

## Effect of Conferences on the Initiative and Proactivity of Non-Academic Staff of Federal University Wukari

**Emmanuel Nwokah, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Emmanuel Eche<sup>2</sup>, Morgan Prayer Christopher<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Business Administration Federal University Wukari Taraba State, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Economics Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Department of Public Administration Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17064554

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received : 29-08-2025

Accepted : 01-09-2025

Available online : 05-09-2025

Copyright©2025 The Author(s):

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

**Citation:** Emmanuel Nwokah, PhD, Dr. Emmanuel Eche, Morgan Prayer Christopher (2025). Effect of Conferences on the Initiative and Proactivity of Non-Academic Staff of Federal University Wukari. *IKR Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (IKRJMS)*, 1(4), 148-153.



### ABSTRACT

### Original research paper

This study examined the effect of conferences on the initiative and proactivity of non-academic staff of Federal University Wukari; the population of study was 1825 non-academic staff working in Federal University Wukarias gotten from the registry department of the university. A sample size of Three hundred and Twenty-Eight (328) staff of Federal University Wukari, was obtained and used for the research. Data was collected from respondents (staff) using questionnaire instruments. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and mean were used to facilitate the change of raw data into the form that was easy to understand and interpret in relation to the study variables. The Hypothesis was tested to explain the relationship between the dependent and independent variables using Simple Linear Regression at (0.05) alpha level of significance. The findings of this study established that: Conferences, is a significant and positive predictor of Initiative and Proactivity. The study concludes and recommends that conferences offer exposure to new knowledge, enhance professional identity, and foster motivation, which translates into greater initiative and innovation among non-academic staff, hence school management should institutionalize regular access to relevant local and international conferences for non-academic staff to encourage exposure to innovations, best practices, and cross-institutional learning.

**Keywords:** Conferences, Employee Capacity, Development, Initiative, Proactivity, Employee Performance.

\*Corresponding author: Emmanuel Nwokah, PhD

Department of Business Administration Federal University Wukari Taraba State, Nigeria.

## Introduction

Employee Capacity development refers to the process of enhancing employees' skills, knowledge, and abilities to function in their respective tasks. Tertiary institutions rely heavily on the performance of non-academic staff to support academic activities. However, the performance of non-academic staff is often overlooked and are often times not attended to (Babalola, 2021). It is believed that capacity development programs such as conferences can enhance employee performance, provide job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Eyina and Orlu, 2021).

The National Universities Commission (NUC) has reported that completion rates for staff training programs are below 40%, highlighting inadequate professional development opportunities. Furthermore, a survey by the Non-Academic Staff Union revealed that over 70% of non-academic staff expressed a need for more training to enhance their skills (Siegel *et al.*, 2004). Such statistics underscore the urgency for Federal University Wukari to evaluate and enhance its non-academic staff capacity development strategies, with a view to addressing administrative inefficiency, increase students' satisfaction, and improve institutional reputation. Personal experience has shown that attending **conference** is essential and a strong strategy for capacity development.

These events allow workers to remain updated on the latest trends in their fields, interact with leading experts, and gain access to new innovations, thinking, research findings and methodologies. The **impact of conferences** on non-academic staff performance is well-documented. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), conferences provide an opportunity for employees to engage in knowledge exchange, discover innovative practices, and broaden their work routine horizons. These interactions as they argued foster a culture of continuous learning, which enhances not only the professional development of employees but also the quality of administrative routine services at the institution.

This study, therefore, investigated the effectiveness of conferences as one of the employee capacity development strategies in Federal University Wukari and their effects on Non-Academic staff performance. It aimed at identifying the gaps in existing development initiatives and provide recommendations for improving human resource development policies to enhance institutional efficiency and academic excellence.

## Statement of the Problem

Employee capacity development plays a crucial role in enhancing the efficiency, productivity, and overall performance of staff in academic institutions. In Federal University Wukari, like many other Nigerian universities, staff performance is a key determinant of institutional effectiveness and service delivery. However, there are growing concerns about the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of existing employee capacity vis-à-vis the capacity development strategies, including training programs, mentorship schemes, professional development workshops, and access to research funding.

Despite various efforts to enhance staff capabilities, issues such as inadequate funding, lack of structured training programs, limited opportunities for skill enhancement, and weak implementation of professional development policies hinder optimal staff performance. The relationship between various non-academic staff and the capacity development strategies (conferences, in-service training, delegation of duties, and mentoring) coupled with non-academic staff performance is not well-established hence the need for this study.

## Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study was to determine the effect of conferences on the initiative and proactivity of non-academic staff of Federal University Wukari.

## Research Questions

Does conferences affect the initiative and proactivity of non-academic staff of Federal University Wukari?

## Research Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Conferences do not significantly affect the initiative and proactivity of non-academic staff of Federal University Wukari.

## Significance of the Study

The significance of this study extends to various stakeholders who will benefit from its findings and recommendations. The non-academic staff of Federal University Wukari will benefit from improved working conditions, enhanced skill development opportunities, and increased job satisfaction. The university administration will gain valuable insights into effective strategies for boosting staff performance, motivation, and retention. For policy makers in education, the findings will provide evidence-based insights that can inform policy decisions aimed at strengthening human resource management and fostering productive work environments in universities and similar institutions.

Similarly, for scholars and researchers, the study will provide a robust empirical foundation for future research into performance improvement strategies. Its context-specific insights can inspire further investigations across diverse organizational settings, contributing to academic discourse in human resource management, organizational behavior, and performance optimization.

## Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining Conferences as a dimension of employees' capacity development strategies and their effect on Non-Academic Staff performance in Federal University Wukari, Nigeria while Initiative and Proactivity are the measures of Non-Academic staff performance in FUW.

## Literature Review

### Employee Capacity Development

Employee capacity development in the academic context is a multifaceted approach that targets individual and organizational growth. It involves activities that increase the potential of employees to perform well in their roles and contribute effectively to the institution's mission. Capacity development is not a one-time event but an ongoing process (UNDP, 2009).

According to Peiser *et al.*, (2018), employee capacity development is a range of structured initiatives aimed at enhancing professional skills, knowledge, and overall effectiveness of workers. These initiatives according to them comprise the following: Training and development through conferences, which equips staff with the necessary skills to improve their performance and stay updated with industry best practices. Mentoring and coaching: which provides personalized guidance and support, fostering professional

growth and career progression. Workshops and seminars: which create opportunities for interactive learning, knowledge sharing, and exposure to new ideas and methodologies. Delegation of duties: which enhances leadership skills, builds confidence, and prepares employees for higher responsibilities within the institution and Exposure to research and academic collaborations: which encourages scholarly engagement, fosters innovation, and promotes interdisciplinary cooperation?

## Conferences

Conferences as a dimension of employee capacity development provide significant opportunities for professional growth, knowledge exchange, and networking. Attending conferences allows employees to acquire new insights and skills that can be applied to their roles, while also exposing them to emerging trends, innovative practices, and expert perspectives in their fields (Carnevale, 1990). Conferences create an environment conducive to learning, where employees can engage in discussions, attend workshops, and collaborate with other professionals, thereby broadening their expertise and improving their job performance.

Conferences typically feature presentations, discussions, workshops, and networking sessions, with the aim of advancing knowledge in a specific field or industry (Al-Kurdiet *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, conferences are essential for encouraging creativity and innovation within organizations. By exposing employees to diverse ideas and approaches, conferences promote cross-pollination of concepts, which can lead to novel solutions for organizational challenges (Zegwaard & Rowe, 2019). This exchange of knowledge not only strengthens the capabilities of individual employees but also contributes to organizational growth by improving productivity and enhancing problem-solving abilities. Investing in conference attendance as a form of employee capacity development demonstrates an organization's commitment to professional growth and innovation.

## Non-Academic Job Performance

Job performance is a critical concept in organizational studies because it strives to measure efficiency and effectiveness of workers. McConnell (2014) describes job performance as the effectiveness with which employees execute their tasks and responsibilities, considering both the quality and quantity of work, as well as adherence to organizational policies. Daft and Lane (2018) described job performance as a measure of an employee's output relative to the resources utilized, linking it to efficiency and productivity. Tannenbaum and Yukl (2012) classified job performance as task performance, focusing on core duties, and contextual performance, which encompasses behaviors that enhance the overall work environment. These perspectives collectively highlight that job performance involves not only completing assigned tasks

but also contributing to organizational success through efficiency, behavior, and adherence to organizational norms.

## Initiative and proactivity

Initiative and proactivity refer to the anticipation of new challenges and taking critical steps to addressing such challenging tasks and roles in the workplace. According to Adejare *et al.* (2020), initiative and proactivity defines the workforce of an organization. The meaning is that the degree to which an individual worker takes actions and remains creative, positions him to deliver his or her duties and responsibilities. Initiative and proactivity according to Shiri *et al.* (2023) is innovative thinking, generating new ideas and solutions to solving and improve processes and services. Therefore, initiative and proactivity as a measure of Non-academic staff performance is key in employee efficiency and productivity.

## Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the **Human Capital Theory (HCT)** which was considered the most suitable theory to anchor this research on *employees' capacity development strategies and performance of non-academic staff in Federal University Wukari*. Human Capital Theory (HCT) focuses directly on how investments in training, education, and skill development lead to improved performance. It aligns well with the goal of exploring how various capacity development strategies (like conferences) affect staff performance. In a university setting, enhancing human capital through capacity-building strategies would naturally lead to better teaching, research, and overall job performance, making this theory particularly relevant for understanding the effects of these strategies on staff productivity. By anchoring the research in Human Capital Theory, the study can explore how investments in faculty development directly contribute to the university's performance, offering a clear framework for evaluating the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives.

## Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, developed by economists like Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, emphasizes that individuals' skills, knowledge, and abilities are valuable assets that contribute to economic productivity. In the context of higher educational institutions, this theory posits that investing in the education and development of employees (administrative staff) increases their ability to perform effectively, thereby enhancing organizational outcomes by staff being proactive and taking initiatives and critical thinking. In a university setting, employees are the primary human capital. Capacity development strategies like training, mentoring, conferences and In-service training are targeted to enhance workers' skills and knowledge. According to Human Capital Theory, such investments lead to improved staff performance, both in

administratively, which ultimately contributes to the institution's overall success.

Empirical Review

Smith *et al.* (2023) analyzed the effects of attending professional conferences by non-academic staff's administrative outcomes. The findings indicated that participation in conferences led to a 15% increase in job knowledge, initiative s and proactivity on routine activities, attributing this rise to enhanced knowledge exchange and networking opportunities. The findings and outcome of this study matched with the study under review.

Johnson and Lee (2024) investigated how conferences contribute to continuing professional development among healthcare professionals. The study concluded that attendees reported improved clinical skills and updated knowledge, leading to better patient care outcomes.

Martinez (2022) explored the influence of educational conferences on teaching methodologies. The research revealed that educators who attended conferences adopted innovative teaching strategies, resulting in increased student engagement, critical thinking initiatives and proactivity which correlates with the current study.

Osman *et al* (2023) examined the role of international conferences in fostering collaborative research. The results showed that 60% of participants initiated joint research projects post-conference, highlighting the importance of such events in building research networks.

Methodology

The research design that was adopted in this study is descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey research is widely recognized for its effectiveness in assessing organizational development and workforce performance. Thus, apt for this study.

The population of this study was 1825 non-academic staff working in Federal University Wukarias gotten from the registry department of the university. A valid sample size of 328 was obtained using the Taro Yamene Formula shown below;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

(Equation 1)

Where:

- N = total population size (1825)
- 1 = is a constant
- e = level of significance (0.05)

In this study, a self-designed and validated structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool, carefully tailored to align with the research objective. The survey was divided into distinct sections corresponding to the study's objective, research question, and hypothesis. The first section focused on demographic characteristics, including variables such as gender, age, educational qualification, department, and years of experience. This section utilized a close-ended format, where respondents chose the option that best applied to them by selecting from a predefined set of responses.

The subsequent section employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (DA), to Strongly Disagree (SD). This scale was used to capture the independent variable (Conferences) and the dependent variable (Initiative and Proactivity). This approach is chosen for its effectiveness in capturing varying degrees of responses, ensuring a structured and comprehensive evaluation of the research constructs.

Analytical Technique

Descriptive statistics, such as tables and frequencies werebe used to analyzeresponses from the survey data. To evaluate the effect of the dimensions on performance and for hypothesis testing, Simple Linear Regression analysis was conducted using SPSS Package version 25. The regression equation as presented is adapted from Ehinola&Akomolafe, (2022).

$$IP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Conf_i + e_i$$

where:

- IP = Initiative and Proactivity; and Conf = Conferences
- $B_0$  = Constant;  $e_i$  = Error term;  $\beta_1$  = Coefficient of Independent Variable

Analysis of Results

Univariate Analysis

Effect of conferences on the initiative and proactivity of non-academic staff of Federal University Wukari

Table 1: Responses on the effect of conferences on the initiative and proactivity of non-academic staff

S/N	STATEMENT	5 (SA)	4 (A)	3 (U)	2 (D)	1 (SD)	Total	Mean	Remark
1	Attending conferences enhances my job knowledge and skills.	150	140	3	3	2	298	4.45	Agree
2	Conferences expose me to best practices in my field.	149	138	2	5	4	298	4.42	Agree



3	Knowledge gained from conferences improves my job efficiency.	136	148	3	7	4	298	4.36	Agree
4	The university encourages and funds participation in conferences.	151	136	3	5	3	298	4.43	Agree
5	Attending conferences provides networking opportunities with professionals in my field.	140	146	4	3	5	298	4.39	Agree

Source: Researchers Computation, 2025

**Table 4.1** reveals the responses on the **effect of conferences on the initiative and proactivity of non-academic staff** of Federal University Wukari. A total of **298 respondents** participated in this section of the study.

In response to the statement *“Attending conferences enhances my job knowledge and skills,”* 150 respondents strongly agreed, 140 agreed, 3 were undecided, 3 disagreed, and 2 strongly disagreed. This yielded a **mean score of 4.45**.

For the second statement, *“Conferences expose me to best practices in my field,”* 149 respondents strongly agreed, 138 agreed, 2 were undecided, 5 disagreed, and 4 strongly disagreed. The calculated **mean score was 4.42**.

On the third statement, *“Knowledge gained from conferences improves my job efficiency,”* 136 respondents

strongly agreed, 148 agreed, 3 were undecided, 7 disagreed, and 4 strongly disagreed. A **mean score of 4.36** was recorded.

Concerning the statement *“The university encourages and funds participation in conferences,”* 151 respondents strongly agreed, 136 agreed, 3 were undecided, 5 disagreed, and 3 strongly disagreed, resulting in a **mean score of 4.43**.

Lastly, for the statement *“Attending conferences provides networking opportunities with professionals in my field,”* responses were as follows: 140 strongly agreed, 146 agreed, 4 were undecided, 3 disagreed, and 5 strongly disagreed. This resulted in a **mean score of 4.39**.

## Bivariate Analysis

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Conferences do not significantly affect the initiative and proactivity of non- academic staff of Federal University Wukari.

**Table 2:** Regression Output Summary

Predictor	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Significance
(Intercept)	1.322	.176	7.506	<.001	
Conferences	.696	.040	17.524	<.001	Highly Significant

Source: Extracted from SPSS output version 27

**Table 3:** Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.714 <sup>a</sup>	.509	.508	.32016

a. Predictors: (Constant), Conferences

Source: Extracted from SPSS version 27

## Interpretation

- Model Fit:**
  - The model has a **moderate fit** ( $R^2 = 0.509$ ), meaning the selected predictors explain a substantial portion of the variation in Initiative and Proactivity.
- Conferences** is a very **significant and impactful** predictor ( $B = 0.696$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).
- Fitting the Regression Model Conceptually:**
  - Initiative and Proactivity =  $1.322 + 0.696$  (Conferences)
  - The regression model indicates that **Conferences**, is a significant and positive predictors of Initiative and Proactivity.

## Discussion of Results

Findings reveal that Conferences significantly affect the initiative and proactivity of non- academic staff of Federal University Wukari. This finding aligns with the research conducted at the University of Benin by Beauty (2025) who found that staff development programs, including conference participation, positively affect the motivation and job satisfaction of non-teaching staff. Quantitative data indicated a strong correlation between participation in such programs and improved job performance. Qualitative insights revealed that staff viewed these opportunities as key pathways to career advancement.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the performance of non-academic staff in public universities is significantly influenced by employees' capacity development strategies such as conferences. Empirical evidence overwhelmingly supports the assertion that these practices, when effectively implemented, contribute to improved job knowledge, motivation, teamwork, communication, and overall job performance. Conferences offer exposure to new knowledge, enhance professional identity, and foster motivation, which translates into greater initiative and innovation among non-academic staff.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends;

- School management should institutionalize regular access to relevant local and international conferences for non-academic staff to encourage exposure to innovations, best practices, and cross-institutional learning.

## References

1. Adejare B. O., Olaore G. O., Udofia E. E., Emola T. B. (2020) 'Inefficiency Among Non Academic Staffs in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: the Role of Training and Development', *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, 13(2), 56-66.
2. Al-Kurdi, O., El-Haddadeh, R., & Eldabi, T. (2018). Knowledge sharing in higher education institutions: a systematic review. *Journal of enterprise information management*, 31(2), 226-246.
3. Babalola, A. (2021). The role of on-the-job training in enhancing staff productivity. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration*, 9(4), 55-68.
4. Carnevale, A. P. (1990). *Workplace basics: The essential skills employers want. asd best practices series: training for a changing work force*. Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104.
5. Daft, R. L., & Lane, P. G. (2018). *The leadership experience* (Vol. 53, pp. 1689-1699). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
6. Ehinola, G. B., & Akomolafe, B. B. (2022). In-service training programmes and mentoring for improving teachers' job performance in north senatorial District of Ondo State, Nigeria. *Int. J. Educ. Res. Rev*, 3, 1-7.
7. Eyina, N. N., & Orlu, C. (2021). Staff development strategies and effective job performance in Rivers State Universities. *Web of scientist: international scientific research journal* 2(11), 227-244.
8. Johnson N, & Lee D. Continuing professional development. In: Carter Y, editor. Medical education and training. From theory to delivery. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2009. p. 157-70.
9. Martinez, C. (2022). Developing 21st century teaching skills: A case study of teaching and learning through project-based curriculum. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), 2024936.
10. McConnell, R. C. (2014). Managing employee performance. *Journal of Health Care Management*, 23(3):273-283.
11. Osman, Z., Nguyen, H. A. T., Intaratat, K., Suhandoko, A. D. J., & Sultana, N. (2023). Fostering Collaborative Learning Among Online Higher Education Students.
12. Peiser, G., Ambrose, J., Burke, B., & Davenport, J. (2018). The role of the mentor in professional knowledge development across four professions. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 7(1), 2-18.
13. Shiri, R., El-Metwally, A., Sallinen, M., Pöyry, M., Härmä, M., & Toppinen-Tanner, S. (2023, November). The role of continuing professional training or development in maintaining current employment: A systematic review. In *Healthcare* (Vol. 11, No. 21, p. 2900). MDPI.
14. Siegel, D. S., Waldman, D. A., Atwater, L. E., & Link, A. N. (2004). Toward a model of the effective transfer of scientific knowledge from academicians to practitioners: qualitative evidence from the commercialization of university technologies. *Journal of engineering and technology management*, 21(1-2), 115-142.
15. Smith, A. H., Grupp, L. L., Doukopoulos, L., Foo, J. C., Rodriguez, B. J., Seeley, J., Boland, L. M., & Hester, L. L. (2022). Taking teaching and learning seriously: Approaching wicked consciousness through collaboration and partnership. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, 41(1).
16. Tannenbaum, S. I., & Yukl, G. (2012). Training and development in work organizations. *Annual review of psychology*, 43(1), 399-441.
17. Zegwaard, K. E., & Rowe, A. D. (2019). informed curriculum and advancing innovative practices in work-integrated learning.