

***INFLUENCE OF EXTRINSIC MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS ON JOB SATISFACTION
AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-EAST
NIGERIA***

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Abstract

Academic staff in public universities in South-East Nigeria operates within a challenging institutional environment characterised by inadequate funding, deteriorating infrastructure, limited digital facilities, political interference, policy inconsistency, and the recurrent failure of government to implement agreements reached with academic unions. These persistent challenges have contributed to declining job satisfaction and the increasing migration of qualified lecturers to other countries in search of better employment opportunities and improved working conditions. Against this backdrop, the study examined the influence of the working environment and interpersonal relationships on the job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study was anchored on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population comprised 9,791 academic staff drawn from the ten public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Yamane (1967) sample size determination formula. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation. Multivariate regression analysis was employed to test the influence of the independent variables (working environment and interpersonal relationship) on the dependent variable (job satisfaction). The findings revealed that working environment and interpersonal relationship significantly influence the job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities in South-East Nigeria at the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the findings, the study recommends that University management in South-East Nigeria should improve lecturers' job satisfaction by providing a conducive working environment with adequate facilities and fostering positive interpersonal relationships through teamwork, effective leadership, staff engagement, and participatory decision-making.

Keywords: Extrinsic motivation, Working environment, Interpersonal relationship, Job satisfaction, Academic staff, Public universities

Word count = 269 words

Introduction

In the contemporary higher education landscape, the capacity of public universities to successfully fulfil their core mandates of teaching, research, and community service is largely influenced by the level of commitment and psychological well-being of their academic staff. (Ogunode, 2020). Over the years, scholars have consistently argued that lecturers' job satisfaction goes beyond personal fulfilment; it is a critical institutional resource that influences teaching quality, students' academic outcomes, research productivity, and national development (Okoli, 2019). Within this broader context, motivation has emerged as one of the major factors shaping lecturers' attitudes toward their work, their level of commitment, and their overall job satisfaction (Kathombe et al., 2018).

Kuranchie-Mensah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2021) describe motivation as the force that drives employee behaviour and determines the extent to which individuals are willing to exert effort in achieving organisational goals. In the workplace, motivation plays an important role in enhancing productivity, improving performance, encouraging creativity, and increasing employee retention. Similarly, Josiah et al. (2023) explain that motivation influences an individual's willingness to contribute meaningfully toward both personal and institutional goals. In the university system, a motivated lecturer does more than fulfil assigned duties; such a lecturer actively engages in effective teaching, quality research, mentorship, and other activities that contribute to institutional growth and development.

Motivation also helps lecturers remain resilient despite difficult working conditions and administrative shortcomings. However, when motivation declines, lecturers often become disengaged, seek alternative opportunities, or contribute to the growing problem of brain drain within Nigerian universities (Olofinkua, 2020; Roy-Omonigho, 2023).

Adi et al. (2021) define job satisfaction as the alignment between what employees expect from their jobs and what they actually receive. Kumari et al. (2021) further describe it as a positive emotional response arising from one's work experiences. Among academic staff, job satisfaction may be reflected in the sense of fulfilment derived from successful teaching, meaningful research output, supportive relationships with colleagues, and adequate institutional support. Lecturers who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to demonstrate commitment to their institutions, maintain positive physical and mental well-being, and engage in behaviours that support organisational effectiveness (Kumari et al., 2021). The relationship between motivation and job satisfaction is closely interconnected. Pang and Lu (2018) argue that motivated employees tend to experience higher job satisfaction, while satisfied employees are often more motivated to perform effectively. This relationship can either create a positive cycle of commitment and productivity or a negative cycle of frustration and disengagement.

Although theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-

Factor Theory suggest that employees become satisfied when their needs are adequately met (Filtvedt, 2016), applying these theories within the Nigerian public university system remains challenging. Public universities in Nigeria, whether federal or state-owned, are expected to provide accessible and quality higher education through government funding. However, the welfare of academic staff in these institutions has received inadequate attention over the years (Okolocha et al., 2021). This neglect has contributed to persistent tensions between university authorities and academic staff unions, often resulting in prolonged industrial actions. A notable example was the prolonged eight-month strike in 2022, triggered by persistent issues such as poor funding, inadequate salaries, withheld wages, and unfavourable working conditions. Such developments reflect the growing level of dissatisfaction among lecturers in the Nigerian university system.

Academic staff in public universities within South-East Nigeria face several challenges that distinguish their experiences from workers in many other sectors. Unlike employees in industries such as banking, petroleum, hospitality, and security, sectors that have received greater research attention regarding motivation and job satisfaction (Pondel, 2023; Williams & Matoka, 2023; Poljasevic et al., 2021; Andriani et al., 2023), lecturers in Nigerian public universities operate within an environment characterised by poor funding, deteriorating infrastructure, inadequate digital facilities, political interference, policy inconsistency, and the frequent failure of government to honour

agreements reached with academic unions (Okolocha, 2021). These challenges have intensified the migration of qualified lecturers to other countries, where many now take up jobs outside academia in search of better living and working conditions.

Despite growing concerns about lecturers' welfare, there is still limited understanding of how specific motivational factors influence job satisfaction within this context. For example, salary may have a different meaning for academic staff who sometimes experience months of unpaid wages compared to workers in better-funded sectors. Promotion processes in universities, which are often delayed by bureaucratic procedures and institution-specific requirements, may also affect lecturers differently from employees in corporate organisations. Recognition, though sometimes symbolic in other sectors, may become especially important where financial rewards are inadequate. Similarly, the working environment, including office accommodation, classroom facilities, laboratories, and library resources, has a direct impact on lecturers' ability to effectively discharge their academic responsibilities. In addition, interpersonal relationships among colleagues, departmental leadership, and union dynamics can either alleviate workplace stress or further contribute to job dissatisfaction.

Existing empirical studies also reveal important gaps in the literature. The working environment of employees is equally paramount to their effectiveness in an organisation. While studies in Ghana

and Taiwan demonstrate the positive impact of the working environment on employee job satisfaction (Sabeng & Mensah, 2023; Chen, 2023), research within Nigerian universities remains limited and misaligned. Existing studies focus exclusively on non-academic library staff (Ig-Worlu & Chiekezie, 2023; Anasi, 2020). Consequently, a significant gap exists: there is a critical lack of research specifically investigating the impact of the working environment on the job satisfaction of academic staff within Nigeria's public universities.

Empirical studies have revealed mixed results on the influence of interpersonal relationship on job satisfaction. While some studies reported a positive relationship between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction, others studies reported a negative relationship between the two variables (Abun et al., 2023; Zuhra, 2022; Oyovwe-Tinuoye, 2020). The conflicting findings indicate a need for more comprehensive studies to ascertain the true impact of interpersonal relationship on job satisfaction. Also, studies reviewed were either carried out on staff in other countries, in other sector or on non-academic staff (Ridzuan et al., 2018; Ikonne & Onuoha, 2015). Hence, there is need for studies to ascertain the impact of interpersonal relationship on job satisfaction of academic staff of public universities in Nigeria.

Previous studies conducted on the relationship between extrinsic motivational factors and job satisfaction of employees were done in banking sector, security sector, petroleum sector and in hospitality

sector (Pondel, 2023; Williams & Matoka, 2023; Poljasevic, Dosenovic, & Todorovic, 2021; Andriani et al., 2023). To the best of our knowledge, the influence of extrinsic motivational factors on job satisfaction of academic staff of public university in Nigeria with specific emphasis on south-east geo-political zone has not been empirically established. This study therefore intends to fill the gap by providing empirical evidence on the influence of extrinsic motivational factors on job satisfaction among the academic staff of public universities in south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study specifically sought to determine the extent to which the working environment and interpersonal relationships influence the job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Literature Review

Motivation

Motivation is a fundamental concept in organisational behaviour and human resource management, as it explains the forces that stimulate individuals to act toward the achievement of specific goals. It refers to the internal and external factors that energise, direct, and sustain human behaviour over time. Burns and Alexander (2020) described motivation as the process that provides individuals with reasons for acting in a particular manner, while Certo (2019) viewed it as the provision of incentives that encourage individuals to act in line with desired objectives. Similarly, Okoth and Florah (2019) defined motivation as the driving force that

determines behaviour, purpose, and direction.

From an organisational perspective, motivation is concerned with the processes that influence employees' willingness to exert effort toward organisational goals. Ferris, Hochwarter, and Wright (2019) conceptualised motivation as a set of energetic forces originating both within and outside the individual, which initiate work-related behaviour and determine its direction, intensity, and persistence. In the same vein, Vroom (1964) explained motivation as the "why" of behaviour, emphasising that motivated individuals sustain effort and commitment over prolonged periods, whereas unmotivated individuals quickly lose interest and energy.

Scholars have further examined motivation within workplace settings. Girdwichai and Sriviboon (2020) defined organisational motivation as the cumulative processes that influence employee behaviour and direction within the workplace. Josiah et al. (2023) described motivation as the drive that compels individuals to achieve maximum performance for themselves and their organisations. Likewise, Ogunode et al. (2023) viewed motivation as the force that propels individuals to carry out assigned responsibilities willingly and effectively. Mulyani et al. (2019) also explained employee motivation as the stimulus that encourages employees to perform activities that facilitate the attainment of organisational goals.

Motivation has also been associated with employees' willingness to invest effort in their work. Antomioni (1999) defined

motivation as the degree of effort individuals are willing to exert based on the extent to which they believe their needs will be satisfied. Sabbagha et al. (2018) further described motivation as the energy and driving force employees utilise in accomplishing individual and organisational objectives. Similarly, Hitka et al. (2019) viewed motivation as a psychological process that energises and sustains human activities related to work tasks and organisational responsibilities. Collectively, these definitions indicate that motivation is primarily concerned with the factors that stimulate and sustain human action toward desired outcomes.

Motivation generally derives from two major sources: intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivation originates from internal satisfaction, personal fulfilment, intellectual curiosity, and a sense of accomplishment, whereas extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards such as salary, promotion, recognition, job security, and fringe benefits (Inayatullah & Jehangir, 2012). Employees are more likely to be motivated when they perceive that their efforts will result in desirable and valued outcomes.

For academic staff, motivation may arise from intrinsic factors such as intellectual fulfilment, professional autonomy, passion for knowledge creation, and commitment to student development. Lecturers who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to engage in innovative teaching, impactful research, and meaningful academic mentorship. Conversely, extrinsic motivation among lecturers may stem from adequate remuneration, timely promotion,

job security, recognition, and favourable working conditions. These factors are especially critical within the Nigerian university system, where poor remuneration, inadequate infrastructure, and unfavourable working conditions have contributed to frequent industrial disputes and the migration of skilled academics to foreign countries (Olofinkua, 2020).

In the context of this study, motivation refers to the internal and external forces that stimulate academic staff to exert effort toward the achievement of individual and institutional goals. It encompasses both psychological and material incentives capable of influencing lecturers' attitudes, commitment, and performance within public universities. Ultimately, fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among academic staff is essential for improving job satisfaction, enhancing institutional effectiveness, increasing research output, and reducing the persistent problem of brain drain in Nigerian public universities.

Dimensions of Motivation

Motivation is a multidimensional concept, meaning it is shaped by several interrelated factors that influence an individual's willingness to initiate, sustain, and direct effort toward achieving organisational goals. In the context of academic staff, motivation is not driven by a single factor but by a combination of financial, psychological, social, and institutional conditions. These dimensions are often discussed in both organisational behaviour and educational management literature (Robbins & Judge, 2019; Armstrong, 2021).

1. Financial Motivation (Salary and Allowances)

Financial motivation refers to the monetary rewards employees receive for their work, including salaries, wages, bonuses, and allowances. It is one of the most direct and visible forms of motivation in any organisation. According to Armstrong (2021), financial rewards remain a primary extrinsic motivator because they satisfy basic economic and physiological needs. Similarly, Robbins and Judge (2019) argue that pay serves as a critical reinforcement mechanism that influences employee behaviour and commitment. In the university system, salary plays a central role in motivating academic staff because it determines their standard of living and financial stability. When salaries are fair, competitive, and regularly paid, lecturers are more likely to remain committed and productive. However, irregular payment, inadequate remuneration, and poor welfare packages often weaken motivation and contribute to dissatisfaction (Ogunode, 2020; Okolocha et al., 2021). In Nigeria, financial challenges within public universities have been strongly linked to reduced morale and brain drain among academic staff (Roy-Omonigho, 2023; Olofinkua, 2020).

Equity Theory also supports the importance of financial motivation by explaining that employees compare their input-output ratio with others, and perceived unfairness leads to demotivation (Adams, 1965). Empirical studies have consistently shown that financial rewards significantly influence employee motivation and performance across sectors, including

education (Kumari et al., 2021; Pang & Lu, 2018).

2. Promotion and Career Advancement

Promotion is another key dimension of motivation and refers to upward movement within an organisational hierarchy, usually accompanied by increased responsibility, recognition, and improved remuneration. Promotion serves as both a motivational and developmental tool because it signals progress and achievement (Dessler, 2020; Armstrong, 2021). In academic settings, promotion is closely tied to scholarly output, teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and service contributions. Lecturers are typically motivated when promotion processes are fair, transparent, and based on merit. However, delays, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and perceived favouritism can significantly reduce motivation among academic staff (Garba & Idris, 2021; Okolocha, 2021).

Vroom's Expectancy Theory explains promotion as a valued outcome that motivates employees when they believe their effort will lead to performance and rewards (Vroom, 1964). In universities, the expectation of career advancement encourages lecturers to publish research, attend conferences, and improve teaching quality. Studies have shown that clear promotion pathways enhance employee motivation and retention (Sahibzada & Khawrin, 2023; Garba & Abdullahi, 2019).

3. Recognition and Reward Systems

Recognition refers to the appreciation and acknowledgment employees receive for their efforts, achievements, and contributions. It may be formal (awards, certificates, promotions) or informal

(praise, feedback, appreciation from supervisors). According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), recognition is a powerful non-financial motivator that reinforces positive behaviour and strengthens employee engagement. In universities, recognition is particularly important because academic work is often intellectual, long-term, and not always immediately rewarded financially. Lecturers are motivated when their research, teaching excellence, and community service are acknowledged by their institutions. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory identifies recognition as a strong motivator that enhances job satisfaction and performance (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Self-Determination Theory also explains recognition as a factor that satisfies the psychological need for competence and relatedness, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In many Nigerian universities, however, lack of adequate recognition systems has been reported as a demotivating factor among academic staff (Okolocha, 2021; Roy-Omonigho, 2023). Studies have shown that recognition significantly improves employee motivation, engagement, and productivity across various organisational settings (Eria et al., 2023; Pen, 2024).

4. Working Environment as a Motivational Factor

The working environment is a critical dimension of motivation and includes physical conditions (offices, classrooms, equipment, infrastructure), psychological conditions (stress levels, safety), and organisational support systems. Chandrasekar (2011) notes that a

conducive work environment enhances employee morale, efficiency, and motivation. For academic staff, the working environment directly influences their ability to teach, research, and perform administrative duties effectively. Adequate facilities such as laboratories, libraries, ICT infrastructure, and comfortable offices contribute positively to motivation. Conversely, poor infrastructure, lack of equipment, and unsafe conditions reduce enthusiasm and commitment (Ogunode, 2020; Chen, 2023).

Herzberg's hygiene factors theory classifies working conditions as extrinsic elements that prevent dissatisfaction when adequately provided (Herzberg et al., 1959). Empirical studies have confirmed that a supportive working environment significantly enhances employee motivation and productivity (IG-Worlu & Chiekezie, 2023; Sabeng & Mensah, 2023). In Nigerian public universities, inadequate infrastructure and poor funding have remained major constraints affecting staff motivation (Okolocha et al., 2021).

5. Interpersonal Relationship and Social Motivation

Interpersonal relationships and social motivation refer to the influence of relationships, communication, and social interactions within the workplace on employee motivation. It includes cooperation among colleagues, support from supervisors, teamwork, and organisational culture (Robbins & Judge, 2019). In academic environments, collaboration is essential for research, teaching, supervision, and academic development. Positive relationships among

lecturers foster knowledge sharing, emotional support, and teamwork, all of which enhance motivation (Abun et al., 2023; Ridzuan et al., 2018). When employees feel respected and supported by colleagues and management, their motivation levels tend to increase.

Social Exchange Theory explains that positive workplace relationships create mutual obligations, trust, and commitment between employees and organisations (Blau, 1964). Similarly, Human Relations Theory highlights the importance of social interaction in shaping employee motivation and morale (Mayo, 1933). Poor interpersonal relationships, on the other hand, can lead to conflict, stress, and reduced motivation. Studies have shown that strong interpersonal relationships significantly enhance motivation and job performance in both academic and non-academic settings (Ikonne & Onuoha, 2015; Oyovwe-Tinuoye, 2020).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a central concept in organisational behaviour and human resource management that reflects employees' attitudes and emotional responses toward their jobs. It is generally understood as the extent to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their work experiences, including tasks, responsibilities, and workplace conditions. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences, a definition that remains foundational in the literature. More recent perspectives continue to emphasize job satisfaction as a

multidimensional construct shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic workplace factors (Judge & Klinger, 2008; Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Various scholars have also described job satisfaction in different ways. Obi et al. (2021) defined job satisfaction as employees' emotional state regarding their job, based on the comparison between what they expected and what they actually receive. Similarly, Adi, Agbe, and Odeh (2021) viewed job satisfaction as the degree of alignment between employees' expectations from their job and what they eventually obtain from the employer. Robberts and Hung (2020) described it as a positive feeling about one's job that results from the evaluation of its characteristics, noting that satisfied employees hold positive feelings while dissatisfied ones hold negative feelings. In the same vein, Ibarra and Obi (2020) explained job satisfaction as a feeling that produces either positive or negative effects toward one's roles and responsibilities at work, emphasizing that no single approach can satisfy all workers in an organisation.

Furthermore, Yokomma and Jones (2020) conceptualized job satisfaction as a combination of feelings and beliefs that span mental, emotional, and physical domains. Johny and Pradeep (2020) also described it as a pleasurable emotional state arising from the appraisal of one's job as fulfilling or facilitating personal values. In addition, Hettenesha (2020) viewed job satisfaction as an emotional and psychological state that influences an individual's motivation and effort toward work. Dewi and Harjoyo (2019) defined it

as an attitude of employees reflected in how they evaluate their work based on factors such as working environment, rewards, career development, and other conditions that determine workplace happiness. Nwagwu (2016) further described job satisfaction as the overall positive feelings individuals have toward their jobs.

The various definitions indicate that job satisfaction essentially refers to a positive attitude toward one's job, reflecting the general feelings individuals hold about their work. Consequently, it is associated with emotional stability, high morale, and increased willingness to contribute to organisational goals (Okonkwo, 1997). A satisfied worker therefore operates at both individual and organisational levels of satisfaction, as their personal contentment aligns with institutional objectives (Nwankwo, 2014).

Job satisfaction is also regarded as a key ingredient for achieving recognition, income, promotion, and other rewards that contribute to a sense of fulfilment in the workplace (Kaliski, 2007). Korlo and Akintunde (2016) added that it reflects the extent to which employees' aspirations, desires, and needs are met on the job, and it varies across different dimensions of work experience.

In terms of classification, job satisfaction is often categorized into global job satisfaction and job facet satisfaction. Global job satisfaction refers to employees' overall evaluation and general feeling about their jobs as a whole (Muller & Kim, 2008). It represents the extent to which workers are generally pleased or

dissatisfied with their occupation, taking into account their cumulative work experiences, responsibilities, organisational environment, and personal expectations. Employees who experience high global job satisfaction usually demonstrate positive attitudes toward their work, stronger commitment to organisational goals, and a greater willingness to remain in the organisation (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

On the other hand, job facet satisfaction focuses on employees' feelings toward specific dimensions or components of their jobs, such as salary, promotion opportunities, fringe benefits, supervision, interpersonal relationships, workload, job security, and working conditions (Muller & Kim, 2008). This form of satisfaction recognizes that an employee may be satisfied with certain aspects of the job while being dissatisfied with others. For instance, a lecturer may be satisfied with interpersonal relationships and academic freedom but dissatisfied with salary or inadequate facilities. Therefore, job facet satisfaction provides a more detailed understanding of the particular elements that contribute to or hinder employees' overall job satisfaction (Judge & Klinger, 2008). Both dimensions are important in organisational studies because they help employers identify the specific areas that require improvement in order to enhance employee morale, productivity, and retention (Herzberg et al., 1959).

In educational institutions, job satisfaction among academic staff is particularly important because it influences teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and

institutional development. Satisfied academic staff are more likely to be committed, productive, and innovative, thereby contributing to the achievement of educational goals. Udoka (2018) therefore posited that for the school system to succeed and for the substantial investments in education to yield meaningful returns, academic staff must be satisfied with their jobs.

In summary, job satisfaction is a complex, multidimensional construct that reflects employees' emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses to their work. It is influenced by expectations, workplace conditions, and individual perceptions, and it plays a critical role in determining both employee well-being and organisational effectiveness.

Empirical Review

Anasi (2020) examined the combined effects of perceived work relationship, workload, and physical work environment on job satisfaction among librarians in South-West Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive survey design and adopted a multi-stage sampling technique to select participants. Data were gathered through a self-developed questionnaire, with 102 academic librarians taking part in the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used for data analysis. The results showed a significant linear relationship among work relationship, workload, physical work environment, and job satisfaction. However, workload was not a significant independent predictor of job satisfaction, while work relationship and physical work

environment exerted a significant positive influence on librarians' job satisfaction.

IG-Worlu and Chiekezie (2023) investigated the influence of physical working conditions on the job satisfaction of cataloguers in federal and state university libraries in the South-South zone of Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 109 cataloguers drawn from six federal and six state university libraries in the South-South zone of Nigeria. Stratified and total census sampling techniques were employed in selecting the respondents, consisting of 57 cataloguers from federal universities and 52 cataloguers from state universities. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled Specific Physical Conditions for Cataloguers' Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Findings from the study revealed that physical working conditions within university libraries significantly influenced the job satisfaction of cataloguers. Based on the findings, the study recommended periodic assessment of university library facilities and increased allocation of resources toward infrastructural development in order to improve physical working conditions within the libraries.

Sabeng and Mensah (2023) examined the relationship between job satisfaction and job characteristics among staff in public higher education institutions in Ghana. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. Data were collected from three categories of staff across four public

universities, with a sample size of 452 respondents. Factor analysis and canonical correlation analysis were employed for data analysis. The findings revealed that conducive work environment, social status, recognition, and remuneration were major factors influencing employees' job satisfaction in public higher education institutions in Ghana.

Chen (2023) conducted a study to investigate professors' job satisfaction and the factors influencing satisfaction in Taiwanese academic institutions. The study focused on professors whose responsibilities included teaching, research, service, and academic advising. A questionnaire survey was administered to 117 participants, while interviews were conducted with 50 professors to further examine their perceptions of work and job satisfaction. The study proposed a model comprising four dimensions of professors' responsibilities and the factors influencing their satisfaction. Findings from the study showed that the university work environment and the nature of academic work significantly influenced professors' job satisfaction. The study further revealed that the work environment had a stronger predictive influence on job satisfaction, particularly among senior professors. Consequently, the study recommended that universities should improve work environments, provide adequate facilities and institutional support, introduce flexible regulations, and establish grievance and reward systems that meet the professional needs of academic staff.

The reviewed empirical studies demonstrated that working environment

remains an important determinant of employees' job satisfaction across different institutional settings. However, most of the studies reviewed focused mainly on librarians and academic staff outside the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. In addition, only limited empirical attention has been given to academic staff in public universities within South-East Nigeria. This gap therefore justifies the need for the present study.

Ikonne and Onuoha (2015) investigated factors influencing the job satisfaction of librarians in federal and state university libraries in Southern Nigeria. The study population consisted of 500 librarians drawn from 37 federal and state university libraries in Southern Nigeria. Questionnaire was used for data collection, while descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis. Findings from the study showed that interpersonal relationship at work had a significant relationship with librarians' job satisfaction in federal and state university libraries in Southern Nigeria.

Ridzuan et al. (2018) investigated the factors influencing employees' job satisfaction among lecturers of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Melaka Campus, Alor Gajah, Malaysia. The study adopted the survey research design. Using the Krejcie and Morgan sampling table, a sample size of 181 respondents was selected from a population of 340 lecturers. However, a total of 212 questionnaires were eventually completed and returned by respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Findings from the study revealed that

interpersonal relationship, self-efficacy, and regular payment of salary had significant positive relationships with job satisfaction among lecturers. The study recommended that organisations should pay greater attention to these variables in order to improve staff satisfaction and retention.

Oyovwe-Tinuoye (2020) examined the relationship between interpersonal relations and job satisfaction among librarians in university libraries in Southern Nigeria. The study adopted the ex-post-facto survey research design. The population of the study comprised 841 librarians drawn from federal, state, and private university libraries located in Southern Nigeria. The study employed the total enumeration sampling technique in selecting all the respondents. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection, while descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used for data analysis. Findings revealed that a significant relationship existed between interpersonal relations and job satisfaction among librarians in university libraries in Southern Nigeria. The study further established that interpersonal relations significantly influenced librarians' job satisfaction.

Abun et al. (2023) investigated workplace relationships between employees and employers in Divine Word Colleges in the Ilocos Region, Philippines, and examined their influence on job satisfaction. The study adopted the descriptive correlational research design. Structured questionnaires were used for data collection, while weighted mean and Pearson Product

Moment Correlation were used for data analysis. Findings from the study revealed that workplace relationships had a significant positive relationship with employees' job satisfaction.

The empirical studies reviewed established that interpersonal relationship is an important predictor of employees' job satisfaction across different organisations and institutional settings. The studies consistently revealed that positive workplace relationships contribute significantly to improved job satisfaction among employees. However, most of the reviewed studies concentrated on librarians and lecturers outside public universities in South-East Nigeria. Consequently, there is still limited empirical evidence on the influence of interpersonal relationship on the job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities within the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria. This identified gap necessitated the present study.

To address the identified research gap, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H0₁: working environment has no significant relationship with job satisfaction among academic staff in public universities in South-East Nigeria

H0₂: interpersonal relationship has no significant relationship with job satisfaction among academic staff in public universities in South-East Nigeria

Theoretical Framework

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory is one of the most widely recognised theories of human motivation. The theory was developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943 and explains that human beings possess a

hierarchy of needs that influence their behaviour and motivation. According to the theory, individuals are motivated to satisfy lower-level needs before progressing to higher-level needs. Maslow categorised these needs into five hierarchical levels arranged in ascending order of importance: physiological needs, safety needs, social or belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualisation needs.

At the foundational level are physiological needs, which include basic necessities required for survival such as food, shelter, clothing, salary, and conducive working conditions. Once these needs are reasonably satisfied, individuals seek safety needs, which encompass physical security, job security, fair treatment, and protection from threats or uncertainties within the work environment. The third level consists of social or belongingness needs, which involve the desire for interpersonal relationships, acceptance, affection, teamwork, and social interaction with colleagues and supervisors.

The fourth category comprises esteem needs, which include recognition, respect, status, achievement, autonomy, reputation, and independence. At the apex of the hierarchy is self-actualisation, which represents the desire for self-fulfilment, personal growth, and the realisation of one's full potential (Robbins & Judge, 2020). Maslow argued that once a particular need is substantially satisfied, it ceases to motivate behaviour, and the individual progresses to the next higher level of need.

The relevance of Maslow's theory to this study lies in its explanation of how the

satisfaction of employees' needs influences their level of motivation and job satisfaction. Academic staff in public universities possess diverse needs ranging from adequate remuneration and job security to recognition, professional growth, and self-fulfilment. When these needs are adequately met, lecturers are more likely to experience higher levels of motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction. Conversely, the inability of universities to satisfy these needs may result in dissatisfaction, reduced morale, and poor job performance. Therefore, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how motivational factors such as salary, recognition, promotion, working conditions, and interpersonal relationships influence the job satisfaction of academic staff in Nigerian public universities.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was employed for this study. The study population consisted of all the 9791 lecturers in the ten public universities in the South East Geopolitical zone, Nigeria. These universities are Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State (1884 academic staff), Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra (974 academic staff), University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State (1952 academic staff), Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu State (521 academic staff), Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ebonyi State (738 academic staff), Ebonyi State University, Ebonyi State (486 academic staff), Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo

State (1226 academic staff), Imo State University, Imo State (589 academic staff), Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Abia State (935 academic staff), Abia State University, Abia State (486 academic staff). The justification for using this particular geo-political zone is the geographical proximity of the southeast geo-political zone to the researcher and to allow for ease of access and data collection, ensuring a high response rate and reducing logistical challenges. A simple random sampling technique was adopted for this study, whereby each unit in the population was afforded an equal opportunity for selection. To determine the sample size for this study, the sample size determination formula by Taro Yamane (1967) was used: $n = N/1+N(e)^2$
Where n = sample size
N = population under study
e = Level of significance = 0.05

The total academic staff of public universities in South East is 9791
Therefore, the sample size was obtained as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= N/1+Ne^2 \\ n &= 9791/(1+9791)(0.05)^2 \\ n &= 9791/(9792)(0.0025) \\ n &= 9791/24.48 \\ n &= 399.96 \\ n &\approx 400 \end{aligned}$$

To ensure that there is proportionate representation of the lecturers in the institutions, a simple proportion was used to apportion the total questionnaire in order to determine the number of questionnaire to administer to each university. The distribution is shown in table 3.2 below

Table 1. Sample distribution

	Universities	Population	proportionate sample
1	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State	1884	$1884/9791 \times 400 = 77$
2	Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra	974	$974/9791 \times 400 = 40$
3	University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State	1952	$1952/9791 \times 400 = 80$
4	Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu State	521	$521/9791 \times 400 = 21$
5	Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ebonyi State	738	$738/9791 \times 400 = 30$
6	Ebonyi State University, Ebonyi State	486	$486/9791 \times 400 = 20$
7	Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State	1226	$1226/9791 \times 400 = 50$
8	Imo State University, Imo State	589	$589/9791 \times 400 = 24$
9	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Abia State	935	$935/9791 \times 400 = 38$
10	Abia State University, Abia State	486	$486/9791 \times 400 = 20$
	Total	9791	400

Source: Researchers' computation (2026)

This study utilised a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts to ensure its adequacy, clarity, and relevance to the study objectives. In addition, the reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.80, indicating a high level of internal consistency and confirming the instrument's suitability for the study. Data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the research

questions, while multiple regression analysis was used to test the study hypotheses. All statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents. Out of this number, three hundred and ninety-two (392) copies were successfully retrieved and found suitable for analysis, representing a response rate of 98%. The details of the questionnaire administration and retrieval are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Profiles

S/N	Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Gender of Respondents	Male	213	54.3	54.3
		Female	179	45.7	100.0
		Total	392	100.0	
2	Age of Respondent	20 – 30years	2	0.5	.5
		31 - 40years	14	3.6	4.1
		41 -50years	199	50.8	54.8
		Above 51years	177	45.2	100.0
		Total	392	100.0	
3	Highest Educational qualification	Bachelor's degree	10	2.6	2.6
		Masters' degree	148	37.8	40.3
		Doctorate degree	234	59.7	100.0
		Total	392	100.0	
4	Academic Rank	Graduate Assistant	10	2.6	2.6
		Assistant lecturer	23	5.9	8.4
		Lecturer 2	77	19.6	28.1
		Lecturer 1	111	28.3	56.4
		Senior Lecturer	128	32.7	89.0
		Associate professor	27	6.9	95.9
		Professor	16	4.1	100.0
		Total	392	100.0	
5	Numbers of years in service in the institution	0-5 years.	6	1.5	1.5
		6-10 years	49	12.5	14.0
		11-15years	158	40.3	54.3
		16-20years.	121	30.9	85.2
		21yrs. & above	58	14.8	
		Total	392	100.0	

Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2026).

Respondents' Demographics: Table 2 shows the demographic analysis of 392 respondents reveals a predominantly middle-aged, highly educated, and experienced academic sample. Most

participants are male (54.3%), aged 41–50 years (50.8%) or above 51 years (45.2%), and hold a Doctorate degree (59.7%). In terms of academic rank, the largest groups are Senior Lecturers (32.7%) and Lecturer

1 (28.3%), while Professors (4.1%) and early-career staff are fewer. Correspondingly, the majority have 11–15 years (40.3%) or 16–20 years (30.9%) of service, indicating a mature workforce with substantial institutional experience.

Overall, the typical respondent is an experienced, doctorate-holding, mid-to-senior level academic, with limited representation from younger or early-career faculty.

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics of Working environment

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
22	My physical working environment is conducive for my job	41 (10.5%)	182 (46.4%)	52 (13.3%)	88 (22.4%)	29 (7.4%)	3.30	1.147
23	My office is adequately equipped and furnished	36 (9.2%)	130 (33.2%)	59 (15.1%)	147 (37.5%)	20 (5.1%)	3.04	1.131
24	Infrastructures are properly maintained in my university	76 (18.1%)	156 (39.8%)	26 (6.6%)	109 (27.8%)	30 (7.7%)	3.33	1.266
25	We have good funding and administrative support	0 (0%)	117 (29.8%)	77 (19.6%)	173 (44.1%)	25 (6.4%)	2.73	0.961
26	There is adequate provision of facilities for teaching and learning process and my work environment is safe and secured	16 (4.1%)	123 (31.4%)	25 (6.4%)	198 (50.5%)	30 (7.7%)	2.74	1.106
Overall mean & standard deviation							3.03	1.1222

Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2024).

Table 4.5 revealed that academic staff in public universities in South-East Nigeria had a moderate perception of their working environment, as indicated by the overall

mean score of 3.03 and standard deviation of 1.1222. The findings showed that respondents moderately agreed that their physical work environment was conducive

and that university infrastructures were fairly maintained. However, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the adequacy of office equipment and furnishing, funding and administrative support, as well as the provision of facilities for teaching and learning and workplace safety. In particular, a larger proportion of respondents disagreed that there was

sufficient funding, administrative support, and adequate teaching facilities in their universities. Overall, the result suggests that although some aspects of the working environment were considered satisfactory, significant challenges still exist in critical areas that could affect academic staff job satisfaction and productivity.

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics of Interpersonal relationship

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
27	There is academic collaboration among lecturers in my university	151 (38.5%)	215 (54.8%)	21 (5.4%)	3 (0.8%)	2 (0.5%)	4.30	0.653
28	My relationship with my colleagues is cordial appropriate.	167 (42.6%)	206 (52.6%)	2 (0.5%)	16 (4.1%)	1 (0.3%)	4.33	0.713
29	There is effective and frequent communication among lecturers	120 (30.6%)	208 (53.1%)	39 (9.9%)	21 (5.4%)	4 (1.0%)	4.07	0.842
30	There is close relationship between school management and lecturers in my university	52 (13.3%)	156 (39.8%)	104 (26.5%)	80 (20.4%)	0 (0%)	3.46	0.961
31	Accessibility and co-operation exists among lecturers	209 (53.3%)	166 (42.3%)	13 (3.3%)	2 (0.5%)	2 (0.5%)	4.47	0.639
Overall mean & standard deviation							4.13	0.762

Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2024)

Table 4.6 showed that academic staff in public universities in South-East Nigeria had a positive perception of interpersonal relationship within their institutions, as indicated by the overall mean score of 4.13 and standard deviation of 0.762. The findings revealed that respondents strongly

agreed that there was academic collaboration among lecturers, cordial relationships with colleagues, effective communication, and accessibility and cooperation among academic staff. In particular, accessibility and cooperation among lecturers recorded the highest

mean score of 4.47, indicating a very strong positive perception among respondents. However, respondents expressed relatively lower agreement regarding the closeness of the relationship between school management and lecturers, although the mean score of 3.46 still reflected a moderate positive

perception. Overall, the findings suggest that interpersonal relationships among lecturers in the universities studied were generally cordial, cooperative, and supportive, which may contribute positively to academic staff job satisfaction and institutional effectiveness.

Table 4.7: Descriptive Statistics of Job satisfaction

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev
32	I am satisfied with the working conditions of my institution	0 (0%)	91 (23.2%)	52 (13.3%)	201 (51.3%)	48 (12.2%)	2.47	0.980
33	My work on the present job gives me a sense of accomplishment.	0 (0%)	288 (73.3%)	78 (19.9%)	26 (6.6%)	0 (0%)	3.67	0.596
34	I feel satisfied because of the comfort I am provided at work	0 (0%)	104 (26.5%)	26 (6.6%)	236 (60.2%)	26 (6.6%)	2.53	0.956
35	I am happy to work for my institution because of the pleasant working environment	0 (0%)	182 (46.4%)	26 (6.6%)	155 (39.5%)	29 (7.7%)	2.92	1.073
36	I am satisfied with a healthy balance between work and family life	0 (0%)	244 (62.2%)	52 (13.3%)	96 (24.5%)	0 (0%)	3.38	0.852
Overall mean & standard deviation							2.99	0.892

Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2024).

Table 4.7 revealed that academic staff in public universities in South-East Nigeria had a moderate level of job satisfaction, as indicated by the overall mean score of 2.99 and standard deviation of 0.892. The findings showed that respondents were

particularly satisfied with the sense of accomplishment they derived from their jobs and the balance between work and family life, with mean scores of 3.67 and 3.38 respectively. However, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the working

conditions of their institutions and the level of comfort provided at work, as reflected in the low mean scores of 2.47 and 2.53. Similarly, respondents showed only moderate satisfaction with the pleasantness of their working environment. Overall, the findings suggest that although academic staff derived personal fulfilment and some degree of work-life balance from their jobs, dissatisfaction with institutional working conditions and workplace comfort

negatively affected their overall job satisfaction.

Regression Analysis Results

To establish the relationship between extrinsic motivational factors and job satisfaction, a regression analysis model was estimated. The specific extrinsic motivational factors dimensions considered for the study were working environment and interpersonal relationship, with the results presented in Tables 7 to 9.

Table 7: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.816 ^a	0.665	0.661	1.89096	1.607
a. Predictors: (Constant), WOEN, INTR					
b. Dependent Variable: JOSA					

The regression result shows that when the independent variables: working environment and interpersonal relationship were regressed on job satisfaction, a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.665 was obtained. Given the value of Adjusted R^2 of 0.661 indicates that the

independent variables jointly explain 66.1% of the variation in the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.607 falls within the acceptable range (1.5–2.5), suggesting no significant autocorrelation in the residuals, thereby affirming the model's validity.

Table 8: Job Satisfaction ANOVA^a results

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	2730.455	2	538.091	143.280	.000 ^b
Residual	1370.236	376	3.576		
Total	4110.691	381			

The F-statistic value of 143.280 was significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the independent variables jointly had

a significant relationship with the dependent variable.

Table 9: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.195	0.678	-	4.716	0.000
	WOEN	0.575	0.030	0.612	18.906	0.000
	INTR	0.170	0.032	0.176	5.386	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: JOSA

Source: Researcher's computation

Table 9 demonstrates a positive and statistically significant relationship between job satisfaction and each of the dimensions of the motivational drivers examined. Specifically, job satisfaction exhibited significant associations with working environment ($\beta = 0.575$; $t = 18.906$; $p = 0.000$) and interpersonal relationship ($\beta = 0.170$; $t = 5.386$; $p = 0.000$).

Test of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis one: *There is no significant relationship between the working environment and job satisfaction of academic staff of public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.*

The results presented in Table 9 reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between working environment and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.575$; $t = 18.906$; $p = 0.000$) at the 0.05 significance level. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was rejected. It is therefore concluded that the working environment significantly relates to the job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities within the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant relationship between interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction of academic staff of public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria*

The findings in Table 9 indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.170$; $t = 5.386$; $p = 0.000$) at the 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. It can therefore be concluded that interpersonal relationship significantly relates to the job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Firstly, finding from this study is that the working environment has a positive and significant relationship with the job satisfaction of academic staff of public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This implies that the working environment as a dimension of motivation has a strong influence on the job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities in the south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This finding implies that a healthy working environment can increase academic staff productivity, motivate them to work hard, help them to maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives and positively influence the level of their job satisfaction. This result corroborates with the findings of Chen (2023) who found that university

work environment and the nature of academic job were the two factors that significantly influenced the job satisfaction of staff in Taiwanese academic institutions and that universities can increase the job satisfaction of professors by improving their work environment, equipment, and support; providing more regulatory flexibility; and implementing teacher grievance mechanisms and reward systems that meet the needs of professors. The study is also in consonance with the findings of Sabeng and Mensah (2023) for found that a conducive work environment, social status, recognition, and remuneration informed the job satisfaction of staff in public higher education institutions in Ghana. Similarly, the study agrees with the findings of IG-Worlu and Chiekezie (2023) who found that physical working conditions within university libraries in South-South zone of Nigeria have a direct effect on the job satisfaction of cataloguers in the south, in the same vain, and Anasi (2020) found that there was a significant relationship between work environment and job satisfaction of librarians in South-West, Nigeria. This study's confirmation of a significant positive link between a healthy working environment and job satisfaction among South-East Nigerian public university academics, reinforced by evidence from Taiwan (Chen, 2023), Ghana (Sabeng & Mensah, 2023), and other Nigerian regions (IG-Worlu & Chiekezie, 2023; Anasi, 2020), deducts that physical infrastructure (e.g., equipment, facilities), operational support (e.g., administrative efficiency, resource access), and psychosocial climate (e.g., work-life balance, collegiality) collectively

form a foundational enabler of productivity, motivation, and satisfaction in this context. This suggests that persistent shortcomings in Nigeria's university environments, including inadequate facilities, bureaucratic delays, and unsupportive institutional cultures, directly weaken staff well-being and overall institutional performance. Therefore, there is a need for urgent and comprehensive interventions that address physical infrastructure deficits, improve administrative efficiency, and promote respectful and flexible workplace cultures. Such measures are essential to enhance academic productivity, complement salary and promotion reforms, and sustainably improve the quality of higher education in the region.

Finally, the study found that interpersonal relationship has a positive and significant relationship with job satisfaction of academic staff of public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This means that interpersonal relationship is a strong motivational factor that can influence the level of job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities in the south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The implication of this finding is that good interpersonal relationships in the workplace of academic staff could help employees reduce stress, enhance creativity, lower turnover rates, improve job commitment, improve productivity and positively influence the level of job satisfaction of academic staff in public universities in the south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This findings align with the study of Abun, Jean and Basilio (2023) who found that workplace relationships and job

satisfaction were significantly correlated among the employees and employers of Divine Word Colleges in the Ilocos Region, Philippines, similarly, the finding of this study corroborates with Oyovwe-Tinuoye (2020) who found that significant relationship existed between interpersonal relations and job satisfaction of librarians in the universities in Southern Nigeria. In the same vein, the study is in agreement with Ridzuan, Baharudin, Ismail, Arham, Nazri and Rahman, (2018) who in their research found that there was a significant relationship between interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction among Lecturers of Mara University of Technology, Melaka, Campus of Alor Gajah. Malaysia. Finally, the study agrees with Ikonne and Onuoha (2015) who found that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal relationships at work and job satisfaction of librarians in federal and state universities in southern Nigeria. This study's confirmation of a significant positive link between interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction among South-East Nigerian public university academics strongly aligned with evidence from the Philippines (Abun et al., 2023), Malaysia (Ridzuan et al., 2018), and other Nigerian regions (Oyovwe-Tinuoye, 2020; Ikonne & Onuoha, 2015) suggests that collegiality, mutual respect, and supportive interactions are fundamental non-financial motivators essential for reducing stress, fostering collaboration, enhancing retention, and sustaining productivity. This implies that toxic or fragmented workplace dynamics directly undermine morale and institutional effectiveness, while positive relationships serve as a cost-effective

resilience buffer against systemic challenges like resource constraints. Consequently, proactively cultivating a culture of trust, communication, and conflict resolution through leadership modelling, team-building, and mentorship is a critical strategic imperative—complementing salary, promotion, and environmental reforms—to nurture institutional well-being and academic excellence in Nigerian universities.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of extrinsic motivational factors on Job Satisfaction among Academic Staff in South-East Nigerian Public Universities. The objectives of the study were to: ascertain whether working environment significantly influences job satisfaction among academic staff and examine whether interpersonal relationship significantly influences job satisfaction among academic staff in public universities in South-East Nigeria. The findings revealed that working environment and interpersonal relationship had significant positive influences on the job satisfaction of academic staff.

Recommendations

1. University management in South-East Nigeria should prioritize the improvement of the working environment by providing adequate office accommodation, well-equipped classrooms, functional laboratories, and updated library resources. This will enhance lecturers' comfort, productivity, and overall job satisfaction.

2. Academic institutions should foster positive interpersonal relationships among staff by promoting teamwork, effective departmental leadership, and harmonious union–management relations. This can be achieved through regular staff engagement, conflict resolution mechanisms, and participatory decision-making processes to strengthen job satisfaction.

Implications and Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to the existing literature on motivation and job satisfaction among academic staff in public universities in Nigeria. The core implication of this study is that extrinsic motivational factors such as working environment and interpersonal relationship are critical determinants of lecturers' job satisfaction within Nigerian public universities. The findings suggest that academic staff are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction when they have adequate office accommodation, well-equipped classrooms, functional laboratories, updated library resources, and good interpersonal relationships among colleagues. These conditions enhance lecturers' comfort, productivity, and overall job satisfaction. This underscores the importance of adopting comprehensive motivational strategies that can improve lecturers' morale, commitment, productivity, and retention within the university system.

The study underscores the importance of improving the welfare of academic staff through the provision of a conducive

working environment and the promotion of positive interpersonal relationships within the organisation. A supportive and well-equipped working environment is essential for enhancing lecturers' comfort, efficiency, and overall productivity, thereby reducing job-related stress and dissatisfaction. In addition, fostering healthy interpersonal relationships among colleagues and between staff and management contributes significantly to a positive organisational climate, improved collaboration, and stronger institutional cohesion. Together, these factors serve as important motivational drivers capable of enhancing job satisfaction, commitment, and performance among academic staff in public universities.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature on motivation and job satisfaction by providing empirical evidence from public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, where studies on extrinsic motivational factors of academic staff remain limited. The findings demonstrate that both the working environment and interpersonal relationships significantly influence lecturers' job satisfaction. The study also supports relevant motivational theories by showing that a conducive and well-resourced working environment, alongside positive social interactions within the institution, are critical factors in enhancing job satisfaction among academic staff in Nigerian public universities.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Subsequent studies are encouraged to replicate this research in other geopolitical zones of Nigeria or in other African

countries to determine whether the significant influence of working environment and interpersonal relationship on job satisfaction among academic staff is peculiar to public universities in the South-East geopolitical zone or reflects a broader pattern across higher education

institutions. Comparative studies across different cultural, economic, and institutional contexts would provide deeper insights into the role of contextual factors in shaping the relationship between motivational factors and job satisfaction among academic staff.

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