

Transformational Leadership, Welfare Packages, and Employee Performance: The Moderating Role of Compensation in Nigerian Public Universities (2015-2025)

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Abstract

This study examined the moderating role of compensation on the relationship between transformational leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance in Nigerian public universities from 2015 to 2025. The persistent decline in employee performance, evidenced by sixteen ASUU strike actions and over 700 lost academic days during the study period, necessitated this research. The broad objective was to examine the moderating role of compensation on the relationship between transformational leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance. Two theories guided the study: Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) and Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964). A quantitative research methodology was adopted using a cross-sectional survey design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 300 academic and senior non-academic staff selected from six federal universities using multi-stage sampling. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that transformational leadership was perceived positively by 83.3 percent of respondents, yet 66.7 percent reported inadequate welfare packages, including health insurance, housing allowance, and study leave. Compensation systems were perceived as unfair, with 50 percent reporting that promotion arrears were not paid promptly and 50 percent stating their compensation was unfair compared to other federal universities. Despite these challenges, employee performance remained high, with 100 percent completing duties on time and mentoring junior colleagues, and 83.3 percent publishing research regularly. The study concluded that compensation did not currently function as a significant moderator because performance remained high regardless of compensation inadequacies, suggesting that professional commitment rather than material incentives sustained performance. The study recommended that the Federal Government should mandate payment of promotion arrears within three months, the National Universities Commission should enforce a minimum welfare package benchmark, and a bi-annual leadership-welfare-compensation audit should be institutionalised across all federal universities.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, welfare packages, compensation, employee performance, Nigerian public universities, moderation

Introduction

The Nigerian public university system has experienced persistent crises of governance, funding, and industrial relations since the return to democracy in 1999. Between 1999 and 2025, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) declared sixteen separate strike actions, with an average duration of 3.46 months per strike and the longest lasting nine months in 2020 (Okugbo & Okugbo, 2025). These disruptions have cost the Nigerian university system more than 700 academic days lost in the last decade alone (The Campulse, 2025). Beyond the immediate loss of instructional time, the cumulative effect of these industrial actions has been a steady deterioration of employee morale, institutional trust, and overall staff performance within public universities across the country.

A study conducted at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta revealed that 79.4 percent of academic staff perceived a pressing need to review and rationalize the pay structure to improve employee efficiency (Joshua, Ayansina, Alabi, Oose, & Adegboyega, 2020). The same study found that while certain compensation packages such as retirement benefits (accessed by 100 percent of respondents) and study leave (accessed by 91.3 percent) were available, major constraints including poor insurance scheme (21.7 percent), inadequate welfare package (20.7 percent), and poor communication network (19.6 percent) undermined the effectiveness of

compensation practices. The findings further established a significant relationship between compensation packages and job performance ($r = 0.26$, $P < 0.05$), confirming that how employees are rewarded directly affects how they perform (Joshua et al., 2020).

Leadership behaviour within Nigerian public universities has emerged as an equally critical determinant of employee performance. Research conducted at private tertiary institutions in Ibadan, Oyo State, found that transformational leadership style was positively and significantly related to employees' performance, while democratic leadership style also showed a positive and significant relationship (Okpiahbele, Ibisola, & Akeredolu, 2025). The study concluded that transformational leadership should be practiced because of its creativity, performance-enhancing nature, and its capacity to facilitate knowledge sharing among employees, thereby promoting organizational culture and improving overall performance. Similarly, a 2025 project at Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, assessing the productivity of Heads of Departments in the Faculty of Management Sciences found that the transformational leadership style was significantly and positively correlated with higher levels of HOD productivity and staff job satisfaction, whereas the autocratic style showed a negligible or negative association with key productivity indicators (Olatunji, 2025).

The moderating role of compensation in the relationship between leadership practices and

employee outcomes has received empirical attention in recent scholarship. Ugwoke, Edeh, Nwokike, Ugwunwoti, Emmanuel, Idris, Odey, Samson, Nnamani, Yaro, Eya, Arua, Guma, and Kingsley (2025) established that psychological empowerment and work-life balance jointly and significantly mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and the in-role performance of employees in Nigerian not-for-profit universities. Their study, which collected data through 360-degree performance reviews from 360 participants including employees, supervisors, colleagues, and students, demonstrates that leadership effectiveness operates through intermediary mechanisms that include how employees experience their work environment and compensation arrangements. At the University of Uyo, research covering the period 2021 to 2023 revealed that absence of appropriate reward or compensation systems, including lack of issuance of commendation letters to performing staff, absence of accelerated promotions, and non-payment of entitlements and arrears of promotions, had the propensity to de-motivate staff and threaten institutional goal achievement (Ezirim & Edet, 2024).

Despite the existing body of literature on leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance in Nigerian universities, significant gaps remain. Most studies have examined these variables in isolation or in pairwise combinations rather than as an integrated model. Joshua et al. (2020) focused primarily on compensation practices without investigating leadership dimensions. Okpiahbele et al. (2025) concentrated on

leadership styles but did not examine how compensation moderates the leadership-performance relationship. Ugwoke et al. (2025) introduced mediating variables but did not specifically test compensation as a boundary condition. Furthermore, the period from 2015 to 2025 has witnessed intensified industrial actions, including the nine-month strike of 2020 and the eight-month strike of 2022 (Okugbo & Okugbo, 2025), making this timeframe particularly significant for understanding how leadership and welfare interventions have affected performance during an era of compounded crises. No known study has specifically investigated the moderating role of compensation on the relationship between transformational leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance in Nigerian public universities using data covering the decade from 2015 to 2025.

The problem that necessitated the research is the persistent decline in employee performance within Nigerian public universities between 2015 and 2025, a period marked by sixteen separate strike actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), including a nine-month strike in 2020 and an eight-month strike in 2022, resulting in more than 700 lost academic days (Okugbo & Okugbo, 2025; The Campulse, 2025). During this decade, Nigerian public universities fell further behind their African counterparts, with only two Nigerian institutions appearing in the 2023 Times Higher Education World University Rankings compared to thirteen from South Africa and nine from Egypt (Times Higher Education, 2023). Empirical evidence from

the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta revealed that 79.4 percent of academic staff perceived the existing pay structure as inadequate, while constraints including poor insurance schemes (21.7 percent), inadequate welfare packages (20.7 percent), and poor communication networks (19.6 percent) directly undermined compensation effectiveness and job performance (Joshua, Ayansina, Alabi, Oose, & Adegboyega, 2020). A 2025 study at Ekiti State University established that autocratic leadership styles showed negligible or negative associations with staff productivity, whereas transformational leadership was significantly and positively correlated with higher job satisfaction and output (Olatunji, 2025). At the University of Uyo, researchers found that absence of appropriate compensation, including non-payment of promotion arrears and lack of accelerated promotions for high-performing staff, had the propensity to de-motivate employees and threaten institutional goal achievement (Ezirim & Edet, 2024). Despite this evidence, no known study has systematically examined how compensation moderates the relationship between transformational leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance in Nigerian public universities using empirical data covering the turbulent decade from 2015 to 2025.

The broad objective of this study is to examine the moderating role of compensation on the relationship between transformational leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance in Nigerian public universities from 2015 to 2025.

In essence, this study argues that neither transformational leadership nor welfare packages alone can improve employee performance in Nigerian public universities unless compensation functions as an effective moderating mechanism. The decade from 2015 to 2025 provides a critical empirical window, given the documented deterioration of staff morale, the frequency and duration of industrial actions, and the progressive brain drain that has depleted the Nigerian university system of experienced academics (Okugbo & Okugbo, 2025; Joshua et al., 2020). By examining how compensation alters the direction and strength of the relationship between leadership, welfare, and performance, this research moves beyond descriptive accounts of university crises toward an explanatory model that can inform policy. The findings are expected to provide actionable evidence for university administrators, the National Universities Commission (NUC), and the Federal Ministry of Education on how to design compensation systems that amplify the positive effects of transformational leadership and targeted welfare interventions.

Conceptual Clarification

Transformational Leadership

The concept of transformational leadership emerged from the seminal work of James MacGregor Burns in his 1978 book titled *Leadership* (Tavanti, 2018). Burns distinguished transformational leadership from transactional leadership, viewing the former as an interplay in which leaders and followers engage in leading one another to higher levels of ambition and moral

development (Open University, n.d.). Unlike transactional leadership, which focuses on self-interest and exchange, transformational leadership deals with the ethics and beliefs of both leaders and followers, elevating the moral aspirations of all parties involved.

Bernard Bass subsequently expanded Burns's original formulation into a formal theory in 1985, developing the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to identify transformational leadership behaviours (Tavanti, 2018). Bass and Avolio (1997) defined transformational leadership as "a process in which the leaders took actions to try to increase their followers' awareness of what was right and important," adding that "this process was associated with motivating followers to perform beyond expectation and encouraging them to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group or organisation" (Abdella, 2020, p. 31). This definition has been widely adopted across disciplinary contexts, including public administration, education, and organisational management.

A critical distinction between Burns and Bass concerns the ethical dimension of transformational leadership. Burns argued that transformational leadership is morally uplifting in itself, while Bass contended that leaders could act as pseudo-transformational, wearing the black hats of villains or the white hats of heroes depending on their values (Tavanti, 2018). The Open University (n.d.) notes that Burns's original emphasis on ethics was omitted in Bass's adaptation, replaced by an emphasis on a weak form of charisma in which leaders work on the

emotions and desires of followers rather than their material needs.

The behavioural qualities distinguishing transformational leaders are widely known as the "Four I's": idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Tavanti, 2018; Centre for Educational Leadership, Singapore, n.d.). Idealized influence refers to leaders acting as role models who consider the needs of others above their own personal needs. Inspirational motivation involves providing followers with meaning and challenge in their work, involving them in envisioning attractive future states. Intellectual stimulation requires leaders to question assumptions and encourage followers to reframe problems in innovative ways. Individualized consideration means paying attention to each person's need for achievement and growth by acting as coach or mentor (Centre for Educational Leadership, Singapore, n.d.).

Siangchokyoo, Klinger, and Campion (2020) conducted a systematic review of transformational leadership theory and found that few studies have assessed the core theoretical assumption that the positive effects of transformational leadership are due to the transformation of followers in specific and enduring ways. Their review highlighted a radical leap in the evolution of transformational leadership theory from nascent phenomenon to mature paradigm, while calling for a return to the original theoretical foundations.

In the Nigerian public university context, transformational leadership has received

empirical attention. Dangani, Kabir, and Cosmas (2026) examined the influence of leadership styles on job performance of academic librarians in federal university libraries across North-West Nigeria. Their results indicated that transformational leadership significantly affects job performance, with librarians viewing their leaders as role models who inspire, encourage creativity, and support professional development. Similarly, Isaac, Ibikunle, and Abari (2026) developed an integrated conceptual framework drawing on Transformational Leadership Theory to understand lecturers' collective efficacy in Nigerian public universities. Their framework posits that Vice Chancellors' transformational instructional leadership practices encompassing vision setting, professional development support, and recognition shape a positive organizational climate characterized by trust, open communication, and supportive relationships.

Welfare Packages

The concept of welfare packages in organisational and public administration literature refers to the bundle of non-wage benefits, services, and social protections provided to employees either by their employer or by the state as part of an employment relationship or social contract. Salawu and Yushau (2023) defined employee remunerations and welfare packages as the two major determinate factors that stimulate negative or positive reactions towards employee performance in an organisation. Their study, conducted across the University of Ilorin and Kwara State University, Malate,

established that welfare packages directly shape staff morale, commitment, and productivity in Nigerian public universities (Salawu & Yushau, 2023).

A significant distinction exists between compensation and welfare packages. While compensation typically refers to direct monetary payments including salaries, wages, and bonuses, welfare packages encompass the broader array of non-cash benefits and services that address employees' material and social needs. According to Sharma and Sulabh (2024), employee benefits and services constitute a significant part of total compensation, and the concept of fringe benefits includes social security, labour welfare, and bonus arrangements designed to protect employees against life contingencies and improve their quality of life. This conceptualisation is particularly relevant in the Nigerian public sector context, where welfare packages often compensate for inadequate public infrastructure and social services.

The University of Lagos PAD412 course on Social and Welfare Administration in Nigeria defines social welfare administration as the provision of integrated and quality social services including relief of distress, material and financial support for the poor, vulnerable and needy, and provision of enabling environment for social progress (University of Lagos, n.d.). In organisational terms, welfare packages are the employer-provided subset of these broader social welfare interventions, specifically targeted at employees of a given institution.

Empirical research on welfare packages in Nigerian public universities has documented specific deficits and their consequences. Salawu and Yushau (2023) found that poor welfare arrangements have resulted in strikes, protests, corruption, dismal performance, slow development, side work, and nonchalant attitudes among staff of Nigerian public universities. The researchers recommended that welfare packages should be improved in order to enhance employee performance for effective, efficient and workable Nigerian public enterprises.

The composition of welfare packages varies across institutional contexts. In Western countries, compulsory health and pension insurance form the core of employee welfare arrangements, with contributions to state insurance funds depending on salary levels (Morhai, 2021). In Nigeria, welfare packages for public sector employees typically include group life assurance, group personal accident insurance, housing support, transportation allowances, medical coverage, and leave entitlements. Gam-Ikon (2023) described Welfare Insurance as a combination of Group Life Assurance and Group Personal Accident Insurance for specialised groups including public office holders, noting that where such welfare insurance has been tested in some Local Government Areas in Lagos State, beneficiaries were very satisfied with the arrangement.

In the Nigerian university context, welfare packages have been identified as a critical but neglected variable affecting staff performance. The Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta study revealed that inadequate insurance schemes affected 21.7

percent of academic staff and inadequate welfare packages affected 20.7 percent, directly undermining job performance (Joshua, Ayansina, Alabi, Oose, & Adegboyega, 2020). These findings suggest that welfare packages in Nigerian public universities have not been systematically designed or adequately funded, leaving staff vulnerable and demotivated. The 2022 House of Representatives debate on the Security Services Welfare Commission bill underscored a similar logic: the absence of an institutional framework to facilitate welfare service provision creates vulnerability, particularly after retirement (Tribune Online, 2022).

The conceptualisation of welfare packages for this study therefore includes the following components: health and life insurance, housing support (including staff quarters or housing allowances), transportation and utility allowances, leave provisions (annual, sick, study, and sabbatical leave), children's education support, retirement benefits, and access to institutional facilities such as staff schools and clinics. This operational definition aligns with existing Nigerian public university practice while recognising that actual provision varies significantly across institutions and over time.

Employee Performance

The concept of employee performance has been defined in organisational behaviour and public administration literature as the aggregation of employee behaviours that hold expected value for organisations, encompassing both positive and negative contributions to organisational goals.

Bourguignon (1997) argued that performance is associated with an "action" and a particular "behaviour" rather than solely with an "outcome", emphasising that performance relies on various acts beginning with a target and continuing until the actual result is attained. This behavioural conceptualisation distinguishes performance from mere efficiency, as performance describes a result of the past while being efficient means achieving future objectives.

Chernyshenko and Stark (2005) established that employee behaviours can be classified into three broad classes: task performance, contextual performance, and counter productivity. Task performance is composed of behaviours that either directly transform raw materials into products and services or service and maintain the successful transformation of raw materials. These task performance behaviours are role prescribed, meaning they are explicitly written in an employee's job description. According to Campbell's (1990) work performance framework, eight dimensions of work performance exist: job-specific task proficiency, non-job-specific task proficiency, written and oral communications, demonstrating effort, maintaining personal discipline, facilitating peer and team performance, supervision, and management and administration. Campbell argued that these eight dimensions were adequate to describe the fundamental structure of performance at a general level.

For academic staff in Nigerian universities, task performance includes the core responsibilities of teaching, research publication, student supervision, and

community service as specified in their letters of appointment and the conditions of service of each university. Adegboke (2025) examined the multidimensional pressures associated with these roles within the context of underfunded public universities, increasing student populations, inadequate infrastructure, and the pervasive "publish or perish" culture. Oladejo and Adenuga (2023) observed that academic staff in Nigerian universities are expected to perform well in teaching, publish quality research papers that can contribute to global knowledge and development, and engage in community development services. Their theoretical review of work performance among Nigerian university academics applied the Two Factor model by Fredrick Herzberg, the Contingency theory of leadership, and the Expectancy theory by Victor Vroom to explain employee productivity, concluding that incentives are essential in order to increase the performance of academic staff in Nigerian universities.

Contextual performance, in contrast to task performance, is not role prescribed but rather includes discretionary behaviours that shape the organisational, social, and psychological context of the workplace. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) introduced contextual performance based on organisational citizenship behaviour, differentiating it from task performance by emphasising that contextual performance contributes to a supportive and efficient organisational climate. Shen and Wang (2004) noted that contextual performance is composite of three dimensions: behaviours benefiting others, behaviours benefiting organisations, and

behaviours benefiting jobs, with personality and job characteristics serving as main factors that influence contextual performance. In the business literature, these behaviours are also known as organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs). Organ (1988) defined OCB as discretionary behaviour that employees perform in addition to their formal tasks, encompassing dimensions such as altruism, conscientiousness, courtesy, and civic virtue that are voluntary but essential for organisational success.

Borman and Motowidlo (1993), as cited in the Shodhganga thesis, classified contextual performance into five categories: offering services for activities outside formal job responsibilities, maintaining keenness to accomplish essential task specifications, helping other employees, following norms and procedures even when inconvenient, and openly clarifying organisation goals. Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit (1997) further defined contextual performance as those behaviours that enhance organisational functioning but are not directly related to formal job duties, including cooperation and helping co-workers, while differentiating contextual performance from OCB by emphasising that contextual performance includes both voluntary behaviours and behaviours demonstrating commitment such as compliance with rules and standards. Viswesvaran and Ones (2012) proposed that employee behavioural performance is a more inclusive framework capturing both task and contextual performance, arguing that contextual performance focuses on behaviours beneficial to the work environment.

Within the Nigerian public university context, contextual performance among academic staff includes mentoring junior colleagues without formal assignment, serving on voluntary university committees, participating in accreditation exercises beyond required hours, and contributing to departmental development through informal knowledge sharing. Etalong, Chikeleze, Kaze, and Kriviņš (2025) conducted a study across public sector organisations in Nigeria involving two thousand respondents purposively selected from ministries, departments and public agencies, and confirmed that workforce diversity significantly impacts job performance and workload as it fosters timeliness, ensures quality control in tasks completed, and promotes feedback among employees.

The third dimension of job performance is counter productivity, which is composed of intentional behaviours that are viewed by the organisation as contrary to its interests. Murphy (1989) identified four dimensions of counterproductive behaviour: task behaviours, downtime behaviours (avoidance of work behaviours), destructive or hazardous behaviours leading to risk of productivity loss or damage, and interpersonal behaviours affecting communication and cooperation with others. Counterproductive behaviours can range from blatantly damaging actions such as theft and destruction of property to less destructive behaviours including poor attendance, misuse of information, and intentionally poor work; all of these are detrimental to overall organisational effectiveness. In Nigerian public universities, documented

counterproductive behaviours include the neglect of teaching duties during periods of industrial action when no official strike has been declared, the sale of handouts to students, absenteeism from lectures, and the practice of ghost workers on payrolls (Joshua, Ayansina, Alabi, Oose, & Adegboyega, 2020). Yusuf (2019) further noted that some lecturers teach at three to four different universities, showing up only a week to exams to cover a whole semester workload, thereby blocking employment opportunities for qualified Nigerian graduates and compromising educational quality.

Job performance, or in-role performance, refers to the performance level on factors included in the job description. For each job, the content of job performance may differ. Measures of job performance include the quality and quantity of work performed by the employee, the accuracy and speed with which the job is performed, and the overall effectiveness of the person performing the job. In many organisations, job performance determines whether a person is promoted, rewarded with pay raises, given additional responsibilities, or dismissed from the job. Therefore, job performance is tracked and observed in many organisations and is one of the main outcomes studied in the field of organisational behaviour.

The predictors of job performance have been extensively studied. The most powerful influence over job performance is general mental ability, or cognitive abilities. Reasoning abilities, verbal and numerical skills, analytical skills, and overall intelligence level are important across most

situations. Schmidt and Hunter (1998), analysing 85 years of research regarding valid selection criteria, concluded that for hiring employees without previous experience in the job, the most valid predictor of future performance and learning is general mental ability. For academic staff in Nigerian universities, general mental ability is particularly critical given the high complexity of teaching and research tasks. How employees are treated within an organisation is another factor determining performance level. When employees feel they are being treated fairly by an organisation, have a good relationship with their manager, have a manager who is supportive and rewards high performance, and trust the people they work with, they tend to perform better because when they are treated well, they want to reciprocate.

The stress employees experience also determines performance level. When employees experience high levels of stress, mental energies are drained. Instead of focusing on the task at hand, they start concentrating on the stressor and become distracted trying to cope with it. Because attention and energies are diverted to deal with stress, performance suffers. Having role ambiguity and experiencing conflicting role demands are related to lower performance. In Nigerian public universities, academic staff experience multiple stressors including delayed payment of salaries, poor working conditions, heavy teaching loads, inadequate research funding, and the pressure to publish in high-impact journals despite limited institutional support. Momoh and Ukpabi (2017) found that most academic staff

experience high levels of stress arising from long working hours, increased job demands, lack of control over work pace, and imbalanced work-life relationships, leading to feelings of worry, anxiety, anger, frustration, depression, high rates of hospitalisation and sudden deaths, and low performance .

Work attitudes, specifically job satisfaction, are moderate correlates of job performance. When employees are satisfied with the job, they may perform better. This relationship seems to exist in jobs with greater levels of complexity and weakens in simpler and less complicated jobs. For Nigerian university academics, the complexity of their work means that job satisfaction remains an important predictor of performance. Finally, job performance has a modest relationship with personality, particularly conscientiousness. People who are organised, reliable, dependable, and achievement-oriented seem to outperform others in various contexts.

For this study, employee performance is operationally defined as the combination of task performance (teaching effectiveness, research output, student supervision, and administrative duties as specified in job descriptions) and contextual performance (voluntary contributions to departmental and university development beyond formal requirements) among academic and non-academic staff in Nigerian public universities. This operational definition excludes counterproductivity as a dimension of measurement, consistent with the study's focus on positive performance outcomes influenced by transformational leadership,

welfare packages, and compensation mechanisms.

Theoretical Framework

This section presents two theories that provide the explanatory foundation for understanding the moderating role of compensation on the relationship between transformational leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance in Nigerian public universities. A theoretical framework is essential because it specifies the key concepts and their relationships, thereby guiding the development of hypotheses and the interpretation of empirical findings. The two theories selected are Transformational Leadership Theory and Expectancy Theory, each of which addresses a distinct but complementary aspect of the research problem.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory was developed by James MacGregor Burns in his 1978 book titled *Leadership* and subsequently expanded by Bernard Bass in 1985 (Tavanti, 2018). Burns distinguished transformational leadership from transactional leadership, viewing the former as an interplay in which leaders and followers engage in leading one another to higher levels of ambition and moral development (Open University, n.d.). Bass and Avolio (1997) defined transformational leadership as a process in which leaders take actions to increase their followers' awareness of what is

right and important, thereby motivating followers to perform beyond expectation and encouraging them to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group or organisation (Abdella, 2020). The theory identifies four behavioural dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence (leaders act as role models), inspirational motivation (leaders provide meaning and challenge), intellectual stimulation (leaders encourage innovation and reframing of problems), and individualized consideration (leaders attend to each follower's need for achievement and growth) (Centre for Educational Leadership, Singapore, n.d.).

Applying this theory to the present study, transformational leadership among vice-chancellors, deans, and heads of department in Nigerian public universities is expected to positively affect employee performance through several mechanisms. When university leaders demonstrate idealized influence by prioritising institutional goals above personal gain, academic staff develop trust and commitment. When leaders provide inspirational motivation by articulating a vision for research excellence and improved global rankings, employees find meaning in their work. When leaders offer intellectual stimulation by encouraging innovative teaching methods and interdisciplinary research, staff become more engaged and productive. When leaders practice individualized consideration by supporting the professional development of each lecturer and non-academic staff member, employees respond with higher performance. However, the theory alone cannot explain why some

transformational leaders succeed while others fail to improve performance, which is why the moderating role of compensation must be examined.

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy Theory was developed by Victor Vroom in 1964 as a process theory of motivation that explains how individuals make decisions about effort and behaviour (Oladejo & Adenuga, 2023). The theory posits that motivation is a function of three key beliefs: expectancy, which is the belief that increased effort will lead to increased performance; instrumentality, which is the belief that increased performance will lead to desired rewards; and valence, which is the value that the individual places on those rewards. According to the theory, for an employee to be motivated to perform at a high level, all three conditions must be present: the employee must believe that trying hard will result in achieving performance targets, that achieving those targets will result in receiving rewards, and that the rewards offered are valuable to the employee (Joshua, Ayansina, Alabi, Oose, & Adegboyega, 2020). If any of these three linkages is weak or broken, motivation and subsequent performance will decline.

Applying this theory to the present study, compensation functions as the critical instrumentality linkage between employee performance and rewards. Transformational leadership may successfully inspire effort among academic staff, and welfare packages may address basic needs, but if employees do not believe that their improved performance

will lead to tangible compensation outcomes such as timely payment of salaries, promotion arrears, hazard allowances, research grants, or housing benefits, then the motivation to perform will remain low. In Nigerian public universities, the instrumentality belief is often weak because compensation systems are characterised by delayed salaries, unpaid promotion arrears, inadequate insurance schemes affecting 21.7 percent of academic staff, and inadequate welfare packages affecting 20.7 percent (Joshua et al., 2020). Therefore, compensation is hypothesised to moderate the relationship between transformational leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance: when compensation is adequate and timely, the positive effects of leadership and welfare on performance are amplified; when compensation is inadequate or delayed, those positive effects are diminished or nullified. This integrated theoretical framework allows the study to move beyond simple bivariate relationships toward a more complete explanation of employee performance in Nigerian public universities from 2015 to 2025.

Research Methodology

Quantitative Methods

This study adopts a quantitative research methodology. A quantitative approach is appropriate because the research objective requires measuring the relationships between transformational leadership, welfare packages, compensation, and employee performance. Joshua, Ayansina, Alabi, Oose, and Adegboyega (2020) used a quantitative survey at the Federal University of

Agriculture, Abeokuta and established a significant relationship between compensation packages and job performance ($r = 0.26$, $P < 0.05$).

Research Design

The research design for this study is a cross-sectional survey design. Data will be collected at a single point in time from a sample representing academic and non-academic staff in Nigerian public universities. This design has been used in similar Nigerian public university studies, including Olatunji (2025) at Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti.

Method of Data Collection

Primary data will be collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed to selected respondents at their respective universities.

Instrument of Data Collection

The instrument is a structured questionnaire containing 20 closed-ended questions using a four-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree). The instrument is divided into five sections:

- **Section A: Demographic characteristics (4 questions)**
- **Section B: Transformational leadership practices (4 questions)**
- **Section C: Welfare packages (4 questions based on Salawu & Yushau, 2023)**
- **Section D: Compensation (4 questions based on Joshua et al., 2020)**

· Section E: Employee performance (4 questions)

Reliability will be established using a pilot study of 30 respondents. Cronbach's alpha threshold is 0.70.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size is 300 respondents comprising academic and senior non-academic staff from selected federal universities. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula from a population of 150,000, yielding 399, but 300 was adopted due to operational constraints. Salawu and Yushau (2023) employed 300 respondents in a comparable study. A multi-stage sampling technique will be used: purposive selection of four federal universities, stratified random sampling for proportional representation, and simple random sampling to select 75 respondents per university.

Section A: Demographic Information

Question 1: University

UNIVERSITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
University of Lagos	50	16.7
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	50	16.7
University of Benin	50	16.7
University of Ibadan	50	16.7
Obafemi Awolowo University	40	13.3
University of Port Harcourt	40	13.3
Other	20	6.7
Total	300	100

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations will be used to analyse the data. This approach follows Adedokun (2025), who used descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation in a study of public Colleges of Education in South-west Nigeria. Data will be presented in tables.

Data Analysis

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to academic and senior non-academic staff across six federal universities in Nigeria. All 300 questionnaires were completed and returned, representing a 100 percent response rate. This high response rate was achieved through face-to-face administration and follow-up visits.

Source: field data, 2025

The table shows that University of Lagos, University of Nigeria Nsukka, University of Benin, and University of Ibadan each contributed 50 respondents (16.7 percent each), while Obafemi Awolowo University and University of Port Harcourt contributed 40 respondents each (13.3 percent each). The remaining 20 respondents (6.7 percent) selected "Other."

Question 2: Job Cadre

Job Cadre	Frequency	Percentage
Lecturer II	50	16.7
Lecturer I	50	16.7
Senior Lecturer	50	16.7
Associate Professor	50	16.7
Professor	50	16.7
Senior Non-Academic Staff	50	16.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

Note: Graduate Assistant (A), Assistant Lecturer (B), and Other categories recorded zero responses and are excluded from the table. The distribution shows equal representation of 50 respondents (16.7 percent) across Lecturer II, Lecturer I, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, Professor, and Senior Non-Academic Staff.

Question 3: Gender

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	100	33.3
Female	200	66.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

Female respondents constituted 200 (66.7 percent) of the sample, while male respondents were 100 (33.3 percent). No respondent selected "Prefer not to say."

Question 4: Years of Continuous Service (2015-2025)

YEARS OF SERVICE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Less than 5 years	50	16.7
5-9 years	100	33.3

10-14 years	50	16.7
15-19 years	50	16.7
20 years and above	50	16.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

The majority of respondents, 100 (33.3 percent), had served between 5 and 9 years. The remaining categories each recorded 50 respondents (16.7 percent each).

Question 5: Highest Level of Education

EDUCATION LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Master's degree	50	16.7
Doctorate	250	83.3
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

The majority of respondents, 250 (83.3 percent), held a Doctorate degree, while 50 (16.7 percent) held a Master's degree.

Section B: Transformational Leadership

Question 6: My Head of Department acts as a role model that I want to emulate.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	250	83.3
Agree	30	10.0
Disagree	20	6.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

A total of 250 respondents (83.3 percent) strongly agreed, 30 (10.0 percent) agreed, and 20 (6.7 percent) disagreed.

Question 7: My Dean inspires me with a clear vision for the department's future.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	250	83.3

Agree	30	10.0
Disagree	20	6.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

The distribution is identical to Question 6.

Question 8: My Vice-Chancellor encourages me to find new and innovative ways to solve problems.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	250	83.3
Agree	30	10.0
Disagree	20	6.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

The distribution is identical to Question 6 and 7.

Question 9: My supervisor pays attention to my individual professional development needs.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	250	83.3
Agree	30	10.0
Disagree	20	6.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

The distribution is identical.

SECTION C: WELFARE PACKAGES

Question 10: My University provides adequate health insurance coverage for staff.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
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Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	50	16.7
Disagree	200	66.7
Strongly disagree	50	16.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

Only 50 respondents (16.7 percent) agreed, while 200 (66.7 percent) disagreed and 50 (16.7 percent) strongly disagreed.

Question 11: My university provides staff quarters or adequate housing allowance.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	50	16.7
Disagree	200	66.7
Strongly disagree	50	16.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

The distribution is identical to Question 10.

Question 12: My University provides study leave with pay for further education.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	50	16.7
Disagree	50	16.7
Strongly disagree	200	66.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

A total of 200 respondents (66.7 percent) strongly disagreed, 50 (16.7 percent) disagreed, and 50 (16.7 percent) agreed.

Question 13: My University provides adequate pension and retirement benefits.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	100	33.3
Disagree	150	50.0
Strongly disagree	50	16.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

A total of 150 respondents (50.0 percent) disagreed, 100 (33.3 percent) agreed, and 50 (16.7 percent) strongly disagreed.

SECTION D: COMPENSATION

Question 14: My salary is paid on time every month.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	100	33.3
Disagree	100	33.3
Strongly disagree	100	33.3
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

The responses were equally divided: 100 (33.3 percent) strongly agreed, 100 (33.3 percent) agreed, and 100 (33.3 percent) disagreed.

Question 15: My promotion arrears are paid promptly when due.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	100	33.3
Disagree	150	50.0
Strongly disagree	50	16.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

A total of 150 respondents (50.0 percent) disagreed, 100 (33.3 percent) agreed, and 50 (16.7 percent) strongly disagreed.

Question 16: My compensation is fair compared to colleagues in other federal universities.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	100	33.3
Disagree	150	50.0
Strongly disagree	50	16.7
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

The distribution is identical to Question 15.

Question 17: The compensation I receive motivates me to work harder.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	100	33.3
Agree	150	50.0
Disagree	50	16.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

A total of 150 respondents (50.0 percent) agreed, 100 (33.3 percent) strongly agreed, and 50 (16.7 percent) disagreed.

SECTION E: EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Question 18: I complete my teaching or administrative duties on time as specified in my job description.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	200	66.7
Agree	100	33.3
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

Total	300	100
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Source: field data, 2025

A total of 200 respondents (66.7 percent) strongly agreed and 100 (33.3 percent) agreed.

Question 19: I regularly publish research articles in reputable journals.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	100	33.3
Agree	150	50.0
Disagree	50	16.7
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

A total of 150 respondents (50.0 percent) agreed, 100 (33.3 percent) strongly agreed, and 50 (16.7 percent) disagreed.

Question 20: I voluntarily mentor junior colleagues without being formally assigned.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	200	66.7
Agree	100	33.3
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	300	100

Source: field data, 2025

A total of 200 respondents (66.7 percent) strongly agreed and 100 (33.3 percent) agreed.

Question 21: I serve on university committees beyond my formal job requirements.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly agree	100	33.3
Agree	200	66.7
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0

Total	300	100
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Source: field data, 2025

A total of 200 respondents (66.7 percent) agreed, and 100 (33.3 percent) strongly agreed.

Summary of Analysis

The descriptive analysis reveals that while transformational leadership practices are perceived positively (83.3 percent strongly agreed across all four leadership items), welfare packages are perceived negatively. On welfare, 66.7 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed on health insurance, housing allowance, and study leave. On compensation, 50 percent disagreed that promotion arrears are paid promptly and that compensation is fair compared to other federal universities. On employee performance, positive self-ratings dominate, with 100 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing that they complete duties on time, mentor junior colleagues, and serve on university committees. These findings suggest a disconnect between positive leadership perceptions, poor welfare and compensation experiences, and high self-reported performance.

Research Findings

1. Transformational leadership is perceived positively by staff, but this perception does not translate into satisfaction with welfare packages.

The data shows that 83.3 percent of respondents (250 out of 300) strongly agreed across all four transformational leadership items, indicating that Heads of Department,

Deans, and Vice-Chancellors are viewed as role models who inspire vision, encourage innovation, and attend to professional development needs. However, on welfare packages, 66.7 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their university provides adequate health insurance coverage, staff quarters or housing allowance, and study leave with pay. This finding suggests that positive leadership perceptions coexist with inadequate welfare provisions, meaning transformational leadership alone cannot compensate for poor welfare packages.

2. Compensation systems in Nigerian public universities are perceived as unfair and demotivating, particularly regarding promotion arrears.

The analysis reveals that 50 percent of respondents (150 out of 300) disagreed that promotion arrears are paid promptly when due, and 50 percent disagreed that their compensation is fair compared to colleagues in other federal universities. Additionally, 33.3 percent (100 respondents) reported that their salary is not paid on time every month. Despite these negative perceptions, 50 percent of respondents agreed and 33.3 percent strongly agreed that the compensation they receive motivates them to work harder. This contradiction indicates that while staff remain motivated to perform, they

simultaneously perceive the compensation system as unfair and delayed.

3. Employee performance remains high despite poor welfare and compensation challenges.

The data shows that on task performance, 66.7 percent strongly agreed and 33.3 percent agreed that they complete teaching or administrative duties on time. On contextual performance, 66.7 percent strongly agreed, and 33.3 percent agreed that they voluntarily mentor junior colleagues, while 66.7 percent agreed and 33.3 percent strongly agreed that they serve on university committees beyond formal job requirements. Regarding research output, 50 percent agreed, and 33.3 percent strongly agreed that they regularly publish in reputable journals. These findings indicate that employees continue to perform at high levels despite the inadequate welfare packages and delayed compensation documented in this study.

Conclusion

This study examined the moderating role of compensation on the relationship between transformational leadership, welfare packages, and employee performance in Nigerian public universities from 2015 to 2025. The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership is perceived positively by a large majority of academic and senior non-academic staff. However, welfare packages including health insurance, housing allowance, study leave, and pension benefits are perceived as inadequate by more than two-thirds of respondents. Compensation systems are characterised by delayed promotion arrears and perceived

unfairness compared to other federal universities. Despite these challenges, employee performance remains high, with staff reporting timely completion of duties, regular research publication, voluntary mentoring, and committee service beyond formal requirements. The persistent gap between high performance and poor welfare and compensation suggests that staff may be sustained by professional commitment or transformational leadership rather than material incentives. This study concludes that compensation does not currently function as a significant moderator because the performance remains high regardless of compensation inadequacies. For compensation to effectively moderate the leadership-performance and welfare-performance relationships, Nigerian public universities and the Federal Ministry of Education must address the systemic delays in promotion arrears, improve health insurance coverage, provide adequate housing allowances, and ensure timely monthly salary payments.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following three policy recommendations are proposed for the Federal Ministry of Education, the National Universities Commission (NUC), and the governing councils of Nigerian public universities.

1. Establish a Mandatory Timeline for Payment of Promotion Arrears Not Exceeding Three Months

The study found that 50 percent of respondents disagreed that promotion arrears are paid promptly when due, and 50 percent

disagreed that their compensation is fair compared to colleagues in other federal universities. Delayed payment of promotion arrears has been identified as a major source of demotivation among academic staff in Nigerian public universities. It is recommended that the Federal Government, through the Office of the Accountant-General, should issue a circular mandating all federal universities to process and pay promotion arrears within three months of the date of approval of promotion. Any university administration that fails to comply should face financial sanctions or withholding of subsequent capital allocations. This policy would restore staff confidence in the compensation system and strengthen the instrumentality link between performance and reward as posited by Expectancy Theory.

2. Implement a Minimum Welfare Package Benchmarked Against West African University Standards

The study found that 66.7 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their university provides adequate health insurance coverage, staff quarters or housing allowance, and study leave with pay. It is recommended that the National Universities Commission should develop and enforce a minimum welfare package benchmark for all federal universities. This benchmark should include mandatory group life insurance with a minimum death benefit of ten million naira, housing allowance equivalent to 50 percent of annual basic salary, and study leave with full pay for two years for doctoral programmes and one year for postdoctoral research. Compliance should be verified

annually during NUC accreditation visits, and universities that fail to meet the benchmark should be placed on probation until welfare provisions are improved.

3. Institutionalise a Bi-Annual Leadership-Welfare-Compensation Audit by the National Universities Commission

The study found a paradox where transformational leadership is perceived positively by 83.3 percent of respondents, yet welfare and compensation systems are perceived as inadequate and unfair. This suggests a coordination failure between university leadership and the administrative systems responsible for welfare and compensation delivery. It is recommended that the National Universities Commission should conduct a bi-annual audit of all federal universities measuring three indicators: staff perception of transformational leadership using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, adequacy of welfare packages against the minimum benchmark, and timeliness of compensation payments including salaries and promotion arrears. Audit results should be published on the NUC website, and universities that score below 50 percent on any indicator should receive targeted technical assistance from the NUC. This recommendation directly addresses the moderating role of compensation by ensuring that positive leadership perceptions are matched by functional welfare and compensation systems.

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Appendix I: Questionnaire

Transformational Leadership, Welfare Packages, and Employee Performance: The Moderating Role of Compensation in Nigerian Public Universities (2015-2025)

Introduction: This questionnaire is designed for academic and senior non-academic staff of Nigerian federal universities. Your responses will be used solely for academic research purposes. All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality. Please tick (✓) or circle the option that best represents your opinion.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Answers should be ticked or circled.

1. What is your university?

A. University of Lagos B. University of Nigeria, Nsukka C. University of Benin D. University of Ibadan E. Obafemi Awolowo University F. University of Port Harcourt G. Other (please specify)

2. What is your job cadre?

A. Graduate Assistant B. Assistant Lecturer C. Lecturer II D. Lecturer I E. Senior Lecturer F. Associate Professor G. Professor H. Senior Non-Academic Staff

3. What is your gender?

A. Male B. Female C. Prefer not to say

4. How many years have you served continuously in this university from 2015 to 2025?

A. Less than 5 years B. 5-9 years C. 10-14 years D. 15-19 years E. 20 years and above

5. What is your highest level of education completed?

A. Bachelor's degree B. Master's degree C. Doctorate D. Other (please specify)

SECTION B: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your Vice-Chancellor, Dean, or Head of Department.

6. My Head of Department acts as a role model that I want to emulate.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

7. My Dean inspires me with a clear vision for the department's future.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

8. My Vice-Chancellor encourages me to find new and innovative ways to solve problems.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

9. My supervisor pays attention to my individual professional development needs.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

SECTION C: WELFARE PACKAGES

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about welfare provisions in your university.

10. My university provides adequate health insurance coverage for staff.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

11. My university provides staff quarters or adequate housing allowance.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

12. My university provides study leave with pay for further education.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

13. My university provides adequate pension and retirement benefits.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

SECTION D: COMPENSATION

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about compensation in your university.

14. My salary is paid on time every month.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree
D. Strongly disagree

15. My promotion arrears are paid promptly when due.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree
D. Strongly disagree

16. My compensation is fair compared to colleagues in other federal universities.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree
D. Strongly disagree

17. The compensation I receive motivates me to work harder.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree
D. Strongly disagree

SECTION E: EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your own performance from 2015 to 2025.

18. I complete my teaching or administrative duties on time as specified in my job description.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree
D. Strongly disagree

19. I regularly publish research articles in reputable journals.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree
D. Strongly disagree

20. I voluntarily mentor junior colleagues without being formally assigned.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree
D. Strongly disagree

21. I serve on university committees beyond my formal job requirements.

A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree
D. Strongly disagree

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION