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Influence of institutional management policy on the research productivity of lecturers in federal universities in north-central, Nigeria

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Research productivity is a vital indicator of academic effectiveness and institutional reputation. Although past studies have focused on infrastructural and individual factors influencing research output, less attention has been given to the role of institutional management policies. This study, guided by the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Path-Goal Theory, examined the influence of management policy on the research productivity of lecturers in seven (7) Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. A descriptive survey design, complemented with a mixed-method approach, was employed. Questionnaires were distributed to 96 purposively selected lecturers, out of which 75 were returned valid (response rate = 78.1%). Additionally, interviews with key management figures provided qualitative depth and triangulated the quantitative results. Findings revealed that policy dimensions such as institutional research objectives (mean = 4.29), academic freedom (mean = 4.35), leadership style (mean = 4.15), and incentive structures (mean = 4.36) significantly influenced research productivity. The overall weighted mean of 4.26 reflected strong agreement among respondents, while the extent of influence across policy dimensions yielded a weighted mean of 4.23. However, policy support for research direction (mean = 4.05) and research resource distribution (mean = 4.16) showed only moderate influence. The study concludes that effective management policy is a key driver of research productivity and recommends reforms to strengthen autonomy, access to resources, and incentive systems.

Key words: Research productivity, institutional management policy, federal universities, institutional support and North-Central Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Research productivity is widely recognized as a cornerstone of academic excellence, institutional ranking, and national development (Mushtaq and Shahzan, 2025)). In higher education institutions, particularly within the Nigerian context, the generation of scholarly outputs such as journal articles, books, and technical reports is essential not only for individual academic progression but

also for fulfilling institutional mandates in teaching, research, and community engagement (Nnadozie et al., 2023; Okebukola, 2006). Despite this imperative, the productivity levels of academic staff in many Nigerian universities remain below global expectations. Research plays a key role in modern-day civilisation in that it is done with the motive for societal development and

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propelled by high-level curiosity which translates or builds up to further investigation (Salami et al., 2020). In the academia, the concept of research is taken seriously since the promotion of lecturers is dependent on the number of publications they have. This requirement by the institutional management policy makes it mandatory for lecturers to be productive scholars.

Institutional management policies serve as the operational blueprint for how universities support or constrain scholarly activities. When well-articulated and implemented, they can foster a culture of research excellence through incentives, clear expectations, and enabling environments (Bako, 2005). Conversely, poorly defined or inconsistently applied policies may demotivate academic staff, hinder innovation, and perpetuate a publish-or-perish culture that prioritizes quantity over quality. Institutional management policy is important for the research projects' success and helps improve research outputs' quality. Management decides the collaboration and sharing of research results as well as intra-university resource allocation. Proper resource allocation and effective cooperation can motivate researchers to implement their research projects and ultimately help improve research results at university level. For example, Nguyen et al. (2021) identified three research productivity impediments to include inadequate training, sub-optimal concentrations of research activity, and competing commitments. These issues can be dealt with through formal research training and on-the-job practice, developing synergies between research and teaching/consulting and finding partners to assist in fieldwork and analysis (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Concerns have emerged regarding the underperformance of lecturers in research activities. While several structural challenges such as poor funding, limited access to digital infrastructure, and insufficient research training have been acknowledged (Shahzad et al., 2023), an equally critical but underexplored factor is the role of institutional management policy. These policies encompass research funding frameworks, promotion criteria, leadership style, workload distribution, academic freedom, and organizational support mechanisms all of which can significantly shape the research behavior and output of lecturers (Mbachu and Unachukwu, 2022; Onyebinama, et al., 2022). Given these dynamics, this study investigated the influence of institutional management policy on the research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities located in North-Central Nigeria a region characterized by diverse institutional practices and academic cultures. Research productivity, encompassing publications, conference papers, and other scholarly outputs, is often shaped not only by individual effort or resource availability but also by the policies that govern academic work environments. These policies include, but are not limited to, institutional research agendas, leadership styles, academic freedom, funding mechanisms, performance evaluation systems,

and incentive structures.

This study therefore sought to examine the extent to which these institutional management policies facilitate or hinder lecturers' ability to conduct and disseminate research. Specifically, it aims to identify policy components that promote a vibrant research culture such as those that encourage collaboration, provide adequate resources, and recognize scholarly achievement while also highlighting barriers like bureaucratic bottlenecks, limited autonomy, and insufficient support systems. The ultimate goal is to provide evidence-based insights that can inform institutional reforms and strategic decision-making. By doing so, the study contributes to the broader discourse on academic development and helps chart a path toward sustainable and impactful research engagement within Nigeria's federal university system.

Statement of the problem

Research productivity is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of academic excellence and a primary indicator of institutional prestige in the increasingly competitive landscape of global higher education. For lecturers in Nigerian universities, consistent research output not only contributes to personal career advancement but also enhances the visibility and reputation of their institutions (Basiru et al., 2018; Mendes, 2022). Despite various national policies and university-level initiatives intended to promote research, concerns persist about the relatively low volume and impact of scholarly publications in many Federal Universities particularly those situated in North-Central Nigeria.

While prior studies have frequently identified challenges such as infrastructural deficiencies, inadequate research funding, and restricted access to academic resources as barriers to productivity (Okebukola, 2006; Singh et al., 2019), the role of institutional management policy has received comparatively less empirical scrutiny. University management policies including institutional research agendas, leadership styles, reward systems, access to research grants, and promotion criteria are critical in shaping the academic environment. These internal mechanisms may either motivate or hinder faculty engagement in research activities (Stephen and Pramanathan, 2020; Mbachu and Unachukwu, 2022). However, in the context of Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria, it remains unclear to what extent these policies influence lecturers' research output.

Reports from the region suggest that many lecturers contend with ambiguous research expectations, inadequate administrative support, and limited institutional recognition of scholarly contributions (Onyebinama et al., 2022; Nnadozie et al., 2023). The consequences of lack of research productivity in Nigerian

universities. Such conditions may point to inefficiencies or misalignments in policy implementation. Given the strategic importance of academic research for national development, a closer examination of how internal university governance structures and policy frameworks affect lecturer productivity is essential.

This study sought to address this critical gap by investigating the influence of institutional management policy on the research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities within North-Central Nigeria. Specifically, it aims to assess both the perceived and actual impacts of various policy components on academic research engagement. The outcomes are expected to inform evidence-based recommendations for institutional reforms that foster a more enabling environment for scholarly productivity.

Research questions

- 1) What is the perceived influence of institutional management policies on the research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?
- 2) To what extent do institutional management policies impact the research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research productivity remains a crucial metric for evaluating the performance of academic staff and institutions globally, serving as a fundamental indicator of knowledge generation, scholarly relevance, and institutional prestige. Universities are frequently assessed based on the volume and quality of research outputs, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, citations, and other forms of scholarly dissemination. In the context of Nigerian higher education, lecturers' productivity is shaped by a complex interplay of institutional, personal, and policy-related factors (Basiru et al., 2018). While infrastructural deficits, limited research funding, overwhelming teaching loads, and administrative burdens are widely acknowledged constraints (Mendes, 2022), increasing attention is being directed toward the influence of university management policies as key enablers or inhibitors of academic productivity.

Institutional management policy broadly encompasses institutional visions for research, leadership style, academic governance, and incentive systems such as promotions, grants, and sabbaticals. These policies set the tone for research priorities, determine access to resources, and shape the extent of academic freedom factors that collectively influence the motivation and capacity of lecturers to engage in scholarly activity (Stephen and Pramanathan, 2020). In institutions where research is deprioritized or inadequately supported

through policy frameworks, lecturers may lack the direction, encouragement, or infrastructure to produce sustained scholarly output. Conversely, universities with clearly articulated, decentralized, and supportive management policies often foster strong research cultures that boost both individual and institutional visibility (Ladipo et al., 2022)). Such policies promote academic autonomy, resource equity, and strategic clarity conditions vital to cultivating long-term academic excellence.

Empirical studies across diverse contexts support the assertion that management policies significantly affect academic research engagement. Ngussa (2018), for example, found that institutional autonomy and flexible academic structures in Tanzanian universities positively influenced lecturers' scholarly participation. Singh et al. (2019) similarly emphasized the effectiveness of incentive-based management strategies, noting that linking promotions, salary progression, and other rewards to measurable research output significantly motivates academic staff. Mendes (2022) adds that when research objectives are clearly communicated and aligned with institutional goals, lecturers are more likely to engage in strategic and impactful scholarly work. Okebukola (2006) also highlighted that bureaucratic inefficiencies and delays in research grant disbursement remain serious barriers to research advancement in Nigerian universities, even when policy intentions are positive. Further supporting this perspective, Mbachu and Unachukwu (2022) reported that academic freedom and collegial governance significantly correlate with enhanced research output in West African universities. Institutions that emphasize open communication, participatory decision-making, and transparent leadership tend to exhibit higher academic performance. Basiru et al. (2018) also pointed to the importance of structured research policy frameworks especially those that provide digital access and professional development opportunities as vital tools for overcoming persistent productivity barriers in Nigerian higher education.

Beyond theoretical assertions, empirical evidence consistently underscores the vital role of supportive management structures. Onyenbinama et al. (2022) found that academic freedom, bolstered by clear institutional policies, enhances research motivation in Nigerian institutions. Likewise, Mendes (2022) confirmed that digital infrastructure, access to academic libraries, and consistent administrative support are strongly associated with higher research engagement. Singh et al. (2019) reiterated that inconsistent internet access and insufficient funding remain significant deterrents to scholarly output. Incentive mechanisms such as research grants, awards, and promotion-linked metrics also serve as critical drivers of productivity. Shahzad et al. (2023) revealed that institutions that reward scholarly excellence consistently achieve higher faculty performance. However, some policy areas showed only moderate

impact. Nnadozie et al. (2023) noted that while policy frameworks for research leadership exist in many Nigerian universities, implementation challenges ranging from poor oversight to lack of political will often weaken their effectiveness. The literature further shows that collegial governance, when effectively practiced, enhances morale and commitment to research. Mbachu and Unachukwu (2022) concluded that leadership transparency, faculty inclusion, and equitable policy implementation are vital to promoting academic innovation. Yet, these policies must go beyond design; fair access and consistent enforcement are key to success.

Decentralized governance and participatory management have also been linked to improved research output. Stephen and Pramanathan (2020) observed that when lecturers are granted autonomy to pursue interdisciplinary research and explore innovative directions, their engagement and output significantly increase. On the contrary, rigid bureaucratic systems, a lack of strategic vision, and underinvestment in infrastructure were found to hinder innovation and demotivate academic staff. Contandriopoulos et al. (2018) emphasized that leadership and administrative support especially in terms of transparent goal-setting and recognition encourage lecturers to publish and disseminate their work. In contrast, institutions with vague or restrictive policies tend to discourage research engagement, particularly when incentives are unclear or lacking.

In summary, the literature affirms that well-structured and effectively implemented management policies are essential for enhancing research productivity among lecturers. Success, however, depends not only on the availability of policies but also on their perceived fairness, clarity, and institutional backing. Where such policies are participatory, incentivized, and aligned with institutional goals, research output tends to thrive. Where policies are ambiguous, poorly implemented, or inadequately resourced, productivity suffers.

Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Path-Goal Theory, which provide complementary perspectives on the relationship between management policies and academic staff research productivity. The Uses and Gratification Theory, developed by Katz et al. (1974), argues that individuals are not passive recipients of structures or messages but active participants who selectively engage with available opportunities to satisfy specific needs. In the context of this study, the theory explains how academic staff interpret and utilize university management policies to meet their professional goals, particularly research related needs. It highlights the agency of lecturers in

navigating institutional policies, assessing their relevance, and appropriating them for scholarly productivity.

On the other hand, the Path-Goal Theory, proposed by House (1971), emphasizes the role of leadership in clarifying goals, removing obstacles, and motivating individuals toward higher performance. Applied to the university environment, this theory suggests that the effectiveness of management policies is mediated by leadership style, administrative clarity, and the provision of enabling resources. Leadership that aligns policies with staff expectations and research demands enhances motivation and strengthens institutional research culture (Northouse, 2019).

Together, these two theories offer a comprehensive framework: while the Uses and Gratification Theory accounts for how lecturers interpret and appropriate policies, the Path-Goal Theory underscores the leadership dimension that facilitates or hinders such engagement. Their integration provides a strong conceptual foundation for understanding how management policies influence academic staff motivation, resource utilization, and research output, as shown in Figure 1.

METHODOLOGY

This study, guided by the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Path-Goal Theory, adopted a descriptive survey design complemented with a mixed-method approach. The theoretical underpinning provided justification for the choice of methodology: the Uses and Gratification Theory explained how lecturers actively interpret and utilize management policies to meet their research needs, while the Path-Goal Theory emphasized how leadership style and institutional policies motivate and shape academic staff productivity. These frameworks informed the design of the instruments, the choice of variables measured, and the interpretation of findings.

Questionnaires were administered to ninety-six purposively selected lecturers, while interviews with key management figures provided deeper insights and validated the quantitative findings (Nworgu, 2015). The target population comprised academic staff drawn from the seven Federal Universities located in North-Central Nigeria, namely the University of Ilorin (Kwara State), Federal University of Technology, Minna (Niger State), University of Jos (Plateau State), Federal University, Lokoja (Kogi State), Federal University, Lafia (Nasarawa State), Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi (Benue State), and the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otuokpo (Benue State).

A structured questionnaire, divided into demographic and management policy dimensions (institutional research objectives, leadership style, academic freedom, resource utilization, and incentives), was administered. Of the distributed copies, seventy-five were returned valid, representing a 78% response rate, which is considered adequate for educational research (Chali et al., 2022).

A five-point Likert scale measured levels of agreement, while descriptive statistics—frequency counts, mean scores, and weighted averages—were used for analysis. The results were presented in tables for clarity and interpretation.

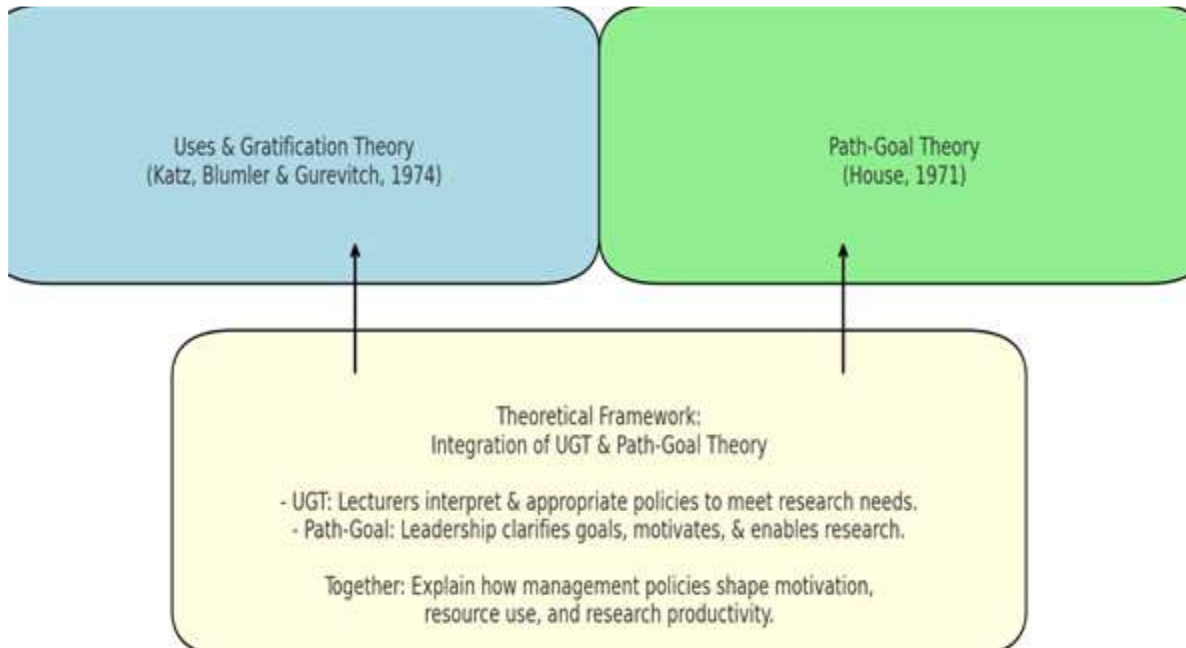


Figure 1. Theoretical framework.
Sources: Authors original construct (2025).

RESULT ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1) What is the perceived influence of institutional management policies on the research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 1 presents respondents' perceptions of the extent to which specific components of management policy influence their research productivity. The findings address Objectives 1 which seek to examine and identify institutional policy components that influence research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Overall, the responses show a high level of agreement that institutional management policies significantly shape research engagement, with a weighted mean score of 4.26, indicating strong consensus across the variables assessed. Specifically, lecturers reported that institutional research objectives positively influence their research activities, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.29. This suggests that clearly defined and communicated research agendas within universities help align lecturers' efforts toward scholarly output.

Decentralized structures and academic freedom received the highest mean score (4.35), highlighting the perceived value of institutional autonomy and flexible governance in promoting academic research. The majority of respondents agreed that greater freedom in decision-making and fewer bureaucratic barriers enhance their motivation and ability to conduct research.

Interestingly, while management leadership style

yielded a slightly lower mean score (4.15), it still reflects a generally positive view. This indicates that leadership behaviors such as encouragement, transparency, and participatory decision-making are moderately associated with improved research output, although perhaps not as directly impactful as structural or policy factors.

Respondents also affirmed the influence of institutional policies on resource utilization (4.37) and salary raise and promotions (4.36) two of the highest-rated items in the table. This underscores the importance of clear, equitable policies that recognize and reward research contributions as central to academic advancement. Likewise, policy regimes and initiatives, such as research funding schemes and institutional grants, received strong endorsement (4.28), suggesting that targeted policy tools can act as catalysts for scholarly activity.

In contrast, available research support infrastructure scored slightly below the agreement threshold (3.99), implying potential inadequacies or disparities in resource provision across institutions. This may reflect challenges such as limited access to funding, laboratory space, or administrative support, which can constrain productivity even when policies are well-intentioned.

In summary, the data indicate that a well-structured policy environment characterized by institutional autonomy, strategic objectives, performance-based incentives, and efficient resource allocation plays a crucial role in fostering a productive research culture. These findings offer actionable insights for university administrators seeking to optimize management frameworks to support academic excellence and

Table 1. Influence of management policy on lecturers' research productivity.

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Decision
The institution's research objectives influence my research productivity	45.3	38.7	16.0	0.0	0.0	4.29	Agree
Decentralized structure and academic freedom influence my productivity	50.7	36.0	10.7	2.7	0.0	4.35	Agree
Management leadership style influences my research productivity	33.3	52.0	12.0	1.3	1.3	4.15	Disagree
Available support for research influences productivity	44.0	28.0	16.0	6.7	5.3	3.99	Disagree
Policy regimes and initiatives motivate research activities	50.7	36.0	6.7	4.0	2.7	4.28	Agree
Institutional policy on resource utilisation influences productivity	54.7	29.3	14.7	1.3	0.0	4.37	Agree
Salary raises and promotion influence research productivity	53.3	34.7	8.0	2.7	1.3	4.36	Agree
Weighted Mean						4.26	Agree

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neutral, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table 2. Extent of Influence of management policy on research productivity.

Policy area	Very high extent (%)	High extent (%)	Low extent (%)	Very low extent (%)	Not at all (%)	Mean	Extent
Access to research materials and institutional support	54.7	30.7	9.3	5.3	0.0	4.34	High
Academic freedom and collaboration facilitation	41.3	53.3	5.3	0.0	0.0	4.36	High
Research resource distribution (funding/promotion)	36.0	52.0	6.7	2.7	2.7	4.16	Moderate
Policy motivation via incentives or awards	45.3	41.3	6.7	4.0	2.7	4.23	High
Policy support for research leadership and direction	32.0	50.7	10.7	4.0	2.7	4.05	Moderate
Weighted mean						4.23	High extent

institutional research visibility.

2) To what extent do institutional management policies impact the research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria?

Table 2 presents respondents' evaluations of the extent

to which management policy influences research productivity among lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria, aligning with Objective 2 of the study. The results reveal that management policies are perceived to exert a high overall influence, as reflected in the weighted mean score of 4.23, which falls within the "High Extent" category.

Among the policy domains assessed, academic freedom and collaboration facilitation received the highest mean score of 4.36, indicating that policies supporting intellectual autonomy and collegial cooperation are viewed as vital to enhancing research output. This finding underscores the importance of creating environments where lecturers can explore ideas freely and build collaborative networks both essential to academic innovation and knowledge dissemination.

Similarly, access to research materials and institutional support was rated highly (4.34), suggesting that respondents see significant value in institutional mechanisms that provide research databases, technical tools, administrative assistance, and mentoring structures. The strong perception of support in this area may reflect the positive effects of targeted investments in research infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives.

Policy motivation via incentives or awards, such as research grants, publication bonuses, and recognition schemes, also garnered substantial agreement (4.23), reinforcing the idea that reward-based structures are influential in driving lecturers' engagement with scholarly work. These mechanisms can stimulate productivity by aligning institutional goals with personal academic aspirations.

In contrast, research resource distribution and policy support for research leadership and direction scored slightly lower (4.16 and 4.05, respectively), placing them in the "Moderate Extent" category. This suggests that while resource allocation (e.g., funding, promotions) and strategic leadership are recognized as important, their current implementation may not fully meet the needs or expectations of academic staff. The moderate scores may reflect concerns about equity, transparency, or consistency in how research resources and leadership opportunities are managed across institutions.

Overall, the data indicate that management policies that prioritize academic freedom, ensure material support, and provide motivational incentives are perceived as having the greatest influence on lecturers' research productivity. Conversely, areas requiring more strategic enhancement include leadership direction and equitable resource distribution. These insights highlight the need for more coherent and inclusive policy frameworks to sustain a vibrant research culture in Nigerian federal universities.

DISCUSSION

Influence of management policy on lecturers' research productivity

The results of this study provide critical insights into how institutional management policies influence the research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. As indicated in Table 1, the majority of respondents agreed that several components of

institutional management policy significantly affect their ability and motivation to engage in research. Specifically, the highest-rated items included institutional policy on resource utilisation (Mean = 4.37), promotion and salary incentives (Mean = 4.36), and academic freedom through decentralised structures (Mean = 4.35). These findings suggest that when institutional policies are strategically aligned with academic needs such as providing autonomy, clear research agendas, and material support they can foster a more enabling research environment. This aligns with findings by Ngussa, (2018), who noted that policies that reinforce institutional autonomy and flexible academic structures contribute positively to lecturers' scholarly engagement. Furthermore, Singh Et al., (2019) emphasized that reward-based policies such as linking promotions to research output are powerful motivators for academic productivity. The positive perception of research objectives and policy regimes as supportive further confirms that institutional direction and strategic clarity are important for encouraging sustained scholarly work (Mendes, 2022). On the other hand, while support mechanisms such as research funding and infrastructure showed moderately high influence (Mean = 3.99), the lower agreement indicates room for improvement in tangible research assistance. This partial agreement may reflect structural or bureaucratic delays in accessing institutional resources a concern also raised by Okebukola (2006) in a study on Nigerian universities' research management inefficiencies. These findings are reinforced by Mbachu and Unachukwu (2022), who argue that academic freedom and collegial leadership models have a significant impact on faculty productivity in West African universities. Moreover, Basiru Et al. (2018) stressed that digital access and structured research policy frameworks are essential to overcoming productivity barriers in Nigerian higher education. However, some dimensions like "policy support for research leadership" (Mean = 4.05) and "distribution of research resources" (Mean = 4.16) were rated as only moderately influential, indicating a potential disconnect between policy intentions and their operational implementation. This suggests that while overarching policies may exist, their enforcement, transparency, and equitable distribution of benefits remain critical issues. In sum, the findings underscore the pivotal role of management policy in shaping the research culture and output of academic staff. To build sustainable and productive research environments, university management must not only craft well-articulated policies but also ensure their responsive execution, promote academic freedom, provide research incentives, and regularly evaluate institutional research goals against performance benchmarks.

Extent of the influence of management policy on research productivity of lecturers

The findings on the extent of management policy

influence (Table 2) reveal that lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria perceive institutional policies as having a high influence on their research productivity. With a weighted mean score of 4.23, respondents consistently reported that academic freedom, access to research support, and institutional motivation structures significantly affect their capacity to conduct and disseminate scholarly work. Specifically, policies that promote academic freedom and collaborative engagement were rated the highest (mean = 4.36), indicating that respondents value environments that support independent inquiry and intercollegiate knowledge sharing. This aligns with the assertion by Ngussa (2018), who emphasize that enabling researchers to operate without undue administrative constraints fosters creativity and research innovation. Similarly, Onyenbinama et al. (2022) stress that unrestricted intellectual environments are essential for improving research performance in Nigerian higher education institutions.

Likewise, access to research materials and institutional support (mean = 4.34) was viewed as critical. Respondents acknowledged that libraries, internet resources, and administrative support significantly enhance their ability to engage in productive scholarship. This supports the findings of Mendas (2022), who reported that access to digital databases and consistent institutional backing is positively correlated with lecturers' research engagement and output levels. It also echoes Singh Et al. (2019), who contend that inadequate resource allocation remains a key barrier to research excellence in many Nigerian universities. Motivational policy tools, such as research grants, merit-based awards, and promotions, also received strong support (mean = 4.23), reaffirming the importance of institutional incentives in encouraging academic output. This observation corroborates Shahzad et al. (2023), who found that lecturers are more productive when universities adopt recognition and reward schemes that value academic effort. When research achievements are tied to career progression or financial benefits, engagement naturally improves.

Interestingly, policy support for research leadership and direction (mean = 4.05) and resource distribution mechanisms (mean = 4.16) were rated slightly lower, though still within the "moderate to high" range. This may indicate perceived inconsistencies or inefficiencies in the implementation of such policies. Nnadozie et al. (2023) highlighted that while many Nigerian universities develop sound policies on paper, execution often falls short due to political interference or lack of monitoring and evaluation systems. Overall, the discussion supports the conclusion that well-crafted and effectively implemented management policies especially those focused on autonomy, support infrastructure, and incentive structures play a crucial role in fostering a productive research environment. However, as Mbachu (2022) observe, institutional leaders must also prioritize transparent

implementation, fair access to research opportunities, and inclusive decision-making processes to sustain long-term gains in research productivity.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that management policy plays a significant role in shaping the research productivity of lecturers in Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria. The findings reveal that components such as institutional research objectives, academic freedom, leadership style, and resource allocation policies are strongly perceived to influence research output. In particular, policies that promote autonomy, recognize scholarly achievements through incentives, and provide clear research direction tend to foster higher engagement in academic research. However, while the influence of management policies is largely positive, some areas such as equitable distribution of research resources, access to leadership support, and infrastructural backing require further strengthening to realize their full impact. Additionally, the moderate extent of influence in certain policy areas suggests that the implementation of existing policies may not always translate effectively into action. Overall, the study affirms the critical role of institutional governance in fostering a vibrant research culture. To improve research performance and institutional visibility, university management must ensure that policy frameworks are not only strategically aligned with research goals but also actively supported by efficient implementation mechanisms and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) University management should institutionalize clear, research-driven policies that support academic freedom, promote inclusive leadership, and provide consistent incentives. Emphasis should be placed on transparent promotion criteria, autonomy in scholarly work, and provision of adequate infrastructure and administrative support to foster a productive research environment.
- 2) Institutions should enhance the implementation and visibility of supportive policies by providing equitable access to research resources, facilitating collaborative opportunities, and establishing motivational schemes such as grants, awards, and mentorship programs. This will ensure that lecturers are not only capable but also motivated to sustain high research output.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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