

**MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS AND WORK ATTITUDES INFLUENCE ACADEMIC
STAFF PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how motivational factors and work attitudes influence academic staff productivity in Nigerian public universities, with a focus on Edo State. Drawing on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Expectancy Theory, the research adopts a phenomenological qualitative design within an interpretivist paradigm. Data were collected through 30 in-depth interviews, two focus group discussions, and document analysis from academic staff across the University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University. Thematic analysis revealed four interrelated themes: (1) structural motivational deficits and professional disengagement; (2) intrinsic commitment amid institutional constraints; (3) work attitudes as mediating mechanisms; and (4) leadership practices and institutional climate as contextual moderators. Findings indicate that while extrinsic deficits such as delayed salaries and promotion delays reduce engagement, intrinsic motivators including autonomy, recognition, and professional growth sustain productivity. Work attitudes—job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and engagement—mediate the relationship between motivation and productivity, while supportive leadership and collegial climate amplify these effects. The study concludes that academic productivity is shaped by the dynamic interaction of structural, psychological, and relational factors, and offers practical recommendations for educational management, including enhancing welfare, fostering intrinsic motivation, promoting positive work attitudes, and strengthening leadership and governance practices. This study contributes to both theory and practice by contextualizing international motivation frameworks within the Nigerian higher education system.

Keywords: Academic Productivity, Motivation, Work Attitudes, Public Universities, Nigeria, Educational Management.

1. INTRODUCTION

The performance of academic staff remains the cornerstone of university effectiveness, institutional reputation, and national development. In Nigeria, public universities occupy a strategic position in producing skilled manpower, generating research-based knowledge, and fostering socio-economic transformation. However, recurring industrial disputes, infrastructural

deficits, limited research funding, promotion delays, and administrative bottlenecks have generated persistent concerns about declining academic productivity and morale (Adebayo & Kolawole, 2022; Omale et al., 2023). These systemic challenges have not only affected research outputs and teaching quality but have also shaped the psychological and professional orientations of academic staff toward their institutions. Understanding the interplay between motivational factors, work attitudes, and productivity within this context is therefore not merely an organizational concern but a national development imperative (Osarenren-Osaghae, 2016)

From a theoretical standpoint, classical and contemporary motivation theories provide a strong analytical lens for examining academic staff productivity. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, although developed in the mid-20th century, remains relevant in explaining how unmet physiological and safety needs—such as delayed salaries, job insecurity, and inadequate working conditions—can suppress higher-order needs like esteem and self-actualization, which are central to scholarly excellence. In the Nigerian public university system, recurrent funding constraints and unstable policy environments have often compromised these foundational needs, limiting staff capacity to pursue research innovation and professional growth (Omodan, 2022). When lower-order needs are chronically threatened, academic staff may redirect energy toward survival concerns rather than intellectual productivity, thereby undermining institutional goals.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory further deepens this analysis by distinguishing between hygiene factors and motivators. Within Nigerian universities, hygiene factors such as remuneration, physical infrastructure, and administrative fairness frequently dominate discourse because their absence generates dissatisfaction (Osarenren-Osaghae, 2016). However, Herzberg argues that the mere presence of hygiene factors does not automatically produce high performance; intrinsic motivators—achievement, recognition, responsibility, and professional growth—are required to drive excellence. In many public universities, limited research grants, bureaucratic promotion procedures, and inadequate recognition structures weaken intrinsic motivation, thereby affecting job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cletus et al., 2023). From an educational management perspective, the failure to strategically integrate both hygiene and motivational elements may explain persistent productivity gaps.

Contemporary frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Expectancy Theory provide additional insight into the psychological processes underlying academic work. SDT posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential psychological needs that foster intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2022). In the academic environment, autonomy in research agenda selection, competence through professional development, and collegial relatedness significantly influence scholarly productivity. Yet, centralized decision-making structures and resource limitations in Nigerian public universities may restrict these psychological needs, diminishing engagement and commitment. Expectancy Theory complements this by suggesting that effort is contingent upon the perceived likelihood that performance will lead to valued rewards. Where academic staff perceive weak links between effort, promotion, and institutional recognition, motivational expectancy declines, affecting productivity outcomes.

Beyond theoretical abstraction, the Nigerian public university system presents a distinctive socio-organizational environment shaped by policy fluctuations, industrial union activism, and funding challenges. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has frequently engaged in industrial action to demand improved welfare and institutional funding, reflecting systemic motivational concerns. These recurrent disruptions have implications not only for academic

calendars but also for staff morale and work attitudes. In such a context, academic productivity cannot be understood solely as an individual trait but must be situated within broader institutional and structural dynamics (Osarenren-Osaghae, 2016). Educational management, therefore, must move beyond administrative oversight to embrace strategic human resource leadership rooted in motivational science.

Furthermore, qualitative exploration is particularly suited to understanding these dynamics because it captures the lived experiences, subjective interpretations, and contextual meanings that quantitative surveys may overlook. Academic staff productivity is shaped not only by measurable incentives but also by perceptions of fairness, belonging, institutional identity, and professional recognition. By centering academic voices within Edo State public universities, this study contributes context-specific insights that enrich both theoretical understanding and managerial practice. It bridges classical motivation theory with contemporary realities of Nigerian higher education, providing a nuanced understanding of how motivational structures and work attitudes interact to shape productivity.

In sum, the persistent productivity challenges within Nigerian public universities demand theoretically grounded and contextually informed investigation. By integrating Maslow's hierarchy, Herzberg's two-factor model, Self-Determination Theory, and Expectancy Theory within the lived realities of Edo State universities, this study advances scholarly discourse and offers practical guidance for educational management reform. Understanding how motivation and work attitudes converge to influence productivity is essential for repositioning Nigerian public universities toward global competitiveness and sustainable academic excellence.

Research Questions

The following research questions were performed in the study:

- 1) What motivational factors do academic staff in public universities in Edo State identify as influencing their productivity?
- 2) How do academic staff describe their work attitudes toward teaching, research, and institutional engagement?
- 3) In what ways does motivational factors shape work attitudes?
- 4) How do work attitudes influence academic staff productivity?
- 5) What educational management strategies can enhance motivation, work attitudes, and productivity?

Hypotheses

While qualitative research does not typically test formal hypotheses, this study was guided by the following propositions:

- **Proposition 1:** Academic staff with lived experiences of unmet basic needs (e.g., fair salary, working conditions) will also report lower motivation.
- **Proposition 2:** Positive work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) will be associated with narratives of higher productivity.
- **Proposition 3:** Supportive management practices aligned with motivational theories will be positively described in relation to staff productivity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic staff productivity in higher education institutions is commonly operationalised through

measurable outputs such as research publications, teaching effectiveness, postgraduate supervision, grant acquisition, community engagement, and administrative contributions (Ibrahim, 2025; Omale et al., 2023). However, in developing contexts such as Nigeria, productivity cannot be understood solely as an individual attribute. Rather, it reflects the interaction between individual capabilities and institutional conditions. Maslow's theory posits that human motivation progresses through hierarchical levels—physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization. In academic environments, self-actualization corresponds to intellectual fulfillment, research innovation, and professional recognition. However, critics argue that the hierarchical progression may not operate uniformly across socio-economic contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2022).

In Nigerian public universities, recurrent salary delays, limited research funding, and infrastructural challenges frequently undermine physiological and safety needs. Under such conditions, academic staff may struggle to pursue higher-order aspirations such as scholarly excellence. Rather than viewing Maslow's model as strictly linear, this study adopts a dynamic interpretation, recognizing that unmet lower-level needs may cyclically destabilize higher motivational states. Thus, productivity is constrained when foundational conditions remain unstable.

Herzberg's distinction between hygiene factors and motivators remains particularly salient in higher education settings. Hygiene factors—salary, working conditions, institutional policies—prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily stimulate high performance. Motivators—recognition, responsibility, advancement, achievement—drive satisfaction and enhanced productivity. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a more nuanced explanation of sustained academic productivity. SDT posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness constitute fundamental psychological needs that foster intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2022). Within higher education:

- Autonomy relates to freedom in curriculum design, research direction, and academic expression.
- Competence reflects access to research funding, mentorship, and professional development.
- Relatedness denotes collegial support, institutional belonging, and collaborative culture.

When institutional structures support these needs, academic engagement and productivity increase. Conversely, excessive bureaucratic control, limited professional growth opportunities, and weak collegial networks undermine intrinsic motivation. SDT therefore provides a robust explanatory framework for understanding why some academics remain productive despite systemic challenges, while others disengage.

Expectancy Theory asserts that motivation depends on perceived linkages between effort, performance, and reward. If academic staff believe that increased effort will not result in promotion, recognition, or material reward, motivation diminishes. In contexts where promotion systems are perceived as opaque or delayed, expectancy beliefs weaken, leading to reduced productivity. This framework is particularly useful in explaining rational disengagement behaviors observed in Nigerian universities. Work attitudes—specifically job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work engagement—have been identified as mediating variables between motivation and performance (Omale et al., 2023). Rather than conceptualizing productivity as a direct outcome of motivation, contemporary models suggest a mediated pathway:

Motivational Factors → Work Attitudes → Productivity Outcomes

This mediated framework aligns with organizational psychology literature and provides a theoretically coherent structure for analyzing qualitative narratives. Academic staff who report supportive leadership and recognition often describe heightened satisfaction and engagement, which subsequently translate into improved teaching and research output. Empirical evidence from Nigerian universities supports this differentiation. Musa (2024) reports that non-financial motivational factors significantly predict academic staff performance, while Cletus et al. (2023) highlight that inadequate welfare provisions generate dissatisfaction without guaranteeing improved engagement when addressed superficially. However, Herzberg's binary classification has been critiqued for oversimplification. Contemporary perspectives suggest that hygiene and motivators interact dynamically, particularly in resource-constrained environments. In Nigerian universities, persistent hygiene deficits may weaken the potency of intrinsic motivators, while strong intrinsic commitment may temporarily compensate for structural deficiencies.

Recent scholars within Nigerian universities indicates that productivity is significantly shaped by structural realities, including funding instability, infrastructural deficits, industrial relations climate, and leadership effectiveness (Cletus et al., 2023). These systemic constraints influence not only material resources available to academics but also psychological engagement and organizational commitment. Consequently, productivity in public universities should be conceptualized within a socio-organizational framework that integrates motivational theory with institutional governance dynamics.

Some studies in Nigerian universities show that motivation significantly impacts academic staff performance. Omale et al. (2023) found that poor working conditions and limited support negatively affect morale and productivity. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2025) reported that management motivation enhances performance outcomes across higher educational settings in Nigeria. Additionally, Musa (2024) highlighted the role of non-financial motivators — such as professional development and work environment quality — in boosting staff performance. These studies affirm that motivation extends beyond financial incentives to include recognition, autonomy, institutional support, and fair treatment within organizational processes. However, there remains limited qualitative evidence directly examining how academic staff interpret and link these factors to their productivity behaviors — particularly in Edo State. This research therefore addresses this qualitative gap from an educational management lens.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design and Epistemological Orientation

This study employed a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretivist epistemological framework. Interpretivism assumes that social reality is constructed through human interaction and meaning-making, and therefore emphasizes understanding lived experiences rather than measuring objective variables (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Given that motivation, work attitudes, and productivity are psychologically and socially mediated constructs, an interpretive qualitative approach was considered most appropriate for examining how academic staff experience and interpret these phenomena within Nigerian public universities. A phenomenological orientation guided the study. Phenomenology seeks to uncover the essence of participants' lived experiences by exploring how individuals construct meaning around shared phenomena. In this context, the study aimed to understand how academic staff perceive institutional motivational practices, how these perceptions shape their work attitudes, and how such attitudes influence their engagement

with teaching, research, and institutional responsibilities. The methodological approach aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Expectancy Theory. These frameworks emphasize subjective perceptions of need satisfaction, recognition, autonomy, and reward expectancy—constructs that require interpretive inquiry for meaningful exploration.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in two public universities in Edo State, Nigeria: University of Benin, Benin city and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. These institutions represent federal and state university governance structures within the Nigerian higher education system. Both operate within a broader national context characterized by centralized funding systems, unionized academic staff structures, promotion hierarchies regulated by national commissions, and periodic industrial disputes. The selection of these institutions provided a contextually rich environment for examining the interaction between institutional structures, motivational practices, and academic productivity.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

Participants were full-time academic staff members across diverse faculties and academic ranks, including assistant lecturers, lecturers, senior lecturers, readers, and professors. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to ensure that participants possessed direct experience with institutional motivational structures and productivity expectations. Inclusion criteria required that participants:

1. Have a minimum of three years of full-time academic service;
2. Be actively engaged in teaching and research;
3. Have undergone at least one formal appraisal or promotion process.

A total of 40 academic staff members participated in the study:

- 30 individual semi-structured interviews
- 2 focus group discussions comprising 5 participants each

Sampling continued until thematic saturation was achieved—that is, when no substantively new insights emerged during data collection.

Data Collection Procedures

Semi-Structured Interviews: In-depth semi-structured interviews constituted the primary data source. An interview guide was developed based on the study's conceptual framework and included open-ended questions addressing:

- Experiences with institutional motivation practices;
- Perceptions of remuneration, promotion systems, and research support;
- Experiences of autonomy, professional growth, and collegial relationships;
- Attitudes toward teaching, research productivity, and institutional engagement;
- Perceived relationships between motivational structures and productivity.

Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and were conducted in private academic offices to ensure confidentiality. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' informed consent and transcribed verbatim.

Focus Group Discussions: Two focus group discussions were conducted to capture shared institutional narratives and collective reflections on motivational climates and leadership practices. Focus groups enabled interactive dialogue, revealing areas of convergence and divergence in perceptions of institutional management. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes and

followed a structured facilitation protocol to ensure balanced participation.

Document and Data Analysis

Institutional documents—including promotion guidelines, staff appraisal policies, and welfare provisions—were reviewed to contextualize participant narratives and triangulate findings. Document analysis allowed comparison between formal policy frameworks and lived experiences of implementation. Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2021) systematic approach. The process involved:

1. Immersion in the data through repeated reading of transcripts;
2. Generation of initial codes capturing meaningful units of text;
3. Collation of codes into candidate themes;
4. Review and refinement of themes for internal coherence and external distinction;
5. Development of thematic narratives integrated with theoretical frameworks.

Transcripts were managed using NVivo software to facilitate systematic coding and retrieval. Analysis proceeded through three analytic phases:

- **Descriptive coding**, identifying recurring patterns (e.g., salary dissatisfaction, recognition, autonomy);
- **Interpretive coding**, linking emergent categories to theoretical constructs (e.g., hygiene factors, psychological need satisfaction);
- **Integrative analysis**, situating themes within the broader motivation–attitude–productivity framework.

The analysis remained iterative and abductive, allowing empirical insights to both confirm and extend theoretical propositions.

Trustworthiness and Quality Assurance

To ensure methodological rigor, the study adhered to established qualitative quality criteria.

Credibility: Credibility was enhanced through triangulation across interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Member checking was conducted by sharing thematic summaries with selected participants to verify interpretive accuracy.

Transferability: Thick contextual description of institutional structures, governance systems, and motivational practices was provided to enable analytical transferability to comparable public university contexts.

Dependability: An audit trail documenting methodological decisions, coding frameworks, and analytic memos was maintained to ensure procedural transparency.

Confirmability: Reflexive journaling was used to acknowledge and bracket researcher assumptions, particularly given familiarity with the Nigerian higher education system. Peer debriefing with independent qualitative researchers further strengthened analytic neutrality.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics committee prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality protections, and their right to withdraw without consequence. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants, and identifying institutional references were anonymized in reporting. Audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored and accessible only to the research team.

Methodological Contribution

This study contributes methodologically to higher education research in three key ways:

- It advances theory-driven qualitative inquiry within Nigerian public universities, moving beyond predominantly quantitative correlational studies.
- It integrates classical and contemporary motivational theories within an interpretivist framework to explore productivity as a socially constructed phenomenon.
- It foregrounds academic staff voices in understanding institutional management practices, thereby enriching educational management scholarship with contextually grounded insights.

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4. RESULTS

The analysis generated four overarching themes that explain how motivational factors and work attitudes influence academic staff productivity in public universities in Edo State:

1. Structural Motivational Deficits and Professional Disengagement
2. Intrinsic Commitment Amid Institutional Constraints
3. Work Attitudes as Mediating Mechanisms
4. Leadership Practices and Institutional Climate as Contextual Moderators

These themes reflect the interaction between extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors, work attitudes, and productivity outcomes, consistent with the study's conceptual framework.

Theme 1: Structural Motivational Deficits and Professional Disengagement

Participants consistently identified structural challenges—particularly remuneration concerns, delayed promotions, inadequate research funding, and infrastructural deficits—as major constraints on motivation. While salary dissatisfaction was frequently mentioned, participants emphasized that unpredictability and delay in payment were more demoralizing than absolute income levels. Several participants described these experiences as psychologically destabilizing:

“It is difficult to focus on research when you are unsure about financial stability. It affects your concentration and long-term planning.” (Senior Lecturer, Participant 7)

These narratives align with Maslow's lower-order needs framework, suggesting that instability in physiological and safety needs constrains higher-order engagement. However, participants did not present these needs hierarchically; rather, they described a cyclical relationship between financial insecurity and diminished professional aspiration.

Similarly, concerns about promotion delays weakened perceived effort–reward linkage. Participants expressed frustration at opaque promotion procedures:

“You work hard, publish papers, but promotion takes years. It makes you question whether the effort is worth it.” (Lecturer I, Participant 14)

These accounts strongly reflect Expectancy Theory dynamics. When perceived instrumentality (effort leading to reward) is weakened, motivation declines. Several participants admitted consciously reducing discretionary effort in research and committee work due to perceived inequities. Importantly, structural deficits were not described merely as administrative inconveniences but as factors that shaped work attitudes—particularly job dissatisfaction and reduced institutional attachment.

Theme 2: Intrinsic Commitment amid Institutional Constraints

Despite systemic challenges, many participants expressed strong intrinsic motivation rooted in professional identity, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to student development. Participants frequently described teaching as a calling:

“Even when conditions are not ideal, I still enjoy teaching. Seeing students succeed gives me

satisfaction.” (Professor, Participant 3)

This intrinsic orientation aligns with Self-Determination Theory’s concept of autonomous motivation. For several academics, intellectual autonomy and personal mastery compensated partially for institutional deficits. However, intrinsic motivation was not limitless. Participants emphasized that sustained neglect by management gradually erodes intrinsic commitment:

“Passion alone cannot sustain productivity if the environment continues to discourage effort.” (Reader, Participant 22)

This finding suggests that intrinsic motivation may buffer structural deficiencies temporarily, but long-term productivity requires supportive institutional conditions.

Theme 3: Work Attitudes as Mediating Mechanisms

Work attitudes—particularly job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and engagement—emerged as central mediating constructs between motivation and productivity. Participants who described positive relationships with departmental leadership and collegial support reported stronger job satisfaction and higher research output. Conversely, those experiencing perceived unfairness or neglect expressed withdrawal behaviors.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was closely tied to recognition and professional respect rather than financial reward alone:

“When my work is acknowledged, even informally, I feel encouraged to do more.” (Lecturer II, Participant 11)

Recognition appeared to function as a Herzberg-type motivator, directly enhancing satisfaction and productivity.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment varied across participants. Those who perceived alignment between personal values and institutional mission expressed higher institutional loyalty.

“If management shows concern for staff welfare, you feel a sense of belonging.” (Senior Lecturer, Participant 19)

In contrast, perceived managerial indifference weakened commitment, leading to emotional detachment from institutional goals.

Work Engagement

Engagement manifested in discretionary effort—voluntary supervision, collaborative research, curriculum innovation. Participants with higher engagement levels described productivity as self-driven, whereas disengaged participants limited effort strictly to mandatory duties. These findings reinforce the mediated pathway proposed in the conceptual framework:

Motivational Factors → Work Attitudes → Productivity

Theme 4: Leadership Practices and Institutional Climate as Moderating Conditions

Leadership practices and institutional culture significantly shaped motivational experiences. Supportive department heads who facilitated conference attendance, provided mentoring, and advocated for staff welfare were perceived as enhancing motivation and engagement.

“My Head of Department encourages publication and helps us secure research opportunities. It makes a difference.” (Assistant Lecturer, Participant 5)

In contrast, bureaucratic rigidity and centralized decision-making structures were associated with reduced autonomy, thereby undermining intrinsic motivation. Institutional climate also moderated productivity behaviors. Participants in departments characterized by collaboration and collegiality

reported higher research output compared to those in fragmented environments. This theme suggests that motivational dynamics are not solely individual-level phenomena but are embedded within relational and structural contexts.

Synthesis and Summary of Findings

Across themes, three core patterns emerged:

1. Extrinsic deficits generate dissatisfaction but do not entirely extinguish intrinsic commitment.
2. Intrinsic motivation enhances productivity but requires supportive institutional reinforcement.
3. Work attitudes function as psychological conduits translating motivational experiences into productivity outcomes.

The data demonstrate that productivity is neither purely structurally determined nor solely internally driven. Rather, it emerges from the interaction between institutional conditions, psychological need satisfaction, leadership practices, and individual agency. This presented in the summary and Synthesis in Table 1

Table 1: Summary and Synthesis

Component	Empirical Evidence
Extrinsic Motivators	Salary instability, promotion delays, infrastructure challenges
Intrinsic Motivators	Passion for teaching, intellectual fulfillment, recognition
Work Attitudes	Job satisfaction, commitment, engagement levels
Productivity Outcomes	Research publications, teaching innovation, service participation
Moderators	Leadership support, governance transparency, collegial climate

The findings strongly support the integrated motivation–attitude–productivity model advanced in this study.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study substantiate the relevance of classical and contemporary motivational theories within the Nigerian public university context. Maslow’s framework is evident in narratives describing how unmet basic needs—such as irregular remuneration and inadequate facilities—diminish professional enthusiasm. However, the data suggest that needs are not experienced hierarchically but interactively. Academic staff frequently oscillate between survival concerns and aspirations for professional excellence. Herzberg’s two-factor theory is similarly reinforced. Participants acknowledged that salary adjustments reduce dissatisfaction but do not necessarily inspire exceptional performance. Recognition, career progression, and intellectual autonomy emerged as more powerful drivers of sustained productivity. This finding affirms Herzberg’s distinction between hygiene and motivators, while also highlighting their contextual interdependence.

Self-Determination Theory provides the most comprehensive explanatory lens. Participants consistently linked autonomy in research and teaching, opportunities for skill development, and supportive collegial relationships to increased productivity. These findings underscore the importance of psychological empowerment in academic environments. Educational management strategies that enhance autonomy, competence, and relatedness are likely to yield sustained engagement and higher output. Expectancy Theory further explains how perceived inequities in promotion systems reduce motivational energy. Where academic staff perceive weak alignment

between effort and reward, disengagement becomes a rational response. Transparent performance appraisal mechanisms therefore serve not only administrative purposes but motivational functions.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Academic staff productivity in Nigerian public universities is influenced by a complex interplay of motivational factors, work attitudes, and institutional context. Structural deficits reduce engagement, but intrinsic motivation and supportive leadership can sustain productivity. Work attitudes mediate the relationship between motivation and output, highlighting the importance of psychological and relational mechanisms in educational management. Effective productivity enhancement requires simultaneous attention to material, psychological, and organizational factors. Integrating classical motivation theories (Maslow, Herzberg) with contemporary psychological models (SDT, Expectancy Theory) provides a robust framework for understanding and managing academic staff performance within the Nigerian higher education context.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made on findings

- a) The state government should strengthen extrinsic motivational structures by ensuring timely and predictable salaries, implementing transparent and equitable promotion procedures.
- b) Promoting intrinsic motivation and professional growth by recognizing teaching, research, and service achievements, providing autonomy in research and teaching design and offering systematic professional development and mentorship programs.
- c) Heads of department should foster positive work attitudes by cultivating organizational commitment and engagement through participatory decision-making and encouraging collegial collaboration and peer support networks.
- d) The management team of universities should enhance leadership practices and institutional climate by developing transformational and supportive leadership competencies, promote transparent governance and open communication and Integrate monitoring and feedback mechanisms linked to professional growth.
- e) The government should introduce policy-Level Interventions by ensuring that national and state regulatory bodies should establish minimum welfare standards and research funding allocations and Proactive management of industrial relations to minimize disruptions and maintain productivity continuity.

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