



## Effect of Motivation on Employee Performance in Small and Medium Enterprises in Kano Metropolis

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

The paper is a conceptual research study that explores the Effect of Motivation on Employee Performance in the Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) of Kano Metropolis. The aim of the research is to investigate the effect of intrinsic motivation (recognition, responsibility and job satisfaction) and extrinsic motivation (salary, promotion and work conditions) and its impact on employee productivity, commitment and performance overall. The research is based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Herzberg Two factor Theory, and Expectancy Theory of Motivation and combines theoretical knowledge to form the connection between motivators and employee performance. The research revolves around the conceptual review research methodology, and secondary sources including journal articles, institutional reports, and conference papers were used. The review is a synthesis of diverse academic views that are used to come up with the key motivational forces that affect employee performance in SMEs. The findings reveal that the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation factors are very essential in determining the attitudes of workers and their satisfaction level and the level of production. An equal use of these motivational dimensions contributes to the organizational effectiveness and retention of employees. The study, based on these insights, recommends that the SME managers ought to embrace holistic motivational approaches which will involve a combination of recognition, good remunerations, growth prospects, and conducive working environment. Policymakers should develop frameworks that encourage SME owners to institutionalize motivational practices as part of strategic management.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Employee Performance, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, SMEs, Kano Metropolis, Conceptual Study.

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## 1.0 Introduction to the Study

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Around the world, motivation among employees has been one of the most important

factors of organizational success, productivity, and sustainability of performance. Organisations all over the world are becoming aware that, making financial investments will not ensure efficiency unless employees are inspired to do



so. Research articles like Ahmed and Ali (2020) in Pakistan highlighted that financial compensation and systematic incentive plans are very useful in motivation, hence increasing employee performance in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). On the same note, Mohammed (2023) noted that agile performance management systems and human resource strategies are critical in aligning the motivation of the employees with organizational objectives, especially in the dynamic nature of the Industry 4.0 atmosphere. The trend in the world is that the organizations slowly began moving toward the system of not only financial motivation but also balanced one, which integrates both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that affect employees' engagement and productivity (Sundararajan and Mohammed, 2023). Motivation is still a determine factor in the sustainability and competitiveness of SMEs, which are the backbone of majority of the developing economies, in the broader African context. Achieng (2020) in Kenya established that motivation of employees has a direct effect on performance levels in the banking industry and thus the justification to propose that motivated employees reflect increased job satisfaction, creativity and dedication to their job. Similarly, Amani (2020) determined that job satisfaction, recognition, and well-organized reward systems are critical factors in performance among the Tanzanian SMEs employees. No matter how these findings, most of the African organizations continue to face challenges in developing structured motivation systems owing to insufficient resources, bad managerial habits, as well as poor knowledge on the psychological needs of employees. The disconnect between policy making in motivational matters and implementation still proves to be a setback to productivity in many sectors.

The connection between motivation and performance has received increasing research interest in the West African region, particularly among small and medium-scale businesses that are the main source of employment and innovation. In his Ghanaian SME analysis, Adjei (2019) found that motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) strengthens work commitment, decreases absenteeism, and enhances overall

output of the employees. The study however has also found that motivation in smaller firms is diluted by inconsistent reward policies and absence of career development opportunities. This is consistent with the findings made by Mohammed (2023), who highlighted the value of reskilling and upskilling as contemporary motivational methods that promote the flexibility and competence of employees. The West African evidence implies that motivation enhances performance, but sustainability is reliant on the leadership commitment and institutionalizing the human resource practices that encourage equity, recognition, and professional development. Motivation has been recognized as a key element in employee performance especially in SMEs that play a significant role in the local economic development in Nigeria. Adeniji (2021) discovered that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can have a major impact on employee performance provided that they are incorporated into a positive and just organizational culture. Equally, Abdul and Salim (2020) established that both the work environment and motivation affect the performance of employees in cooperative organizations, whereas Adeyemi (2021) directly connected compensation management to performance increase in the Nigerian banking industry. The evidence on the effectiveness of motivational strategies to stimulate productivity in manufacturing and service-oriented companies was also supported with empirical evidence by Aluko (2021) and Abiola and Awonusi (2020). The Nigerian case and specifically in Kano Metropolis is of a different kind as SMEs are not able to retain good workers owing to lack of effectiveness in motivational systems, incentives and lack of career growth. This theoretical case study will, therefore, aim at analyzing the effect of motivation as a multidimensional construct on employee performance in small and medium enterprises in Kano Metropolis.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Although an increasing literature highlights the importance of motivation in spurring performance among employees in all parts of the world and all regions, most small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have challenges in aligning their motivational strategies in attaining

sustained performances. The research conducted by Ali and Farooq (2021) has demonstrated that recognition, fair pay, and promotion opportunities are vital motivation factors that can affect the productivity of employees in small manufacturing firms. Amira and Hassan (2020) also determined that work motivation and job satisfaction are dominant predictors of employee performance in the Somali private sector. Nonetheless within developing economies, motivation practices are inconsistent and in most cases, they are confined to extrinsic motivational factors such as pay as opposed to intrinsic motivation factors such as achievement, autonomy and recognition. Such imbalance will become the cause of low morale, lack of commitment and low productivity in most SME settings. In the Nigerian setting, scholars have noted that motivation remains a thorn in the flesh of workforce efficiency and productivity of an organization. According to Azeez (2020), intrinsic motivation significantly affects the performance of employees in various banks in Nigeria, but most companies do not make the necessary effort to establish proper motivational frameworks that attract employees psychologically. Bassey and Joseph (2019) found that in SMEs in Cross River State, low productivity and employee turnover have been as a result of weak motivational policies and poor reward systems. The authors further stressed that reward systems and motivation within small businesses are not always strategically oriented towards performance objectives, which results in failure to be efficient and make workers feel unsatisfied (Ekanem (2020) and Gambo (2020)). The results of these findings indicate that even though motivation is accepted as one of the most important factors in determining performance, its operationalizations in Nigerian SMEs are ill-defined and poorly executed.

In addition, a number of studies have revealed that other complementary factors that affect the effectiveness of motivation are leadership, discipline and work environment. Bello and Mohammed (2020) emphasized a set of work discipline and motivation to have a significant effect on job performance, whereas Ibrahim and Bala (2020) identified the moderation role of the leadership style between motivation and

employee outcomes in SMEs. Equally, Bello (2021) noted that motivation and job satisfaction work together to increase performance in the hospitality industry. Nevertheless, most of the Nigerian SMEs continue to be plagued by unorganized motivational policies, inefficient leadership, and organizational discipline that in combination restrain employee engagement and performance enhancement. To make matters worse, business operations are increasingly becoming complex due to technological and environmental pressures and therefore, more strategic methods of motivation are demanded. As Kumar, Mohammed, Raj, and Sundaravadivadhanazhagan (2024) noted, the modern manufacturing systems need to be concerned with the challenges of human motivation and innovation management as an entrepreneurial approach to reducing the risks of operating the system. Similarly, Lawal, Abdulsalam, Mohammed, and Sundararajan (2023) pointed out that technology and human factor of motivation and commitment are also important in achieving sustainable organizational practices. Although Mohammed (2023) emphasized that the global trade management and digital entrepreneurship need motivated and flexible workers, the conceptual understanding of the motivational processes within the Nigerian SMEs is limited, particularly in industrial cities such as Kano Metropolis. Hence, this research is able to fill the conceptual gap by analyzing the multidimensional influence of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) on employee performance in small and medium businesses in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this conceptual study is to examine the effect of motivation on employee performance in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kano Metropolis. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the influence of intrinsic motivation (such as recognition, responsibility, and job satisfaction) on employee performance in SMEs within Kano Metropolis.
2. Assess the effect of extrinsic motivation (including salary, promotion, and work

conditions) on employee performance in SMEs.

3. Explore the combined impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on the overall productivity and commitment of employees in SMEs.
4. Identify key motivational strategies that can enhance employee performance and organizational effectiveness in SMEs operating in Kano Metropolis.

### 1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the stated objectives, the study will address the following research questions:

1. How does intrinsic motivation influence employee performance in small and medium enterprises within Kano Metropolis?
2. What is the effect of extrinsic motivation on employee performance in SMEs?
3. How do intrinsic and extrinsic motivation jointly affect employee productivity and commitment in SMEs?
4. What motivational strategies can be adopted to improve employee performance and organizational outcomes in SMEs operating in Kano Metropolis?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

The research is significant because it offers valuable data on the usefulness of motivation on the enhancement of the performance by the employees in the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kano Metropolis. In the ever increasing competitive business environment, the driving forces behind the productivity of the employees have become a must in the continued growth and the organizational success. Motivated employees are more committed to their jobs and experience higher job satisfaction, which, in its turn, leads to high performance and low turnover, as discussed by such authors as Bello (2021) and Chinedu (2020). This notwithstanding, a gap in the comprehension of the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their effect on performance in local SME settings, and particularly in Northern Nigeria, still exists. In addition, this study has a contribution to the

existing literature because it has strengthened theoretical opinions on work motivation and its implications on development of SMEs. Duru and Okafor (2020) and Idris (2020) in their research argue that motivation-based managerial practices can be used to enhance the performance of organizations. Combining both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation dimensions in the study allows a more comprehensive conceptual insight that complies with the results of Daniel (2019) and Haruna (2021) who related recognition, job enrichment, and satisfaction to improved employee efficiency.

Managerially, the findings will be used in assisting SME owners and managers in Kano Metropolis to develop effective motivational plans that enhance the morale and productivity coupled with commitment of employees. This is very important considering that motivation was found to be a significant outcome of performance, retention and innovation among the workers (as mentioned by Kazeem and Lawal, 2021; Kamal, 2021, and Lawal and Hassan, 2020). The study also brings out the policy implications, which are important and clear, since the study presents the importance of the institutional frameworks that enable the development of human resource and performance guided by motivation in the SMEs. Finally, the research has academic and practical implications because it connects the motivation theory and the present-day trends in the organizations in the digital era. Based on the works by Mohammed (2023) and Mohammed and Sundararajan (2023), it places the topic of employee motivation in more general frameworks of digital transformation, strategic management, and entrepreneurship. Therefore, the research does not only contribute to the academic literature, but it also offers practical advice to practitioners and policymakers who want to increase workforce performance and sustainability in the SME sector in Nigeria.

### 2.0 Literature Review

Literature review will give a conceptual insight on motivation and the connection to the performance of employees in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). It combines the theoretical backgrounds, critical aspects of motivation, and



their contextual application to workforce performance and the performance of an organization. Motivation is a similar construct in management and organizational psychology that has been among the most studied and yet constantly changing constructs as a core factor of employee behavior and performance.

## 2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework which will be adopted in undertaking this study is based on motivation as the independent variable (IV) and the performance of the employees as the dependent variable (DV). A multidimensional construct called motivation is further subdivided into two broad dimensions; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, both of which affect the way employees interact, invest, and execute their roles as prescribed in the organizations.

### 2.1.1 Concept of Motivation

Motivation is defined as either the internal or external forces that trigger, guide and maintain goal-oriented behavior. The psychological process is what triggers people into action in order to fulfill personal and organizational goals. Motivation, when applied to SMEs, is not limited to meeting economic needs but it is also associated with a sense of belonging, purpose, and accomplishment of employees (Eze, 2021; Fatima and Aisha, 2021). Productivity, innovation and retention all depend on motivation. Companies with motivational focus are likely to have a higher level of job satisfaction and a lower turnover. Research has found out that staff that feels valued and appreciated performs better in enhancing the success of an organization (George and Nnadi, 2020). Motivation, in turn, is all the more important in SMEs because of the lack of resources and competition. The workers usually have strict supervision and have to struggle with factors like low promotion prospects and monetary compensation. Thus, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation systems are important instruments to facilitate commitment and innovation in such environments (Fatima and Aisha, 2021; Nura, 2020). The employees who are motivated have more energy, concentration and creativity which bring about greater

production and achievement of goals. Motivation also creates a culture of performance that balances individual goals with goal of the organization hence sustainable development and competitiveness (Eze, 2021; Nuhu, 2020).

### 2.1.2 Dimensions of Motivation (Independent Variable)

The motivational elements of the study are divided into 2 dimensions: motivational orientation and capability (IV). Motivation is a multidimensional concept, which includes both intrinsic motivators and extrinsic motivators which, in combination, determine how employees behave and affect the performance of an organization.

#### A. Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is motivated by internal satisfaction gained out of work itself and no other rewards. It has a connection with psychological satisfaction, including, a sense of accomplishment, ability, and direction. Self-motivated workers do their jobs due to interest, sense of meaning, and personal gratification (Lukman, 2020; Musa, 2021). Highly intrinsically motivated employees tend to have increased job satisfaction and job achievement orientation. They also strive independently to achieve objectives and are proud of accomplishing tasks successfully. This increases the level of engagement, and job performance (Musa & Garba, 2021; Nuhu, 2020). Intrinsic rewards are recognition, promotion, and career development, which increases the feeling of value and belonging to employees. Staff members who do not see a way to grow become more loyal and committed to organizational goals (Musa, 2021; Mohammed et al., 2022). Employees are to be empowered in their work, which enhances intrinsic motivation. Participatory management and empowerment promote creativity and responsibility, which contribute to the increased performance and morale (Mohammed et al., 2023; Lukman, 2020).

#### B. Extrinsic Motivation

The extrinsic motivation is based on the external rewards like the salary, bonuses,

promotions, and other material rewards. It is one of the key factors that determine employee performance, especially in SMEs where money is usually a defining factor of work engagement (George and Nnadi, 2020; Fatima and Aisha, 2021). High rewards such as wages, bonuses, and pay in relation to performance are great driving forces that directly affect productivity. The more significant the reward provided, the more the employees are likely to and will focus their energies on their task performance and efficiency within the organization (George and Nnadi, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2024). Opportunity of promotion and job security make the employees feel that they are safe and part of the organization. Good working conditions also substantiate the morale and the productivity and lower the rate of absenteeism and turnover (Eze, 2021; Fatima and Aisha, 2021). Extrinsic motivation is increased by supportive supervision and clear organizational policies. Leaders who are able to give constructive feedback and uphold a fair practice in the workplace encourage a commitment and enhance performance (Mohammed et al., 2023; Musa and Garba, 2021).

### 2.1.3 Concept of Employee Performance

Employee performance entails the extent to which employees are effective and efficient in the execution of their assigned duties in achieving the organizational objectives. It includes direct outputs like productivity, quality, innovation, and punctuality of providing work (Hassan and Abdullahi, 2020; Ibrahim, 2019). Performance in the SME setting is not just a performance in which a job is performed but also flexibility, devotion and contribution towards the development of the organization through constrained resources. The performance of employees can be indicated by such measures as productivity (quantity divided by unit of input), quality (correctness and steadiness of work), and efficiency (optimal utilization of time and resources). Such indicators show how much employee efforts are aligned to strategic objectives. Conscious production and quality levels are key factors that ensure SMEs remain competitive in the volatile markets (Obinna, 2020; Peter, 2021).

Motivational, environmental, and managerial factors have been found to be a combination to the performance in SMEs. Leadership style, communication, job satisfaction, and workplace culture are factors of leadership elements that are important in influencing employee conduct. The efficient performance measurement frequently depends on the qualitative (e.g., the commitment of employees) and quantitative measures (e.g., the rate of task completion and the amount of profits generated) (Hassan and Abdullahi, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2024). Motivation is one of the most important predictors of employee performance. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators increase the desire of the employees to work hard and remain consistent in performance. Research points to the fact that motivated staff members are more resilient, have reduced absenteeism rates, and are more malleable, which is crucial when SMEs have to maintain their growth in the face of competition pressures (Ibrahim, 2019; Sundararajan and Mohammed, 2022).

### 2.1.4 Relationship between Motivation and Employee Performance

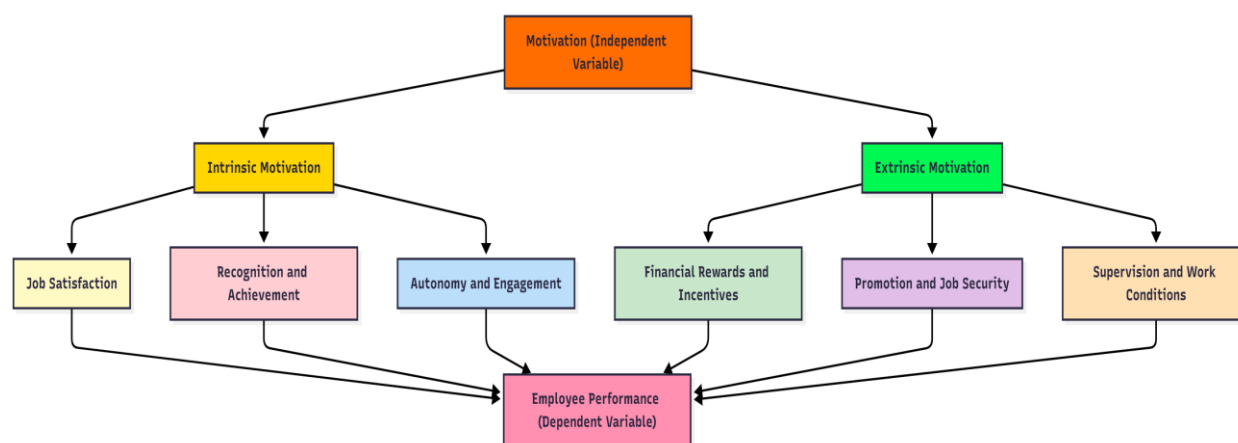
The intrinsic motivation, which is a result of internal satisfaction, recognition, and achievement has a positive effect on creativity, commitment, and innovation in employees. When employees have a purpose and meaning in their task, they have better work attitudes and discretionary efforts. It is also found that intrinsically motivated employees have a higher level of job satisfaction, loyalty, and emotional commitment, which positively affect the performance outcomes directly (Lukman, 2020; Hassan and Abdullahi, 2020; Ibrahim, 2019). The extrinsic motivation which is instigated by the outer rewards like wages, bonuses, endowments, and the favorable working environments also contributes to shaping the employee performance. Extrinsic motivators in the context of SMEs make up strong forces of goal-oriented behavior and productivity because monetary rewards and recognition are key retention factors in those organizations (George and Nnadi, 2020; Peter, 2021; Mohammed et al., 2024).

The combination of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational advantages is the most stable

performance outcomes. By offering a combination of material and non-material rewards like recognition, empowerment, and career development, the organization is likely to get employees to perform better. Such a two-way strategy leads to the development of psychological satisfaction and operation commitment, resulting in a performance culture (Fatima and Aisha, 2021; Sundararajan et al., 2024). The relationship between motivation and performance is always high and backed by empirical evidence in SMEs. As a concept, motivation is seen as an intermediary between the organizational systems and the behavior of the employees, which transforms managerial practices into productive results. Such relationship corresponds to the Two-Factor Theory and Expectancy Theory by Herzberg that are collectively used to explain the motivation of performance by satisfaction and reward expectations (Hassan and Abdullahi, 2020; Shanmugam et al., 2024; Mohammed et al., 2022).

### 2.1.5 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This conceptual framework of the study demonstrates the multidimensionality of the concept of motivation- intrinsic and extrinsic motivation- is considered the independent variable, which has an impact on employee performance, the dependent variable. The framework assumes that the two motivational dimensions interrelate to define the commitment, productivity, and efficiency of employees in the SMEs in Kano Metropolis. Motivation and performance have been described to be related in a dynamic and reinforcing cycle. Internal satisfaction and engagement are achieved by intrinsic motivation (e.g., recognition, achievement, autonomy), whereas tangible incentives (e.g., pay, promotion, supervision) and goal-oriented behavior reinforcement are the functions of extrinsic motivation. The combination of these dimensions builds a synergistic effect, which helps to improve individual and organizational performance outcomes (Nura, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2023; Sundararajan and Mohammed, 2022).



**Figure 1: Model of the Study Linking Motivation to Employee Performance**

**Source:** Researcher's Design (2025)

The model demonstrates that the performance of the employees is a resultant product of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational forces. Intrinsic motivates commitment and

innovativeness as the personal fulfillment of employees is matched with their job responsibilities and extrinsic motivates offer physical rewards and career security at the cost

of hard work and loyalty. When the two streams of motivation are met, the outcome is a better job satisfaction, increased productivity and the growth of the organization. Thus, companies striking a balance between internal and external rewards have a higher chance of engaging in long-term performance and employee involvement.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

The Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943) is a theory that was explored by Maslow and assumes that humans are motivated by the need to pursue hierarchical needs, i.e., physiological, safety, procreation, reproduction, food, rest, and sleep. Maslow suggests that the lower-order needs that need to be fulfilled by employees include food, security, and belongingness before the higher-order needs such as esteem and self-actualization are driving forces (John and Musa, 2020; Rahman, 2021). This theory is structured in putting together the way of understanding motivation that develops as needs are met consecutively. Motivation in the SME context is not the same as there are limited resources and there is diversity in the workforce. Managers should therefore see to it that the basic needs of the employees like fair remuneration, job security and good working atmosphere should be taken care of before they demand greater measures of creativity and self-motivation. As an example, such intrinsic motivators as personal recognition and career advancement will only perform well when the basic needs are fulfilled (Kazeem, 2021; Suleiman, 2021). In the SME world as identified by Kano, most of the employees work under humble conditions with their main motivators being their financial stability and their workplace safety. The development of survival-based motivation to growth based is gradual and this is in line with the hierarchy of Maslow. Therefore, to boost the performance of the employees, the SME owners in Kano should develop compensation systems, welfare packages, and recognition programs that can satisfy the needs of employees on multiple levels at the same time (Umar, 2020; Sundararajan, Mohammed, and Lawal, 2023).

### 2.2.2 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

The Two-Factor Theory of Herzberg distinguishes between motivators (it causes satisfaction including achievement, recognition and responsibility) and hygiene factors (it causes dissatisfaction including salary, supervision and company policy). Herzberg believed that intrinsic factors that satisfy psychological development cause genuine motivation as opposed to extrinsic conditions alone (John and Musa, 2020; Tukur, 2020). This theory argues that increasing the hygienic factors will remove dissatisfaction but will not provide motivation; motivators alone will bring more performance. Resistance to extrinsic rewards may be observed in SMEs due to limited resources, and thus, a greater effort should be put on skill development, recognition, and decision-making autonomy as motivators (Kazeem, 2021; Sundararajan, Mohammed, and Senthil Kumar, 2023). The model offered by Herzberg is especially applicable in the case of Kano SMEs since the small businesses do not depend on large monetary rewards but on the willingness of the employees. Low-financial rewards can be compensated with non-financial incentives including recognition, career advancement, and engagement in a team, which would have a strong impact on the productivity (Suleiman, 2021; Mohammed et al., 2023).

### 2.2.3 Expectancy Theory of Motivation

The Expectancy Theory of motivation (1964) by Vroom describes the process of motivation at the intersection of three interconnected mental factors Expectancy (belief in performance) Instrumentality (belief in reward) Valence (value of reward). The employees feel motivated when they believe that their hard work will have the desirable consequences (Rahman, 2021; Sundararajan, Mohammed, and Lawal, 2023). In the context of SMEs, workers tend to consider the rewarding or recognition of their efforts on the basis of open management processes. Motivation and performance rise when there is a distinct connection between rewards and performance i.e. promotion, bonuses or verbal appreciation. On the other hand, confusion or injustice of rewarding systems may drive down the level of

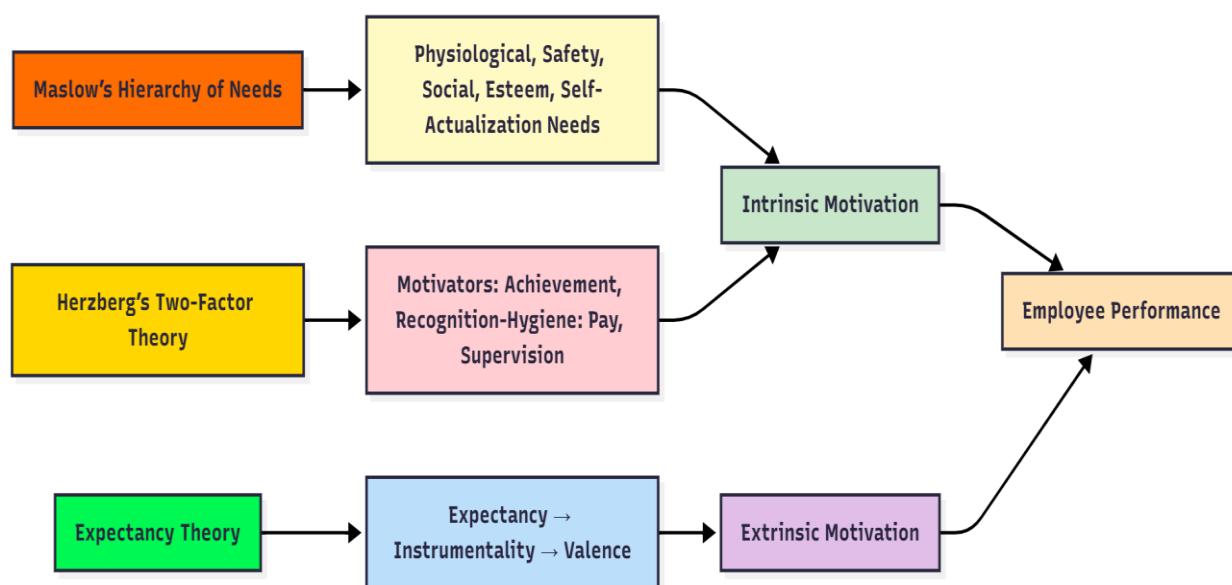


effort and commitment to the organization (Tukur, 2020; Umar, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2024). The Expectancy Theory applies to SMEs in Kano Metropolis by expressing the necessity of managers to explain the reward structures and make sure that rewards are achievable and acceptable. Such an option builds trust but also ensures that the effort of employees and the objectives of the organization align, thus enhancing the results of performance (John and Musa, 2020; Sundararajan et al., 2023).

#### 2.2.4 Linkages between Theories, Independent and Dependent Variables

Maslows Hierarchy of Needs Theory, the Two-Factor Theory offered by Herzberg, and Expectancy Theory by Vroom are the three theories that complement each other as they provide a comprehensive look at the motivation

of employees. Maslow offers the original knowledge about the human needs; Herzberg distinguishes between the factors of satisfaction and dissatisfaction; and Vroom incorporates the process of cognition that intertwines effort, performance, and reward (Rahman, 2021; Sundararajan et al., 2023). All these theories are explanatory of the multidimensionality of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and the impact it has on employee performance. Although the former (Maslow and Herzberg) focus on internal satisfaction and individual development as intrinsic motivators, and the former (Vroom), describes how external rewards (extrinsic motivators) provide a positive feedback to the effort-performance relationships. This hypothetical connection helps to assume that motivation is a direct positive influence on employee performance in SMEs (Kazeem, 2021; Tukur, 2020; Mohammed et al., 2023).



**Figure 2: Theoretical Model Linking Motivation Theories to Employee Performance**

*Source: Researcher's Design (2025)*

The model demonstrates that employee performance is shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, arising from different theoretical perspectives. From Maslow's view, employees perform better when their basic and higher-level needs are fulfilled. The theory proposed by Herzberg further opines that the hygiene factors ensure that one is not dissatisfied

but real performance can only be achieved by intrinsic factors such as achievement and recognition. Expectancy Theory underlines the fact that when employees are sure that making an effort will bring valuable results, they put additional efforts. Therefore, the ratio between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation improves the overall performance, encourages job

satisfaction, commitment, and productivity in the organization.

### 2.3 Empirical Review

The conceptualizations of research and empirical studies are more likely to confirm that motivation processes and performance of employees in various sectors have a close connection. The results of the research in Pakistan and the Lahore manufacturing stock attested the fact that the monetary benefits, recognition, and the applied motivation programs contribute greatly to productivity and output (Ahmed and Ali, 2020; Ali and Farooq, 2021). The international literature suggests that both monetary (extrinsic) and psychological (intrinsic) incentives are crucial and the optimal performance growth within organizations becomes sustainable as the corporations combine the two practices. In addition, the international literature suggests that strategic human resource practices, including training, performance management, and career development, are important in the mediation between the motivation and the performance outcomes that can be measured (Mohammed et al., 2023; Mohammed, 2023). A large body of empirical evidence in Africa verifies the global correlation between motivation and performance in terms of cultural peculiarities. The literature in Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Ghana indicates that motivation (motivation intrinsic and motivation extrinsic) has consistent positive correlations with employee outcomes (job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity) (Achieng, 2020; Amira and Hassan, 2020; Amani, 2020; Adjei, 2019). Regarding Nigeria, in particular, several empirical studies also claim that compensation systems, recognition, leadership practices, and work environment play an important role in employee performance in both SMEs and large companies (Chinedu, 2020; James, 2020; Tukur, 2020). The studies conducted in Cross River State and Anambra State confirm that the low productivity and increased turnover rates of SME employees are associated with their weak motivational systems (Bassey and Joseph, 2019; Duru and Okafor, 2020). All the African

evidence combined stresses that though motivation is universal, the local managerial ability, resource limitation, and institutional practice influence the effect of motivation on performance.

Research on Kano and the northern Nigerian context, in general, shows that there are also such motivational processes but with specific regional features. The studies carried out in Kano Metropolis indicate that employee performance in SMEs is primarily focused on motivation and job commitment and that the lack of a powerful reward system and professional growth opportunities tends to bring down the staff morale (Bello, 2021; Yusuf, 2020). The studies of Kano-based enterprises and local circumstances point to the importance of the leadership style, the practice of recognition, and the work environment as the key factors of enhancing the output and staff retention (Umar, 2020; Suleiman, 2021; Peter, 2021). Furthermore, the results of research on managerial attitude and training in Kano SMEs indicate that the impact of motivation on performance is enhanced by human-capital interventions (training, managerial responsiveness) (Mohammed et al., 2022; Mohammed et al., 2023). Synthesizing the empirical work reveals recurring patterns: (1) both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators matter — intrinsic drivers (recognition, autonomy, job enrichment) often produce deeper commitment, while extrinsic rewards (pay, promotion) produce immediate performance responses (Lukman, 2020; George & Nnadi, 2020; Musa, 2021); (2) leadership and HR practices moderate the motivation–performance link — effective leadership, clear reward systems, and strategic HR management enhance motivational impact (Rahman, 2021; Kazeem & Lawal, 2021; Mohammed et al., 2023); (3) contextual constraints in SMEs (limited budgets, weak career ladders, informal policies) inhibit full realization of motivational strategies, making non-monetary motivators critical in resource-constrained settings (Nura, 2020; Obinna, 2020; Fatima & Aisha, 2021). On the whole, the empirical data proves the hypothesis according

to which multidimensional motivation has a positive impact on the performance of employees, but the strength and permanence of such an effect varies depending on the situation and managerial circumstances.

## 2.4 Research Gap

Though it has been confirmed in various studies that motivation influences the performance of employees, most studies treat motivation as a unidimensional construct or emphasize on either intrinsic motivation or extrinsic motivation. Such fragmentation does not allow a further conceptual insight into the interaction between the various dimensions of motivation in generating different performance outcomes within the SMEs. The literature in the Nigerian setting tends to record one of them (e.g., compensation or recognition) without bringing them together into a coherent conceptual framework explaining how the two motivators have combined and interactive effects on performance. In practice, a good portion of the available research is based on cross-sectional surveys and basic correlational studies (Achieng, 2020; Chinedu, 2020; Idris, 2020), and the quantity of conceptual or theoretical syntheses that synthesize the results of research across settings is relatively low. Empirical findings are widely dispersed without conceptual papers that combine them to offer unified models that may be applicable in SMEs, especially ones that consider both mediators (e.g., leadership, managerial attitude, HR practices) and moderators (e.g., work environment, discipline). Subsequently, over-reliance of the methodology on single-study designs has led to a little theory-building on motivation-performance relationship in the SMEs.

Although certain empirical studies trace back to Kano and northern Nigeria (Bello, 2021; Yusuf, 2020; Umar, 2020), the literature on the topic is rather limited and somewhat disjointed. Conceptual consolidation on Kano Metropolis in particular has little conceptualization that combines the local studies with the wider national and regional studies. This contextual weakness limits the creation of custom motivational models capable of capture the specific socio-economic, cultural and

institutional factors of Kano including its labor market structure, entrepreneurial behaviour and the limitation of SME resources. Despite the frequent mention of Maslow, Herzberg, and Expectancy theories, not many studies explicitly combine these theoretical lenses into a model that explicitly relates multidimensional motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) with employee performance as well as moderating contextual factors and managerial mediators. This leaves a theoretical gap to a unified conceptual framework which can be used to compose not only of main effects but of interactive and conditional relationships (e.g., how leadership type or HR practices reinforce or undermine the effectiveness of motivation). This research paper fills this gap by providing a consolidated conceptual framework which brings together the theory and empirical evidence to SMEs in Kano Metropolis.

## 2.5 Model of the Study

### 2.5.1 Reiteration of Key Constructs and Linkages

The given conceptual paper combines two core constructs as the Independent Variable (IV) and the Employee Performance as the dependent variable (DV). It is considered that motivation is a multidimensional construct, having both intrinsic and extrinsic elements, and they both have an impact on employee attitudes, effort, and results in SMEs. The intrinsic dimension contains internal motivators like achievement, recognition, growth, autonomy, and job satisfaction, which motivate the workers to work because it satisfies them as opposed to rewarding them. Extrinsic dimension, in its turn, encompasses external rewards like monetary rewards, work security, promotions, healthy working conditions, and supervisory practices. The combination of the two streams of motivation is theorized to improve employee performance which is the efficiency, quality and productivity of employee contributions towards organizational goals. The connection between the two constructs is that with proper satisfaction of both the intrinsic and extrinsic needs, employees will show increased rates of engagement, satisfaction, and commitment which translate into better results of their

performances.

### 2.5.2 Justification for the Proposed Model

The given conceptual model is justified by the existing theories of motivation and practical observations. Particularly, the Hierarchy of Needs Theory by Maslow forms the basis of dedicated progress in meeting human needs, i.e., physiological, self-actualization, etc., as the crucial motivation factors. The Two-Factor Theory of Herzberg further explains that motivators (intrinsic factors) and hygiene factors (extrinsic factors) are different but complementary as far as their role in job satisfaction and job performance are concerned. Vroom Expectancy Theory builds on this argument by arguing that the behavior of employees is determined by the expectation of results, i.e. when employees believe that motivation will result in desirable rewards, they will work hard. These theoretical statements are confirmed in empirical research in the context of the Nigerian and African SMEs, which indicate that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation does indeed affect performance though the extent of their influence is usually dependent on leadership style, organizational culture and the availability of resources. The model is therefore valid as it combines both theoretical and empirical data into an integrated model that is appropriate in explaining employee performance

in the SME sector of Kano Metropolis.

### 2.5.3 Conceptual Integration of IV and DV

The theory of operation suggests the direct and complementary relation of Motivation (IV) and Employee Performance (DV), with the contextual-specific realities of SMEs in Kano Metropolis as the moderating factor. Intrinsic factors like recognition, growth prospects and autonomy will contribute towards stronger psychological engagement of the employees resulting in an enhanced creativity and innovation and ownership of tasks. Extrinsic rewards such as remuneration, promotion and positive supervision are likely to yield instant behavioral change leading to improvement in completion of tasks, quality in output and efficiency. The integration presupposes that the best performance cannot be achieved through the one of the two motivational dimensions but through the synergy interaction of both of them. Under this conceptualization, SMEs that develop balanced motivational systems (credited by combining intrinsic motivators with sufficient extrinsic reinforcement) will have higher chances of receiving sustained employee performance changes. Thus, the model has summed up a dual path motivation-performance mechanism based on the psychological and managerial realities of SMEs.

### 2.5.4 Summary Table of Variables and Indicators

Variable Type	Construct Dimension	Key Indicators	Expected Relationship
<b>Independent Variable (IV)</b>	<b>Intrinsic Motivation</b>	Job satisfaction, sense of achievement, recognition, personal growth, autonomy, task involvement	Positively influences employee engagement and internal commitment
	<b>Extrinsic Motivation</b>	Salary and bonuses, promotion opportunities, job security, working conditions, supervision quality	Positively affects effort intensity, retention, and short-term performance
<b>Dependent Variable (DV)</b>	<b>Employee Performance</b>	Productivity, efficiency, service quality, innovation, goal attainment	Final outcome reflecting cumulative influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation



<b>Moderating/Contextual Factors</b>	<b>SME Organizational Context</b>	Leadership style, managerial attitude, resource availability, HR practices	Can strengthen or weaken the motivation–performance relationship
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### 3.0 Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The proposed research will use the conceptual research design, as it focuses on synthesizing and critically analyzing the existing theories, models, and empirical results on motivation and employee performance within the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The study is based on conceptual reasoning rather than field data to provide the linkage between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the outcomes of employee performance. The design will enable a theoretical investigation of motivational constructs and their applicability to SME productivity, especially based on the setting of Kano Metropolis, as it is suggested by John and Musa (2020), and Kazeem (2021).

#### 3.2 Sources of Literature (Journals, Conference Papers, Institutional Reports)

The paper heavily uses secondary data, which is taken through reputable and peer reviewed academic resources. These are academic journals, conference papers, organizational reports, and concept reviews on the topics of employee motivation, human resource management, and SME performance. Yusuf (2020), Yakubu (2021), and Yusuf and Bala (2021) relevant works were considered to find out more about the local context of SME operations in Nigeria. The global and African views were also taken to enhance the theoretical discussion by applying resources that give an insight into both emerging and established economies.

#### 3.3 Data Collection and Synthesis Techniques

The researcher used a systematic literature synthesis method in order to collect and tabulate the available information regarding motivation and performance. This included finding, categorizing and evaluating academic literature in terms of their relevance thematically to the research interests. The studies were classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation,

performance indicators including productivity, job satisfaction and efficiency. Conceptual mapping and content analysis were used to identify patterns and relationships in order to come up with an integrated view of the effect of motivational dimensions on the outcome of employees in SMEs.

#### 3.4 Analytical and Interpretive Approach

An interpretive analysis was used to study the correlations between the motivational theories and constructs. It was analyzed in relation to the relationship among the concepts of recognition, compensation, autonomy, and job satisfaction and their interaction to affect behavior and productivity of employees. The past studies (e.g., John and Musa, 2020; Sundararajan, Mohammed and Senthil Kumar, 2022) were critically analyzed in order to interpret the relationship of the motivation frameworks to the reality of SMEs. The interpretive approach contributed to deeper conceptualization and clarity of the theoretical framework by integrating various perspectives into a solid story.

#### 3.5 Validation of Conceptual Arguments

Triangulation of sources and theoretical consistency was used to make this conceptual study valid. The combination of several theories such as Maslows, Herzberg, and Expectancy Theory was used as a basis to prove the conceptual model. Furthermore, the comparison of the empirical research in the past under the Nigerian SME environment (e.g., Yusuf and Bala, 2021) and the theoretical postulates in terms of logical consistency and internal validity was conducted. The cross-referenced literature allowed making sure that the conceptual relationships between motivation and performance were properly rooted.

#### 3.6 Ethical Considerations in Conceptual Research

Though this study was not a human

study, the ethics were considered when obtaining and using scholarly materials. All authors and works were acknowledged and cited in a proper way, according to the principles of academic integrity. Intellectual honesty was also considered in this study so as to prevent plagiarism, distortion of the author's point of view, or bias selectivity when interpreting the findings. According to Yakubu (2021), ethical rigor in conceptual research enhances credibility and reliability of scholarly discussions.

## 4.0 Findings of the Study

### 4.1 Summary of Key Findings Based on Conceptual Review

**1. Intrinsic motivation significantly influences employee performance:** The conceptual synthesis discovered that intrinsic aspects of motivation such as recognition, responsibility and job satisfaction are significant in employee involvement, creativity and performance in SMEs. Employees who have good work experience tend to perform better and remain committed to the goals of the organization.

**2. Extrinsic motivation remains a vital performance driver:** Monetary rewards, job security, advancement and good working environment were found to have positive influence on morale, discourage absenteeism and retention among the SME employees, particularly under resource strained circumstances as is the case in Kano Metropolis.

**3. Combined motivation dimensions produce the highest performance outcomes:** The interactive effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on the productivity is the fact that the two motivation dimensions are complementary in employee commitment as well as job performance.

**4. Motivational practices in SMEs are often inconsistent or inadequately structured:** In the majority of cases, the motivation structure is not formalized in the SMEs of Nigeria but is based on the ad-hoc reward systems, which makes them less competent in terms of long-term performance sustainability.

### 4.2 Core Dimensions of Motivation Affecting Employee Performance

1. Recognition and responsibility help to improve the sense of purpose in the employees thereby becoming more productive and innovative.
2. Promotions and remunerations are the key extrinsic drivers that curtail turnover and creates loyalty.
3. Emotional commitment is supported by job satisfaction and friendly working environment that reduces job-related stress.
4. The performance outcomes are to be sustained by balance between the psychological satisfaction and the financial reward through the integrated motivation management systems.

### 4.3 Integrated Insights from Literature and Theory

1. The articles analyzed affirm the fact that Maslow's and Herzberg theories are still applicable in the current context of explaining employee behavior in SMEs, especially in terms of the interaction between need satisfaction and motivation.
2. Empirical sources indicate that extrinsic incentives cannot be employed in Nigeria and other African settings without attention and self-development opportunities.
3. Theoretical synthesis of Expectancy Theory highlights the fact that workforce does better when they recognize that there is an apparent connection between dedication, incentive, and performance consequences.
4. The practices of motivation within SMEs should be thus multi-dimensional so as to be balanced between the individual as well as the organizational goals.

### 4.4 Observations on Motivation Practices in SMEs

1. SME owners tend to have little knowledge in structured motivational tactic, as they have a very narrow scope of understanding career development and concentrating on salary development.
2. Most of the SMEs in Kano are run on limited

resources and this has influenced their capability of adopting holistic reward systems.

3. The non-financial reimbursement, including training, recognition and autonomy are less used though these activities are known to affect morale and innovativeness.

4. The theoretical proof points out that increased performance with motivation is capable of resulting in sustainable business and expansion in the SME industry as a whole.

## **5.0 Recommendations of the Study**

### **5.1 Policy Recommendations for SME Development**

1. There should be institutionalization of motivation oriented policies by government and SME development agencies like performance based support schemes of the SMEs.

2. Training and up skilling should be encouraged under policy frameworks which will encourage intrinsic motivation by personal growth.

3. SMEs that would show a quantifiable change in terms of employee motivation and welfare could be subjected to tax incentives.

4. It should promote collaboration between local chambers of commerce and HR institutions in order to come up with motivational best practices to SMEs.

### **5.2 Managerial Recommendations for Enhancing Motivation**

1. SME managers need to come up with balanced motivation systems, which integrates both financial and non-financial motivational factors.

2. Organizational culture should also have recognition programs and career advancement opportunities built into it.

3. The level of transparency in communication and participative leadership ought to be encouraged to increase employee engagement and trust.

4. Managers are also expected to continuously review and align motivation practices to the changing expectations and work positions of the employees.

## **5.3 Theoretical Recommendations for Future Research**

1. Conceptual research in the future must go a step forward to incorporate the contemporary theories of motivation with the behavioral and psychological framework of worker engagement.

2. Researchers ought to elaborate on the effects of digital transformation and technology-based HR systems on motivation dynamics in SMEs.

3. The comparison of the urban and rural SMEs might further enhance the insight into the factors of motivation which are specific to the context.

4. Longitudinal impacts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on long-term retention of employees and performance of the firm ought to be examined on theoretical models.

## **5.4 Practical Recommendations for Sustained Employee Performance**

1. Formal motivation policies should be introduced in which rewards are pegged on quantifiable performance criteria within SMEs.

2. Managers are encouraged to use their own initiative to carry out continuous learning and professional development as an intrinsic motivational factor.

3. The responsibility and autonomy of the work should be elevated to make the employees more owned and satisfied.

4. They should adopt regular feedback processes and participative decision making that would keep morale, performance, and loyalty levels up.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Summary of Major Insights**

This theoretical paper explored the impact of motivation on employee performance in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kano Metropolis in both intrinsic and extrinsic levels of motivation. The review also demonstrated that intrinsic motivation, which is recognition, responsibility and job satisfaction, is core in improving employee sense of purpose, ownership as well as engagement long-term. The extrinsic motivation which included salary, promotion and work environment were also

known to have a significant impact on employee commitment, retention and productivity. Combination of the two types of motivation forms a stable and balanced model towards enhancing performance. In addition, good motivational measures based on the realities of SMEs like remunerating employees fairly, encouraging supervision, and participative decision making are the cues that bring about greater performance and organizational development.

## 6.2 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Theoretically, the research confirms the applicability of Maslows Hierarchy of needs, Herzberg Two Factor theory, and Expectancy theory as key prisms in the motivation in SMEs. All these theories focus on the point that employee motivation is reached as a result of fulfillment of psychological and economic needs and consistency between effort and desired results. To the managers, the research emphasizes the need to implement a multidimensional approach to motivation that would help in meeting both intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic motivation. The managers of the SMEs in Kano Metropolis need to focus on reward system that is transparent, continual feedback and employee development programs to maintain the motivation and improve the productivity of the firm.

## 6.3 Final Reflections on Motivation and Employee Performance in SMEs

Motivation continues to be a critical source of organizational success especially in the SME sector where resources are usually limited in a manner that they can test employee retention and performance. The paper concludes that a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is important in bringing about sustainable performance results. Not only does a motivated workforce lead to increased productivity, but also to enhanced innovation, adaptability as well as customer satisfaction. In the case of SMEs in Kano Metropolis, an inclusive and recognition based culture will be of long term benefits both to employees and organizations. The empirical validation of this conceptual model in the future should help to

further enhance the knowledge on how the dynamics of motivation develop in different SME sectors and contexts.

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