The Effect of Service on Research Performance: A Study on Italian Academics in Management

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A Study on Italian Academics in Management

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Academics all over the world are feeling the increasing pressure to attain satisfactory research performance. Since research is not the only activity required of academics, though, the debate on how it may be coupled with other knowledge transfer activities like teaching, patenting, and dissemination has been captivating scholars interested in higher education. Literature is surprisingly silent about the interplay between research performance and other roles and tasks that faculty are expected to carry out, namely academic citizenship, intended as the service that they provide to their institution, to the scientific community, and to the larger society. Through a negative binomial regression conducted on 692 Italian academics in management, this paper investigates both the direct and moderating effect exerted by academic citizenship on the relationship between research performance in two subsequent evaluation exercises, thus advancing our knowledge of the relationship between research and service. Findings show that institutional service acts as a pure moderator, discipline-based service is a quasi-moderator, while public service exerts only a direct negative effect on research performance. In light of the emergent interplay between research and service, the necessity to boost reflection on academic citizenship is discussed and suggestions for its acknowledgement and advancement are formulated.
Introduction

The pursuit of research performance has become the mantra of academics all over the world (e.g., Vogelgesang et al., 2010; Bak and Kim, 2015). Research excellence is deemed to promote national system development, as well as to introduce valuable transparency and clarity in the management of public resources (Frølich, 2011). Consequently, research on higher education has reinforced the effort to increase our understanding of what may foster or hamper the achievement of a satisfying research performance. Individual characteristics, such as previous performance and embeddedness in an international network of ties, and contextual features, such as university size and orientation to research, have been investigated. In an attempt to better grasp how to enhance research, the relationships between the various tasks and roles expected of academics have been taken into account. In particular, a vibrant debate has delved into the interplay between different knowledge transfer activities, e.g., research, teaching, dissemination, and spin-off creation (e.g., Landry et al., 2010; Bak and Kim, 2015; Rossi and Rosli, 2015), with the goal to realize whether they are complementary, substitute or independent of each other. Surprisingly, academic citizenship, intended as the service provided to the university and to the wider society, has remained in the background of the reflection on higher education (e.g., Vogelgesang et al., 2010; Macfarlane, 2011; Lawrence et al., 2012). Academic citizenship comprises a set of activities and roles that are mostly implicitly expected to be part of the academic profession, but that are often not clearly recognized and rewarded (O’Meara et al., 2019). The ambiguity linked to the status of service in academia calls for a study inquiring into its relationship with research to inform our understanding of how emphasis on research performance impinges upon faculty’s other duties and roles.

We investigated the engagement in research and in academic citizenship of 692 Italian faculty in management in the 2004-2013 time span, that is to say, before and after the
introduction of a reform formally endorsing research performance in the appraisal of
universities and academics. Based on a negative binomial regression, our findings disclosed
how, in addition to the effect of path dependency, visiting scholarship experience, recognition
of research achievements, and university orientation to research, public service negatively
affected research performance, while service to the scientific community exerted a positive
influence. In addition, institutional service negatively moderated the relationship between
research performance in two evaluation exercises. Interestingly, a negative moderating effect
of discipline-based service enhanced the scientific productivity of academics with limited
former research performance, but reduced the performance of scholars with solid publication
track records.

Overall, this study helps fill a gap in our knowledge of higher education system functioning,
contributing to the comprehension of the interplay between the individual and organizational-
level factors that account for research performance. Awareness is here raised towards the fact
that academic citizenship influences the attainment of research performance along complex
pathways. Consequently, it is high time that policy makers, university managers, and
academics took into account service in the design of institutions as well as in the choice of
the courses of actions to undertake. The call for making the evaluation of academic
citizenship in career pathways less puzzling is reinforced by this paper. Some suggestions for
conveying the well-deserved relevance to service are then formulated, based on the
consideration that in academia, as in most organizations, individuals do not need to excel in
all dimensions, while their employing organizations as a whole should.

The Influence of Academic Citizenship on Research Performance

Almost all higher education systems have been embracing research excellence as their
primary target over the past decades (e.g., Knights and Clarke, 2014; Pifer and Baker, 2013).
The rationale for promoting better research performance lies in the belief that the quality of research outcomes positively affects the success of single institutions and sustains national development and collective welfare (Fussy, 2017). Research excellence is in fact meaningfully referred to as ‘the engine of growth’ (Salter et al., 2017:1769). Given that the academic profession is multifaceted (Bak and Kim, 2015; Guarino and Borden, 2017), a lively debate has nonetheless addressed the effects that the pursuit of research proficiency can have on other academic duties and expectations. In particular, a substitution effort has been evoked between research and teaching (Holmstrom and Milgrom, 1991), based on the claim that research is about specific contents and contributions to bring to a specialized community, whereas teaching is about the ability to convey knowledge to a less expert and more heterogeneous audience (Wiley et al., 2016). At the same time, a positive link has been posited between these two core tasks of faculty, though, since teaching may help clarify and adapt research topics, especially when communicated to diversified sets of students (Hattie and Marsh, 1996). In parallel, whether the other types of knowledge transfer that academics can engage in and which vary from patenting and spin-off creation to consulting services, are substitute, complementary, or independent of research has been largely discussed (Landry et al., 2010; Rossi and Rosli, 2015).

Although no shared interpretation has emerged yet concerning the interplay between the various knowledge transfer activities, teaching included, it is remarkable how academic citizenship has been sidelined in the discourse on higher education (Thompson et al., 2005; Macfarlane, 2007, 2011; Carli et al., 2018). Academic citizenship represents, alongside teaching and research, a pillar of university functioning: these three core sets of activities have been referred to as the ‘tripartite vision’ (Macfarlane, 2011) or as the ‘contested triad’ (Pifer and Baker, 2013) of academic profession, depending on whether they are viewed as complementary or substitute for each other. Academic citizenship can be defined as the roles
and activities that faculty perform for the sake, and on behalf, of their institution. Latest reflection on these much-neglected tasks embrace a perspective that goes beyond the university boundaries to extend to the impact of academics on the wider society, distinguishing between internal and external service (Guarino and Borden, 2017). According to Thompson et al. (2005) and Macfarlane (2007), academic citizenship behaviors can in fact refer to assistance and guidance provided to students, such as counselling and coaching (student service), and to colleagues, such as mentoring PhDs (collegial service), contribution to internal governance bodies like committees and Senate (institutional service), as well as it can refer to reaching a larger audience. This latter ranges from service yielded to the scientific community, such as acting as a reviewer or organizing a scientific conference (discipline-based service), to impacting upon the collective through public lectures or participation in the media (public service). The roles that academics can exert in addition to knowledge transfer activities are key to turning the university, often called a ‘secluded campus’ or ‘ivory tower’, into a ‘placeful university’, i.e., an organization amongst other organizations that share knowledge and set future common development pathways (Nørgård and Bengtsen, 2016). Engaging in academic citizenship requires effort and time and poses a dilemma to faculty, who wonder whether they should take charge of service and what positive or negative consequences their enactment might convey to research and career advancement (e.g., Holland, 1999; Macfarlane, 2011). The scant reflection currently available on the relationship between research and service does not allow yet to formulate any indication to this regard. This paper investigates the very influence that playing out academic citizenship can have on research performance.

Studies have been flourishing about the factors that promote or hamper the attainment of research performance. According to a line of reasoning, individual-level characteristics are more relevant than institutional-level factors in engendering research outcomes (e.g.,
O'Connor and O'Hagan, 2016). From a different perspective, it is mostly institutional features that drive and determine research effort and achievements (Lewis, 2014; Lewis and Ross, 2011). It is more likely, though, that individual and institutional characteristics jointly affect the capability to carry out research and attain satisfactory results (George and Jones, 2012; Vogelgesang et al., 2010). Adhering to this latter interpretation of academic life, the rest of the paper will delve into the factors that may sustain or hinder research performance that the literature on this issue has proposed as prominent.

Among the individual characteristics, path dependency, embeddedness in an international network, visiting fellowship experience, and acknowledgement of researcher status will be taken into account as antecedents of research performance. In addition, organizational features such as university orientation to research and size will be considered. Finally, the effects of the enactment of academic citizenship will be fleshed out.

Path Dependency

The capability to carry out high-quality research can be impacted by previous research experience. Behavioral consistency theory posits that human achievements be influenced by previous performance in the same domain (Wernimont and Campbell, 1968). Individuals tend in fact to stick to previous courses of action that have turned out to be satisfying and rewarding. From a psychological point of view, this trend can be framed within the search for self-continuity as a means to be socially validated by others: repeating well-established behaviors enables self-verification, thus reinforcing the professional identity in this case (Ashforth, 2000; Swann et al., 1987). Specifically, scholars who have formerly accomplished a good publication record tend to remain productive over time (Carli et al., 2018; Salter et al., 2017). A cumulative advantage for scientific recognition has been claimed for the hard sciences (Bonaccorsi et al., 2017): researchers who have a distinguished publication record
are endowed with more resources, such as laboratories, equipment, and team members, which sustain their research effort and achievements over time. Accordingly, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

_Hypothesis 1: Subsequent research performance is positively related to previous research performance._

**Embeddedness in an International Network**

The literature on higher education has stressed the importance of network ties to achieve outstanding research outcomes. Outperformers are usually nested within a network of international collaborations able to offer a fertile environment for conducting research: availing oneself of a set of international linkages likely conveys interesting hints to start investigations as well as provides support throughout the whole process (e.g., Adams et al., 2005; Lee and Bozeman, 2005). In particular, cooperation with international coauthors can be fruitful for promoting and seeing through publication processes, as they can offer access to new perspectives on how to do research that colleagues located in the same environment cannot convey (Benedetto et al., 2016; Daraio and Moed, 2011). Therefore, it can be conjectured that:

_Hypothesis 2: Research performance is positively related to international collaborations._

**Visiting Scholarship Experience**

Exposure to different contexts, especially international settings, can be beneficial for faculty’s research. Shielded from daily obligations and consolidated patterns of behavior, academics can free up their mind, build new connections, and get stimuli to undertake high-quality research (Defazio et al., 2009; Edler et al., 2011). This evidence gets corroborated when a researcher moves from the periphery of the research arena towards the center, i.e.,
from less to more prestigious institutions, and opportunities for launching and finalizing new studies increase (Jonkers and Cruz-Castro, 2013). The support to research that experiences in a stimulating environment provide leads to the formulation of the below hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** Research performance is positively related to visiting scholarship experiences.

**Acknowledgment of Researcher Status**

The attainment of academic awards signals the relevance of the research carried out to the scientific community, thus communicating the researcher status, and usually plays an important role in tenure evaluation processes (Lutter and Schröder, 2016). The impact of academic awards on research performance has been debated, and a distinction has to be made concerning whether they are due to an outstanding performance in research or in other tasks such as teaching or fundraising (Allison and Long, 1990). In the first case, it is plausible that, according to expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), there be a virtuous relationship between the achievement of public recognition for a behavior and the willingness to reinforce the same conducive behavior: if individuals apply input (time, effort, competencies, relationships) to reach a performance that is rewarded with valuables outcomes, then the motivation to reapply the same—or even bigger—input is high. Accordingly, research-related recognition is likely to commit academics further to the pursuit of high-quality research outcomes. These considerations lead to formulate the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 4:** Research performance is positively related to research awards.

**Academic Citizenship**

Enacting service inside and outside the institution can endanger commitment to research. This statement, which resonates with daily experience in academia, emerges from the reflection on academic citizenship (e.g., Thompson et al., 2005; Lawrence et al., 2012;
Bolden et al., 2014). Academic citizenship in fact diverts attention and consumes time that could be profitably spent on research. This holds particularly true for institutional and public service, which call for different skills from those needed to produce valuable research and whose opportunities for mutual fertilization with research is still scant (Thompson et al., 2005; Guarino and Borden, 2017). A different claim can be made for discipline-based service: since it addresses and unfolds within the scientific community, profitable synergies between acting as a reviewer or organizing a conference and producing good pieces of research can be expected (Macfarlane, 2011). Accordingly, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

*Hypothesis 5a: Research performance is negatively related to institutional service*

*Hypothesis 5b: Research performance is negatively related to public service*

*Hypothesis 5c: Research performance is positively related to discipline-based service*

As anticipated above, organizational features can also influence the capability to perform outstanding research. The literature on higher education has highlighted the relevance of the orientation to research of the academic context as well as the effect of the university size.

**Contextual Orientation to Research**

The ability to achieve a brilliant publication record is affected by the surrounding environment. A context that at different levels fosters research through the allocation of appropriate resources (e.g., funding, administrative staff, support to project bid elaboration) and explicitly rewards it is expected to lead to better research performance (Salter *et al.*, 2017). The orientation to research of the context in which faculty are nested can exert a positive influence at various levels, varying from the university to which one belongs to the department to which one is affiliated, to the colleagues of the same discipline who operate in the same department (Carli *et al.*, 2018). Some studies conducted on PhD socialization
processes help grasp the importance of the social environment on research achievements.

Hottenrott and Lawson (2017) showed how PhD students who availed themselves of attentive
and expert advisors and proactive research group tended to make scientific and career choices
that put research centerstage. Relatedly, Park and Gordon’s work (1996) testified to how PhD
students who were able to publish thanks to the endorsement and guidance enjoyed during
their PhD program remained more productive after the program was over than colleagues
who did not have this opportunity. In the end, the beneficial effect that a research-oriented
context can have on faculty research performance can be elaborated as follows:

*Hypothesis 6: Research performance is positively related to university research orientation.*

**University Size**

The bigger endowment of resources that are usually available to large-sized universities can
create a fertile setting to conduct research. The tangible and intangible assets, which range
from specialized staff to international cooperation agreements, that large institutions can offer
to their members sustain their capability to carry out and finalize high-quality research
(Landry et al., 2010; Taylor and Cantwell, 2015). This assumption, corroborated by empirical
evidence, is particularly relevant for disciplines that necessitate significant hardware and
facility investments, such as laboratories and machines in the STEM field (Bonaccorsi et al.,
2015). Consequently, the below hypothesis can be formulated:

*Hypothesis 7: Research performance is positively related to university size.*

**The Moderating Effect of Academic Citizenship on Research Performance**

Academic citizenship can be posited to moderate the relationship between individual and
organizational-level antecedents and research performance. Undertaking service that does not
directly address research, such as institutional and public service, can not only subtract time
and effort from research, but requires skills and competencies, such as negotiation, conflict
management, and verbal abilities, that do not match the skills and competencies necessary to
carry out excellent research. The literature on higher education has underlined the potential
for divergencies that taking on heterogeneous roles— instructor, researcher, organizational
representative—can spawn, as well as the complications that it brings (e.g., Bolden et al.,
2014; Knights and Clarke, 2014; Pifer and Baker, 2013). Conversely, some complementarity
can be expected between discipline-based service and research (Macfarlane, 2007; Pifer and
Baker, 2013). In this case, knowledge foundations and competencies are similar and a
virtuous learning cycle can take place leading individuals to produce more valuable research.

Along this line of reasoning, the following hypotheses can be expressed:

**Hypothesis 8a:** Institutional service moderates the relationship between previous and
subsequent research performance, such that the effect of previous research performance on
subsequent research performance is weakened when institutional service is high.

**Hypothesis 8b:** Public service moderates the relationship between previous and subsequent
research performance, such that the effect of previous research performance on subsequent
research performance is weakened when public service is high.

**Hypothesis 8c:** Discipline-based service moderates the relationship between previous and
subsequent research performance, such that the effect of previous research performance on
subsequent research performance is reinforced when discipline-based service is high.

**Control variables**

The need to control for some variables has been raised in the literature. Gender has been
often evoked as a variable able to explain different publishing patterns. Male faculty are
expected to produce more research than their female colleagues, although the quality of
outcomes is still debated: according to some studies, women carry out fewer publications, but
with a higher target (e.g., Long and Fox, 1995; Groot and García-Valderrama, 2006).
Academic rank has been extensively called into question, too, although its influence remains controversial (Baccini et al., 2014). Based on some evidence, full professors enjoy the so-called ‘status effect’: they are involved in publications by their peers owing to their reputation and visibility in the scientific community (Tien and Blackburn, 1996). Conversely, according to other studies, once obtained the tenure, full professors are less motivated than lower-ranking colleagues to undertake research (e.g., Xie and Shauman, 1998). Eventually, some contributions do not disclose any significant relationship between rank and research performance (Over, 1982).

Also the interplay of discipline and research performance has prompted discussion in the literature on higher education (Jaffe, 2014; Landry et al., 2010). The intensity of knowledge transfer activities, among which stands out research, is affected by the field in which academics operate, with academics in STEM and management producing a high volume of activities aimed at disseminating knowledge beyond the scientific community (Salter et al., 2017). Figure 1 represents the hypotheses of the paper.

Data

To test our hypotheses, we collected data on Italian academics in management in the 2004-2013 period. This time frame was chosen to take into account two evaluation exercises promoted by the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research System (ANVUR): the former gauged the research outcomes achieved between 2004 and 2010, while the latter measured research performance from 2011 to 2013. In between the two periods, marking a dramatic change in Italian higher education, lied the so-called Gelmini
reform issued in 2010 that fostered research performance as the main evaluation target of individuals, departments, and universities, and introduced a two-step process for career progressions (Anon, 2010; Frischknecht, 2008; Rebora and Turri, 2013). All faculty who aim for a promotion to associate or full professor must undergo a National Qualification Exam (Abilitazione Scientifica Nazionale or ASN) that is based first on the attainment of given research outcomes, measured through ‘threshold values’ equal to the research performance medians in the discipline, and then, if and only if these values are met, on the analysis of the publication record, product contents, and curriculum vitae (CV) by national committees. Subsequently, individuals who have successfully passed the Qualification Exam can apply for the positions opening at single universities; at this stage, candidates’ publication record, product contents, and CV are gauged by locally appointed committees. Italian academia represents an interesting and extreme case when research performance is under study (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Bonaccorsi et al., 2017), as research performance had been declining nationwide since 2008 and an institutional action was evoked to bring its relevance to the fore (Cartlidge, 2010). Within this framework, academics in management are prominent since they have long been unbalanced on the generation of knowledge addressing practitioners, such as consulting services for public and private companies, while sidelining the pursuit of research excellence (Salter et al., 2017). Consequently, meeting high research requirements has been remarkably challenging for these academics, who had to rethink and adjust their behavioral patterns (Butler et al., 2015). In addition, interest in management is enhanced by the fact that it comprises many different fields, thus offering an exhaustive outlook (Salter et al., 2017).

In particular, we gathered and analyzed data concerning 692 faculty members in the fields of accounting, strategy, marketing, banking, and finance, distributed in 63 universities. 59.8% are males, 43.8% are assistant professors, 27.7% are associate professors, and 28.5% are full
professors. The $\chi^2$ tests used to compare the sample with the Italian population of academics in the same disciplines confirmed that there are not significant differences in distribution across gender and academic rank.

CVs represent an established source to analyze academic careers since they allow to keep track of activities, roles, and achievements over time (e.g., Gaughan, 2009) and are becoming the main reference for career advancements (Macfarlane and Burg, 2019). CVs were used to grasp visiting scholarship, research awards, and the number of academic citizenship activities and roles performed (institutional, discipline-based, and public service). CVs were collected from the National Qualification Exam website for 28.5% of the sample and downloaded from universities’ and research projects’ websites for academics who did not participate in the qualification process. The National Qualification Exam website collects the CVs of candidates who wish to participate either in the assessment procedure or in committees: these latter are sorted out of a list of faculty who comply with ‘threshold values’ that are usually higher than those required of the former. It is noteworthy that the National Qualification CV format has become the standard for CV elaboration in Italy since its launch in 2012; consequently, there is substantial homogeneity in the information reported across CVs that abide by this format. The criterion of consistency with the qualification exam format drove us in the retention of CVs among those available on the Internet. We then fine-tuned the sample selection by discarding CVs that were not updated to January 2014 at least, as the 2010-2013 national evaluation exercise comprised all the data up to December 2013 included. We met several times to define coding criteria with two coders based on batches of CVs that each of us had singularly examined, then regularly again to discuss and solve doubtful cases that arose during further independent coding (Gioia et al., 2013).

Information about publications of academics and networks of international collaboration were retrieved from the Scopus database (Chavarro et al., 2017). Additionally, reports
published by ANVUR and the database on the Italian Research Evaluation Exercise (Valutazione della Qualità della Ricerca or VQR) provided data about university research orientation, while reports by the Statistical Office of the Italian Ministry of Education, University, and Research (MIUR) were used to gather data on university size.

Variables

Research performance can be traced back to two significant dimensions that have been identified in the lively debate targeting the appraisal of research performance. The former refers mostly to the quantity of publications on indexed journals carried out by each academic, also known as scientific productivity (Lee et al., 2015; Moed, 2010), while the latter parses out the impact of publications on the scientific community, or scientific influence (e.g., Glänzel, 2008; Moed, 2010).

Among the various and somewhat controversial measures of scientific influence proposed in the literature, such as the journal impact factor and h-index, the number of citations appears to be the most widely used (Bongioanni et al., 2014). Accordingly, we counted the number of papers listed on Scopus for each academic in the 2011-2013 period (Harzing and Alakangas, 2016) as a proxy for scientific productivity and the number of citations received from every scholar as reported on Scopus (Daraio et al., 2018) as a proxy for scientific influence. This second measure was standardized by the number of years since the publication date of each paper, as earlier articles are likely to be cited more than later products.\(^1\)

The independent variables were elaborated for the years going from 2004 to 2010. Previous scientific productivity and previous scientific influence were measured with the same

\(^1\) To avoid endogeneity, we calculated citations respectively for the papers published in the first evaluation exercise and for those published in the second exercise, which differ in their time length. We counted the citations per author reported on Scopus at 2017. For both periods, we adjusted the citation per paper by the number of years since its publication date: for instance, if a paper published in 2012 received 20 citations at 2017, we divided 20 by the years from 2012 to 2017, i.e., 5, counting 4 citations for that paper.
approach as the dependent variables to test Hypothesis 1 on path dependency.

International collaborations were defined as the count of each academic’s co-authors affiliated to a foreign university (Ponomariov and Boardman, 2010). In our case, we counted them using the authoring data reported on Scopus.

Inspired by Jonkers and Cruz-Castro (2013), visiting scholarship was defined as a binary variable coded as 1 if the academic had done at least a period of visiting in a foreign university between 2004 and 2010, and 0 otherwise.

Research awards were based on the coding of academics’ CVs considering several types of acknowledgements, such as best paper and best dissertation awards (Allison and Long, 1990; Lutter and Schröder, 2016).

Academic citizenship was measured by three variables—institutional, public and discipline-based service—according to Macfarlane (2005, 2007), Thompson et al. (2005), Vogelgesang et al. (2010), and Bolden et al. (2014).

Information on institutional service was coded from CVs as a variable that counts the activities and roles undertaken by each academic to serve university committees and boards between 2004 and 2010. Some examples are membership in the faculty or department boards, in the Senate, in PhD program committees, or in other committees (e.g., funding, internationalization, quality assurance) and the roles of Head or Deputy Head of Department, Dean or Deputy Dean.

Similarly, public service was appraised as the count of activities and roles related to service in public bodies and non-profit organizations, such as membership in boards of directors or in boards of auditors, roles in the boards or committees of professional associations, membership in authorities or formal roles in regional or local institutions.

Discipline-based service was defined as the number of roles in editorial boards of scientific journals (e.g., editor in chief, senior editor, associate editor) or in conference committees.
(e.g., conference program chair, member of the scientific committee or of the organizing committee) or as reviewers.

The research orientation of the university was gathered from the detailed report published by ANVUR on the 2004-2010 evaluation exercise, using the rates assigned to research quality. University size was defined as a categorical variable, dividing universities into three classes: small (fewer than 10,000 students), medium (between 10,000 and 20,000 students), and large (more than 20,000 students).

Control variables on gender and rank (assistant, associate, and full professor) were taken from CVs, while the discipline was coded as a categorical variable to attribute academics to three wide subject areas: accounting, strategy and marketing, and finance.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations among variables.

Remarkably, the dependent variable’s mean is similar to the first predictor (Previous Scientific Productivity), although this latter was calculated on a three-year timeframe instead of seven, as the two subsequent evaluation exercises differed in their time span. Few correlations among independent variables above the cutoff of 0.6 involved previous scientific productivity, international collaborations, and previous scientific influence, but they did not generate effects of multicollinearity, as we checked by assessing the Variance Inflation Factors (VIF).

Table 2 presents descriptive data on scientific productivity reporting mean values, standard deviations, and median values for university size, gender, academic rank, and discipline. A generalized increase in productivity from the first to the second evaluation exercise can be noted, although the second exercise period lasted less, as specified above. This trend can be
grasped from the median values, which all moved to 1 in the second exercise. Moreover, we observed a reduction in standard deviations from the first to the second period, highlighting a convergence towards the mean values.

Method

The nature of the dependent variables, scientific productivity measured by papers published on Scopus-indexed journals and scientific influence measured by citations, suggested not to use an OLS regression to test the hypotheses, but a negative binomial model that is able to explain the particular distribution of count variables with over-dispersed outcomes (Lee and Jung, 2017). The likelihood-ratio test for the overdispersion coefficient (alpha) was performed to verify whether the negative binomial model had a better fit than a Poisson model assuming equal mean and variance: the resulting value testified to a significant increase in fit using a negative binomial model.

The aim of our study is to look at the combined influence of individual and institutional-level variables on scientific productivity and influence. The use of a multilevel analysis enabled to distinguish the effects of the context from individual features and activities (Klein et al., 1999). To explain variability at the university level, we developed a random intercept model (Snijder and Bosker, 1999), assessing differences among universities and measuring the variance of the intercept related to individuals’ university membership.

The equation of the multilevel model is:

\[(1) \ln y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{ij} + u_j + e_{ij}\]

Model (1) is a random intercept model, where the intercept can vary across groups, i.e., universities. \(y_{ij}\) represents the productivity or influence of the individual \(i\) in the university \(j\).
The random part of the model is given by $u_j$ and $e_{ij}$. $u_j$ is the group effect, which is assumed to follow a normal distribution with mean equal to zero and variance $\sigma_u^2$ that we measured in the analysis, while $\sigma_e^2$ is the variance of the residuals’ distribution. We calculated the Interclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) and the significance values of both variances. Likelihood-ratio tests were conducted to compare the fit of the multilevel model with the correspondent negative binomial models, always finding a significant improvement of fit with the multilevel approach, as reported at the bottom of Tables 2 and 3.

In our theorizing, the three moderation hypotheses (8a, 8b and 8c) were first combined with hypotheses on the direct effect of the moderators on the dependent variable ‘scientific productivity’ (5a, 5b and 5c). The combination of these hypotheses means that we were looking for quasi-moderation effects where the moderator had also a direct influence on the criterion variable. To empirically test quasi-moderations, according to the method suggested by Sharma et al (1981), we performed a hierarchical regression with three models: Model 1 with the independent variables as regressors, as argued above, Model 2 including the moderators as regressors, Model 3 adding the interaction terms between moderators and the regressors at stake, as follows:

$$\ln y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{ij} + \beta_2 z_{ij} + u_j + e_{ij}$$

(2) $$\ln y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{ij} + \beta_2 z_{ij} + \beta_3 (x_{ij} \times z_{ij}) + u_j + e_{ij}$$ (3)

Adopting hierarchical regression analysis, it is possible to distinguish between a pure moderation and a quasi-moderation. This latter requires that both the effect of the interaction term between the moderator variables and the independent variable and the effect of the moderator as independent variable be significant.

In order for a moderation effect to be detected, the beta of the interaction term in Model 3 must be significant ($\beta_3 \neq 0$). Subsequently, to evaluate if it is a pure or a quasi-moderation effect, the significance of the relationship of the moderator with the criterion variable in
Model 2 must be verified. If $\beta_2$ is significant, Model 1 and Model 2 are different, and $z$ is a quasi-moderator; if not, the two models are equivalent, and $z$ is a pure moderator. The same approach was adopted to study scientific influence, using a hierarchical regression in models 4, 5 and 6, considering previous scientific influence in the interaction term.

To estimate the parameters of the negative binomial regressions we used robust estimators to control for mild violation of underlying assumptions, as suggested by Cameron and Trivedi (2013). The VIF tests for multicollinearity showed an average value equal to 1.79 and a maximum value equal to 3.52, below the suggested cutoff of 10 (Hair et al., 2010).

Findings

In this section, the results of the three negative binomial regressions related to scientific productivity are presented. Then, the other three models for scientific influence are introduced by stressing the differences from findings on scientific productivity.

In Table 3 the effects of the independent variables on the criterion variable are displayed as exponential coefficients that measure how much the dependent variable would change for a unitary variation in the independent variable. If an exponential coefficient is higher than 1, it means that the predictor has a positive effect given by the coefficient value minus 1. Conversely, if the exponential coefficient is inferior to 1, the independent variable has a negative effect equal to 1 minus the coefficient value. Table 3 reports also the level of significance and standard errors, while the fit parameters are listed at the bottom.

----------------------------------------
Insert Table 3 about here
----------------------------------------

Model 1 partially confirmed the first hypothesis on path dependency: academics who published a large number of papers in the previous evaluation exercise were more likely to be
productive in the following exercise. An additional paper published from 2004 to 2010 increased the predicted outcomes by 15.8%. Nevertheless, previous research influence did not exert a significant influence on scientific productivity. Having an impact with former publications did not make the scholars under exam more productive later.

International collaborations did not exert a significative effect on scientific productivity, thus leaving Hypothesis 2 unconfirmed, while having been a visiting scholar at a foreign university wielded a significant payoff in terms of scientific productivity (52.1%), supporting Hypothesis 3.

Research awards had only a partially significant effect on scientific productivity in Model 1, but their positive effect was verified in Models 2 and 3 that better approximate our data. According to Model 3, a research award could raise research outcomes by 8.1%, thereby giving support to Hypothesis 4.

Model 2 included academic citizenship variables that were also tested as moderators: first, we observed their direct effect on scientific productivity, which did not turn out to be as posited. Institutional service did not appear to have a significant direct effect on productivity. Consequently, Hypothesis 5a was not confirmed. Conversely, roles and activities connected to public service had a significative negative effect (-3.2%) on research outcomes, in line with Hypothesis 5b. Finally, we found that past discipline-based service enhanced subsequent scientific productivity with a positive significant effect equal to 2.3%, confirming Hypothesis 5c, too.

Contextual factors posited in Hypotheses 6 and 7 can be gleaned from Model 1. Hypothesis 6 on the effect of university ranking was confirmed. Working in a university with a good research outlook facilitated scientific productivity. As can be observed from Table 1, the scale used to assign rates in the evaluation exercises run by ANVUR is quite compressed, going from 0 to 0.588. Model 1 showed that a 0.1 increase in ANVUR ranking impacted...
positively on scientific productivity (80.4%).

Hypothesis 7 was not confirmed by data analysis: working in a large institution did not exert a significant effect on research outcomes. A coordination issue might be at play (George and Jones, 2012): while large universities can yield more resources than smaller ones, organizing and coordinating them in a way that is beneficial to scholars might be difficult and generate inefficiencies in research processes (Brandt and Schubert, 2013).

Model 3 shows the three interaction terms that we intended to delve into. The first interaction between previous scientific productivity and institutional service emerged as significant, giving support to Hypothesis 8a. Moreover, the non-significance of the direct effect of the moderator on the criterion variable, which was tested in Model 2, as anticipated by the lack of support for Hypothesis 5a, confirmed that institutional service was a pure moderator of the relationship between previous and subsequent scientific productivity. This effect is represented in Figure 2, which shows the predicted values of the dependent variable for different levels of former scientific productivity and of institutional service, keeping the other variables at their average. Each line stands for the expected productivity of academics with different levels of institutional service engagement, ranging from 0 to 9. The x-axis shows the number of papers reported on Scopus in the 2004-2010 time length. Lines are almost totally overlapping for low values of previous scientific productivity, but, looking at academics who published 9, 12, or even more papers in the previous evaluation exercise, a clear difference stands out: those who had performed less institutional citizenship published more, while those who had been more committed to this type of service reduced their possibility of generating the same amount of papers as colleagues who had not excelled in this service. It is noticeable that academics who had published few papers were not negatively impacted by their commitment to institutional citizenship. The moderation effect became relevant for academics who had formerly strongly focused on the advancement of their publication
records: enacting institutional academic citizenship lowered the number of publications expected of them according to path dependency in the following exercise.

The interaction term involving public service did not turn out to be significant, thereby providing no support for Hypothesis 8b. Only a direct effect of public service on the dependent variable was confirmed (see Hypothesis 5b).

A significant effect of discipline-based service as a moderator was found, but with a different trend from the one hypothesized (8c): in fact, evidence ran counter the conjecture that high values of discipline-based service enhanced the effect of previous scientific productivity on the criterion variable. Our findings depicted that increasing commitment to discipline-based citizenship reduced the impact of previous scientific productivity on predicting future outcomes. An explanation of this effect might lie in the action of discipline-base service as quasi-moderator instead of pure moderator: its direct effect on the dependent variable was significant and positive in Model 2, as testified by the support found for Hypothesis 5a.

Playing out discipline-based service had a positive impact on the dependent variable, but as the engagement in this activity increased, it lessened the positive effect of previous scientific productivity on the dependent variable. Figure 3 provides a visual representation to better comprehend this complex pattern. The lines show, as per Figure 3, the expected number of research outcomes at different levels of commitment to discipline-based service, while the x-axis depicts different levels of previous scientific productivity.
Faculty who had published few Scopus-indexed papers in the previous evaluation exercise (<6) obtained some benefits from the enactment of discipline-based service, in comparison with those who did not have any involvement in this type of academic citizenship. This result might be interpreted as a positive impact of discipline-based service for faculty members with a limited publication record, who might learn from doing reviews or participating in conference committees. Variance in the moderator proved to be ineffective at around six publications to then capsize: academics who had carried out a large number of Scopus papers in the past were expected to produce more research outcomes if they were less involved in discipline-based service. This trend might be due to the fact that well-experienced academics who took on editorial roles or actively served on conference committees had to reduce time and energy dedicated to research: no positive spillover was recorded.

Control variables confirmed some of the conjectures that had been formulated. First, being a female increased the likelihood of producing more high-quality research, in line with Groot and García-Valderrama’s findings (2006). We did not find any significant effect of academic rank and of discipline on scientific productivity.

The variance of the intercept related to university membership and the variance of the residuals were found highly significant. The ICC showed that, conditional to the fixed-effects covariates, research productivity was scarcely correlated within the same university, accounting for 15.6% of the total residual variance (Model 3).

The results found for the multilevel negative binomial models performed on scientific influence (number 4, 5 and 6 reported in Table 4) were very similar to the results related to scientific productivity. We underline the few emergent differences.

---------------------------------------------------------------

Insert Table 4 about here

---------------------------------------------------------------
First, being in a medium-sized university negatively affected scientific influence (-47.7%) compared with belongingness to a small university, and being in strategy rather than in accounting exerted a positive effect, even though only in Model 4. The main difference between scientific productivity and influence stemmed from the analysis of moderation effects: while a quasi-moderation between discipline-based service and scientific influence proved to be significant, consistently with Hypothesis 8c, the interaction between research influence and institutional service was not significant.

As with the previous models focusing on scientific productivity as dependent variable, both the variances of the group effect and of the residuals were significant, with a low ICC (8.5%), which indicates that university membership did not account for much of the overall residual variance.

**Discussion**

In the debate on universities becoming ‘psychotic’ and academics becoming ‘bipolar’ due to the multiple, often conflicting, expectations placed on them (Sievers, 2008; Bolden et al., 2014), the relationship between research performance and academic citizenship has surprisingly been sidelined. When reflecting upon the levers to enhance research performance in fact, the effect that service within and outside the university boundaries can exert has been only marginally, and mostly theoretically, called into question. Conversely, a great deal of attention has been devoted to grasping other individual and organizational-level antecedents. This study enriches our comprehension of the antecedents and moderators of research performance by including different types of academic service.

Our findings, rooted in 692 Italian academics in management, show that research performance is influenced by previous research-oriented individual achievements, such as scientific productivity, research awards, and international co-authorship, and by the
orientation to research of the university to which a scholar belongs. A complex relationship links service and research. Public service in fact negatively influenced research performance, without exerting any moderation effect, while institutional service negatively moderated the path dependency effect on research productivity in two subsequent evaluation exercises. A possible explanation could be that actively contributing to university management requires the development of specific skills and behaviors, e.g., political and decision making abilities, that encroaches upon successful research pathways (e.g. Tagliaventi et al., 2019). In addition, discipline-based service has a quasi-moderation effect on the relationship between research performance in two subsequent evaluation exercises. The direct effect of discipline-based service is positive, but the moderation effect tells us something more: academics with a limited publication record could benefit from the effect of discipline-based commitments that reinforced their scant publication experience, whereas productive academics would enjoy less publication success if they committed to more discipline-based activities. It is plausible that engagement in the scientific community represents a learning opportunity for the former, but a burden and a distraction for the latter. We posited a positive mediating effect based on the affinity between activities directed at the scientific community and activities aimed at publishing. Conversely, findings seem to contradict this expectation and to corroborate the service nature of discipline-based citizenship, highlighting its kinship to the other types of academic citizenship rather than to research.

Interesting contributions to management of higher education systems ensue from the above considerations. First of all, we can claim, thus testifying to a well-voiced concern (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2012; Macfarlane, 2011; Vogelgesang et al., 2010), that academic citizenship, while benefiting the university and the wider collective, takes a toll on research. As Knights and Clarke (2014) stated, pursuing research can turn academic life into a ‘bittersweet symphony’ in which activities that differ in nature, such as publishing and being
a good citizen of the university, are hard to be matched. It is particularly remarkable that
acting as editor or even reviewer and organizing scientific conferences and workshops likely
foster the development of skills and ties that sustain a high research performance for faculty
who formerly had an inadequate publication record. This consideration sheds a different light
on forms of active participation of junior researchers in the scientific community that might
be interpreted as interfering with the straightforward attainment of research goals. As a
matter of fact, service to colleagues in the same field enhances, rather than puts at risk, the
achievement of brilliant research performance by academics who need to further their
publication record. This hint contributes to the conversation on socialization to the academic
profession, which has largely stressed the influence of the closest environment, such as the
department’s orientation to research and the advisor’s publication record, on research training
(Hottenrott and Lawson, 2017). A profitable approach to research can ensue from a
proximate context that fosters research, but also from involvement in the more distant
scientific community.

Policy makers, university managers, and ultimately faculty themselves should keep a special
eye on academic citizenship. If academic citizenship and research performance are
potentially conflicting, as emerges from this study, the importance of academic citizenship
needs to be clearly communicated and rewarded in systems that emphasize research. Up to
now, the reasons and potential returns for embarking on service have been ambiguous. In
some contexts, service is considered as part of the ‘contested triad’ alongside research and
teaching (Krause, 2009), with the implicit expectation that it might be somewhat taken into
account for tenure. In other cases yet, performing academic citizenship can even turn into a
disadvantage, since people are deemed to take charge of service to make up for their inability
to perform research successfully (Thompson et al., 2005). Assessment and reward for service
is still ‘foggy as opposed to clear’ (O’Meara et al., 2019, p. 5). Time is ripe for rethinking the
way academic citizenship is gauged and compensated in academic careers. The need to formally recognize the relevance of service for university functioning and, in general, for societal advancement has been expressed in the literature (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2012; Macfarlane, 2011). Thompson et al. (2005) recommended that academic citizenship requirements be specified when opening positions. Extending Valantine and Sandborg’s (2013) reflection on medicine school faculty, O’Meara et al. (2019) proposed that academics be assigned credits for their various activities and given the chance to trade credits in one area for credits in other areas to generate an overall system equity. Along this line of reasoning on the development of a ‘choice environment’ (Kahneman, 2011), Maiden and Perry (2011) and Curcio and Lynch (2017) advocated for a planned and shared rotation of less and more-preferred, less and more time-consuming academic tasks so that they are no longer carried out by the same people, who end up undermining their research potential. We join and integrate this call from another perspective: departments could be designed and managed so as to comprise individuals with different domains of expertise and excellence—some in teaching, others in research, others yet in service, thus echoing what happens in companies, where different functional orientations (e.g., sales, marketing, and R&D) altogether are expected to produce satisfying organizational performance. Groups composed of heterogeneous members, each of them outperforming in at least one domain, instead of all targeting the same domain and refraining from the others, would live up to the expectation of bettering the overall higher education system.

Limitations and Hints for Future Research

This work has limitations that can pave the way for additional studies on the interplay between research and academic citizenship. First of all, it gleans on from Italian management
faculty only: considering scholars in different fields and countries would enable us to get a
more thorough view on the relationship between heterogeneous types of academic activities
and roles. How female faculty live and handle possible competing requirements deserves
further elucidation. A ‘gendered nature’ of service has been claimed in the literature
(Babcock et al., 2017; Vogelgesang et al., 2010). Women tend to take charge of service,
often repeatedly over time: they are so keen on ‘institutional housekeeping’ that a ‘gully of
service’ has been highlighted for them (Guarino and Borden, 2017, p. 674). Implicit social
biases have been taken into account. Women are scarcely willing to negotiate their position
and are the target of requests for ‘not-promotable’ tasks from male colleagues as well as from
students, who both perceive them as nurturing and prone to help (Babcock et al., 2017). In
parallel, women have been shown through a range of investigation tools varying from survey
to focus groups, and from interviews to annual faculty activity reports, to be less focused on
research than men (Bozeman and Gaughan, 2011). Our study unravels that female scholars
were able to respond to the pressure to advance scientific productivity prompted by an
institutional reform through a heftier increase in papers published on Scopus-indexed journals
than their male colleagues. Further investigation should complement this evidence by
unraveling whether a stronger publication effort came at the expense of service involvement
or whether and how female faculty succeeded in balancing heterogeneous courses of action.
Additionally, a more thorough outlook on knowledge transfer activities that takes into
account patenting, spin-offs, consulting, funding, and teaching, would allow us to better grasp
the influence that the different tasks and roles enacted by faculty exert on each other. Finally,
we invite academics to proceed along the pathway of understanding the complex intertwining
of factors that underlie daily behaviors and choices in university life, and that ultimately
determine our performance as individual scholars, but also as members of a collective.
References


**Conflict of interest statement**

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.
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Table 2. Descriptive data on Scientific Productivity

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<td>Previous Scientific Productivity</td>
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<td>Wald χ² (Prob. &gt; χ²)</td>
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<td>LR test vs. neg. binomial mode LR χ² (Prob. &gt; χ²)</td>
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N= 692; ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previous Scientific Productivity</td>
<td>1.182***</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>1.167***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Scientific Influence</td>
<td>1.009</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>1.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Collaborations</td>
<td>1.049</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>1.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting Scholarship</td>
<td>2.164***</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>2.193***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Awards</td>
<td>1.088</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>1.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Service</td>
<td>0.990</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>0.939**</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.935**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-based Service</td>
<td>1.045**</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>1.045**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Scientific Influence × Institutional Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Scientific Influence × Public Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Scientific Influence × Discipline-based Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Research Orientation</td>
<td>53.805***</td>
<td>51.868</td>
<td>44.741***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Dimension (ref.: Small)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium university</td>
<td>0.523**</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>0.491**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large university</td>
<td>0.810</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>0.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (ref.: Female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Rank (ref.: Full Professor)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>1.059</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>1.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline (ref.: Accounting)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy and marketing</td>
<td>1.663**</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>1.457</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.218</td>
<td>0.724</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.425**</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td>0.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln(alpha)</td>
<td>0.915***</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.893***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma^2)(residuals)</td>
<td>2.498***</td>
<td>0.260</td>
<td>2.442**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\sigma^2)(constant)</td>
<td>0.219**</td>
<td>0.116</td>
<td>0.210**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wald (\chi^2) (Prob. &gt; (\chi^2))</td>
<td>140.82 (0.0000)</td>
<td>149.80 (0.0000)</td>
<td>181.43 (0.0000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LR test vs. neg. binomial mode LR (\chi^2) (3) (Prob. &gt; (\chi^2))</td>
<td>8.42 (0.0019)</td>
<td>7.73 (0.0027)</td>
<td>9.04 (0.0013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 692; ***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .1
Figure 1. Research hypotheses

- Previous research performance
- International collaborations
- Visiting scholarship experiences
- Research awards
- University research orientation
- University size

- Institutional service
  - Institutional service
  - Public service
  - Discipline-based service

- Subsequent research performance
  - Controls:
    - Gender
    - Academic rank
    - Discipline

- Hypotheses:
  - Hp.1 (+)
  - Hp.8a
  - Hp.8b
  - Hp.8c
  - Hp.5a (-)
  - Hp.5b (-)
  - Hp.5c (+)
  - Hp.2 (+)
  - Hp.3 (+)
  - Hp.4 (+)
  - Hp.6 (+)
  - Hp.7 (+)
Figure 2. The full moderation effect of Institutional Service on the relationship between past and future Scientific Productivity.
Figure 3. The quasi-moderation effect of Discipline-based Service on the relationship between past and future Scientific Productivity.