

Motivation and Academic Staff Performance in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria (2020 – 2025)

Michael Eugene Ekpo, Phd ¹, Anietie E. Ekan, Phd ², Stephen P. Udoaka, Phd ³, Catherine Jumoke Olorunda ⁴

¹ Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

² Department of Political Science, Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Nsit Ibom LGA

³ Department of Political Science, Federal College of Education, Ididep, Ibiono Ibom LGA, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

⁴ (M.Sc. in view), Department of Sociology, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria

E-mail: ¹michaeeugene091@gmail.com, ²ayubongekang@gmail.com, ³stephenudoaka79@gmail.com, ⁴olorundajumoke@gmail.com

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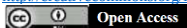
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ABSTRACT

The study was undertaken to examine the manner in which motivation influences the performance of academic staff at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. In this study, two objectives, research questions and research hypotheses were formulated. Descriptive and survey research designs were adopted for the work. The study population consists of 1705 academic staff from the 12 faculties and research institutes. The sample size for the work was 426 respondents selected from 25% of the study population. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the academic staff from the 12 faculties and research institutes in the study area while simple random sampling was adopted in selecting the study samples. The instrument used for the work was Motivation and Academic Staff Performance Questionnaire (MASPQ) developed and administered by the researcher to 426 respondents. Three experts validated the instrument while Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability index of the instrument giving an internal consistency of 0.78. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) were used in testing the hypotheses and answering the research questions respectively. The findings revealed that: Motivational strategies have a significant influence on the reward system (Compensation) for quality services delivery at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt; Motivation has a significant direct influence on career advancement opportunities for academic staff resulting in improved organizational productivity at Rivers State University. The study concluded that academic staff motivation in RSU occurs through staff rewards/compensations, career development and adequate employees' engagement. The study recommended among other things the managers of RSU should give priority to staff welfare like better reward system, staff development through training and re-training for improved performance and provision of a conducive work environment and facilities to increase productivity in the university.

Introduction

The powerful link between employees' performance and motivation, as a force, to propel organizational effectiveness and efficiency cannot be underestimated. Around the globe, motivation has been recognized as a driver of improved productivity in many organizations, affecting how staff engage with the work process and how they contribute their knowledge to the production of goods and services in an organization.

Motivational encouragements for the workforce contribute greatly to a higher quality of human resources and improved performance within organizations. Motivation within organizations is vital and necessary because it can positively change and improve the performance of workers (Okafor & Musa, 2023). Bateman and Snell (1996, cited in Wogwu & Eloke, 2025) argue that motivation is the force that energizes and directs a person's work to the attainment of an objective. As a result, motivation is one of

the most important issues and an effective factor in job performance, and is a necessity for guiding employees towards the attainment of goals.

According to Paaïs and Pattiruhu (2020), and Wogwu and Elope (2025), academic staff motivation plays a crucial role in determining the efficiency of production output in many universities. The commitment, enthusiasm, and perseverance of employees are key drivers of an organization's success. However, in high-pressure work environments such as Rivers State University in Port Harcourt, employee motivation amidst high pressure, tension, and demanding job conditions could lead to role ambiguity, heavy workloads, and poor work-life balance, causing a decline in employee performance.

Additionally, this study identified a gap in implementation of the commendable motivational strategies and programmes for teaching staff at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, such as incentives, training, career development, fringe benefits, promotion of suitable staff, and aimed to close the gap. Motivational factors or programmes like those mentioned above tend to improve job performance, leading to the accomplishment of the overall goal of organizations (Okafor & Musa, 2023; Salahu, Lawal & Mosaudu, 2025; Wogwu & Elope, 2025). Indeed, the expectations of each employee at Rivers State University, alongside their approaches or attitudes to work, also differ from those in other organizations. For clearer understanding and a more comprehensive approach to addressing these expectations as well as the implementation gap, the study of strategies and programmes for motivating employees has inspired this research.

Therefore, the study of the motivational strategies adopted by Rivers State University, Port Harcourt to stimulate their employees toward efficient productivity has become necessary. Indeed, studies conducted by other scholars have shown motivation to be a driving force behind the success of many businesses. Motivation is considered a key determinant of employee performance, playing a significant role in job performance and influencing the behaviours of employees (Okafor & Musa, 2023, Salahu, Lawal & Mosaudu, 2025).

On the other hand, employees' performance can be described as the documented account of employees' behaviours and results within the organization. It encompasses all elements that directly or indirectly affect/relate to the work carried out by employees. Employee performance ultimately shapes organizational effectiveness, so improving employees' performance is a central component of the continuous training and development process within the organization (Salahu et al., 2025).

Furthermore, employee performance is essential to the effectiveness and sustainability of organizations, particularly in higher education institutions, where human capital drives teaching, research, and administrative functions. Universities rely heavily on the commitment, competence, and productivity of academic staff to achieve their institutional objectives.

Nwodin and Chujor (2024) examined the impact of work environment on performance of public sector workers using Rivers State University (RSU). The study's findings indicated that the work environment at Rivers State University significantly affects workforce performance, and that although the institution's authorities provide basic work facilities within their resources, this had a negative effect on workers' job performance.

Salahu, Lawal and Mosaudu (2025) investigate how various motivational factors influence the employees' performance of non-academic staff at Oke-Ogun Polytechnic. The findings show that motivation has a substantial effect on employees' performance at Oke-Ogun Polytechnic, with staff training development and fringe benefits such as salary increments, bonuses, and allowances found to considerably influence employee productivity, particularly for non-academic staff.

Isi and Egwurugwu (2026) examine how staff management strategies, i.e., staff motivation, training and development, and performance appraisal, are applied in two public universities in Rivers State, and how they influence service delivery outcomes. The results indicated that all three strategies — staff motivation, training, and staff appraisal — had statistically significant positive associations with service-delivery performance.

In addition, this study intend to show the extent to which managers of public universities in Nigeria generally, and Rivers State University specifically, manages its academic staff to maximize efficiency and effectiveness for peak performance. This study could also serve as a guide for scholars who may wish to carry out further research in areas related to staff development and performance, by providing relevant literature for consultation and reference.

Statement of the Problem

Many academic staff members at Rivers State University (RSU) have been facing demotivating factors, such as delayed salaries, inadequate career advancement and research funding, and insufficient opportunities for capacity development. These factors negatively impact service effectiveness, research output, and staff morale. Another major problem is policy inconsistency in implementation of motivational policies, and this inconsistency in applying institutional policies often result in declining productivity, as staff express concerns about poor motivation, few promotions, and inadequate institutional support could demotivate staff. This is a significant challenge, as unmotivated academic staff or employees may perform poorly in their core duties of teaching, research, and other public service delivery. To address this issue, there is a need to empirically examine the role of staff motivation in influencing productivity, with the aim of offering evidence-based recommendations for improvement. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how motivation affects academic staff performance at Rivers State University (RSU), Port Harcourt, with the aims to provide remedial measures to cushion the effects on institutional performance.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine impact of motivation on academic staff performance in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate how motivational strategies affect the rewards system (Compensation) for delivering quality services at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.
2. Evaluate how motivation affects career advancement opportunities for teaching staff, with the aim of improving organizational productivity at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What effects do motivational strategies have on the rewards system (Compensation) for delivering quality services at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt?
2. How has motivation affected career advancement opportunities for teaching staff, with the aim of improving organizational productivity at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt?

Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses;

H₀₁: Motivational strategies tend not to influence the rewards system (Compensation) for quality services delivery in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

H₀₂: Motivation does not directly influence career advancement opportunities of teaching

staff for improved organizational productivity in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

2. Review of Literature

Concept of Motivation

The World Bank argued that highly capable staff who are not motivated will not perform effectively. According to AI Mithaq Institute Education Support Services (2026), workplace motivation is the force that energizes, directs, and maintains employee behaviour toward achieving organizational objectives or goals. It is far more complex than simple reward systems; motivation encompasses intrinsic desires, extrinsic rewards, social ties, and chances for personal development. Thus, evaluating motivation systematically allows organizations to identify areas requiring improvement and to track how effective intervention programmes are.

Motivation is an internal state that drives goal-directed behaviour and effective leadership, arising from personal needs, goals, and aspirations. Since it has a strong impact on efficiency, effectiveness, and perseverance, motivation is crucial to the success of any organization (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020).

Ikechukwu, Reginald, Hart, Ezech, Bridget and Peters (2019) observed that motivation is the most significant element for all organizations, whether privately or publicly owned. Motivations are essential to the success of any organization. The term motivation is essentially derived from the word motive (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2012, cited in Ikechukwu et al., 2019). Hence, the meaning of the word motive refers to people's wants, desires, and needs. Employee motivation is the process by which an organization should motivate its employees through bonuses, rewards, and various other incentives, etc., purely for the purpose of achieving organizational objectives. The individual is a complex being. Consequently, every employee in an organization is driven by a different kind of tactic.

As stated by Luthans (1998, cited Ikechukwu, et al., 2019), motivation is the process that energizes, stimulates, sustains, and directs actions and performance. Today, an organization can easily transfer its services, goods, needs, and materials to other countries or to other organizations. Human capital is the only main asset that cannot be easily replaced. Similarly, human resources are the most important or highly economical resources that cannot be replaced for any organization. Motivation is a key element that affects the human capital of any organization. Therefore, for the best performance or for the attainment of organizational goals, the organization should motivate its workers. When it comes to attaining improved performance, motivation serves as the most powerful instrument. Managers note that motivating employees ranks among the essential key instruments for achieving efficient and effective management between the organization and its employees (Ikechukwu, et al., 2019). As Chowdhury (2006, cited in Ikechukwu, et al., 2019) states, motivation is the process of maintaining and directing behaviour toward the directed goals of both the individual and the organization.

Concept of Academic Staff Performance

Academic staff performance in Nigerian Universities is generally shaped by the reward structures, Remuneration, working conditions, institutional competition in term of standard/quality teaching, research and Community services. Hence, Academic staff performance of River State University can be conceptualized according to UNESCO cited by Boakye-Yiadom (2024) as “the sum totality of faculty’s outcomes and behaviour spanning effective teaching/instruction, research such as peer reviewed publications, books chapters, research grant and career progression; community service and institutional citizenship”. Aguinis (as cited in Kamale, 2025) defines performance in term of measurable outcomes within a specific time frame pointing to the importance of results in relative to organizational goals. However, while the outcomes-oriented model could be very useful in measuring tangible achievement

such as publications, book chapters, and completed teaching hours, its risk aspect of performance which are intangible such as mentoring and professional conduct (Kamale, 2025).

Kasimu, Matakhitwen and Emmanuel (2024) quoting from Ofoegbu and Alonge (2016) defined academic staff performance as the ability to teach and learn effectively, with strong foundation in developmental resources and a significant influence on creativity, innovation and community service. It covers all activities of academic staff regarding the execution of assigned tasks or responsibilities such as teaching, researching and community services of an academic staff in RSU measurable within a specific period of time.

Isi and Egwurugwu (2026) contend that effective staff management is vital for enhancing service delivery in higher-education institutions, particularly since universities play a growing role in sustainable development agendas. Universities are increasingly regarded as fundamental pillars for developing national intellectual capacity, encouraging innovation and advancing sustainable societal development (Mafindi, 2024). Their core mission of delivering high-quality teaching, meaningful research and impactful community engagement depends heavily on the effectiveness of service delivery. In this sense, service delivery refers to how efficiently and effectively universities fulfil their roles in education, research and community service (Okafor & Musa, 2023; Mafindi, 2024).

Central to achieving such service delivery is the management of staff, encompassing recruitment methods, training, motivation, appraisal and the general support they receive in their roles. In higher-education settings, the concept of staff management (also referred to as personnel or human-resource management) entails aligning the workforce's capabilities and commitment with the institutional mission (Olaitan, 2025). Evidence from Nigerian higher-education institutions indicates that strong human-resource practices, such as training and staff appraisal, are significantly connected to staff productivity (Okafor & Musa, 2023; Olaitan, 2025). Research supports the importance of these human-resource strategies in higher education. For instance, studies have shown that performance management systems in open-distance learning institutions influence academic staff perceptions of effectiveness and their alignment with institutional goals.

World Bank outlined criteria for effective academic performance of lecturers to include: recruiting qualified/best lecturers, exposing them to useful training and experience, matching lectures skills with students needs; monitoring teaching and learning process, supporting lecturers to improve instructions and motivating lecturers to improve performance (World Bank, 1994, 2012 cited in Ekpo et al., 2025).

Moreover, organizing professional support for university staff has proven to be a complex and ongoing challenge, since university structures, support systems and staff management practices must be continually adjusted to enable effective service delivery.

Kasimu, Matakhitwen and Emmanuel (2024) argue that the success of academic staff of any university depend greatly on the university's outstanding leadership strategies. Despite this awareness, considerable evidence from developing-country contexts indicates that universities still fall short in staff management across many areas, including: irregular training, weak appraisal systems, inadequate motivation and poor alignment between staff efforts and institutional mission (Cletus et al., 2024; Mafindi, 2024). Drawing data from the World Bank report indicating that, poor working environment, obsolete facilities, low morale and inadequate funding of Nigerian Universities including RSU often contribute to massive brain drain in educational sector of the country.

Concept of Reward Systems

According to Armstrong (2012 in Kamale, 2025) reward system is defines as the policies, processes and practices of an organization for satisfying its employees in accordance with their contributions, skills, competency and market worth, and such include monetary and non-monetary compensations/benefits. It is also viewed as a formal and informal mechanisms adopted by organization to acknowledge and compensate workers or employees as a result of their contributions to the overall organizational goal or productivity.

Concept of Career Advancement Opportunities

World Bank (2026) defines career advancement as a philosophical process of continuous learning, internal mobility and structured professional growth link directly to the mission of ending poverty and boosting shared prosperity. World Bank Group (2026) views career development to mean a lifelong process involving managing learning to acquire suitable knowledge or skills, works and the capacity to move towards a personal visualize professional work goal in future. When done right, career or skill development helps to reduce underemployment or unemployment, increase productivity and improve standards of living. Therefore, investing in skills upgrading or skills acquisition programmes for reskilling the people for jobs of future interest contributes to economic growth. In addition, the World Bank sees career or skills development as a factor that is increasingly central to education and labour market transformation driven by global megatrends such as possessing cognitive skills/problem solving techniques like automation, digitalization, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship to mention but a few.

According to United Nations policy report (2025), it include formal career coaching, mentoring, cross training and job shadowing opportunities to help students and others attain personal aspiration in life. Development as defined by the World Bank connotes a multi-dimensional process that is focusing on poverty reduction, economic growth and shared prosperity (World Bank, 2025). The report added that investing in education, health, infrastructure and technology are of utmost important to economic growth and development, job creation and security. Career development therefore entails building the foundation of human capital that drives job creation, shared prosperity and improve societal well-being in the state.

Orijji (2023) asserts that motivational strategies have been categorized as the internalized desires that are most prominent in an individual at a given point, and as such, they are core aspects of university administration. Consequently, without appropriate strategies to motivate academic staff, the university management cannot accomplish anything related to academic staff productivity (Nwodim & Chujor, 2024). In addition, university lecturers join the teaching institution to see their students grow physically, mentally, and emotionally. However, the performance of these lecturers is mostly tied to the performance of their students. Since motivation can improve performance, lecturers are concerned with the motivation of their students.

Career development activities or training programs are, therefore, utilized to improve the performance of staff in terms of accomplishing the duties and responsibilities required of them and also enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary to carry out future jobs effectively, leading to improved organizational performance. Thus, performance appraisal of employees can help an organization identify areas that need improvement, provide employees with the opportunity for learning and development, and motivate them to achieve organizational goals (Menon, 2020, Nwodim & Chujor, 2024, Wogwu & Elope, 2025). Consequently, the appraisal of employee performance varies depending on the type of business, industry, roles, and responsibilities.

According to the World Bank (2021), the concept of performance emphasizes enhancing productivity, accountability, and the ability to align individual performance with organizational or development objectives. The Bank views performance not only from a human resource management perspective but also from the viewpoint of influencing economic growth, especially in public administration and management. World Bank (2021) argued that performance management can improve individual and organizational productivity by directing, motivating, and developing employees to achieve organizational objectives, team goals, and individual objectives.

Motivational strategies are energizers for employees. Some studies have shown that motivational strategies have a significant role in directing and controlling behavior in order to achieve desired results (Wogwu & Elope, 2025). Studies have revealed that motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, plays a very significant role in influencing behavior and setting goals. Udoh and Akpa, 2012 as cited in Oriji, 2023 claimed that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are very significant in the teaching and learning process. Oriji 2023 agreed that the motivation of teachers can take various forms such as providing allowances, bonuses, on-job training, promotions, providing a good working environment, having a high level of relationship with the teachers, and boosting the employees' morale.

Motivation can either be intrinsic or extrinsic; intrinsic motivation emanates from personal interests and enjoyment, and individuals are willing to engage in an activity for its inherent pleasure and satisfaction. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated do not participate in an activity for external rewards. On the contrary, extrinsically motivated individuals engage in an activity because they are compelled to do so by external pressures such as rewards and punishments (World Bank, 2021, Wogwu & Elope, 2025). Teachers in schools motivate learners by giving rewards and punishment; thus, influencing their behavior. In the case of students, rewards can take the form of grades and marks in the examination. Achievement motivation is related to accomplishing the desired result at the end of an activity. It is evident that proper motivation of teachers can have a positive effect on the teaching and learning process in an institution (Wogwu & Elope, 2025).

Motivation and appreciation are very important aspects of effective leadership, and all successful institutions have them. Unfortunately, in Africa, motivation is not achieved due to the lack of adequate funding, infrastructural facilities, and appreciation. In Nigeria, this problem is exacerbated by the absence of regular salary payments and professional development for motivated employees and faulty institutional policies (Mwamba & Uche, 2023). In Nigeria, tertiary institutions such as Rivers State University (RSU) are under constant pressure to provide quality education and research despite the lack of resources. The extent to which motivation influences staff productivity needs to be determined. In this study, a high level of staff motivation was found to have a positive relationship with service delivery; this was consistent with previous studies carried out in Nigerian tertiary institutions and Nigerian public service in general.

Research found that salary, working environment, training, and access to information had a significant effect on staff performance in tertiary institutions. Similarly, Cletus et al., (2024) found that the level of motivation in Nigerian tertiary institutions was low and was influenced by poor remuneration, inadequate infrastructural facilities, and lack of staff participation in decision-making. Previous studies revealed that when appropriate motivational strategies are utilized, staff members are able to play a greater role in improving service delivery.

In addition, the high effect of training/development on staff performance corroborated previous studies. For instance, Osunyikanmi (2024 in Isi and Egwurugwu, 2026) found that training and development of staff in Nigerian universities were poorly implemented, thus affecting their productivity.

Furthermore, studies conducted in the library department at the University in South-South Nigeria revealed that training and development of non-academic staff such as librarians influenced their performance. This study, therefore, sought to establish the relationship between training/career development and service delivery by extending the findings of previous researchers whose focus was on the effect on productivity to also include the effect on institutional service delivery.

Dimensions of Motivational Strategies

Two major dimensions of motivational strategies in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, were covered by this study base on the context:

- i. **Reward System:** This refers to the total amount of rewards one gets in the place of work as a result of the efforts made at the job site. The individual expects to earn a living from his profession or occupation by rendering his services and professional skills at the workplace. Teaching staff members also provide services and are, therefore, entitled to rewards. Rewards can be described as the total amount of earnings, emoluments, salaries, allowances, and other fringe benefits accrued by an employee during his tenure. Remuneration is part of the reward management system comprising of fringe benefits. This is because the reward system is a key element for the survival of any organization. The survival and growth of an organization depend on how well the employees are compensated. Fringe benefits can be described as indirect compensation provided to an employee or a group of employees as part of employment compensation. Bratton and Gold (2009, as cited in Salahu et al., 2025) described them as the portion of the total reward package given to employees in addition to base or performance pay. Fringe benefits are concerned with maintaining and raising employees' standards of living while also providing a level of security and financial protection to employees. Just as the main pay program, the objectives of most compensation programs are to attract, retain, and motivate employees with the required proficiencies and expertise (Salahu, Lawal & Mosaudu, 2025). Mathis and Jackson (2013, as cited in Salahu et al., 2025) further assert that an employer organization with a more appealing benefits package has an advantage over competitors when it comes to attracting and retaining talented employees over those with similar base pay. Adesulu et al (2015) as cited in Wogwu and Elope, (2025) lamented that, alongside the fact that salaries are low and irregular, the welfare package of the teaching and non-teaching staff of the RSU is not appealing and can be described as among the worst in the world.
- ii. **Career Advancement Opportunities:** Training and development are generally regarded as essential human resource interventions in contemporary organizations where they facilitate improved performance of staff and subsequently organizational performance. In Nigeria, the importance of training in relation to staff-job performance has increasingly prompted researchers' attention, especially in the education sector. For instance, Ogunode, Ukozor & Chijioke (2024) examined the effect of staff training on academic job performance in Nigerian tertiary institutions and concluded that staff training has a positive relationship with teaching, research, and community service performance of academic staff in the institutions. In a similar study, Ehwarieme et al., (2024) investigated the training procedure and their effect on staff in Nigerian Universities (Delta State University & Edwin Clark University). The authors

concluded that on-the-job training, seminars, and job rotation, if well planned, have a positive effect on staff performance though the institutions lack the will to provide such training opportunities. Contrary to the previous arguments, Okebiorun (2019) evaluated training and development of non-teaching staff in Nigerian Universities (south-western) and revealed that factors that increase organizational growth include staff training and development. During the course of organizational growth and development, employee training becomes useful in improving performance and boosting productivity, which puts the organization ahead of its rivals. Thus, it is safe to argue that there is a very big difference between organizations that train their staff and those that do not. The review of related literature provides evidence that staff training and development have a great potential in influencing staff performance (Salahu et al., 2025). Onah, and Anikwe (2016 as cited in Salahu et al., 2025) describe staff training as an organized and purposeful effort to bring about the most effective improvement of knowledge, skill, and attitudes of an individual in order to achieve a certain level of proficiency in a given situation or task. In a similar vein, Olaniyan and Ojo (2008 as cited in Salahu et al., 2025) define training as a systematic development of knowledge, skill, and attitude for the purpose of enhancing effectiveness in an organization. A close examination of the above-discussed definitions of training reveals that training is a purposeful endeavor aimed at improving performance in an organization. However, this study goes beyond training to focus on career advancement opportunities that employees can utilize to increase their performance levels. At this juncture, it is important to note that the need for knowledge, skills, or expertise is enormous in almost all organizations. Despite the fact that RSU staff complaint of lack of training and development, it does not entirely mean that there are no provisions for it. However, some staff do not have the time to acquire new skills because of the nature of their work. These observations illustrate the conflicting issues surrounding training and development. Some of the challenges associated with training and development include budget constraints, advancing technology, cross-training, staff rotation, and overburdened personnel. The two factors, desire and ability, determine the extent to which people can perform their tasks efficiently. Initially, a job can be made interesting through expansion, job enrichment, and sharing, but ultimately the desire must come from within. Labour productivity is generally about raising the amount of value added per worker or per hour of work. One of the measures of labour productivity is total factor productivity, popular among many economists, or multifactor productivity (MFP), as it is termed by the Bureau of Labour Statistics; the two terms can be used interchangeably. The most common way of analysing labour productivity growth is by examining the percentage change in MFP. However, it is important to note that the annual percentage change in MFP is often referred to as the residual since it is derived from the percentage changes in hours worked and output per hour.

Approaches to Rivers State University Training Programmes

A training plan is a systematic statement of training intentions together with the means by which they will be achieved and measured. Training is not a random affair; it is a systematic activity in which one stage informs the next in a given order. It is a planned undertaking carried out to accomplish a set objective or solve an existing problem within an organization. There are established procedures that an organization must abide by to achieve its aim.

The following are factors that can influence organizational training needs.

- i. **Administrative Factor:** Every organization has a policy that guides its activities. The policy on training shows whether training should be annual, perennial or every ten years, and the method of training to which employees can be subjected; the personnel manager must examine it thoroughly before taking further action. The organization, whether public or private, has a mission statement or target it seeks to achieve. These objectives determine the kind of skill, knowledge and capacity its employees will possess so that it can attain its objectives; unlike other organizations, RSU critically examines its objective and then defines its training objective.
- ii. **Economic Factor:** The relevance of manpower development in an organization can be related to economic development, conditions or challenges in the country. This is because manpower development is capital intensive, which requires substantial amounts of money and other resources, which captures the true meaning of development in that it is people centred. Moreover, it entails building capacity and harnessing the institution's human resource, which is an indispensable requirement for development. Human resources form the ultimate foundation of a nation's wealth. Capital and natural resources serve as passive factors of production. Human beings are active participants who build up capital, make use of natural resources, establish social, economic, and political organizations, and propel national development forward. Clearly, an institution which cannot cultivate the skills and knowledge of its employees and apply them effectively in production and service delivery for the national economy will not be able to develop anything else. As a result, inadequate funding and the growing poverty rate have been recognized as barriers to the development and training of RSU employees in addressing educational challenges. As a consequence, manpower development is vital for addressing the current poverty problem in Nigeria.
- iii. **Political Factor:** Undoubtedly, many institutions encounter undue political interference that affects the stability of academic institutions as well as motivation. The inability to adequately develop its manpower could be attributed to the socio-economic and political instability present within the system. As mentioned by Ekpo (2023), the dysfunctional use of the nation's human resources among leaders, particularly in the Niger-Delta region, leads to political instability, leading to situations where youths, especially those from poor family backgrounds, out of frustration, take part in crimes and other social vices, and are likewise manipulated by politicians as tools for interrupting the political democratic system through rigging, thuggery, and ethnic conflicts. These factors, including rigging, thuggery, economic mismanagement, personal ambition, selfishness, and others, affect the production of goods and the provision of services in the university and the entire state (Ekpo, Frank, Umo-Udo & Utok, 2024). Therefore, manpower and student training could help youths in self-development and improve the quality of their political participation in the decision-making process in the state. The need or importance of training in any organization cannot be stressed enough. There is growing economic evidence that investments in training are related to long-term profitability in an organization. In other words, any organization desiring a competitive advantage over others must undergo training. In our ever-changing environment, an organization's relevance largely rests on its ability to engage in training. It provides the opportunity for an organization to keep abreast with current events and methods.

Mullins, (2007, Salahu et al., 2025) further argues that training can bring the following benefits. Increase the confidence, motivation, and commitment of workers; offer recognition, boost responsibility, and the prospect of higher pay and promotion; give the trainee a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement, and widen the opportunities for career progression, and support the availability and quality of staff.

In connection with the above, Salahu, Lawal and Mosaudu (2025) list functions of training to include: greater productivity; better quality of work; improved skills, knowledge, and understanding, among others. They further stated that training improves the use of tools and machines; lessens waste, accidents, turnover, lateness, and absenteeism and guarantees higher job performance; and strengthens the implementation of new policies and regulations.

Salahu et al. (2025) brought out the benefits of motivation on employees' performance to include: greater job satisfaction among employees; increased self-confidence and improved morale of the employees; better efficiencies in processes, leading to financial gain; greater capacity to adopt new technologies and methods; more innovation in strategies and products; lesser employee turnover; an improved company image, for example, conducting ethics training; risk management, for instance, training about sexual harassment, diversity training; offer recognition, greater responsibility, and the prospect of higher pay and promotion; and help to improve the availability and quality of staff.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Goal-Setting Theory as a theoretical framework of analysis for this study.

Goal-Setting Theory

Edwin A. Locke, an American Psychologist, initially developed the theory and it was formally published in a paper entitled "Toward a Theory of Task motivation and Incentives" in 1968. Edwin Locke and Gary Latham further developed the theory and officially launched it in a book titled "A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance" in 1990 (Locke & Latham, 1990, as cited in Ekpo, 2023). The theory posits that having specific and difficult goals coupled with appropriate feedback leads to a greater degree of task performance and motivation than having vague goals, such as "do your best." For the study on motivation and performance of academic staff at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, the theory is considered the most appropriate and adopted theoretical framework for the study. The theory is relevant to the current study since it is among the widely used theories for analyzing educational and organizational psychology across the globe today. It may be used as a basis for performance appraisal in higher institutions of learning. According to the theory, having clearly stated goals, appropriate performance metrics, and feedback enhances staff performance and organizational effectiveness (Ekpo, Ekang & Umo-udo, 2025). Applying the theory to the current study shows how effective appraisal of staff in universities leads to their responsibility in attuning their tasks to the needs of the organization; in addition, it helps in directing their personal development toward career growth and physical health, and influences their behaviors to meet the expectations of the university in terms of organizational goals and subsequently improve service delivery.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the theories are appropriate for exploring methods of managing academic staff to increase productivity as well as the effect of training on staff productivity at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The theories adopted in the current study demonstrate that the inputs that determine employees' performance are influenced and determined by academic staff performance; in other words, it is the output that influences the input. It is evident that one of the reasons for managing and motivating academic staff is to increase productivity in universities, and specifically,

Rivers State University must respond to innovations, changes, and developments in technology and other areas of work.

However, these changes, innovations, and demands for technological developments are what the boards of university managements approve, and it is these managers who make decisions at all levels, be it in a department, faculty, or the entire Rivers State University. One of the aspects of this theory is organizational effectiveness and organizational survival. The practice of managing academic staff to increase organizational productivity is aimed at improving their performance, making them effective and efficient, and for this reason, academic staff training is very important. Nevertheless, if academic staff are motivated, as has been observed in the long run, it will lead to increased productivity and job satisfaction. In addition, as they become more productive, the organization will also begin to maximize more profit. Therefore, with regard to service-rendering organizations such as Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, there will be improved service delivery to the students, staff, and management of the institution.

Empirical Studies

Isi and Egwurugwu (2026) evaluated the management strategies for staff, including staff motivation, training and development, and performance appraisal, among the staff of two Rivers State public universities. The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population of the study comprised Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University staff while a sample of 400 respondents was selected purposively. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled the Staff Management Strategies and Service Delivery Questionnaire (SMSSDQ) and analysed using the mean, standard deviation, and z-test statistics. The results showed that all the examined strategies, including staff motivation, training and development, and performance appraisal, have a positive effect on the service delivery performance of the sampled institutions. The study suggests that universities should implement inclusive management strategies to enhance service delivery and promote sustainable development. The study's findings contribute to addressing the need for effective staff-management strategies and improved service delivery practices in the sampled universities and similar other institutions.

Salahu, Lawal and Mosaudu (2025) looked the effects of motivational factors on the performance of non-academic staff in the polytechnic. The study adopted a sequential exploratory mixed-method approach consisting of a quantitative and a qualitative phase. In the quantitative phase, the researchers collected and analysed data from a large sample of the target population using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) while the qualitative phase entailed exploring the views of a smaller sample of the target population through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. The results of the study revealed that motivational factors significantly influenced the employees' performance. For instance, staff training development and fringe benefits (salary increment, bonus, and allowances) had a substantial effect on the performance of the non-academic employees in Oke-Ogun Polytechnic. Nonetheless, the study also identified key motivational issues, such as absence of career advancement, delays in promotions, and lack of feedback, that negatively affected the performance of the non-academic staff in the sampled institution. As such, the researchers recommended that the management of Oke-Ogun Polytechnic should consider regular performance appraisal to motivate the staff to enhance performance.

Wogwu and Elope (2025) examined the effect of job demands on the motivation of employees in manufacturing companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the unique challenges of the manufacturing industry in Port Harcourt and help the

industry's managers develop strategies to motivate their employees. The researchers adopted a cross-sectional survey design, using a census sampling procedure to select study participants from among managers and supervisors in manufacturing companies in Rivers State, resulting in 85 respondents. The study's hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The findings revealed that role ambiguity significantly predicted job satisfaction and employee commitment while negatively affecting motivation. Conversely, workload significantly predicted an increase in employee motivation. In addition, the study found that work-life balance significantly moderated the effect of job demands on employee motivation. By highlighting the significance of addressing job demands and work-life balance in employee motivation, the study provides practical implications for managers in the manufacturing industry, including promoting open communication and adopting effective workload management strategies to motivate employees and improve their performance.

Gap in Literature

However, there are various gaps in the literature. First, while most of the reviewed articles focused on academic staff, non-academic staff also play a critical role in service delivery, particularly in public universities and colleges. Hence this study focuses on the motivation of teaching staff for effective performance.

3. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive and survey research designs were adopted for the work. The study population consists of 1705 academic or teaching staff from the 12 faculties and research institutes. The sample size for the work was 426 respondents selected from 25% of the study population. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the teaching staff from the 12 faculties and research institutes in the study area while simple random sampling was adopted in selecting the study samples. The instrument used for the work is Motivation and Academic Staff Performance Questionnaire (MASPQ) developed and administered by the researcher to 426 respondents. Three experts validated the instrument while Cronbach Alpha was used to establish the reliability index of the instrument giving an internal consistency of 0.78. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) were used in testing the hypotheses and answering the research questions respectively.

4. Data Analysis and Results

Research Question One: - How do motivational strategies influence the rewards system (Compensation) for quality services delivery at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt?

Table 1 mean and standard deviation of teaching staff's perception of rewards system/compensation and employees performance/institution productivity in RSU. (N=420)

Item No.	Statement on Rewards System/compensation	Mean	SD.
1	Motivation involves a psychological process of inspiring and sustaining of teaching staff behaviour towards quality services delivery in Rivers State University (RSU), Port Harcourt.	3.30	0.65
2	Motivation strategies adopted in Rivers State University influences rewards system (Compensation) for quality services delivery.	3.15	0.70
3	Teaching staff in RSU are motivated by personal growth, skill learning, financial incentives and bonuses for quality services delivery to the public.	3.20	0.65
4	Effective motivation strategies boost creativity among teaching staff for quality services delivery in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.	3.10	0.70

Item No.	Statement on Rewards System/compensation	Mean	SD.
5	Motivation enhances employee's performance among teaching staff in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.	3.05	0.75
6	Motivated teaching staff produces high quality output than unmotivated ones in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.	3.15	0.70
7	Rivers State University's success and sustainability depend more on employee motivation.	3.10	0.70
8	Motivation is recognized as a driver for improved productivity in term of quality teaching and learning in RSU, Port Harcourt.	3.20	0.65
	Motivation strategies in RSU targets human capital development of teaching staff for better teaching, research, and administrative efficiency.	3.15	0.65
10	The teaching staff performance in RSU is measured by students' academic achievements.	3.25	0.60

Cluster Mean for teaching staff's perception of rewards system/compensation and academic staff performance/institution productivity in RSU: Mean 3.15, SD: 0.70

Table 1 above presents the result showing how rewards system/compensation impacts employees' performance/institution productivity in RSU. Motivation as a psychological process of inspire and sustaining teaching staff behaviour towards quality services delivery in Rivers State University (RSU), Port Harcourt, recorded a cluster mean of 3.30 and SD of 0.65. The motivation strategies adopted in Rivers State University influence the rewards system (Compensation) for quality services delivery, with a Mean of 3.15 and SD of 0.70. Effective motivation strategies enhance creativity among teaching staff for quality services delivery in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, with a mean of 3.10 and SD of 0.70. With respect to human capital development, the motivation strategies in RSU focus at developing the human capital of teaching staff for better teaching, research and administrative efficiency, showing a mean of 3.15 and SD of 0.65.

Test of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Motivational strategies tend not to influence the rewards system (Compensation) for quality services delivery in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

Table 2: PPMC between the teaching staff's perception of rewards system/compensation for quality services delivery in RSU (N=420)

Variables	Mean	SD	Pearson Correlation (r)
Teaching staff's perception of rewards system	3.15	0.70	0.72
Employees performance /institution productivity in RSU	3.05	0.75	

Table 2 shows the result on the analysis of relationship between the **Teaching staff's perception of** rewards system for quality services delivery in RSU, and this shows that the correlation coefficient is 0.72, indicating a high positive correlation.

Research Question Two

How has motivation influenced career advancement opportunities of teaching staff for improved organizational productivity in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the influence of motivation on career advancement opportunities of teaching staff for improved organizational productivity in Rivers State University (N=420)

Item No.	Statement on Career advancement opportunity in RUS	Mean	SD.
1	RSU provides opportunity for career development to enhance employees' performance for increased institution's productivity.	3.20	0.65
2	Career development and staff training programmes available in RSU improves performance of employees and organization productivity.	3.15	0.70
3	Career development of teaching staff influences the overall success in teaching, research and community service in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.	3.05	0.65
4	Motivation of teaching staff broaden opportunities for career progression, and quality of staff for better productivity in RSU.	2.80	0.70
5	Teaching Staff career development policy is closely linked to improved job satisfaction in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.	2.55	0.60
6	Professional development through trainings, mentorship and certification programmes leads to increase productivity in RSU.	3.10	0.65
7	Acquiring new skills through self-driven learning contributes to the ability to handle higher tasks or responsibilities in RSU	3.00	0.70
8	Teaching Staff career development programmes contributes to increase in innovations in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.	3.10	0.60
9	Organizing workshop and seminars for teaching staff enhances quality services delivery in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.	2.70	0.65
10	Inadequate training and development programmes for teaching staff decreases productivity among teaching staff in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.	2.65	0.60

The Outcome presented in Table 3 above shows how motivation influences the career advancement opportunities accessible to teaching staff, therefore increasing the organizational productivity at Rivers State University. The information displayed indicate that RSU provide career development opportunities to improve employee performance, thus increasing their productivity as indicated by a cluster mean of 3.20. In addition, the career development and staff training programmes available at RSU enhances employee performance and organizational productivity with a mean of 3.15; on the other hand, the effect of teaching staff career development on overall success in teaching, research and community service at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt had a mean of 3.10. Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall success in teaching, research and community service at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt is related to the career development of their teaching staff. On the other hand, poor training and development programmes for the teaching staff limits productivity of teaching staff at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, as indicated by a relatively low mean of 2.65. Therefore, a gap exists in the training of the teaching staff at RUS and therefore there should be more substantial training and development programmes offered, in line with the training needs of RUS teaching staff, which could significantly impact the productivity of the institution.

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Motivation does not directly influence career advancement opportunities of teaching staff for improved organizational productivity in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

Table 4: PPMC on the influence of motivation on career advancement opportunities of teaching staff for improved organizational productivity in Rivers State University (N=420)

Variables	Mean	SD	Pearson Correlation (r)
Career advancement opportunities of teaching staff	3.20	0.65	0.67
Organizational productivity in RSU	3.10	0.60	

Table 4 shows the result on the analysis on the influence of motivation on career advancement opportunities of teaching staff for improved organizational productivity in Rivers State University shows that the correlation coefficient is 0.67, indicating a moderately high positive correlation.

5. Major Findings and Discussion of Findings

In summary, the study found the following:

1. Motivational strategies have a significant influence on the rewards system (Compensation) for quality services delivery at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.
2. Motivation has a significant direct influence on career advancement opportunities for teaching staff resulting in improved organizational productivity at Rivers State University.

The first finding indicates that motivational strategies have a significant influence on the rewards system (Compensation) for quality services delivery at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. This finding is supported by earlier studies by Isi and Egwurugwu (2026) that examined how staff management strategies such as staff motivation, training and development, and performance appraisal are applied in two public universities in Rivers State and how they affect service delivery outcomes. The study's findings revealed that all three strategies (staff motivation, training and staff appraisal) had statistically significant positive relationships with service-delivery performance. Based on the above results, it was recommended that the university management should consistently apply inclusive, transparent and motivating staff-management practices in order to boost service delivery as well as consequently advance the broader goals of sustainable development of higher education. Similarly, Salahu, Lawal and Mosaudu (2025) explored how various motivational factors affect the performance of non-academic staff at the polytechnic, and their findings revealed that motivation has had a substantial impact on employees' performance at Oke-Ogun Polytechnic, including staff training development and fringe benefits such as salary increments, bonuses, and allowances, which were found to significantly influence employee productivity, particularly among non-academic staff. Isaruk (2024) explores the link between staff motivation and productivity among academic staff at the Rivers State College of Health Science and Management Technology, Port Harcourt, and discovered that prompt salary payment, promotion opportunities, training and recognition are the strongest motivating factors. Productivity was highest in teaching and student mentorship, but relatively low in research and community service, due to inadequate funding and support. Thus, in order to attain effective and high-quality service delivery at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt; management-staff motivational strategies should consider putting suitable reward systems in place to achieve maximum results.

The second finding shows that motivation has a significant direct influence on career advancement opportunities for teaching staff resulting in improved organizational productivity at Rivers State University. This is supported by earlier studies conducted by Chima and Opuene (2021) that investigated academic staff motivation and productivity in public universities in Rivers State; the study found that

productivity ultimately aims at improving academic staff development, that motivation has a significant effect on the development of academic staff and added that organizing seminars, conferences and academic staff development could help enhance productivity. The study's results showed that academic staff identified the provision of study leave, attendance at both local and international conferences, the organization of internal conferences and seminars for staff academic updates, and the organization of workshops and symposia as measures that effectively developed academic staff.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study of motivation and academic staff performance reveals the correlations which exist in the relationship between motivation and work productivity of academic staff at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. Thus, the findings of this study unveil among other things that; Motivational strategies have a significant influence on the reward system (Compensation) for quality service delivery at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt; Motivation has a considerable direct effect on career advancement opportunities for teaching staff, resulting in improved organizational productivity at Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

The study made the following recommendations:

1. The Management of Rivers State University (RSU) of Port Harcourt should devise and implement motivational strategies that prioritize employees' reward system as a measure for improved organizational productivity. This involves prompt and consistent payment of salaries, incentives, fringe benefits and other allowances to prevent demotivation, and conducting periodic salary reviews to ensure compensation remains competitive and fair.
2. Management of Rivers State University should provide a conducive policy for staff development, training and re-training initiatives such as workshops, ICT-based learning, peer mentoring etc. for all staff categories; professional growth opportunities that align with institutional goals and emerging trends in higher education to build competence and adaptability, and involving the teaching staff in planning and in decision-making of the institution as this helps to give them a sense of belonging, boost their morale to contribute more towards higher productivity of the institution. For teaching staff, career growth opportunities depend on their willingness to work hard toward improved organizational productivity by turning assigned responsibilities into the delivery of quality service.

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