



Comparative Relationships Between Physical Work, Remuneration and Institutional Policies on Academic Staff's Motivation among Public Universities in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated Working Conditions and Academic Staff Motivation among Public Universities in Delta State, Nigeria," examined the relationship between different dimensions of working conditions and academic staff motivation. The study focused on three major factors: physical work environment, remuneration, and institutional policies. Three research questions were raised to guide this study and three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. A correlational research design was adopted. The population consisted of 958 academic staff drawn from Delta State University, Abraka and Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun. A sample of 274 respondents was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The instrument was validated through face and construct validity and the reliability coefficient is 0.83. The method of data collection is questionnaire and data collected were analysed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation and linear regression. Findings revealed a significant relationship between working conditions and academic staff motivation across all dimensions studied. The study concluded that a conducive physical environment, equitable remuneration, institutional policies significantly enhance academic staff motivation. It was recommended that university management should improve workplace infrastructure, review remuneration periodically, and implement transparent institutional policies to promote staff motivation and productivity.

Keywords: Working conditions, staff motivations and Public Universities

Introduction

Motivation is a foundational concept in both organizational behaviour and educational psychology. It serves as the driving force behind individuals' actions, aspirations, and levels of engagement with their responsibilities. Within the context of higher education, particularly among academic staff, motivation is regarded as a critical determinant of job performance, commitment, job satisfaction, and overall institutional success. The vitality of universities heavily depends on the enthusiasm and commitment of their teaching and research staff. As such, understanding the nature, significance, and management of motivation in academic settings is both timely and necessary.

In the context of university academic staff, motivation encompasses the internal and external factors that influence their level of commitment to teaching, research, student mentorship, and institutional responsibilities. Motivated staff are more likely to demonstrate creativity, resilience, and effectiveness in executing their academic duties. Motivation plays a pivotal role in the effectiveness and sustainability of academic institutions. Motivated academic staff are more productive, innovative, and committed to delivering high-quality education and producing meaningful research. When staff are adequately motivated, they may likely align their personal goals with the institutional objectives, resulting in a harmonious and productive academic environment. Furthermore, motivation enhances job performance and it reduces staff and absenteeism from work. University education requires consistency and dedication, and when academic staff are demotivated, their disengagement can negatively affect student learning outcomes and institutional reputation. Motivated academic staff also serve as role models to students, inspiring them to pursue academic excellence and develop a positive attitude towards learning and research. Additionally, motivation among university lecturers influences their willingness to engage in continuous professional development. Academic staff who feel valued and supported may likely inclined to participate in workshops, attend conferences, and pursue further studies, which ultimately benefits the university's academic quality and ranking. The repercussions of poor motivation among academic staff in universities can be far-reaching and detrimental. Lack of motivation may likely lead to decrease in job satisfaction, low morale, and increased burnout. Demotivated staff may exhibit minimal commitment to their teaching responsibilities, a delay in grading, poor



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attendance at lectures, and lack of interest in research and student mentoring. Poor motivation also contributes to brain drain, especially in developing countries, where academic staff migrate to other institutions or countries in search of better remuneration and working conditions. This phenomenon has been described by Eze and Chukwuma (2020) as a critical threat to the development of tertiary education in Africa. In extreme cases, low motivation can result in industrial actions such as strikes, which disrupt academic calendars, delay students' graduation, and tarnish the institution's image. Recognising the adverse effects of poor motivation, numerous strategies have been implemented to enhance academic staff motivation in universities. One of the most common approaches is improving remuneration and providing financial incentives. Salary increments, research grants, performance reward, and housing allowances may seem to a direct impact on staff morale and commitment. Numerous factors may contribute to motivation among academic staff at the university. These factors may include working conditions, though they are not limited to them. Working conditions refer to the environment and circumstances under which employees perform their job responsibilities. This encompasses both the physical and psychological aspects of the workplace, such as infrastructure, tools and resources, workload, interpersonal relations, remuneration, job security, and the policies that influence job performance. Yusuf and Adetunji (2023) posited that working conditions encompass the tangible and intangible elements that affect how comfortable, safe, and effective employees feel in their daily job routines. Therefore, working conditions are critical to employee satisfaction and organisational effectiveness.

The components of working conditions can be categorised into the following dimensions: office space, lighting, ventilation, safety, access to teaching and research facilities, and availability of equipment. Academic staff performance can significantly be influenced by how conducive the physical work environment is for teaching and research. This relates to workplace culture, interpersonal relationships, job autonomy, leadership style, and emotional support. A healthy environment can foster collaboration, reduces stress, and enhances. Financial compensation, such as salaries, allowances, bonuses, and research grants, is central to working conditions. Therefore, fair and regular remuneration can significantly enhance motivation and job commitment among university staff. This pertains to the quantity and nature of work assigned, job permanency, and prospects for career progression. There may be a strong and positive correlation between working conditions and motivation among academic staff. Motivation refers to the inner drive or willingness of employees to exert effort towards achieving organisational goals. When working conditions are favourable, academic staff are more likely to be committed, productive, and satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, conducive working conditions can lead to improved job satisfaction, which in turn boosts intrinsic motivation. In similar vein, poor working conditions such as irregular salary payments, lack of research support, and administrative bottlenecks, diminish morale and increase staff turnover in universities. Chinedu et al. (2023) opined that staff motivation is a by-product of both tangible rewards and intangible workplace experiences. Universities that provide adequate infrastructural support, fair policies, and emotional well-being initiatives create an environment where academic staff are motivated to engage in teaching, research, and community service. In like manner, Adeyemi and Afolabi (2024) assert that recognition, promotion opportunities, and autonomy are components of working conditions that foster a deep sense of motivation among lecturers. Moreover, institutions with enabling work environments seems to record higher levels of innovation, punctuality, and research outputs among staff. Hence, improving the components of working conditions is not merely a matter of compliance or policy, it is central to the academic productivity and global competitiveness of universities.

Statement of the Problem

Motivation is a crucial determinant of productivity, commitment, and job satisfaction among academic staff in public universities. It drives individuals to engage actively in teaching, research, and community service, which are core to institutional effectiveness. However, in many public universities across Delta State, Nigeria, there seems to be growing concerns over low levels of staff motivation. This is evident in declining research output, frequent absenteeism, delayed academic work, and increased cases of industrial disputes. Poor motivation among academic staff often stems from inadequate working conditions, including irregular salary payments, poor office infrastructure, excessive workload, lack of research support, and limited opportunities for professional development. Recent studies shows that conditions not only diminish morale but also lead to frustration, burnout, and reduced institutional performance. Although some individuals strive to maintain their drive through self-discipline, peer collaboration, or seeking external academic engagements, these efforts are often unsustainable in the face of systemic challenges. Working conditions, therefore, play a significant role in either enhancing or undermining motivation. It is imperative to examine how these conditions impact the academic staff



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of public universities in Delta State, with a view to identifying actionable strategies that can foster a more supportive and productive academic environment. Therefore, the problem of the study is to investigate working conditions on the academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. Examine the relationship between the physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State.
2. Investigate the relationship between remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State.
3. Explore the relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between the physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State?
2. What is the relationship between remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State?
3. What is the relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between the physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State.

Methodology

A correlational research design was chosen for this study because it aimed to examine the relationship between working conditions and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State, Nigeria. The area of study for this research were two public universities located within Delta Central Senatorial District, Delta State, Nigeria. The study specifically focused on the academic staff employed in these public universities, who played a critical role in delivering quality education and driving the institutions' academic mission. The population for this study comprised all academic staff members employed in the public universities situated within Delta Central Senatorial District, Delta State. The total population is 958 academic staff across the various faculties and departments of these universities: Delta State University, Abraka – 680 and Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun – 278; making a total of 958 academic staff. The sample of this study consisted of 274 academic staff drawn from the entire population size by Krejcie and Morgan (2006). A statistical table prepared by Krejcie and Morgan indicated that out of a population of about 958, 274 individuals were sampled. At the 95% confidence level, this is sufficient. The instrument used for data collection in this study was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Working Conditions and Academic Staff Motivation Questionnaire (WCASMQ)”. The questionnaire was specifically developed by the researcher to suit the objectives of the study. Questionnaire included 35 questions, and respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement on a four-point Likert scale: 4 for Strongly Agree, 3 for Agree, 2 for Disagree, and 1 for Strongly Disagree. The validity of the instrument was established by an expert in Measurement and Evaluation Department, College of Education, Warri, Delta State. After the specialist reviewed the tools, he made recommendations based on how well they would have worked with the research questions. A reliability test of the instrument was carried out on 50 academic staff outside the study area. A general reliability coefficient of 0.81 was found for the full scale based on the testing of the data acquired from their replies using Cronbach's Alpha for the determination of the reliability coefficient of the instruments of two subscales. The Working Condition Scale (WCS) has a reliability rating of 0.82 and the Motivation Scale (MTS) of 0.79. The questionnaire was administered to 274 academic staff directly by the researchers and the retrieval rate was 100%, meaning that all 274 questionnaires were successfully recovered. In



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order to address the research questions, the study used Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The testing of hypotheses was done using linear regression analysis. All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) because of its robust capabilities to handle massive datasets, guarantee precise computations, and provide transparent statistical findings.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between the physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State?

Table 1: *Pearson Product-Moment Correlation(r) and Coefficient of Determination(r^2) of the relationship between the physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State*

Variables	n	Mean	R	r^2	$r^2\%$	Decision
Physical work environment	274	42.80	0.717	0.514	50.4	Positive relationship
Academic staff motivation		59.26				

Academic staff motivation at public universities in the Delta state is correlated with the physical work environment (r) and the coefficient of determination (r^2), as shown in Table 1.1. There is a substantial positive association between the two variables, as shown by the correlation coefficient (r) of 0.717. This suggests that academic staff are more motivated when there are changes to the physical work environment. The quality of the physical work environment may explain roughly 51.4% of the variance in academic staff motivation, according to the coefficient of determination (r^2) of 0.514. This suggests that the size, lighting, ventilation, and amenities of an academic staff's workplace significantly impact their level of intrinsic motivation.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State?

Table 2: *Pearson Product-Moment Correlation(r) and Coefficient of Determination(r^2) of the relationship between the remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State*

Variables	n	Mean	r	r^2	$r^2\%$	Decision
Remuneration	274	23.23	0.528	0.278	28.0	Positive relationship
Academic staff motivation		59.26				

Table 2 shows the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) between remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta Central Senatorial District. The correlation coefficient (r) of 0.528 indicates a moderate positive relationship between remuneration and academic staff motivation. This implies that improvements in salary, allowances, and other financial incentives tend to enhance the motivation of academic staff. The coefficient of determination (r^2) of 0.278 shows that 28.0% of the variation in academic staff motivation can be explained by remuneration

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State?

Table 3: *Pearson Product-Moment Correlation(r) and Coefficient of Determination(r^2) of the relationship between the institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State*

Variables	n	Mean	R	r^2	$r^2\%$	Decision
Development opportunities	274	45.59	0.703	0.495	29.0	Positive relationship
Academic staff motivation		59.26				

Table 3 presents the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (r) and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) showing the relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State. The correlation coefficient (r) of 0.703 indicates a strong positive relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation. This means that favourable and transparent institutional policies, such as those related to promotion, welfare, and academic development, significantly enhance staff motivation. The coefficient of determination (r^2) of 0.495 shows that 49.5% of the variation in academic staff motivation can be explained by institutional policies.



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Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State.

Table 4: Regression analysis of physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State.

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11785.680	1	11785.680	400.501	.000 ^b
	Residual	11123.528	273	29.427		
	Total	22909.208	274			

		Coefficients ^a				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients		
1	(Constant)	22.799	1.843	Beta	12.370	.000
	Physical work environment	.843	.042	.717	20.013	.000

$R = 0.717$, $p < 0.05$, Significant; a. Dependent Variable: Staff motivation; Predictors: (Constant), Physical work environment

Table 4 presents the regression analysis of the physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State. The result shows a correlation coefficient ($R = 0.717$) with a significance level of $p < 0.05$, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. The analysis reveals that the physical work environment significantly predicts academic staff motivation. The regression coefficient ($B = 0.843$, $t = 20.013$, $p = 0.000$) shows that improvements in the physical work environment—such as better office facilities, lighting, ventilation, and safety—lead to higher staff motivation levels. The F-value of 400.501 further confirms the model's significance. This finding implies that when academic staff work in conducive and well-maintained environments, their morale, satisfaction, and overall motivation to perform effectively increase substantially.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between Remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State.

Table 5: Regression analysis of Remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State.

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6376.731	1	6376.731	145.798	.000 ^b
	Residual	16532.477	273	43.737		
	Total	22909.208	274			

		Coefficients ^a				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients		
1	(Constant)	35.992	1.957	Beta	18.394	.000
	Remuneration	.680	.056	.528	12.075	.000

$R = 0.528$, $p < 0.05$, Significant; a. Dependent Variable: Staff motivation; Predictors: (Constant), Remuneration

Table 5 presents the regression analysis of remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State. The result shows a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.528$, which is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, indicating a moderate positive relationship between remuneration and staff motivation. The F-value of 145.798 confirms that the regression model is significant, meaning remuneration is a reliable predictor of staff motivation. The unstandardised coefficient ($B = 0.680$, $t = 12.075$, $p = 0.000$) implies that for every unit increase in remuneration, such as salary, allowances, bonuses, or other financial incentives, there is a corresponding increase in academic staff motivation. This suggests that when staff



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perceive their remuneration as fair, competitive, and commensurate with their efforts and qualifications, their morale, job satisfaction, and commitment to institutional goals improve. Conversely, inadequate remuneration could lead to demotivation, absenteeism, and reduced productivity among academic staff.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State.

Table 6: Regression analysis of institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State.

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11334.704	1	11334.704	370.169	.000 ^b
	Residual	11574.504	273	30.620		
	Total	22909.208	274			

		Coefficients ^a				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	22.637	1.925		11.762	.000
	Institutional policies	.803	.042	.703	19.240	.000

$R = 0.703, p < 0.05$, Significant; a. Dependent Variable: Staff motivation; Predictors: (Constant), Institutional policies

Table 6 shows the regression analysis of the relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities in Delta State. The result indicates a correlation coefficient of $R = 0.703$, which is significant at $p < 0.05$, suggesting a strong and positive relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation. The F-value of 370.169 also confirms that the regression model is statistically significant. The unstandardised coefficient ($B = 0.803, t = 19.240, p = 0.000$) implies that a unit improvement in institutional policies leads to a significant increase in staff motivation. This means that when universities implement fair, transparent, and supportive policies, such as equitable promotion criteria, consistent reward systems, and participatory decision-making, academic staff tend to be more motivated and committed to their work. Conversely, inconsistent or unfavourable institutional policies may diminish morale and hinder performance.

Discussion of Findings

Physical Work Environment and Academic Staff Motivation

The first finding shows that there is a significant relationship between the physical work environment and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State, suggesting that the quality of the work setting plays a crucial role in influencing how motivated academic staff feel towards their duties. This means that when lecturers work in an environment that is clean, safe, well-ventilated, and adequately equipped with teaching and research facilities, their enthusiasm, job satisfaction, and productivity are significantly enhanced. Conversely, poor lighting, inadequate office spaces, noise, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of teaching resources tend to reduce morale and diminish motivation. This finding aligns with the view of Ahmad et al. (2022), who posited that a conducive physical environment, comprising ergonomic office arrangements, good ventilation, and availability of work tools, has a positive influence on employee commitment and performance. Similarly, El-Sayed et al. (2021) opined that staff motivation increases when their physical surroundings support comfort and efficiency, as such conditions foster a sense of belonging and professional pride. In the same vein,

Remuneration and Academic Staff Motivation

The second finding shows that there is a significant relationship between remuneration and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State, indicating that the level of pay and financial rewards received by lecturers has a direct and meaningful impact on their enthusiasm, commitment, and productivity. Remuneration serves not only as a source of livelihood but also as a symbol of recognition and value for one's professional contribution. When academic staff perceive their pay as fair, competitive, and commensurate with their workload and qualifications, they tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction. Conversely, poor remuneration often leads to frustration, low morale, and reduced commitment to institutional goals. This finding is consistent with the view of Park et al. (2021), who posited that equitable and adequate remuneration enhances employees' sense of worth and motivates them to put forth greater effort in achieving



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organisational objectives. Similarly, Marin-Morales et al. (2022) opined that pay satisfaction is one of the strongest predictors of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as it provides financial stability and reinforces employees' perception of fairness and organisational justice. Carter et al. (2023) also asserted that when employees feel adequately compensated, they are more likely to display positive work attitudes, reduced turnover intentions, and higher job engagement.

Institutional Policies and Academic Staff Motivation

The third finding shows that there is a significant relationship between institutional policies and academic staff motivation in public universities of Delta State indicates that the clarity, fairness, and implementation of university policies play a crucial role in shaping lecturers' morale and job satisfaction. Institutional policies, such as those concerning promotion, remuneration, research support, workload distribution, and staff welfare, provide the framework within which academic staff operate. When these policies are transparent, equitable, and consistently applied, they create a sense of fairness, security, and organisational justice, which in turn enhances motivation and commitment among staff. This finding is consistent with Mehta et al. (2023), who posited that well-formulated and effectively communicated institutional policies serve as motivational tools by aligning organisational objectives with employees' personal and professional goals. They argued that when employees perceive policies as supportive rather than punitive, their engagement and productivity increase. Similarly, Morrison et al. (2022) observed that fair institutional practices and clear administrative procedures foster trust, reduce workplace anxiety, and enhance motivation among university staff. They emphasised that unclear or inconsistently applied policies often lead to frustration and demotivation. In the same vein, Foster et al. (2021) opined that effective institutional governance, backed by transparent and participatory policy frameworks, contributes significantly to academic staff morale, professional fulfilment, and retention.

Conclusion

Specifically, the study established significant relationships between the physical work environment, remuneration, and institutional policies, and academic staff motivation. These factors collectively determine the level of enthusiasm, commitment, and productivity of academic staff. Universities that provide conducive work environments, fair remuneration, and supportive institutional policies tend to have more motivated and effective staff.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following was recommended:

1. University management should ensure that classrooms, offices, laboratories, and other facilities are well-equipped, comfortable, and safe. Proper lighting, ventilation, and access to teaching resources are essential to foster a conducive academic atmosphere that enhances staff motivation.
2. Competitive and regular remuneration should be prioritised to reflect the workload and contributions of academic staff. Government and university councils should review salary structures periodically to align with current economic realities, as fair compensation strongly influences motivation and retention.
3. University management should adopt clear, consistent, and fair policies on promotion, research funding, and welfare. Policies should be communicated effectively to avoid ambiguity and ensure that staff feel valued and fairly treated within the system.

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