

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF PERCEPTION OF MOTIVATION AT WORK AND ITS EFFECTS ON THEIR MORALE TOWARDS TASKS IN CENTRAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE

Irabor Ehikioya Festus¹, Ibhagbemien Emmanuel Ebhozele² and Momoh Danjuma Yakub³

^{1,2}Department of Public Administration, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.

³Department of Public Administration, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State

¹iraehi@aauekpoma.edu.ng, ²emmazele@gmail.com, ³danco231@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study examined local government staff perception of motivation at work and its effects on their morale towards tasks using Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State. The research used a descriptive survey design. The population comprised all 532 local government staff from different ministries and departments in Esan Central Local Government Area. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select 8 Ministries and Departments, and simple random sampling to select a sample of 220 local government staff from the selected units. A structured questionnaire titled "Local Government Staff Motivation and Morale (LGSMM)" was used for data collection. Experts in Educational Management and Foundations validated the instrument, and its reliability was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding a reliability index of 0.84. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), and t-test statistics at 0.05 significance level. Findings showed that local government staff perceived their motivation levels as moderate and exhibited moderately positive morale. A significant positive relationship existed between motivation and morale. Work motivation contributed to task performance in areas such as administrative duties, customer service, record keeping, and community engagement. Major issues leading to low work morale included poor pay, unfavourable working conditions, heavy workload, and lack of opportunities. The study concluded that staff morale greatly influences staff effectiveness in performing organisational tasks. Recommendations included improved compensation, better working conditions, and greater opportunities for professional development.

Keywords: Local government staff, motivation, morale, task performance, Esan Central Local Government

Introduction

The way employees perceive their work environment influences their motivation and morale when carrying out organisational tasks, whether in the public or private sector. When staff members feel appreciated and believe they have a future in the organisation, their morale remains high, and they perform tasks effectively (Adamu, Wushishi & Faruk, 2025). Conversely, when employees feel unmotivated, unappreciated, and without future prospects, their morale drops, leading to poor

performance. In every local government, staff play a vital role by providing essential services in administration, revenue collection, and community development. They require motivation and good morale to deliver quality services to the public and other stakeholders. Staff morale and motivation have attracted considerable research in organisational behaviour studies.

Motivation refers to the psychological drive that pushes an individual toward action and directs the focus of that action. Morale, on the other hand, is the emotional and mental state of workers (Azelama & Osumah, 2022). Employees with good morale and motivation tend to be more creative, loyal, and productive. Those who are demotivated and have low morale may become lethargic, lazy, and even counterproductive. Several factors affect the morale and motivation of local government staff in Nigeria. Chileskar (2025) identified poor funding, unsatisfactory working conditions, delayed salaries, long working hours, and lack of promotion as key factors. Adebayo (2017) added that poor service delivery and inefficiency, including high turnover, result from these issues.

Although adequate motivation and high morale are considered essential in organisational settings, most Nigerian local governments suffer from an unmotivated workforce. Studies indicate that many local government staff are not adequately compensated, work in unfavourable environments, and lack rewards, recognition, and career advancement opportunities (Ejumudo & Ejumudo, 2023). This gap between what staff could achieve with proper motivation and what they actually achieve leads to inefficient resource use and delays in meeting organisational goals. While studies on motivation exist in general organisational contexts, empirical research focusing specifically on how local government staff perceive motivation and how it affects their task performance in Nigerian local governments particularly in Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State remains limited. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how local government staff view work motivation and morale toward tasks, and the impact of morale on motivation.

Statement of the Problem

Local government staff are central to the smooth operation of Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State. They handle functions such as administrative duties, revenue collection, customer service, record keeping, and community engagement. These responsibilities demand that staff perform at their best. However, a growing trend among staff members suggests an unmotivated workforce. Casual observations and informal interactions with some staff members reveal relatively poor morale, indicated by passive behaviour toward task delivery, reluctance to engage in community service, and low commitment to core duties. This phenomenon may result from low salaries, unclear job specifications, unfavourable working conditions, poor rewards, and limited professional development opportunities. When local government staff believe their basic work-related needs are not met, they become demotivated, which negatively affects job performance, including the quality

of administrative work and community development outcomes (Okeke, Chukwuemeka & Amobi, 2017).

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate local government staff perception of motivation at work and its effects on their morale towards tasks. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Determine the effects of morale on staff performance of tasks at work at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State.
- ii. Examine the relationship between staff motivation and morale at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State.

Research Questions

- i. What are the effects of morale on staff performance of tasks at work at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State?
- ii. What is the relationship between staff motivation and morale at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State?

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant relationship between morale and task performance at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State.

Theoretical Framework

Expectancy Theory.

Abraham Maslow proposed the Hierarchy of Needs Theory in 1943. It states that human beings satisfy needs in a hierarchy: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualisation. Basic needs must be fulfilled before employees can become motivated toward higher-level needs such as recognition, success, and self-actualisation (Alonge et al., 2020). Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) complements this perspective. According to Expectancy Theory, motivation depends on expectancy (the belief that effort leads to performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance leads to rewards), and valence (the value attached to those rewards) (Biswas & Giri, 2017). These two theories are useful for analysing how motivation affects morale among local government staff. They help explain why staff feel demotivated when their basic needs remain unfulfilled or when they believe their efforts will not yield rewards (Badu, 2005).

However, both theories have weaknesses. Maslow's theory assumes that people always satisfy lower needs before moving to higher ones. In real life, a worker can feel a need for recognition (esteem) even if their salary (basic need) is not perfect. Also, the order of needs can differ from

person to person. Vroom's Expectancy Theory assumes that people are very rational and always think carefully about effort, performance, and rewards. But in real workplaces, emotions, habits, or unfair treatment can affect motivation without such clear thinking.

To minimize the impact of these weaknesses on the outcome of this study, the researcher did the following: First, the study used both theories together so that each theory covers the other's gaps. Maslow explains what people need, and Vroom explains how they choose to act based on expected rewards. Second, the study used a structured questionnaire with clear, practical questions that directly asked staff about their actual morale, motivation, and task performance not abstract theoretical ideas. This means the findings came from real worker experiences, not just from what the theories predict. Third, the study used statistical tests (mean, standard deviation, and t-test) to confirm the relationship between morale and performance. By doing this, the weaknesses of the theories did not harm the truth or usefulness of the study's findings.

Empirical Studies

Several empirical studies have analysed the impact of motivation on staff performance. Ogunode, Salman, and Ayoko (2023) conducted a study on motivation, non-academic staff job performance, and tertiary education in Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional survey design with 300 non-academic staff from selected tertiary institutions, they found that motivation had a significant positive effect on performance. Inadequate compensation and poor salary structures led to decreased performance. Similarly, Abubakar, Soba, and Yusuf (2022) examined the impact of motivation on academic staff performance in Nigerian universities, using Bauchi State University Gadau as a case study. Their descriptive survey of 250 academic staff concluded that motivation significantly affects performance, with adequate compensation, recognition, and advancement opportunities leading to better outcomes. Noordin and Jusoff (2009) found similar results among Malaysian academic staff, noting that job satisfaction levels correlate strongly with motivation. These findings are relevant to local government staff in Esan Central Local Government Area.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was chosen because it allows orderly data collection from a representative sample to describe perceptions about motivation and the effect of morale on task performance without manipulating variables. The survey was conducted in Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State. The population consisted of all 532 local government staff from different ministries and departments within the local government area. The researchers used purposive sampling to select 8 ministries and departments. Simple random sampling was then employed to select a sample of 220 local government staff from those selected units. The selected ministries and departments included: Administration, Finance and Treasury,

Works and Housing, Health, Education, Agriculture, Community Development, and Planning and Budget.

The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire titled "Local Government Staff Motivation and Morale Questionnaire" (LGSMMQ). Three academic experts in Educational Management at the University of Benin validated the questionnaire using face and content validity techniques. The researchers incorporated their comments. To establish reliability, a pilot study was conducted on 30 local government staff in a neighbouring local government area using the Cronbach Alpha method, which produced a reliability coefficient of 0.84. The researchers, along with three trained research assistants, administered the questionnaires in person. All 220 questionnaires were completed and returned. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and t-test statistics at 0.05 significance level.

Results

Research Question One: What are the effects of morale on staff performance of tasks at work at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State?

Table 1: Effects of morale on staff performance of tasks

Task Area	Mean	SD	Decision
Administrative effectiveness	3.35	0.76	Positive Effect
Customer service delivery	3.28	0.79	Positive Effect
Record keeping and documentation	3.24	0.82	Positive Effect
Revenue collection	3.18	0.84	Positive Effect
Community engagement	3.12	0.87	Positive Effect
Staff mentoring and support	3.30	0.78	Positive Effect
Professional development	3.22	0.80	Positive Effect
Cluster Mean	3.24	0.81	Positive Effect

Table 1 presents mean scores on the effects of morale on task performance. All task areas scored above 2.50, ranging from 3.12 to 3.35. The cluster mean of 3.24 indicates a positive effect of morale on staff performance across all tasks. The strongest effects were on administrative effectiveness ($\bar{X}$ = 3.35), staff mentoring and support ($\bar{X}$ = 3.30), and customer service delivery ($\bar{X}$ = 3.28).

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between morale and task performance at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State.

Table 2: t-test analysis on morale and task performance

Variable	N	X	SD	t-cal	df	t-crit	p-value	Decision
Morale Effect	220	3.24	0.81	7.56	219	1.97	0.000	Reject H ₀

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value (7.56) exceeds the critical t-value (1.97) at 219 degrees of freedom and 0.05 significance level. The p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that staff morale has a significant positive effect on task performance.

Discussion of Results

The result of the study showed that morale has a positive effect on staff performance in all task areas at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State. As revealed in Table 1, the overall average score (cluster mean) was 3.24, which is above 2.50. This means that when staff morale is good, their performance improves across every task. The results further revealed that the strongest effects of morale were on administrative effectiveness (average 3.35), staff mentoring and support (3.30), and customer service delivery (3.28). The weakest but still positive effect was on community engagement (3.12). These findings agree with Ejumudo and Ejumudo (2023), who said that motivation and incentives improve work performance.

The result of the study also revealed a significant positive relationship between morale and task performance. As shown in Table 2, the calculated t-value was 7.56, which is much higher than the critical value of 1.97. The p-value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This result means that the relationship is real and not by chance. In simple words, the study revealed that when staff feel good about their work, they perform their tasks better whether it is keeping records, collecting revenue, or serving the community. This supports Ogunode, Salman, and Ayoko (2023), who found that public sector staff have high intrinsic motivation but low extrinsic motivation due to systemic workplace issues. This finding is consistent with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where higher-order needs (esteem and self-actualisation) remain unsatisfied (Maslow, 1943).

Conclusion

Study concluded that morale has a significant and positive effect on staff task performance at Esan Central Local Government Area, Edo State. Staff with higher morale perform better in all key areas, especially administration, mentoring, and customer service. The statistical test confirmed that this relationship is real, not by chance. However, the average morale score of 3.24 out of a possible 5.00 shows that morale is only at a moderate level not very high. Therefore, while morale already helped performance, there is still room for improvement. The local government needs to pay more attention to what makes staff feel valued and motivated.

Recommendations (Refined)

Based on the results and conclusions above, the following recommendations are made in simple terms:

- i. Since morale affects performance significantly, the local government should ensure staff receive their salaries and allowances regularly and fairly. This will raise morale and improve all task areas, especially administrative effectiveness.
- ii. Staff need working equipment, enough office space, clean toilets, and safe conditions. This will help them perform tasks like record keeping and revenue collection more easily.
- iii. The results showed that staff feel less valued by management. The administration should create simple rewards like thank-you notes, awards, or small bonuses for staff who do well. This will boost morale in the areas of mentoring and customer service.

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