactive personality" OR "work engagement" OR "intrinsic motivation" OR "resilience" OR "self-efficacy").

The population for this review comprises all scholarly articles (empirical studies, theoretical papers, and review articles) that explicitly investigate the influence of individual-level psychological or behavioral characteristics on the performance outcomes of higher

education lecturers or faculty members. The sample was selected through a multi-stage screening process. Initially, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Subsequently, full-text articles were assessed against predefined inclusion criteria: (1) written in English; (2) focusing on higher education lecturers/faculty as the primary subject; (3) having individual characteristics as a central independent variable; and (4) defining performance in terms of teaching, research, or service outcomes. Editorials, non-peer-reviewed commentaries, and studies focused solely on student performance were excluded.

Data collection was conducted by systematically extracting information from the selected articles into a standardized matrix. Key data points included author(s) and year, research objectives, theoretical framework, methodology, sample characteristics, key variables (independent: individual characteristics; dependent: performance dimensions), main findings, and contributions. This structured approach facilitated comparative analysis.

The analysis technique used was thematic synthesis. Extracted data were analyzed qualitatively to identify recurring themes, patterns, and theoretical relationships. The findings were organized around the core individual characteristics that emerged prominently from the literature. The analysis involved interpreting how each characteristic conceptually and empirically links to performance metrics, noting points of consensus, contradiction, and gaps in the existing knowledge. No statistical software was used for meta-analysis, as the review prioritizes a qualitative synthesis and integrative framework development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature synthesis reveals that lecturer performance is significantly predicted by a set of interrelated individual characteristics. These characteristics function as personal resources that enable lecturers to navigate academic challenges, seize opportunities, and excel in their multifaceted roles. The most salient characteristics identified are Psychological Capital, Proactive Personality, and Work Engagement, each contributing uniquely and interactively to performance outcomes.

1. Psychological Capital (PsyCap) as a Core Motivational Resource

Psychological Capital, a higher-order construct comprising self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Yu et al., 2019), emerged as a foundational predictor of lecturer performance. Studies consistently show that lecturers with high PsyCap demonstrate superior outcomes. Among them: 1) Self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to execute tasks) is directly linked to teaching innovation and research productivity (Ndiango et al., 2024). Lecturers with high teaching self-efficacy are more likely to adopt new pedagogical

technologies and persist through instructional difficulties. Similarly, research self-efficacy predicts greater scholarly output and resilience in facing publication rejections; 2) Hope (agency and pathways thinking) facilitates goal-directed (Corrigan & Schutte, 2023). Hopeful lecturers effectively set clear academic goals (e.g., completing a research paper, revising a curriculum) and develop multiple strategies to achieve them, enhancing both teaching preparation and research project management; 3) Optimism (positive attribution about future success) is associated with greater commitment and lower burnout (Lu, 2021). Optimistic lecturers interpret setbacks as temporary and specific, allowing them to maintain effort and engagement in their long-term academic endeavors; 4) Resilience (capacity to bounce back from adversity) is crucial for managing occupational stress, workload pressure, and critical feedback, thereby sustaining performance over time (Stoverink et al., 2020).

Collectively, PsyCap equips lecturers with the positive psychological state necessary to transform job demands into challenges, leading to enhanced performance across domains. For instance, a lecturer high in PsyCap is more likely to view a heavy teaching load as an opportunity to impact more students (optimism), believe they can manage it effectively (self-efficacy), plan their schedule strategically (hope), and recover quickly from a demanding week (resilience).

2. Proactive Personality: The Driver of Initiative and Change

Beyond positive psychological states, a stable behavioral disposition—proactive personality—is critical. Proactive individuals identify opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they bring about meaningful change (Parker et al., 2019). In academia, proactive lecturers are not passive recipients of their environment; they actively shape it to improve their performance.

The literature indicates that proactive lecturers are more likely to: 1) Seek out research collaborations and funding opportunities; 2) Innovate in their teaching methods without waiting for institutional mandates; 3) Network professionally to enhance their knowledge and reputation; 4) Provide unsolicited feedback to improve departmental processes.

This characteristic is particularly vital in environments with limited resources. A proactive lecturer will independently seek online courses to improve their skills, propose new course modules aligned with industry trends, or initiate community partnership projects, thereby enhancing their performance in teaching, research, and service, respectively. Proactive personality and PsyCap often interact, as psychological resources fuel the confidence needed to take proactive steps.

3. Work Engagement: The Pathway to Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption

Work engagement, characterized by vigor (high energy), dedication (strong involvement), and absorption (full concentration) (Hines, 2022), is not merely an outcome but a key mechanism linking individual characteristics to performance outcomes. Engagement mediates the relationship between personal resources and performance results.

Lecturers who are highly engaged are fully immersed in their work. They bring enthusiasm to the classroom (enhancing teaching quality), experience a "flow" state during research activities (increasing productivity and creativity), and derive personal meaning from community service. Engagement is often fueled by intrinsic motivation and the presence of job resources, but individual characteristics such as PsyCap and proactivity are antecedent personal resources that help lecturers gain these job resources and sustain engagement even when facing demands (Ma, 2023).

Integrative Framework and Discussion

The findings coalesce into an integrative framework (see Figure 1). Individual characteristics such as Psychological Capital and Proactive Personality function as foundational personal resources. These resources directly influence performance behaviors (e.g., persistent effort, innovative teaching, rigorous research). Simultaneously, they foster a state of high Work Engagement, which acts as a powerful motivational pathway that channels energy and focus directly into performance-relevant tasks. This entire process is contextual, occurring within an organizational environment that presents both job resources (e.g., supervisory support, autonomy) and job demands (e.g., administrative burden, publication pressure). However, the core argument of this review is that individual characteristics determine how a lecturer perceives and utilizes these environmental factors.

Table Key Individual Characteristics and Their Impact on Lecturer Performance

Individual Characteristic	Key Components	Primary Impact on Lecturer Performance
Psychological Capital	Self-efficacy, Hope, Optimism, Resilience	Enhances adaptive capacity, persistence, positive goal pursuit, and stress management across all academic roles.
Proactive Personality	Initiative, Change-orientation, Perseverance	Drives innovation, opportunity-seeking, and improvement of work processes in teaching, research, and service.

Individual Characteristic	Key Components	Primary Impact on Lecturer Performance
Work Engagement	Vigor, Dedication, Absorption	Channels high levels of energy and focus into work tasks, leading to higher quality output and personal fulfillment.

Source: Developed for this study based on literature synthesis.

This discussion aligns with and extends the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). The reviewed literature strongly indicates that within the academic profession, an individual's psychological traits are critical resources. A lecturer rich in these personal resources is more likely to craft their job, seek out additional resources, and avoid the negative spiral of demands leading to burnout. Conversely, a lack of these characteristics can lead to energy depletion and reduced performance, even in a resource-rich environment.

The humanistic implication is profound. To enhance lecturer performance, institutions must move beyond purely transactional HR policies. Interventions should include training programs to develop PsyCap (e.g., resilience workshops, efficacy-building through micro-teaching sessions), recruitment and promotion systems that value proactivity, and creating a culture that fosters intrinsic motivation and engagement. Recognizing and nurturing these individual characteristics is essential for building a sustainable, innovative, and high-performing academic workforce.



Figure Proposed Integrative Framework of Individual Characteristics and Lecturer Performance (Source: Developed for this study).

CONCLUSION

This literature review has systematically examined the pivotal role of individual characteristics in enhancing lecturer performance. The synthesis conclusively demonstrates that performance in the complex academic role is not merely a function of institutional systems but is profoundly shaped by the personal resources that lecturers possess. Key characteristics, including the composite construct of Psychological Capital (encompassing self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience), a proactive personality, and a high level of work engagement, have been identified as critical drivers. These attributes empower lecturers to proactively navigate challenges, transform demands into opportunities, maintain high energy and focus, and ultimately excel in their teaching, research, and community service obligations.

The proposed integrative framework positions these individual characteristics as foundational personal resources that directly and indirectly, through fostering engagement, lead to superior performance. This perspective contributes to the field of organizational behavior in higher education by emphasizing the agency of the academic individual within the organizational system. For practice, the findings advocate for a more holistic approach to academic human resource development. Universities should invest in programs that build psychological capital, recognize and reward proactive behaviors, and create a work environment that fosters intrinsic motivation and engagement. Future research could empirically test this framework in diverse cultural and institutional settings and explore interventions designed to develop these vital individual characteristics among academic staff.

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